

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

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PKBedwell@hotmail.com

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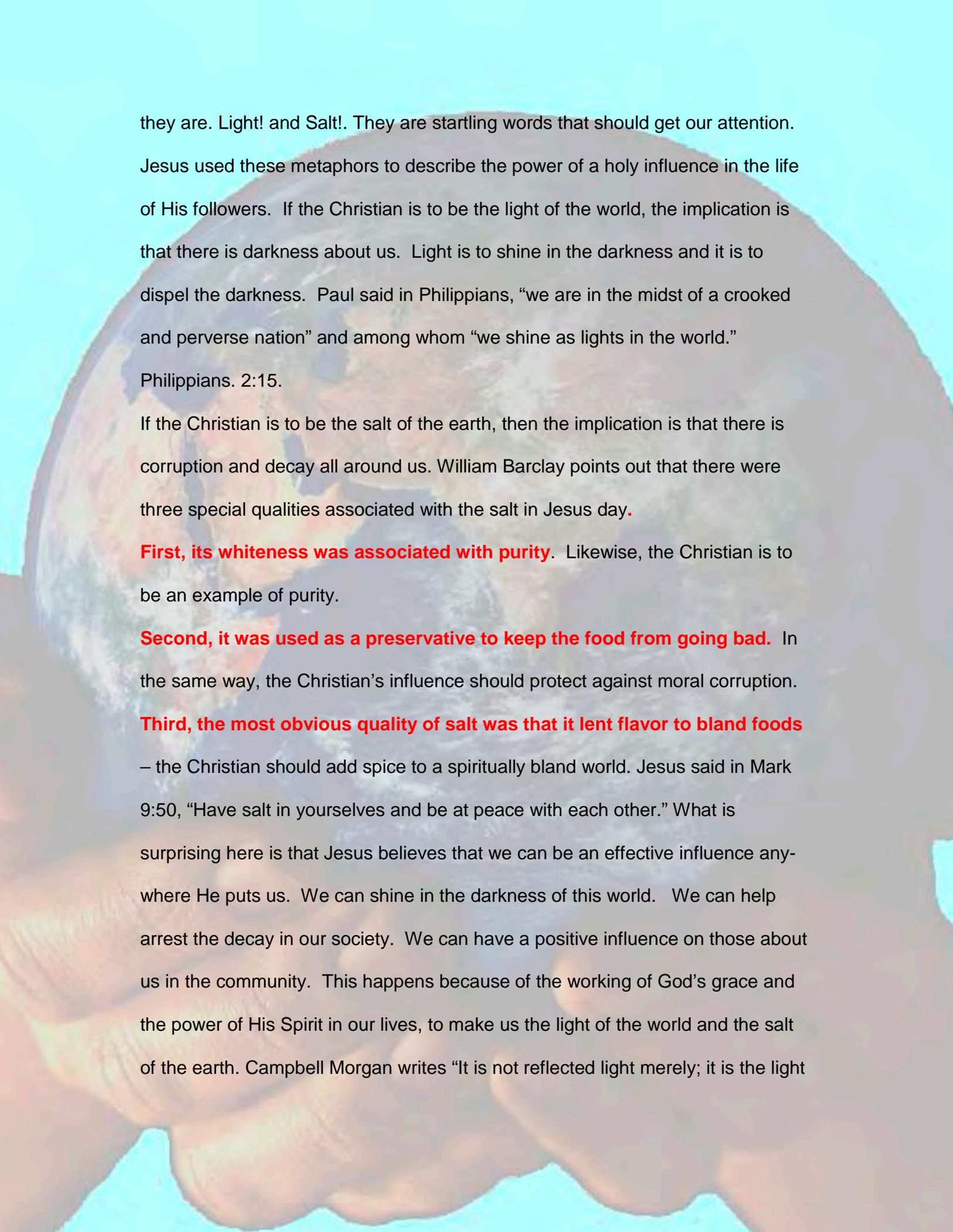
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THE POWER OF A HOLY INFLUENCE

Scripture Reading – Matthew 5:13-14.

Introduction

These words are part of the teaching of Jesus on the Mount. In it He sets out the Principles of His Kingdom. In the words of our text Jesus lays out what is vital in the witness of the Christian. He makes clear that what they were in character was indispensable in their witness. Our chosen passage of scripture makes this truth clear. What Jesus says here is not difficult. It is simple yet profound “You are the salt of the earth,” “You are the light of the world.” They are two vivid metaphors clear in their meaning and fundamental in the Christian’s witness. These words go beyond saying that you “have salt” or that you “have light.” They indicate that “you ARE salt” and “you ARE light.” One has correctly written “It is what we ARE that determines the measure and power of our influence in the world about us.” It is significant these words are not commands, injunctions or exhortations they are simply declarations of a fact. The followers of Jesus are the light of the world and they are the salt of the earth. because that is the way



they are. Light! and Salt!. They are startling words that should get our attention. Jesus used these metaphors to describe the power of a holy influence in the life of His followers. If the Christian is to be the light of the world, the implication is that there is darkness about us. Light is to shine in the darkness and it is to dispel the darkness. Paul said in Philippians, “we are in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” and among whom “we shine as lights in the world.”

Philippians. 2:15.

If the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, then the implication is that there is corruption and decay all around us. William Barclay points out that there were three special qualities associated with the salt in Jesus day.

