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# **Let Your Light So Shine**

**# 980-A**

**Series: Let God Be God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Let Your Light So Shine

## YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, MY CHILD

In total darkness, the earth was submerged  
The blackest of nights did reign  
No light, no life, no way there was  
Death's song... the world's refrain.

When, from the shadows, a miracle came  
A gift to make men see.  
To a dungeon of night, there appeared a light  
Oh, God, what could it be?

Closer and closer and closer it came  
Stronger and stronger it grew  
Till that one little light enveloped the night  
And all of life became new!

The powers of darkness had shackled the earth  
Now light burst through to break it  
The darkness attacked; but to no avail  
For the darkness could not overtake it

It grew and it grew till its brightness became  
A banner of glory unfurled  
It spread and it spread till it shouted its name  
Crying, "I AM the light of the world!"

At long last, light had come to earth  
Bringing hope, bringing life, bringing peace  
And it promised to man but a glimpse of that day  
When all trace of darkness would cease

Now two thousand years have come and gone  
Yet to much of the world, it's still night;  
Inwardly crying; outwardly sighing...  
They're longing to come to the Light

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Then what is the problem? What do they lack?  
Our Lord answers tenderly,  
“They need to see the Light, dear Saints,  
Then they will come to me.”

“Now you are the light of the world, my child,  
And the world is looking at you;  
You must let your light so shine  
That Jesus Christ shines through.”

You have just heard the gospel. The gospel is the story of a dramatic struggle between darkness and light, between the prince of darkness, Satan, and the Living Light, Jesus Christ. So intense is this conflict, that Light Himself left His home and came to earth to appear to man; and whenever man came to the Light, the darkness disappeared. Wherever the Light went, the darkness fled into the shadows.

One day, on a Roman cross, for a few brief moments, the darkness appeared to have triumphed. It appeared that the Light of the World had been extinguished. Darkness covered the earth once again. Ah, but just as certainly as the sun rises every morn in the eastern sky, so the Son of God, the Light of the World, rose triumphantly conquering death, signaling the eventual end of darkness, when one beautiful morning eternity will overpower time, and the Light of the countenance of God will illuminate the heavenlies for all eternity.

That leaves but one question: between now and then, if the Light has returned to heaven, how will man, living in darkness, know to come to the Light? If men are blinded, how can they see? Light had an answer. He designed reflectors, tiny flashlights, empowered by Light Himself. Then all these reflectors would have to do is let His light shine through them, and those who lived in darkness would flee into the arms of Light.

The plan was simple enough. Only one problem existed. Not everyone who been set aglow by that Light was willing to let it shine. So, sadly, much of a world longing to be delivered from darkness has yet to see the Light.

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That is the issue Jesus was dealing with on that Judaeen hillside as He painted, with every word from His tongue, a living photograph of what the “blessed” life was really like. We call them “the beatitudes,” God’s beautiful attitudes that will take control of the man or woman who is allowing God to be Himself in them.

But these “beautiful attitudes” proved to be at cross purposes with the world’s concepts of blessedness; for God’s blessed life would belong to the insignificant, the meek, the lowly, the grieving, the spiritually hungry, the misunderstood, the persecuted, and the lonely. Those whose lives could not, in and of themselves, be classified as shining lights; they were the blessed ones! They could not shine for themselves, so when light emanated from their lives, it had to be from another source. That was the idea. Men would see their works and give glory, not to them but to the Light Himself.

Jesus concludes His brief description of this revolutionary life by looking straight at the “blessed ones” and echoing this charge, “You are the salt of the earth. As long as you do not lose your flavor, you will change the world in which you live; but if you cease being the salt you are, you will become good for nothing but to be trodden under the foot of men.” Without so much as taking a breath, Jesus went on.

“Let me put it another way. You are the light of the world. A city that is situated on a hill cannot be hidden, can it? And men do not light a candle, then put it under a table so that no one can see it, do they? No, they lift it up so that it gives light to everyone in the house. Be like that. Let the Light that lives in you so shine through you that others will see that Light and give Glory to God. He’ll be the Light. You just let it shine!”

