

**Titles of Christians (3)**  
**The Light of the World**  
**Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan**

Today we continue to study the titles of Christians in the Bible. Last time we studied “The Salt of The Earth”; today we are going to study another title:

<sup>NASB</sup> **Matthew 5:14 – 16** <sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Mat 5:14-16 NASB)

**The Function of Light**

Here the Lord Jesus says that we are the light of the world; in verse 16 he says specifically that we have to shine before men.

When we enjoy all the modern conveniences in life, we don’t realize how important light is. In the year 1993 Pastor Bentley and I went to a certain country in Asia to preach the gospel. At that time there were frequent blackouts in that place. If a blackout happened during day time it wasn’t that bad, but if it happened at night, it was really inconvenient. But the worst is when the blackout happened at night time while we were walking outside on the streets. A big part of the city would become pitch dark; it was more than just inconvenient, it was really dangerous. There were many open manholes on the roads without covers, because these would be stolen. Indeed there was an Englishman who fell into one of these manholes and died. We all had to look carefully when we walked on the roads. A few times we went out in the evening, and on the way back home suddenly there was a blackout. We couldn’t see anything on the road. I was really scared, and I turned to our Father in heaven immediately and asked Him to protect us bringing us back home safely. After that, we would always carry a flashlight when we went out in the evening.

Besides the open manholes, there were all kinds of garbage on the ground. When I walked on the roads during the blackout, I couldn’t see what was on the ground; I didn’t know what I was stepping on. It was only until we came back home, under the candle light, that I saw that all kinds of garbage were stuck to my shoes and my pants, sometimes there was even excrement!

When a person is in the dark, he doesn’t see the things around him, he doesn’t know whether the place is clean or dirty, indeed he doesn’t even know whether he himself is clean or dirty.

## The Light of The World

The Bible compares light to righteousness, holiness and the glory of Yahweh God; and darkness is compared to sin and death.

Those who live in sin usually don't see the seriousness of sin, because they are so accustomed to this kind of life, they don't see what's wrong with it. For example:

- Someone who has been lying all the time doesn't see lying as a sin; to him lying is a way of life. People all around him are lying all the time; some people say it is just exaggerating a bit. Indeed the more skillfully they lie, the more successful they become in life, so what's wrong with it?
- In this world most people like to boast about themselves; they think that a little bit of boasting doesn't really matter! And while they boast about themselves, they also like to talk down on other people to show that they are superior!
- People like to swear, adding vulgar words to their speech. Indeed it is trendy! If your speech is too pure or too polite, they say you are old fashioned, you are boring!
- Some people don't see their sins as serious, so they may even exaggerate the sins they have committed!

It is only until the day the light of righteousness shines on those who live in darkness, that they realize how dirty they are! Now they can see their own sins.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 5:1 – 11** One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. <sup>2</sup> He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." <sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11 NIV)

Why did Peter suddenly fall at the Lord's knees and asked him to go away? Because when the Lord Jesus was sitting on Peter's boat and teaching the people from there, Peter listened to the whole sermon, and he couldn't run away from it. The Lord's righteousness and holiness came upon him like the sun shining in the darkness. He also saw the power and authority in the Lord's teaching. The light had shone into Peter's heart and made him see his own sins. After that the Lord asked Peter to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch. They got so much fish that their nets began to break. Usually people catch fish at night time, they can't catch as many fish in day time, as every fishman knows. Peter was an experienced fishman. When he saw such a miracle happened, he knew right away that the Lord Jesus was no ordinary man, he saw that he was not worthy to stand in front of the Lord. That's why he fell at the Lord's feet and asked him to go away from him, because he was a sinful man.

The Lord told Peter that from now on he would fish for people. (Please read the sermon "Fishers of Men" to understand this point. The transcriptions of all my previous sermons have been put on the website: [www.gospelandsalvation.com](http://www.gospelandsalvation.com). You can go to the website to read and download the PDF copy of the transcription.) Here the Lord was leading Simon Peter out of sin to go on to a new direction in life.

The Lord Jesus is the light of the world. Christians are his disciples, so we too are the lights of the world:

- We have to shine into the hearts of sinful people to help them see their own sins.
- We have to lead them out of darkness and go into a new direction in life.

Light always defeats darkness. Wherever there is light, darkness has to retreat. No matter how dark the place is, as long as there is light, darkness would be pushed away. The brighter the light is, the bigger the area it can shine on, and darkness will be pushed away further; if the light is weak, it can only shine on a small area. But darkness can never defeat light.

This task is not easy, but we are not doing this by ourselves in our own strength. It is by the power of Yahweh God and the instruction from the Holy Spirit that we carry out the task. So what should we do now?

### **A Joint Effort of All The True Christians**

First of all it is a joint effort of all true Christians. In Matthew 5:14 the Lord said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden":

- The word “you” here in the original Greek word is ὑμεῖς (*humeis*); it is plural, so here the Lord is talking to all his disciples, not just to an individual.
- “A city” refers to which city? It refers to Jerusalem; indeed Jerusalem is really a city built on a hill. In the Old Testament “Jerusalem” often stands for Israel, the people of Yahweh God. In the New Testament the disciples of the Lord Jesus are also the people of God. So Jerusalem stands for all the people of God.

