

Our Call to Season and Shine

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[0:00] I want to make one thing perfectly clear if I can. And that is, whenever we look at the admonitions and encouragements and commands from Scripture, it is absolutely impossible for us to do what God wants us to do without God doing something in us and through us by the gospel of Jesus.

That's where it starts, right? It all starts with the Lord. It all starts with the cross. It all starts with His working and doing the work that we were called to do and we failed to do because we can never measure up to His standards.

We can never do His law perfectly, whether it's our own laws that we impose upon ourselves, laws that others impose upon us, or even the law of God found in the Scriptures.

You know, we can try and make every effort, but if we miss and make one little mistake, we've broken the whole thing. And so what God does, obviously, He sends His Son.

God becomes a man who does the law on our behalf. He fulfills all the commands because we can't. And He does them perfectly. He follows the Father's will.

[1:10] And then, as we know, He pays the penalty for our failure. He dies upon the cross, doesn't He? He shed His blood, though we were the ones who needed to shed the blood.

And He pays for our sins. And He declares, it is complete. It's finished. The debt is paid in full. And He does that for us. He was buried.

And if He were merely buried, we might have a record somewhere of Jesus that He said some nice things. But He does something rather radical and incredible because the Father accepted His work on our behalf.

He rose again from the dead. You know, as a little one once said, He popped up. You know, He came back. And He certainly did that. And so He was raised from the dead.

And that resurrection power, He sends. When He ascends into heaven, He sends His Spirit. And that resurrection power is upon us and through us. Now, all the commands and everything that He desires for us to do, even that which He tells His disciples to do, which we're looking at here, He gives the imperatives and the indicatives, you know, the commands and the facts, knowing full well that we can't do anything on our own with our own ability.

[2:27] So I want to make clear, and I hope you take this, is that we don't come to this thinking that we're going to do what God tells us to do and God's going to give us more brownie points. Look, we have all the brownie points we absolutely need because of what Jesus has already done, right?

So this isn't giving us brownie points. Nevertheless, He wants us to do some things. And He does it by the empowerment of the Spirit through the Word. Now, what does He want us to do? First of all, He calls us.

In our call, you want to know what you're calling in life? This is what you're calling. This is one of the calls that Christ has given you. Our call and our commission as a church is to season and to shine. Season and shine. Now, we looked the last time, whether it was a few months ago or a year or so ago, the last time is found in verses.

And, of course, verses 3 through 12 delineates the character of a real disciple in Jesus. You know, it's not merely that you have a morning devotion, you go to church once in a while, and you're a disciple.

[3:32] A real follower of Jesus is one who has received Him and accepted and believed upon Him. And what He says, that good news of Jesus' work for us.

And the character here is the function, our call, is to be salt and light. You know, to season. To be salt. In fact, as one ancient philosopher by the name of Pliny said, there's nothing more useful than salt and sunshine.

Which is true. But Jesus calls us to be both salt and like the sun, shining. Now, to be shining doesn't mean that we go around with a radiant face and happy all the time.

You know, it's much more than that, as we will see. But the clear teaching of Jesus of the followers of Christ, followers of the Word, motivated and worked through by God's Holy Spirit in us, is to do, through God's Word, is to do good works.

And one way is we season the world. He says, you and you alone, is what it actually says. You and you alone are the salt of the world. You and you alone are the season of the world.

[4 : 50] Now, we know that salt prevents food from being bland. And please don't take Jesus' message as advocating something that's bad for your diet. Okay?

That's not the point. Right? You know, don't have salt because, you know, it's going to elevate your blood pressure and do all these horrible things. By the way, years ago, I gave up salt.

And I was having a horrible time with my health. And I went in, saw the doctor. And the doctor did all these tests on me and found out that I was in serious need of salt.

He said, you need salt. You're going to die. So I had to go back on salt. I just can't, you know, moderation. But he's not talking about moderation here. He's not talking about diet here. He's talking about something else.

It's that which prevents the food from being bland. And that doesn't mean that we go out and we become clowns or characters for Jesus so that we, you know, liven up the place.