Never has God more clearly defined the balanced Christian life. The Christian’s job would not be to initiate light, nor to imitate light. The Christian’s job would simply be to let the light shine. That is today’s subject; it is a study of light. It is entitled: “Let Your Light So Shine.” It will take this form:

## Let Your Light So Shine

I- The Character of Light Revealed

II- The Characteristics of Light Reviewed

III- The Curse of Light Repressed

### I- THE CHARACTER OF LIGHT REVEALED

If there is to be any light shed on the subject of light, one thing must be made crystal clear at the outset. Light is not a quality, though it does possess certain qualities. Light is not a creation, though it gives to creation its very reason for existence. Light is not a force, though when unleashed it demonstrates such force that it provides power for the whole universe. But light is not any of those things. The Holy Spirit explained it for us clearly in John, chapter one. There we read these words:

In the beginning [before all time] was the Word, [Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.

In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.

And the Light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it—put it out, or has not absorbed it, has not appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it.

There it was; the true Light [was then] coming into the world — the genuine, perfect, steadfast Light — that illuminates every person.

(John 1:1,4,5,9 Amplified Bible)

This amazing passage surfaces the first of several principles that help us outline the character of light. Let's look at them:

1- Light is a person; the same person described as the Living Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was, in fact, God. Jesus Christ is the Light who lights every man who comes into the world. Light is a person, and, therefore, all of the characteristics of light are but reflections of the character of that Person.

If we are to be lights, then, we must be eternally inhabited by that Person. That is the essential dynamic of the Christian life; inhabited by Deity: God actually living in man.

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2- While on this earth, Jesus Christ was the LIGHT; and all the light this world needed.

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

(John 9:5 NIV)

3- Jesus' purpose in coming was to reveal the Light to all those who would come to the Light.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

(John 8:12 NIV)

John goes on, then, to explain,

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

(John 12:46 NIV)

4- Jesus warned His followers that the Light was going to leave the earth and darkness would again prevail, so He wanted to produce sons of Light to provide the Light once He returned to the Father. John explains it this way,

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.

Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of Light." (John 12:35,36a NIV)

5- Jesus had to return to the Father, so He arranged to place the Light that was in Him in the sons of Light, that the world would still have a witness to lead them out of darkness. That's what Jesus meant in the passage before us. He said, "Ye are the light of the world". It is what Paul meant in Acts 13 when he declared of himself that God told him,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." (Acts 13:47 NIV)

So, in review, the world lived in darkness. God was the Light. He sent Light into the world so the world could flee the darkness that enveloped them. While He was on this earth, Jesus was that Light. But the Light couldn't stay indefinitely, any more than the sun would remain in the heavens day and night. Thus, God revealed His incredible

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plan for transferring light. He illuminated those who came to the Light, placing in them the same Light He possessed, but He made it terribly clear that we who were to become lights were only in essence reflecting light. So He said of John the Baptist,

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:6-9 NIV)

So the ones who were to be lights were, like the moon, to simply stay where the light of the sun could reflect through them, thus giving light to a world living in the dark of night.

One last truth about the character of light.

6- Though the Light actually indwells the sons of Light, it does not automatically shine. Hence, Jesus gave that penetrating analogy to his disciples. "A city that has been set on a hill cannot be hidden. And a man does not light a candle and then put it under the table or under a bed so no one can know there is light. No, he lifts up the light so others can use it to see. Let your light so shine..." It is why Paul so clearly admonished us in Romans,

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. (Romans 13:12)

## II- THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIGHT REVIEWED

That, then, is who Light is; and that, then, is why you and I, now that Christ is back with the Father making intercession for us, are the lights of the world. We have two choices according to our passage. As in the case of salt, we can penetrate and permeate the world in which we live, (the world to which we have been sent), or we can withdraw into a Christian cocoon and keep ourselves from being recognized. If we do that, we will minimize our vulnerability, but we will

maximize our ineffectiveness.