When all the disciples of the Lord emit light, the church would really be like a city built on the hill that cannot be hidden. From a place far far away people can see the light from this city; people who live in darkness would be attracted to that city.

The first point is that all Christians have to join together to emit light to this dark world. We shouldn't think that only the pastors and teachers can do this, and then we say, “I am just an ordinary Christian, I can't do this.” The Lord's calling is for everyone. He called Peter to follow him, and soon after that he included Peter as part of this city set on a hill.

### **Christians are to Be Different from The World**

In order for the church to be a city set on a hill, Christians have to be different from the people in the world.

I am not saying that Christians have to deliberately do some strange things to attract attention; that would be completely wrong, that's not what I am saying.

In verse 16 of Matthew 5, the Lord Jesus says, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Notice the term “good works” here; the Lord is comparing the light to good works. When we do good works, our light will shine before men, and we will be very different from the rest of the world.

Some people would immediately say, “It is nothing more than doing good works! What's the big deal?” “Good works” here is not simply helping people a little bit, donating some money to charity works! Even those who don't believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus can also do that, and they do it quite often. Indeed mafia bosses often donate huge amounts of money to charity works!

But the good works that the Lord Jesus talks about here is much deeper than that; the Lord is talking about the works that Yahweh God considers as good, the works which are good in Yahweh's eyes, not just any kind of good works!

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What are the good works in Yahweh's eyes? Those are works according to His will! Those are works according to His teaching in the Bible! Those should be good works in His eyes!

Matthew 5:16 says that when we do good works, our light will shine before men; yet to do good works means to do them according to God's teaching. That means that when we live according to Yahweh God's teaching, our lives would be very different from those of the people of the world, and our light will shine before men.

For example: If someone in your family commits sin, what are you going to do? According to the people of the world, the best way is to cover it up, so that it won't be leaked out to the world. But according to the teaching of Yahweh God, you have to help your family member to repent, you don't simply cover it up. I am not saying that we announce the sin of your family member to the world to let the whole world know about it, that's not what I mean. If the person who commits sin doesn't want the world to know, then we shouldn't leak it to the world and put the person to shame, but we should help the him to repent of his sin, that is, according to God's teaching.

That's why if we truly live according to the teaching of Yahweh God, we would be very different from the world, we would stand out as the light in this world.

### **People in the world hate the Light**

But on the other hand, when the light shines into the hearts of people, that makes them very uncomfortable. Most people in the world want to stay away from the light, some of them even hate the light.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 3:19 – 21** This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. (John 3:19-21 NIV)

When the light shines into the darkness, those who love evil would hate the light, because the light exposes their sins; they would not come into the light, but would stay far away from the light.

### **Life Quality to be the Light of the World**

Do you want to become the light of the world? What kind of life quality do you need to have? It is true that if we live according to the teaching of God, we would automatically become very

different from the people of the world, and we would stand out as the light. But is there one very important quality that we must have in order to be the light of the world?

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:35** John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. (John 5:35 NIV)

Here the Lord Jesus says specifically that John the Baptist was a lamp that burned and gave light. What kind of quality did John have? The Lord says John was able to give light to the world because he burned. What exactly did he do?

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 14:3 – 4** Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, <sup>4</sup> for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." (Mat 14:3-4 NIV)

John was willing to die for the sake of righteousness. What happened was that king Herod Antipas took Herodias the wife of his brother Philip while his brother was still alive; it was unlawful to do that, for it amounted to adultery. John the Baptist dared to point out Herod's fault. That made the king very angry, and he put John in prison. Eventually king Herod put John to death in order to please the daughter of Herodias, the woman he took.

This story shows that if you want to be the light of the world, you yourself would have to be willing to be burned, in the sense of being willing to suffer and even die for the sake of righteousness!

### **What can make Light not Shine in the Darkness?**

We just learned that light always defeats darkness; wherever there is light, darkness would retreat; darkness can never defeat light. But if light is being covered, then it can no longer shine in the darkness.

In Matthew 5:15 the Lord said, "nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." (NASB) If the lamp is under the basket, it can no longer give out light. What does the "basket" stand for?

The original Greek word for "basket" is *μόδιος* (*modios*); it is a container for dry goods with a capacity of about 8 litres (or 2 gallons); it is usually used within the family or in a store to measure dry goods.

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Here the word *modios* stands for the concern for family and business matters. If our hearts are preoccupied with family and business matters, our light would be covered by this container (*modios*), and we cannot shine to give light to the world.

I am not saying that we simply abandon our family and our business. We definitely have to take care of our family, and we have to make a living, but we should never let the concern for family and business take the first place in our hearts. Yahweh God is always at the most important place in our lives; the work of God is always far more important than anything else. We care for our family and business, but we don't have to be anxious for them; we commit them to Yahweh God while we serve God with all our hearts, and God will take good care of our family and business; indeed He would care for them much better than if we do it ourselves.

### **Conclusion**

Now we sum up everything we have studied today. The Lord Jesus says we are the light of the world, we shine into the hearts of people to help them see their sins, we lead them out of sin into a new direction of life. In order to be the light of the world, we would have to live according to God's will, and be ready to be hated by the world. We don't let the concern for family and business affect our devotion to God; Yahweh God always occupies the most important place in our hearts.