[5 : 48] But the reality is as believers in Christ who understand and grasp and know what he's done for us and believe in, we actually season those around us.

They see something unique and different about us, hopefully. And we bring to life to a certain degree things that are not lively in their lives at all.

Salt inhibits the rot of sin and evil. The greater the impact of the Holy Spirit upon God's people, the greater the impact as they live and breathe and move in Christ because of what he's done has a significant impact upon those around us and therefore around the neighborhood and upon the country.

It's been amazing to see that whether it's been in Mexico years ago, South America or Africa, or even in this country, that whenever God's word is planted and the good news of Jesus is given to people and they come to faith in Christ, their lives change.

But the things begin to happen that are different. They actually begin to paint their houses, you know. I'll never forget the story I read, the event that happened in a little village somewhere in South Mexico where the gospel had taken hold of this one family.

[7 : 20] And they were just so exuberant about this new life in Jesus. Hardly knew anything. And nevertheless, their lives had been turned around because of the power of the word and the power of the spirit.

So what did they do? Well, they decided that they wanted to clean up the place. And so they put flowers out and painted their little hut and, you know, they began to keep things clean and, you know, picked up the litter that was so pervasive in the area.

And, you know, life changed. And then others began to wonder, what's up with this family? You know, so they started asking and they told them about the life that they had, newfound life in Jesus. And so they began to do it. And so as the story unfolds, what happens is that little village goes through a significant change. Not only with their behaviors and thoughts and actions and beliefs, but it goes through a change as a village.

It becomes a pretty little village, you know. And so it becomes attractive to others. And that's what the impact of what it means. But it delays and hinders the decay in society by exerting what John Stott says, a wholesome influence in the community.

[8 : 38] A man by the name of Tasker said, it's to be a moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are love and constantly changing or non-existent.

So the Bible, Jesus himself speaks of us as having this kind of impact around us. Now we look around and we say, man, our country's really going down quick.

You know, there's a cold civil war that's happening. You know, what's going on? Why isn't God changing? Well, it might be his will not to, you know, to maintain the spirit, the Holy Spirit.

He keeps evil at bay. That may or may not be the case. But we've seen this throughout our history in this nation. You know, it kind of goes like this. And so we don't know what's going on.

But nevertheless, as 1 Peter reminds us, as obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts, which were yours, in ignorance. But like the Holy One who's called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior.

[9 : 50] So how did this happen? How did the church season and how do we season? Well, first of all, it's teaching, preaching consistent with the gospel, the good news.

If you don't know what the gospel is, you can't remember, turn to 1 Peter 15 and there it is. Okay? That's the gospel in a nutshell. The gospel is not, I believe in Jesus and I, you know, I walk the eye. I believe in Jesus and I raise my hand. I believe in Jesus. I went to a Billy Graham crusade. I believe in Jesus, you know, whatever. That's not the gospel. Those are the impact that might led you to the gospel.

But the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15. That's the summary of the gospel. The second thing is to engage the world. And it really means that Jesus tells them, the disciples, to do this.

He says, you and you alone are salt and light. And when he says that, he's not only making a statement because of their life in him, but he's essentially expecting them to be intentional about this life that they have in him.

[11 : 01] Which means stand against injustice and unrighteousness and immorality, refusing to go along when something is immoral.

Jesus stood against evil. Now he didn't get out of sign and, you know, do protests and gather a group of people and, you know, march up and down the street. He was far more effective than that. You know, the spread of the good news is not merely for the purpose of gaining recruits, but it's the spread of the gospel, the good news of the kingdom, that was spreading the kingdom and its influence on the area and the world around them.

The early church, they put feet to their words as they proclaim the good news of truth, of justice, of kindness, of mercy and grace of God.

And how do they do that? Well, mankind's inclination is always towards death. You know, we watch movies, listen to the news, you know, there's always been this morbid fascination and desire for death.

[12 : 13] That's in us. And so this whole thing with New York and some of the other states passing laws saying it is now legal to commit infanticide is really nothing new.