First, its whiteness was associated with purity. Likewise, the Christian is to be an example of purity.

Second, it was used as a preservative to keep the food from going bad. In the same way, the Christian’s influence should protect against moral corruption.

Third, the most obvious quality of salt was that it lent flavor to bland foods – the Christian should add spice to a spiritually bland world. Jesus said in Mark 9:50, “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other.” What is surprising here is that Jesus believes that we can be an effective influence anywhere He puts us. We can shine in the darkness of this world. We can help arrest the decay in our society. We can have a positive influence on those about us in the community. This happens because of the working of God’s grace and the power of His Spirit in our lives, to make us the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Campbell Morgan writes “It is not reflected light merely; it is the light

of our own life, communicated to us from the Essential Light (Jesus). When we received the Essential Light (Jesus) it was not merely that we might reflect it; it was that it might ignite us and burn in us.

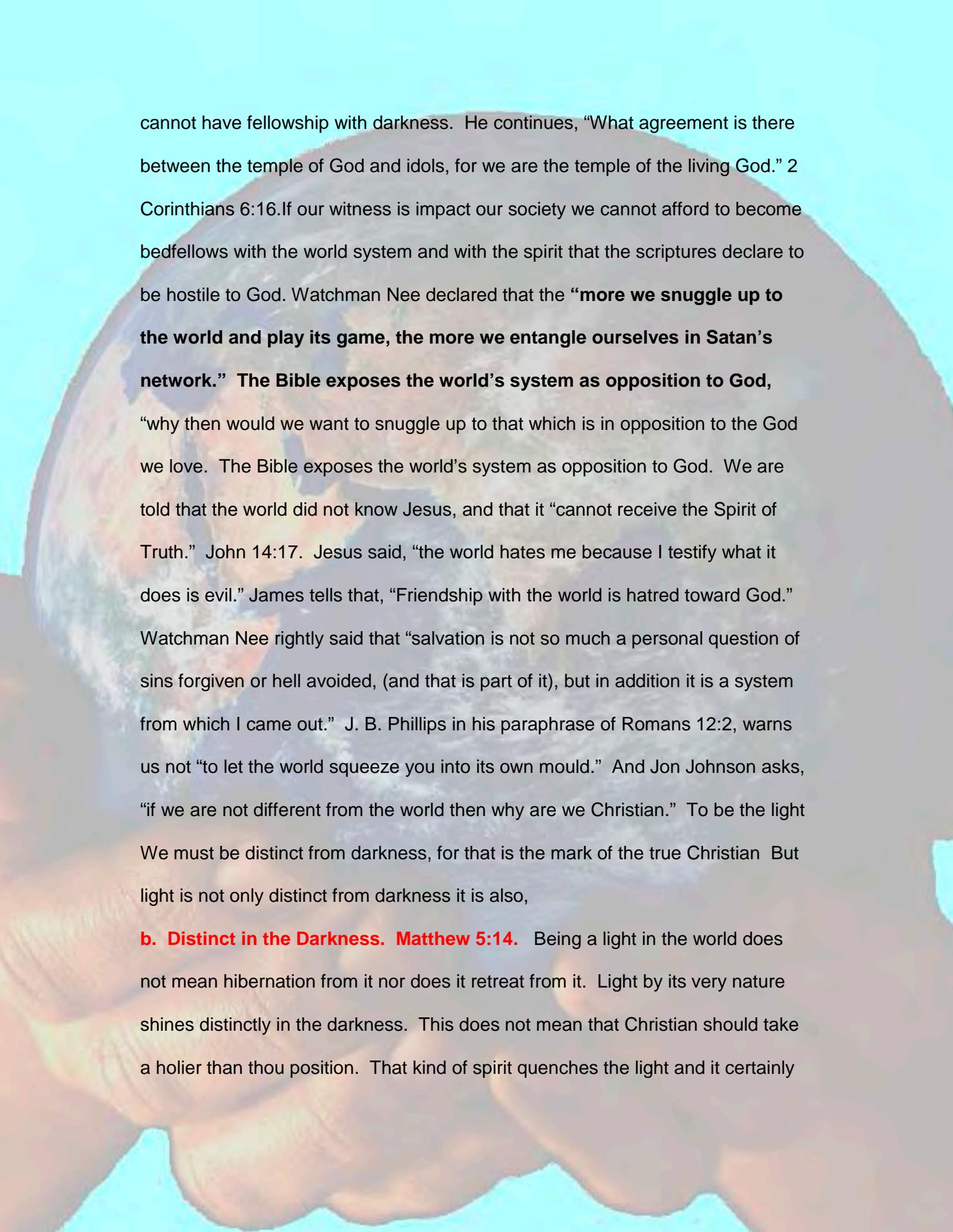
Now what about this holy influence that is the heart of our Christian witness?

