

Fire Works

How to Take a Stand and Shine

July 7, 20024

Today we're learning how to take a stand and brightly shine for our Father of lights!



So, first off: **Light off any fireworks, and get a dud?**



Everyone at your house, sitting in the dark, eagerly waiting for something to do something ... but, **it just sits in the dark, disappointing expectations.** No burst of glory, lighting up the darkness at your house ... just *nothin'*. Well, maybe you know that fireworks without fire "works" aren't technically fireworks.



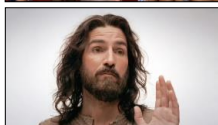
But do you want to know, O foolish man, [or, as the New American Bible translates it: "Do you want proof, you ignoramus"] that faith without [faith] works is [dud, I mean] dead? – James 2:20 NKJ



It isn't that works of faith produce salvation; but that **salvation produces shining works of faith.** The way a lit lamp or Roman candle produces light. That's our fire "proof" in the dark down here. While under Roman rule:



[John] [the Baptist] was a burning and a shining candle – John 5:35 GNV



[But, when it comes to] The light of the wicked ... the spark of his fire shall not shine. [So] The light shall be dark in his dwelling – Job 18:5-6 GNV



And on the hill above the Sea, Jesus told His freshly appointed, very amateur and immature, apprentices, the same thing He'd tell us:

"You are [now] the light of the world." – Matthew 5:14 NIV

Not: *should-be, could-be, or will-be*; but, *ready-or-not: are!* "But I fizzle out." But you're the light. "But I'm a punk." So give 'em a light. "But I have a short fuse." But you're the light of the world. "But I thought Jesus said He was the Light of the world." Yes:

He said, "I am the light of the world. [But then added] Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life [leading them]." – John 8:12 NIV

[And then He added] I must work the works of Him who sent Me ... [And so] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." – John 9:4-5 NKJ

As are we. **He projects it and we reflect it** – a responsibility, not to be taken lightly; because:

"People [don't] light a lamp and put it under a basket, [that's how you put it out] but [they put it] on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, [take your stand, and fire up your faith, and] let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." – Matthew 5:14-16 ESV



Because, when “all in the house” see the *visible transformation* in you, as you reflect more and *more* of His love, and *treat* them more and more as He would, they can’t help but “Ooh” and “Ahh” at **the changes He’s causing, sparking the progress you’re making**. And that’s the burning and shining “light” from your fire “works” “stand”!

And *that* glorifies Him! Shar and I had a *dozen* firework stands back in the *day*. And we had *one* on the *main drag* at Birch Bay. And we were *surprised* when the *competing* stands closed on the *night* of the 4th, when the *police* closed the road, and it turned into a giant *block party*. Great! Then the *masses* got *lubricated* and *bought* fireworks like *crazy*. Great! And then they started *shooting* them into our stand, on *purpose*! Not so great. But, *small price* for such *incredible* sales. So I *grabbed* a *garbage can lid* as a *shield*, *fended off* bottle rockets and Roman candles and *completely* sold out in a *couple hours*! Now, **Faith-works are like fireworks**, because, **without faith-works, there’s nothing to see**. Because, **we act on what we trust ...** and, **we don’t act on what we don’t trust ...** because, we *don’t* trust it! Which is why, James says:

Show me your *faith* without the *works*, [which you *can’t*, cuz there’s *nothin’* to see] and I will show you my *faith* by my *works*.” [Which *shines the light* of *life/growth* of the *living/growing* glory of God] You *believe* that God is *One*. [Father. Spirit. Son. Okay] You do well; [But, *do realize*] the *demons* also *believe*, and *shudder*. – James 2:18-19 NAS

[You see] *Demons* came out of *many* people, *shouting*, “You are the *Son of God!*” ... Because [by His *works*, even] they knew He was the *Christ*. – Luke 4:41 NIV