It's horrible for us. Because what was new over the past two, three hundred years is the gospel impact that you sanctify life. Life is important.

People are made, babies are made in the image of God. And yet, mankind has always seen no problem with discarding people, infants, little ones, older ones, people who are not quite, don't measure up, you know, mental disorders, those who are sick.

And so what the Christians would do is when people, you know, back then just like in China, you really didn't want to have a girl. Because, you know, they were costly.

You wanted a boy. And so when they gave birth to a girl and the father didn't want a girl in the house, he had them take the girl and throw him out in the garbage.

[13 : 26] And it was, you know, it was a place where it was constantly burning. Because they burned the garbage always. And so they'd throw him out there. And wolves or lions or, you know, some wild animals would come and eat these babies.

And Christians did something horrible. They went and rescued these babies, raised them as their own. That was counter culture.

That was revolutionary. And in some places, it was against the law to do that. Sound familiar? And yet, that's what it meant to seize them.

Tertullian, ancient church fathers, and another non-Christian authority wrote that when the Black Plague broke out, it was the Christians who decided to go out and help those.

They stayed around. They nursed people back to health. They thought there was some kind of weird magic going on because Christians and Jews also tended not to get as sick.

[14 : 29] Well, there was a reason for that. They had adopted practices of taking baths and washing their hands and eating good food and things like that. But there was that season, that saltiness about them, that they stayed behind when everybody else ran to the hills to hide away from the plague until it was over.

The Christians stayed behind and nursed these people back to health. And because of that, that was one of the impacts that it had, that when plagues would rise, Christians would come to the

rescue.

Great groups of people would come to faith in Christ because Rome didn't come to the rescue. Their regional government didn't come to the rescue. Their neighbors didn't come to the rescue. The false gods didn't come to the rescue. Nobody cared one stinking bit except Christians. And so they were salty in that way.

It was rather amazing about that. In the Reformation, they were actively engaged to the world. And the way they did it, they helped the poor by teaching skills and crafts and starting guilds.

[15 : 37] A lot of people went to Geneva because not only they heard the gospel and they wanted to come to this newfound faith, they went to Geneva so that they could learn a skill.

Carpentry, plumbing, masonry, whatever it was. And they started unions. And when they were very well skilled and they felt it was safe to go back to France or Britain or wherever it was, they went back.

And they spread the gospel first and they taught others the skills. That was the rise of modern capitalism. Late 1700s and 1800s, they became very active and working for humane conditions for prisoners.

Promoted universal education. Developed child labor laws. They fought for the treatment, equitable, fair treatment and status of women who were still second class at that time.

Why? Because they saw that Jesus had done a work in them and they saw liberty and freedom rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ. And so they were salt.

[16 : 48] So, that doesn't mean you have to do something distant, you know. It makes a difference in your own life with your own people with whom you work and so forth.

Now, what does it mean to shine? What does it mean to shine? You and you alone are the light of the world. That's only because of Jesus. The world in its basic, because of the fall at the very beginning, is basically dark and bleak and black.

That's how it is. So now, while we are surprised to see a rise of darkness and evil, that really is, you know, that's the median.

That's the bottom line. That's where, that's the world is at. And yet, we shine. We radiate. We're different. We're unique.

And what is it we shine? We shine the impact of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension in our lives. We show the, Jesus showed, and then because of that, we show the nature and the true way of living.

[17 : 59] We live a life of justice. We speak up when somebody is doing something wrong, or we should. You know, we do things righteously. We're concerned about fair laws.

We're against unfair laws and so forth. But the proper motivation always must come because we love God and we love others.

And that happens because of the good news of Jesus. So what is this light in the Bible? What is this light? It's not an inner light so much as it is a number of things.

Seven things, in fact. The first thing, that the light in the Old Testament and the New Testament really means true knowledge of the one true God. So when in the Old Testament it talks about the light, the light of the word is a lamp unto my feet, it means it gives direction to the righteous way that leads to God.

And they understood that. It's the true knowledge of God. The second thing that we see, what light is, we see this in Ephesians 5, is goodness, righteousness, and truth.