What are the marks or characteristics of Christian influence as Jesus described here. The first is,

1. PENETRATION OF A HOLY INFLUENCE Matthew 5:13-14.

You are light and salt said Jesus to His followers. These are familiar figures of speech Jesus uses to describe what the function of the Christian is in our world. Salt penetrates and pervades that with which it comes into contact. Light penetrates the deep darkness surrounding it. The Christian as light and salt is to penetrate and pervade our world with a healing redeeming influence. Now salt and light are distinctive qualities and I believe that this distinctiveness is the reason for its effectiveness. For instance, for light to be effective it must be,

a. Distinct From the Darkness. Matthew 5:14. Light is not part of the darkness. Light is effective in the darkness but it is separate from it. It is different from it. It is divorced from it and does not partake of it. It is this distinctiveness that gives it authority and power. If light is meshed with darkness, the darkness would prevail and there would be no light. The Christian as the light of world, must be detached from a relationship with the darkness of sin and fleshly the spirit of the world system. The Christian will never win the world to Christ by identifying with its darkness or accommodating to the world mindset, and compromising with its sinful lifestyle. Paul emphatically tells us that light



cannot have fellowship with darkness. He continues, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols, for we are the temple of the living God." 2 Corinthians 6:16. If our witness is to impact our society we cannot afford to become bedfellows with the world system and with the spirit that the scriptures declare to be hostile to God. Watchman Nee declared that the **"more we snuggle up to the world and play its game, the more we entangle ourselves in Satan's network."** The Bible exposes the world's system as opposition to God, "why then would we want to snuggle up to that which is in opposition to the God we love. The Bible exposes the world's system as opposition to God. We are told that the world did not know Jesus, and that it "cannot receive the Spirit of Truth." John 14:17. Jesus said, "the world hates me because I testify what it does is evil." James tells that, "Friendship with the world is hatred toward God." Watchman Nee rightly said that "salvation is not so much a personal question of sins forgiven or hell avoided, (and that is part of it), but in addition it is a system from which I came out." J. B. Phillips in his paraphrase of Romans 12:2, warns us not "to let the world squeeze you into its own mould." And Jon Johnson asks, "if we are not different from the world then why are we Christian." To be the light we must be distinct from darkness, for that is the mark of the true Christian. But light is not only distinct from darkness it is also,

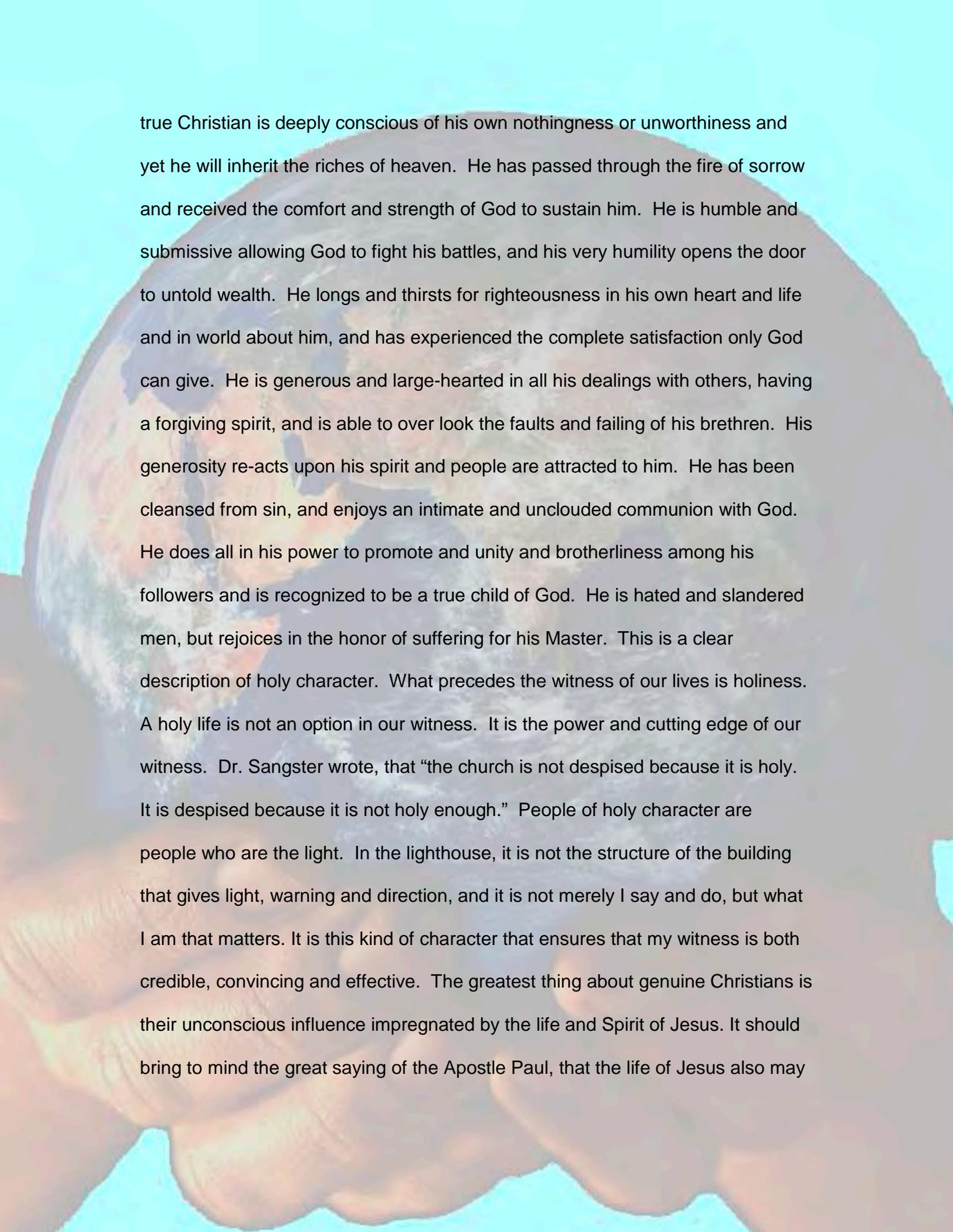
b. Distinct in the Darkness. Matthew 5:14. Being a light in the world does not mean hibernation from it nor does it retreat from it. Light by its very nature shines distinctly in the darkness. This does not mean that a Christian should take a holier than thou position. That kind of spirit quenches the light and it certainly

