

SHINING LIGHTS OR "*LIGHT SHINERS*"?

Jesus said, "*Let your lights so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). This statement comes immediately after his having told His disciples, "*Ye are the light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14). Lights will shine and will illuminate. Light will overcome darkness. Lights will stand out in the midst of darkness. However, I believe it is appropriate to note that such will happen without the "lights" seeking to draw attention to themselves. Jesus said, "*Let your lights so shine...;*" not, "Shine your light." I fear many are more concerned about the attention and praise they can attain for themselves than with simply doing what the Lord would have them do.

Note, also, that the purpose of letting our lights shine is that God may be glorified, not to bring praise upon the person doing the good works. All of us must fight the temptation to seek the praise and attention of men.

For example, preachers may study hard and preach lessons true to the word, however they may do so and all the while be thinking, "Boy, what an outstanding job I am doing!" It seems that some are more desirous of impressing men with their "great" knowledge or their outstanding ability than with preaching the word in a very plain and simple manner so that those who hear may easily understand God's will and be persuaded to obey. When listeners go away talking about "how smart he is" or about how much "Greek he knows" and remembering little or nothing about the message something is wrong. When someone does obey the teaching of God's word it should not be viewed with the attitude, "Look what I have accomplished." We must recognize that the gospel is GOD'S power unto salvation and that He is the one to be glorified and praised when His will is obeyed. Brethren, let's make sure we preach the truth and let's make sure we do so for the right purpose.

Song leaders can also be guilty of trying to impress others rather than humbly "letting their lights shine." A man may be so intent on impressing men with his wonderful singing and his leading ability that he forgets that he is supposed to be helping and leading others in worship to God. Good song leaders are a great help to all of us in our worship to God, however they do not have to broadcast their ability to others to shine forth as lights. Faithfully serving in this capacity will get the job done and God will be glorified.

Bible class teachers can sometimes forget about helping others attain knowledge and understanding of God's word and can become caught up in efforts to impress the students with their knowledge and ability. The good teacher is one who directs the student's attention to God and His word and not to himself. The good teacher does not have to tell the students about how talented he is or how well educated he may be. If he is so talented and capable it will soon be evident to all and the students will benefit from his teaching and will be impressed with God, His word, His power and His love.

Jesus tells us that those who do their good deeds to be seen of men "*have their reward*" (Matthew 6:1-16). When these receive the praise of men they have received their reward and will receive no additional reward. They have been "paid in full!"

The faithful child of God recognizes that true greatness in the kingdom of heaven is humble service (Matthew 18:4; Luke 14:7-11). He knows that if he does what is right God will be glorified and he will be pleasing in the sight of God. He may not be exalted in the eyes of men; in fact, men may not even see or know about the deeds done by the faithful servant, BUT God knows, and that is all that really matters.

The intelligent person does not have to tell others he is intelligent. The "good teacher" does not have to boast of his accomplishments. The faithful child of God will not have to "shine his light." He will humbly and quietly go about doing the Lord's will and will "*shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). He may seem very unimportant to men, but he is great in the kingdom of heaven.

Brethren, which are we doing? Are we "letting our lights shine" or are we trying to "shine our lights"?

✍ James Hahn