[19 : 05] So when he talks about we are the light, we live out of the gospel. We live in accordance to the good news impact and the change that Jesus gives to us.

We live out of our lives goodness, righteousness, and truth. The third thing is, according to Psalm 97 and Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 60, is light sometimes means joy.

Joy. Joy. It's not some flippant happiness, but joy. Our little guy got from his other grandparents a battery-operated car.

You know, we just... And so, you know, Papa finally figured out how to connect it right, so that when you plug it in... Thankfully, they didn't give it, you know, in pieces. You had to put it all together.

Thank God they got it.

And so he tried it. It wasn't working, and I said, all right. So finally got around it and figured it out and plugged it in. Battery got charged overnight. And he got on it, and he pushed the button.

[20 : 11] Pushed the button. Pushed the button. So he pushed the button, and he goes forward. It doesn't go backwards or anything. And he hasn't figured out how to steer, so he loves bumper cars. Right? So, you know, bang.

So we have to turn it. Bang. So he's doing this practically all day. Was he yesterday? Yesterday, all day. And something he said, he said, I'm happy.

I was like, where'd you get that from? It delighted him, right? He was happy. Now, there's somewhat of a difference between happiness and joy, and that is you can be joyful and still be mourning because there's a fundamental deep sense of satisfaction and completion and delight in the Lord, even though everything else around you is going to hell in a handbasket, if you will.

And while Matthew was happy about that, God calls us to light in the sense that we have exhibit joy in our lives. So that sometimes people say, what's up with you?

What's up with you? Blessings of salvation, according to Psalm 27 and Luke 1, is the light. It's living out the blessings of salvation.

[21 : 33] Hendrickson, in his commentary, says, not only we've been blessed with these endowments, but they are also the means used by God to transmit them to others who surround them.

Light possessors become light transmitters. And that's exactly what God calls us to do.

Then, fifthly, in Matthew 6, chapter after Matthew 5, Jesus talks about us having three valuable good deeds, giving or charity, praying and fasting.

And in the Old Testament, you find that comparable to light. This is light. So you share the light. You live in the light. You exhibit the light when you give or you show charity, when you pray and when you fast.

Now, the Jewish leadership of the time, the Pharisees understood charity or giving as an act of righteousness, which was very important as it works.

[22 : 45] You know, you did that. You entered in by birth into this covenant with God, but you had to maintain it. And if you didn't maintain that covenant with God, then you would have no future with God.

And the Pharisees believed in heaven, so you had to maintain by your works and your effort. Otherwise, you'll never make it into, you know, a permanent heaven with God. Sadducees, you know, didn't believe in the afterlife.

So you just had to maintain this goodness here and now. But Jesus takes it one step further. He says because of the work, essentially, he's, by all implications, what he's saying is because of the work that I do for you and I've done upon the cross to make the way for you to come to the Father. It's not by your works that you come to the Father. It's not because of your charity and praying and fasting that you get to the Father. But I have brought you to the Father so that now you can demonstrate, through light, charity, prayer, and fasting.

You see the difference? Matthew 5 also says that light is good works. And the Hebrew idea of life lived righteously with positive benefits for the community in which you live was considered good works.

[24 : 12] Now, I have known some dear brothers and sisters. I think they're dear. I'll say they're dear because I'm supposed to love them, right? Dear brothers and sisters, is that when you begin to talk about good deeds and works, you know, they want to focus so much upon the gospel, the good news, what Jesus has done for us on the cross and his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, that they assume that you don't want to imply or encourage Christians to do good works because you're talking about works.

Look, there's a difference between doing good works out of an attitude and a life of gratitude for the Lord, for what he's done for you. Declaring all your attempts at good works to be null and void and nevertheless paid for on the cross.

Now you demonstrate out of your life in him. Out of gratitude, you do good works. Good works is a good thing. I preached a sermon on all the different ways that good works are shown in the New Testament.

And man, did I have some people fired up at me. As you're talking about works, righteousness. No, I'm talking about righteous works. Right? Living it out.

So Luke 6, for example, says, And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?