does not reflect the spirit of Christ. Jesus prayed for His disciples in His high priestly prayer in John 17, “my prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world...Just as you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” John 17:17. It is in the world that we are to shine. The light penetrates the darkness but there is not only penetration in genuine Christian witness there is also,

2. POWER OF HOLY INFLUENCE. Matthew 5:13-16.

The power of Christian witness has its foundation in two truths contained in this passage of scripture. The first being,

a. The Character of the Christian. Matthew 5:13-16. Note the carefully chosen words of Jesus. “You are the light of the world.” “You are the salt of the earth.” We have already said that Jesus did not say you have the “light of the world.” or “you have the salt of the earth.” These two metaphors describe what we are as Christians. Christians are Light! And Salt! But what does it mean to be light and salt? What should the essential character of a Christian be? The character of the Christian is defined in the first eleven verses of the chapter five of Matthew. These verses which are known as the beatitudes, describe what the character of a Christian is, and they are tied together with verses 13-16. These verses describe where the influence or power of the Christian lies. It lies in his holy character described as light and salt.. If we paraphrase or summarize the description of the Christian’s in verses 2-11 it will help us understand what Jesus meant by light and salt. One has paraphrased these words to show what constitutes light and salt. Starting at chapter 5 verse two Jesus shows that the



true Christian is deeply conscious of his own nothingness or unworthiness and yet he will inherit the riches of heaven. He has passed through the fire of sorrow and received the comfort and strength of God to sustain him. He is humble and submissive allowing God to fight his battles, and his very humility opens the door to untold wealth. He longs and thirsts for righteousness in his own heart and life and in world about him, and has experienced the complete satisfaction only God can give. He is generous and large-hearted in all his dealings with others, having a forgiving spirit, and is able to over look the faults and failing of his brethren. His generosity re-acts upon his spirit and people are attracted to him. He has been cleansed from sin, and enjoys an intimate and unclouded communion with God. He does all in his power to promote and unity and brotherliness among his followers and is recognized to be a true child of God. He is hated and slandered men, but rejoices in the honor of suffering for his Master. This is a clear description of holy character. What precedes the witness of our lives is holiness. A holy life is not an option in our witness. It is the power and cutting edge of our witness. Dr. Sangster wrote, that “the church is not despised because it is holy. It is despised because it is not holy enough.” People of holy character are people who are the light. In the lighthouse, it is not the structure of the building that gives light, warning and direction, and it is not merely I say and do, but what I am that matters. It is this kind of character that ensures that my witness is both credible, convincing and effective. The greatest thing about genuine Christians is their unconscious influence impregnated by the life and Spirit of Jesus. It should bring to mind the great saying of the Apostle Paul, that the life of Jesus also may

be revealed in our mortal body(2 Corinthians 4:11.) Dr. J.D. Drysdale said, “we accomplish more by our radiations than our exhortations.” “you are the light of the world.” said Jesus. This has to do with what we are as Christians. But the power of Christian witness not only lies in the character of the Christian but also in,

b. The Conduct of the Christian. Matthew 5; 13-16. Jesus said, “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds.” What we are will effect and influence what we do and how live. Good character produces deeds. A good tree said Jesus will produce good fruit. The Christian will never convince the world of its need of Christ if it does not exemplify Him in good conduct. Henry Stanley who was sent to Africa to find David Livingstone the missionary explorer said after he had been with Livingstone a while, “if I had been with him any longer, I would have been compelled to be a Christian, and He never spoke to me about it once.” Such is the power of light and salt in the life and conduct of a genuine Christian. This is important because one has written that the “rejection of religion is not on account of the wickedness of men, but on the account of the worthlessness of religion.” A light-less and salt-less religion has no power or credibility. Jesus had stronger words to say about this in verse 13. “If the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” E. Stanley Jones wrote that, “the problem is not to get to people to church, but to get salt in the churches. Get it there and people will come.” “Let your light shine that they may see your good deeds.” The genuine Christian witness has penetration and power but