Apparently the primary danger of being ineffective salt lies in the losing of your savor, of becoming tasteless. Salt that has lost its ability to flavor what it touches is not only useless; it is a hindrance. It promises to deliver something it cannot. Better that it be cast out and trodden under foot than to present itself as something it is not.

Light, on the other hand, while posing similar problems, emphasizes a different aspect of our responsibility. The primary warning that Jesus gave us about being lights was not that of being poor lights. It was that of being hidden lights. It was that of refusing to be seen. God made salt to be tasty; God made light to be seen; and as salt kept in the shaker is useless even if has flavor, so light hidden under a covering serves no purpose at all.

The character of light, then, demonstrated that it is, in fact, the reflection of a Person. The characteristics of that light will tell us what that light will do when properly allowed to shine. Let's look at them:

1- Light warns. When you are traveling at night and a bridge is washed out ahead, what do men do to alert you to danger? They use lights. When you are flying at night and there is a huge crane stretching so high in the sky that it is a source of danger to the aircraft overhead, what do men do? They make that crane a veritable sea of star-like lamps that flicker off and on so brilliantly that the pilots who fly those skies know without a doubt where the danger lies. Light warns. It is the world's method of warning those who are in the midst of darkness when they have gone too far.

The church is supposed to be that kind of light for the world. We are supposed to be that kind of light to our worlds. Men and women traveling in darkness will fall helplessly and hopelessly into an endless eternity unless the lights are in place to warn them. Light warns, and we are the lights of this world.

2- Light warms. Wherever you find heat, you almost always find light. The night times of earth are the cold times of earth. When the light of the world, the sun, hides its head



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on a pillow of clouds for the night, the earth's furnace ceases to function. Not only can men not see, they are trapped in a world that offers no warmth. They must huddle together or hide beneath some kind of covering until the sun returns to its post and rekindles the flame that warms men's lives. We build a fire in the fireplace or a bonfire in the country, not for the light, though we enjoy the contrast of the flames as they dance against the darkness. No, we build a fire to keep us warm. A natural by-product of most forms of light is heat. And a natural by-product of the church being what it was intended to be is that the world it lives in will begin to thaw from its frigid self-imposed coldness, and begin to express love and begin to experience love as only those who live in the Light can. Light warms, and we are the light of the world.

3- Light Reveals. Lose a contact lens on a dark floor. Lose your favorite ring in the carpet. Leave your glasses outside in the yard. Put those important papers on the fender of the car and forget to bring them in. What do you do? You either get close to the light or take the light to the place where you thought something was lost. The lamp casts out the darkness that had enveloped what you were looking for, and you can see to find it. In the same way, your house can look clean at night, but let the rays of sunlight dance across the table in the morning, and you see dust and dirt you did not know existed. Why? It has been brought to light.

The church, then, is to be the light of the world that reveals to the world that something is lost, or not clean. When the church is functioning properly, even the world's changing standards stand revealed for what they are, violations of eternal Truth. Men may still choose to hide in the darkness, but not out of ignorance, rather out of choice. The light reveals, and we are the light of the world.

4- Light Directs. Fly over a major city at night. What do you see? You see winding paths of lights that form literal ribbons that glow against the darkness below. They are the lights that line the main streets and the expressways so those who want to reach their destinations can see. What do the headlights on a car do? They direct just enough light on the

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path ahead until you move to the place where they could not reach, and then they stretch their rays into that new chasm of darkness, until at last, little by little, you have reached your destination. Try it sometime without any lights (and pray there is nothing in your way). In a world of darkness, man cannot find his way. There have to be some kinds of lanterns in the world showing us where the sidewalks are; some kinds of beacons showing us the harbor; some kinds of spotlights showing us the road.