The *prince of darkness* is *many* things, but he *ain’t* an *atheist*! And if *faith* was *merely* a *matter of intellectual recognition*, even those *screamin’ demons* would be *saved*! Shar and I actually *sold* “*Screamin’ Demons!*” And James says we’re pretty much *neck and neck* with ‘em till we **start to act according to the claims of the One we claim to trust**. So *pick a team* and *take a stand!*

For it is by *grace* you have been *saved* ... to *do* good works – Ephesians 2:8, 10 NIV

[Cuz] He has *made perfect forever* those who are *being made holy*. – Hebrews 10:1-36 NIV



And **it’s the “being made” that shines the light of life and truth** – albeit usually in *bursts* and *flashes*. But it *lights* things up *none-the-less*. He *projects*. We *reflect*. So, **are you reflecting what you’re receiving in ever-increasing glory?** If not, why not? Cuz **no one in the house wants a dim wit ... ness; dim witness**. Not even *unbelievers*. And **there’s no such thing as an undercover light**. I was quite the *pyro ... technic; or maniac*. One of the two. I even had *bangs*. And back in 1984, I prepared fireworks for a His Place New Year’s Eve party. So I got a case of 120, 25-shot, Saturn Missile Batteries, and *glued* ‘em to a *piece of plywood*, and *tucked* the *fuses* into a *trail* between them, and *filled* it with *black powder*. You know, so *all 3,000* missiles would *shoot off* more-or-less *simultaneously*. Then I *gathered* the *crowd* behind the Ark at *midnight*, and *lit* ‘em. And it went “*FOOMP!*” and *lit* ‘em *all*, and *blew* ‘em all off of the *plywood* in *every direction*. Here’s what I wrote in my *journal* that *night*:

“The missile batteries *blew apart* when the *gun powder* went off, and they were *shooting everywhere* ... even into the crowd. People were *running and hiding* and *getting hit*. It was very *exciting* and everyone *loved it!*” And, I got my hands on Pops’ journal and *here’s all* he had to say about it: “Bruce had his fireworks. It went everywhere as usual.” **Live and learn. Or don’t. Choice is ours.** But:

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. – Daniel 12:3 NIV

[For] Every *perfect* gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights ... [who] brought us [little lights] forth by the Word of Truth ... [Therefore] be doers of the Word ... Anyone who *listens* to the Word [of Truth] but does *not do* what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and ... forgets what he [actually] looks like. – James 1:17-24 NIV

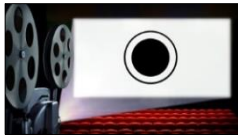
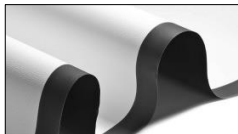
For man is *made* in God’s image and *reflects* God’s glory. – 1 Corinthians 11:7 NLT

Because, **we’re here to mirror His brilliance in our darkness.** Because, **to receive is to reflect.**

But we *all* ... beholding *as* in a *mirror* the *glory* of the Lord, are *being transformed* into the same *image* from [dim] glory to [bright] glory – 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 NAS

For *now* we see in a mirror *dimly*, but then *face to face* – 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 NAS

[Because] He is the [projected] *image* of the *invisible* God – Colossians 1:15 NAS



You see, **projected light** (like a *movie projector*) **is measured in lumens**. Whereas, **reflected light** (like a *movie screen*) **is measured in units of gain**. How *fitting* is that, since Paul says, **to die to sin is gain!** (Phil 1:21) The more reflective the screen, the more lumens are seen. So, **how many lumens of grace are you reflecting to all in the house?** That depends on how much *gain* you’ve *gained*, from how much *sin* to *which* you’ve *died*. So, **what’s consumin’ your lumens?** Because, *holding onto sin* is like a *screen* holding onto *filth*. **Those stains reduce our gains.** And:

Anyone who *claims* to be in the *light* but [still] *hates* his *brother* is *still* in the *darkness*. – 1 John 2:9 NIV

[Because] God is *light*; [and] in *Him* there is *no* darkness at *all*. [So] If we *claim* to have *fellowship* with *Him* yet *walk* in the *darkness*, we *lie* and do not *live* by the *truth*. – 1 John 1:5-6 NIV