Jesus is concerned with the

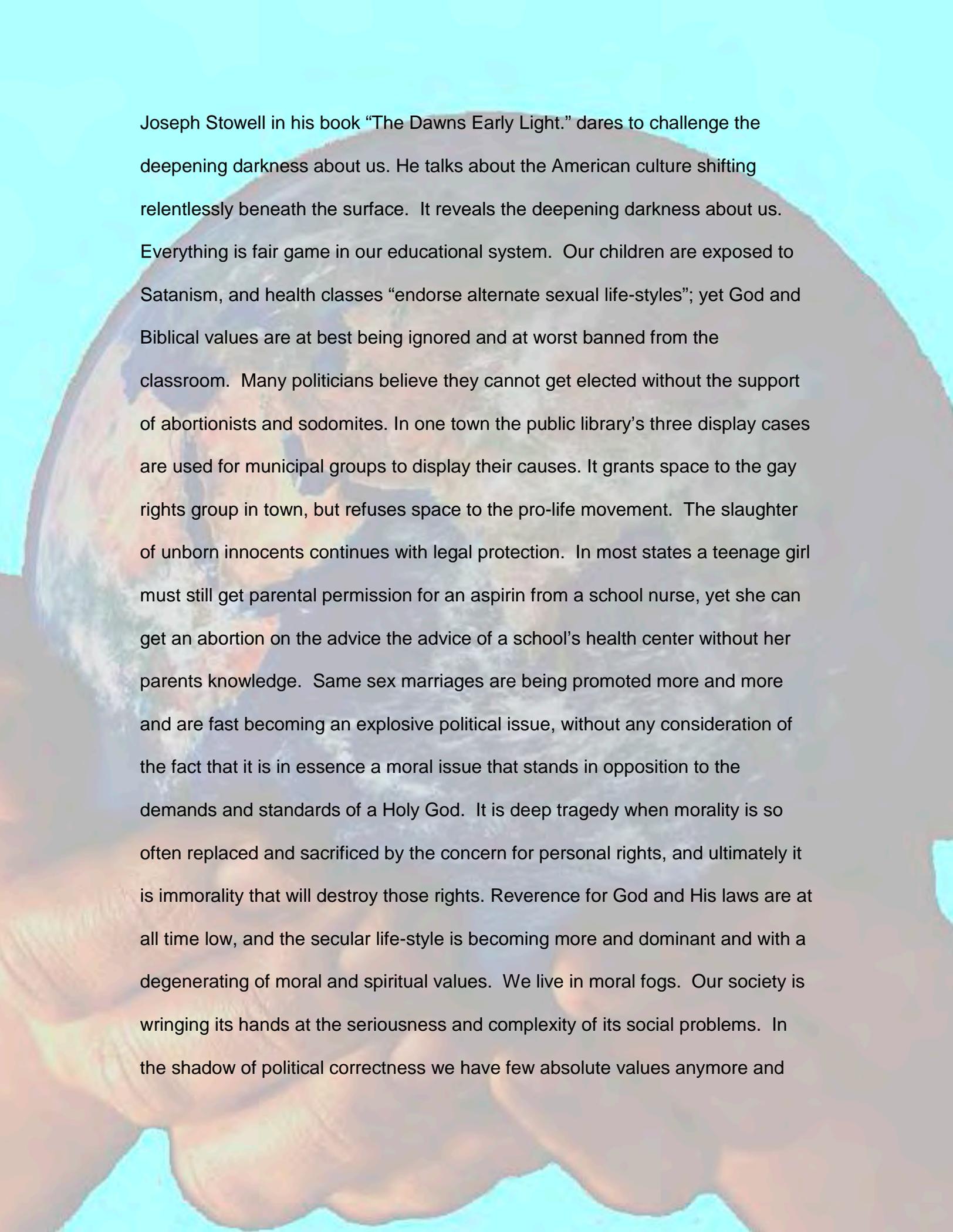
3. PURPOSE OF HOLY INFLUENCE. Matthew 5:13-14.

Jesus said “You are the light of the world – You are the salt of the earth.