The church is the only light this world has. Either we get involved with those around us who are groping in darkness and take them by the hand and lead them into the light, or we, who are their only hope, become responsible for their inability to see. If they are to see, we must shine the light. Yes, they may choose to ignore it; that's their choice. But if we choose not to shine; that's our choice. We become accountable. Light directs, and we are the light of the world.

5- Light comforts. Night time carries with it all kinds of fears. Children are afraid of the dark for they do not know what dangers lurk there. At night, sounds you would not even hear in the daytime sound so ominous that you cringe with fear. A feeling of aloneness, a feeling of helplessness, a feeling of endlessness often accompanies the night. Then the sun comes up. The world seems peaceful again; the world seems serene again; the world seems alive again. Why? It is feeling the comfort of light. Light casts out fear. Light casts out uncertainty. Light surrounds the unknown and fills it with reality. Truly, the world is waiting for the sunrise. And in a world desperate for comfort, only Christians have an indwelling Comforter. Therefore, only Christians possess the Light needed to bring comfort to a world hovering in darkness, waiting for morning. Light comforts, and we are the light of the world.

### III- THE CURSE OF LIGHT REPRESSED

So you and I are God's agents in a world enveloped in spiritual darkness. We have become inhabited by Light. Therefore, the Light that dwells in us wants to shine through us to warn, to warm, to reveal, to direct, and to comfort a

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world that is desperately seeking those qualities that only light possesses. But as we learned earlier from our text, Jesus said it was possible to possess light and not reflect light. It is possible to be a light and not let it shine. It is possible to succumb to the curse of becoming hidden light. Here are three of the ways we do that:

1- We become bomb-shelter believers. Bomb-shelter believers are those who see the church as a place to find safety from a world they cannot cope with. They live in a world of explosives, of warfare, of difficulties. The church has become their underground cave. There they find security. There they find acceptance. There they find peace. Instead of using the church as a filling station to equip them to go back onto the battlefield, they spend more and more and more of their time in the bomb shelter where they feel safe and secure. They cultivate no unbelieving friends. They make no effort to communicate with the lost where they work. They simply endure life in the world so they can enjoy life in the bomb shelter. They are lights, but they are well-hidden lights that no one will ever see.

2- We become high-priced hypocrites. This kind of Christianity is characterized by those of us who let the world know we're Christians, even get involved in witnessing and sharing our faith, but who fail to live in such a way that others can see the light; they can only hear our vivid description of what light is like. However, a description of light doesn't do the same thing that light does. It doesn't warn or warm or direct or comfort. It just provides information. And no one is impressed with that.

3- We become muted messengers. Muted messengers are those who let their lights shine; their lives reflect Christ in all that they do, but they never share why they are so different. So a confused world thinks they are the light. It is impressed with them, heaps praise on them, but never imagines that this same light is available to everyone. They let the light shine, but men see their good works and mistakenly give the glory to them. Jesus said men ought to see our works and glorify HIM. That only happens when the light is identified as being His.

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You and I, Jesus said, are the light of the world. We possess the only light the world has. We possess everything the world needs. And we have been charged with one key responsibility. We are to let it shine. We are not to spend our lives lighting each other's candles so we'll all be nice and warm. We are not to spend our time beating drums about being lights while living as though we are no different than darkness, and we are not to be muted messengers, living light-filled lives and letting a confused world think we are the source of our own light.

Do you know what your world is saying right now? It is saying, "Hey, it's dark out here. Does anyone know where we can find light?" Do you know what Jesus is saying? He is saying, "I know where there's light...come to me. Look... there's one of my lights now. Follow him. Follow her. They will lead you to me. They will, that is, if they will just let their lights shine."

Then He whispers to us, "Let it shine, Beloved. Let it shine!"

### LET IT SHINE, BELOVED

Let it shine, Beloved,  
Let your light so shine  
That a dark and dying world,  
Left to death, resigned

Wakens to the awesome truth  
As the Son breaks through.  
Jesus Christ is still the Light  
And now He lives in you!

Let it shine, Beloved,  
Ignite the path to hell  
That men encased in tombs of night  
Might find life as well.

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