[25 : 44] Sound familiar? Yeah, this verse earlier. Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same.

And if you lend to those whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies.

And by the way, a good definition of love, in biblical love, is not so much the feeling of love caused by this wonderful hormone called oxytocin.

But love in Scripture is seeking, intentionally doing, and seeking the highest good of another person. But love your enemies and do good and lend, hoping nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.

For he is kind, and even to the unthankful and to the evil. Romans 12, verses 20 and 21. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

[26 : 50] If he's thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing, you will heap coals of fire on his head. Become overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good deeds.

Titus 3, 8. Engage in good deeds. Paul tells Titus. Titus 2, verse 11 and following. Be eager to do good.

Galatians 6, verses 9 and 10. Let us not grow weary while doing good. Ever get tired of doing good? Yeah, can we talk? Sometimes you just think, I'm done.

I'm done. But don't grow weary while doing good. For in due season, we will reap if we don't lose heart. Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are not of the household of faith.

You know, see, doing good deeds. Say that three times fast. Which is to live a life of righteousness with positive benefits for others.

[28 : 03] Doing those good deeds is something that emanates. That's a way that we shine. That we shine. It really is topsy-turvy to the world's ending.

You know, when in 1917, there was the Bolshevik Revolution that led to the Marxist communists and they took over Russia and then all those other countries around them.

when that happened and the Eastern Bloc countries were infected with this horrible evil called Marxism. And I have it on record, okay?

What happened was within a generation, the impact of the gospel diminished significantly. So that everybody was out for themselves. And the only way you could get motivated to have people do what is right and good is to enforce it by the law.

And if you didn't do it, you were jailed or fined or whatever kind of external emphasis, whatever they could push upon you to make you do what is right. That intrinsic motivation that the gospel had, even in Russia up to that point, had been lost and gone.

[29 : 24] When the wall fell and the USSR fell apart, the gospel had a little more freedom. You know, people had a little more freedom to declare the good news of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15. That had an impact upon people and their lives. And as a consequence, we see then this intrinsic motivation for doing the good things and the right things.

Because as much as they say materialism calls, you know, it makes everybody out for their own and not caring. The reality is any ideology absent from the Lord Jesus Christ is an ideology of selfishness that leads to evil.

That's how it is. I don't care what you call it. There's a significant difference between the light that Jesus gives us and allows us because of his life and work in us and the darkness that's in the world.

Doing something without expecting anything in return is an oxymoron. It's a paradox. It's a weird thing. And yet it's what God allows us and gives us to do out of gratitude that we have for him, not because we're trying to gain brownie points.

[30 : 44] And then Matthew 5, ultimately, here's the reason why there's goodness, why we radiate the light. Matthew 5 says, light is having worldly people glorify God.

Wow. Light is having worldly people glorify God.

That's the end game. So we might make much of him. And that they, in their non-Christian way, ultimately makes much of the Lord as well.

So the Lord calls us to season, to be salty, and also to shine. But again, it's not because we're such wonderful people and we're trying to prove ourselves to God and we're trying to gain points or we're trying to make it to heaven.

No, it's because he's already done everything on our behalf. We do it out of love and gratitude for him. We're called to season. That's our call. And to shine in Christ.

[31 : 54] Thank you, Father. There's a multitude of ways we know, a myriad of ways to be able to demonstrate to be salty and to be light in the world.

And Father, we could probably spend the next several days or weeks thinking about different ways to be proactive as salt and light. We pray that you would motivate us, give us that inner desire to show love and affection for even our enemies and to do what they don't expect.

We hear, Father, of stories in the Muslim countries of Christians who don't, who are not verbal yet and afraid to be verbal and to declare the gospel.

Nevertheless, we know that many Muslims are coming to faith in Christ because they see the salt and light of Christians around them.

I pray that that grows. It grows in places like communist countries such as China and Cuba.

[33 : 06] I pray that salt and light would even be a major impact for our country that you might see fit to extend the life of this country for a few more hundred years.

but not for us, Father, ultimately, but for your glory, we ask and pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.