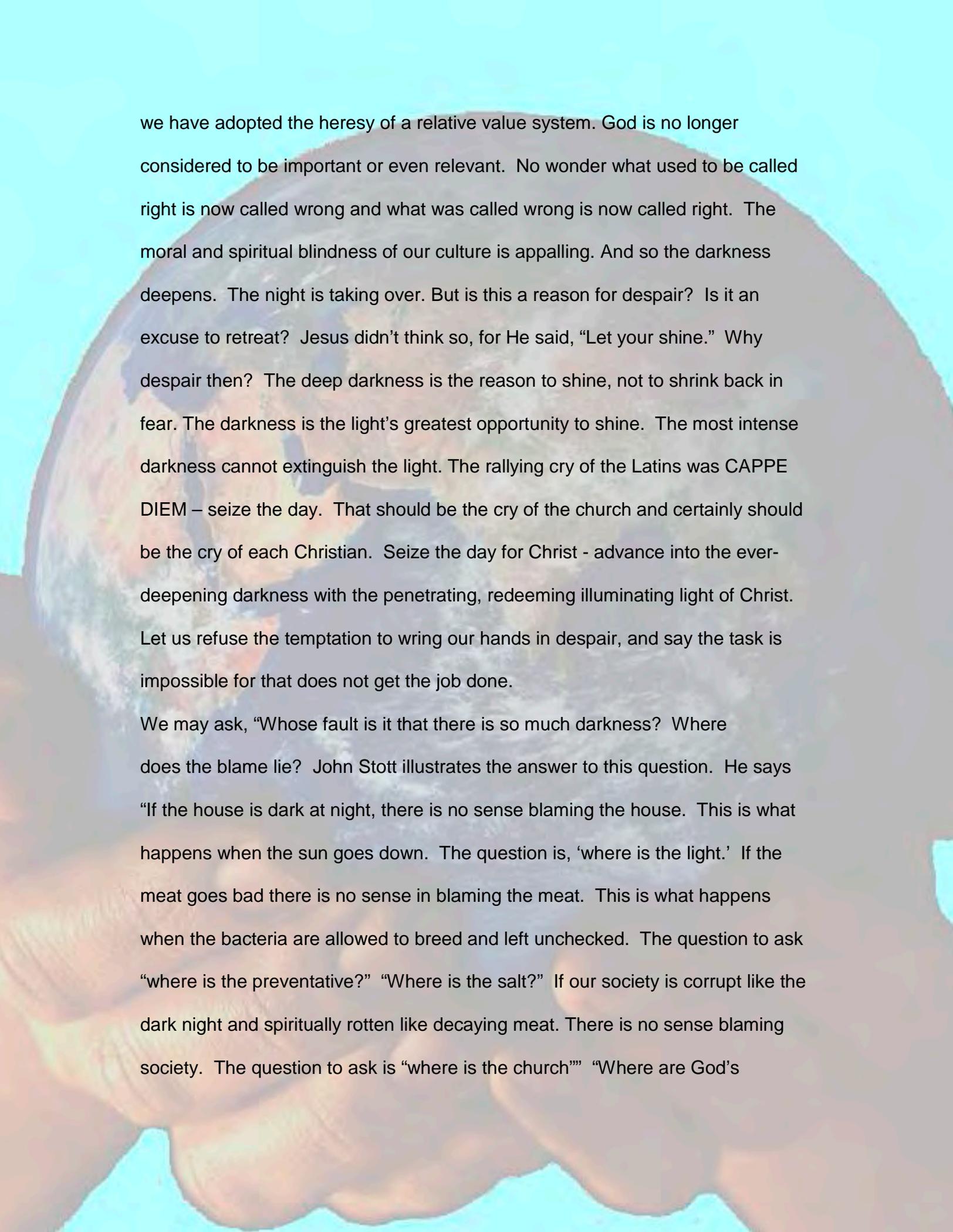
Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” The purpose of light can be summed up in

three words. The first is quite obvious, It is,

a. Illumination. Matthew 5:14. Light illumines it enlightens – It exposes. Light is contrasted with darkness. Light is opposed to darkness. We might say that it is a danger to darkness. Light threatens the existence of darkness. Paul confirms this when he wrote that Christians do not struggle against flesh and blood.....but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” Eph 6: 12. He describes the nature of the Christian’s enemies’ The are not fleshly foes. The Church of Jesus Christ is arrayed against the satanic and demonic forces of evil in our world because Christianity is counter-cultural? It runs against the flow of a degenerating society. It objects to and denounces sin and evil. The power of its message and the distinctness of its lifestyle poses a threat to the forces of darkness. The Christian as light is a danger to the darkness about us. The light opposes darkness. The gospel can never be compatible with society because, it is news about the work action of a Holy God whose intention is to defeat and destroy the malignant satanic forces of evil and bring redemption to our world.. Yet segments of the church in their presentation of the gospel are bending over backwards not to offend that society.