We’re very *self-deceiving* in *acclimating* to *darkness*. What *color* is that *black circle* on the *screen*? Not *black*. Cuz the *screen* is *white*, and *projectors* only project *light*. So *why* does the *circle* seem so *dark*? **Contrast!** Let’s *make* the *entire screen* the *same color* as that *circle*. *See?* That’s what *color* that *circle* *actually* is. The *blackness* only *appears* when the *surrounding reflected light* is *intensified*, *magnified*, and let’s just say, *glorified!* You see, **without the contrast of light, no one will notice the absence of light.** Likewise, we can *only* see what we’re *missing* when we see what we’re *missing out on*; which is *why* it’s so *important* that we’re *reflecting* what *He’s* *projecting*. Because:

The god of this age has *blinded* the *minds of unbelievers*, so that they *cannot see* the *light* of the *Gospel* of the *glory of Christ*, who is the *image of God*. – 2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV

[So] Let your light shine ... For the glory of the Lord is shining upon you. – Isaiah 60:1 NLT

... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet ... “The people who sat in *darkness* have seen a *great light*, and upon those who sat in the *region* and *shadow of death* [the] *Light* [of *Life*] has dawned.” – Matthew 4:14-16 NKJ



Know what the “*shadow of death*” is? *Aging!* Our years down here *lengthening* as we *draw ever closer to death’s door!* As it says in Psalms:

My days are like a *shadow* that *lengthens* – Psalm 102:11-12 NKJ

[And] I *fade away* like an *evening shadow* – Psalm 109:23 NIV

[Because] In *truth*, each of us journeys through life *like a shadow*. ... [So] In *light* of all this, Lord, *what* am I really *waiting* for? *You* are my *hope*. – Psalm 39:6 VOICE

In *truth*, **I want to see the light, and be in the light, on that final night!** So, want to *shine* in ways that *brings* Dad *praise*? Offer the *contrast* that *only comes* from *intensifying* your *reflecting* of the *light you’re receiving*, that *He’s projecting*. And don’t *lie* to *yourself* along the way. **To receive is to reflect.** Because, **light is eagerly emitted from the truly committed.** Which is where we, our Father’s very *amateur, immature, ambassadors* come in. Because:

[God] has reconciled *us* to Himself *through* Jesus Christ, and has given *us* the *ministry of reconciliation* ... [so, ready or not] *we are ambassadors* for *Christ* – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NKJ

[Jesus said] “I now send you ... to turn *them* from *darkness* to *light*” – Acts 26:17-18 NKJ

[So] Cast *off* the *works* of *darkness*, and ... put *on* the *armor* of *light*. – Romans 13:12 NKJ

For you were once *darkness*, but *now you are* light in the Lord. [So] *Live as children* of *light* [and *grow* and *show your shining works of faith*] – Ephesians 5:8-14 NIV

Become *blameless* and *harmless*, children of *God* ... in the *midst* of a *crooked* and *perverse* generation, among *whom you shine* as *lights* – Philippians 2:15-16 NKJ

“What’s *that*? You’d like to know *why* I’ve *stopped dropping* the “*F*” *bomb*? And *how* I *seem* to have more *peace* and *hope* when all *hell breaks loose*? Well, *allow* me to *shed* some *light!*” At the *end* of the *day*, **everyone longs to escape the darkness of sin**, from *without* and *within*. Because, this *ol’ world* has a *fatal heart condition*: it’s *filled* with *darkness*. And, **God sends His lumens through us flawed humans**. Cuz we’re *done for* unless we can get a *peace-maker* implanted before it’s too late. So, **don’t just pray for peace, make peace with all in your house**. And *shine* your *light*, by *reflecting* His *love*, in *ever-increasing measure*. Because, *ready* or *not*, *like it* or *not*, you *are* His *amateur, immature, ambassador!* So, **take a stand, and live like a child of the Father of lights;** and simply do what you *trust* to be *true*, and your *faith* will *grow* ... like a *fireworks show!*

And let’s show this ol’ world just what they’ve been missing!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.