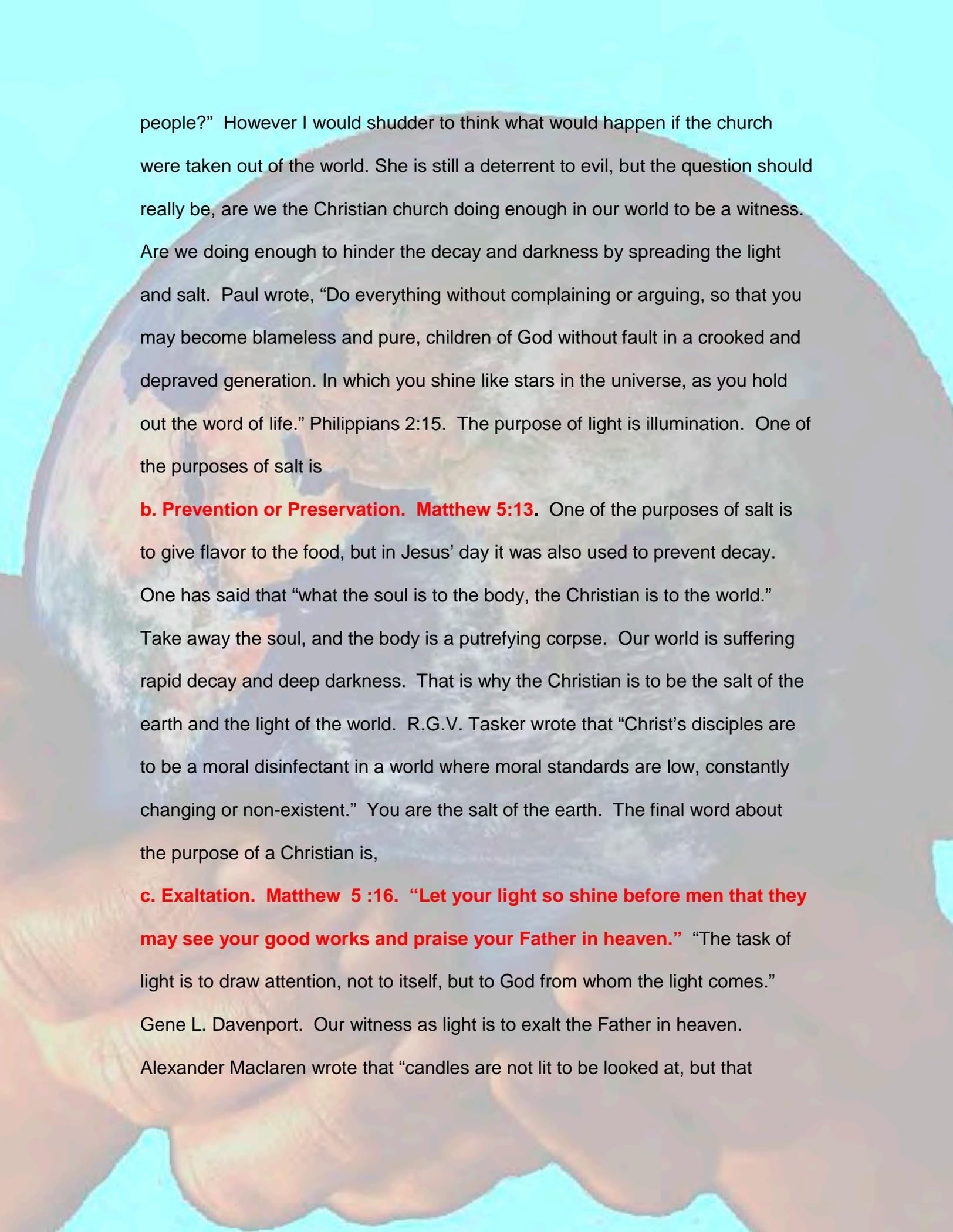


Joseph Stowell in his book "The Dawns Early Light." dares to challenge the deepening darkness about us. He talks about the American culture shifting relentlessly beneath the surface. It reveals the deepening darkness about us. Everything is fair game in our educational system. Our children are exposed to Satanism, and health classes "endorse alternate sexual life-styles"; yet God and Biblical values are at best being ignored and at worst banned from the classroom. Many politicians believe they cannot get elected without the support of abortionists and sodomites. In one town the public library's three display cases are used for municipal groups to display their causes. It grants space to the gay rights group in town, but refuses space to the pro-life movement. The slaughter of unborn innocents continues with legal protection. In most states a teenage girl must still get parental permission for an aspirin from a school nurse, yet she can get an abortion on the advice the advice of a school's health center without her parents knowledge. Same sex marriages are being promoted more and more and are fast becoming an explosive political issue, without any consideration of the fact that it is in essence a moral issue that stands in opposition to the demands and standards of a Holy God. It is deep tragedy when morality is so often replaced and sacrificed by the concern for personal rights, and ultimately it is immorality that will destroy those rights. Reverence for God and His laws are at all time low, and the secular life-style is becoming more and dominant and with a degenerating of moral and spiritual values. We live in moral fogs. Our society is wringing its hands at the seriousness and complexity of its social problems. In the shadow of political correctness we have few absolute values anymore and



we have adopted the heresy of a relative value system. God is no longer considered to be important or even relevant. No wonder what used to be called right is now called wrong and what was called wrong is now called right. The moral and spiritual blindness of our culture is appalling. And so the darkness deepens. The night is taking over. But is this a reason for despair? Is it an excuse to retreat? Jesus didn't think so, for He said, "Let your shine." Why despair then? The deep darkness is the reason to shine, not to shrink back in fear. The darkness is the light's greatest opportunity to shine. The most intense darkness cannot extinguish the light. The rallying cry of the Latins was CAPPE DIEM – seize the day. That should be the cry of the church and certainly should be the cry of each Christian. Seize the day for Christ - advance into the ever-deepening darkness with the penetrating, redeeming illuminating light of Christ. Let us refuse the temptation to wring our hands in despair, and say the task is impossible for that does not get the job done.

We may ask, "Whose fault is it that there is so much darkness? Where does the blame lie? John Stott illustrates the answer to this question. He says "If the house is dark at night, there is no sense blaming the house. This is what happens when the sun goes down. The question is, 'where is the light.' If the meat goes bad there is no sense in blaming the meat. This is what happens when the bacteria are allowed to breed and left unchecked. The question to ask "where is the preventative?" "Where is the salt?" If our society is corrupt like the dark night and spiritually rotten like decaying meat. There is no sense blaming society. The question to ask is "where is the church"" "Where are God's



people?” However I would shudder to think what would happen if the church were taken out of the world. She is still a deterrent to evil, but the question should really be, are we the Christian church doing enough in our world to be a witness. Are we doing enough to hinder the decay and darkness by spreading the light and salt. Paul wrote, “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation. In which you shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life.” Philippians 2:15. The purpose of light is illumination. One of the purposes of salt is

b. Prevention or Preservation. Matthew 5:13. One of the purposes of salt is to give flavor to the food, but in Jesus’ day it was also used to prevent decay.

One has said that “what the soul is to the body, the Christian is to the world.”

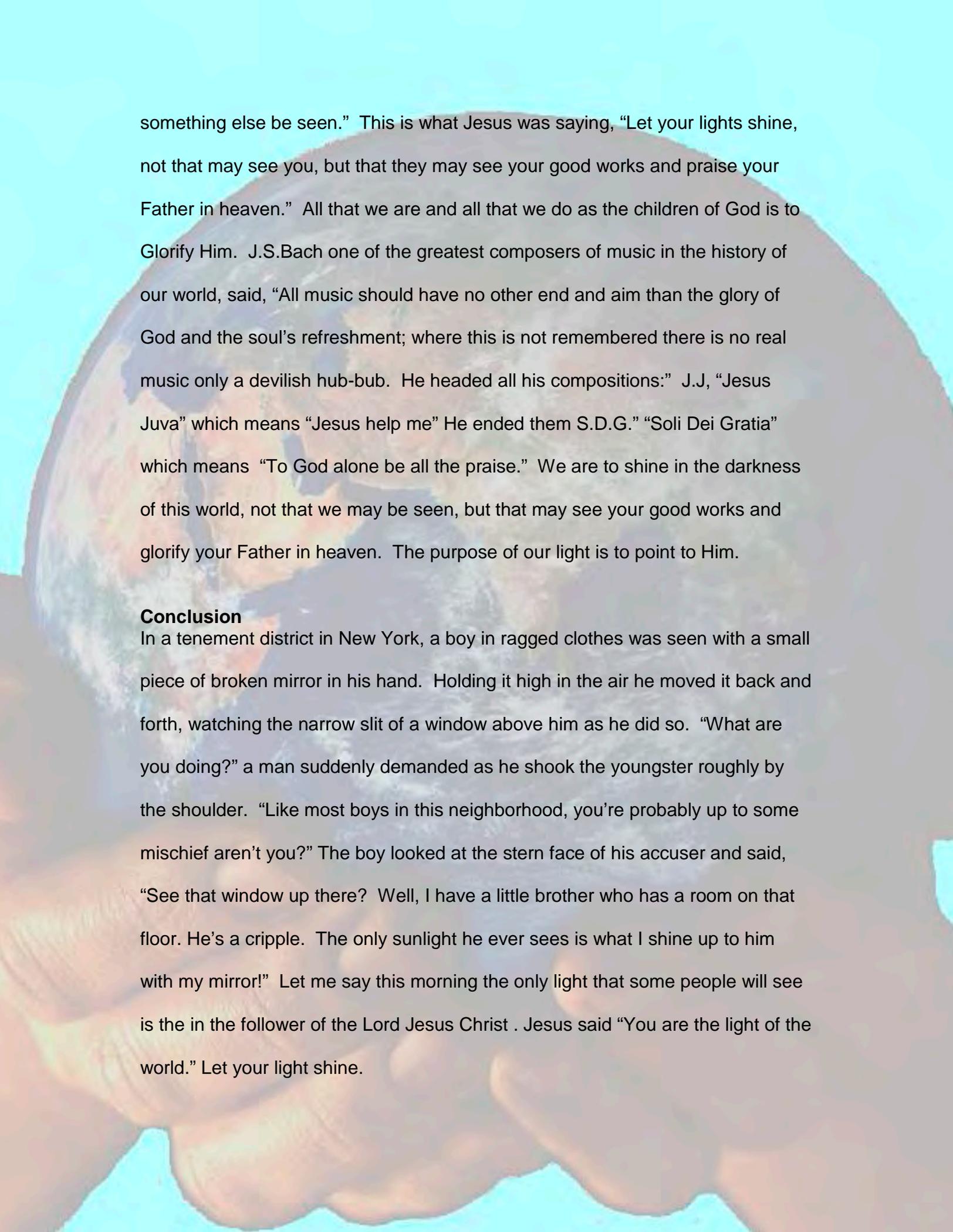
Take away the soul, and the body is a putrefying corpse. Our world is suffering rapid decay and deep darkness. That is why the Christian is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. R.G.V. Tasker wrote that “Christ’s disciples are to be a moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are low, constantly changing or non-existent.” You are the salt of the earth. The final word about the purpose of a Christian is,

c. Exaltation. Matthew 5:16. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.”

“The task of light is to draw attention, not to itself, but to God from whom the light comes.”

Gene L. Davenport. Our witness as light is to exalt the Father in heaven.

Alexander Maclaren wrote that “candles are not lit to be looked at, but that



something else be seen.” This is what Jesus was saying, “Let your lights shine, not that they may see you, but that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.” All that we are and all that we do as the children of God is to Glorify Him. J.S.Bach one of the greatest composers of music in the history of our world, said, “All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the soul’s refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music only a devilish hub-bub. He headed all his compositions:” J.J, “Jesus Juva” which means “Jesus help me” He ended them S.D.G.” “Soli Dei Gratia” which means “To God alone be all the praise.” We are to shine in the darkness of this world, not that we may be seen, but that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. The purpose of our light is to point to Him.

Conclusion

In a tenement district in New York, a boy in ragged clothes was seen with a small piece of broken mirror in his hand. Holding it high in the air he moved it back and forth, watching the narrow slit of a window above him as he did so. “What are you doing?” a man suddenly demanded as he shook the youngster roughly by the shoulder. “Like most boys in this neighborhood, you’re probably up to some mischief aren’t you?” The boy looked at the stern face of his accuser and said, “See that window up there? Well, I have a little brother who has a room on that floor. He’s a cripple. The only sunlight he ever sees is what I shine up to him with my mirror!” Let me say this morning the only light that some people will see is the in the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ . Jesus said “You are the light of the world.” Let your light shine.