

## Lighting Up Our World

## II Peter 1:19-21

We are coming to the conclusion of this mini-series from II Peter 1:19-21 on God's Word.

From verse 19 we considered that God's Word *illuminates*. Through the Holy Spirit, God reveals His Word to us in a way that not only teaches us what it says but applies its truths to our lives. From Psalm 119:105 we see that God's Word lights our path, illuminating the right way to live, helping us to avoid pitfalls along the way.

In verse 20 we looked at the Bible as God's *revelation* about Himself to us. It reveals who He is and the relationship He wants to have with us that is only possible through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible shows us that we have all strayed from God because of sin and then it shows us how to get right with God through personal faith in Christ who died on the cross for our salvation.

Last week from verse 21 we discussed the *inspiration* of the Bible, that all of it is equally inspired not just some of it. We looked at how the Bible is powerful.

It's powerful to save us.

It's powerful to sanctify us or make us holy.

It's powerful to succeed, that it will accomplish all that God intends.

We concluded by noting that it is profitable.

It is profitable to align us in right doctrine.

It is profitable to alert us when we have strayed from God.

It is profitable to alter us by showing us how to get back on track with God.

It is profitable to apply its teachings to help us stay on the right path with God.

Its aim is profitable to equip us to do good works.

This morning as we wrap up this passage I would like to highlight one particular phrase that stands out to me as an important marching order for Christians. We find it in verse 19: "you will do well to pay attention to it, as to *a light shining in*

*a dark place*".

This verse is speaking specifically about God's Word is a light that shines in dark places. We are advised to heed it. That means not just listen to it but to obey it, do it, live it.

A motorist might be driving along and notice a sign that says BRIDGE OUT AHEAD. That's a warning to the motorist to turn around.

Some driver might miss the sign because they were looking at the passing scenery or changing the station on the radio.

Another driver might see the sign and wonder about the colors chosen for the sign that perhaps something neon would draw more attention but they fail to read the words on the sign.

Another driver might see the sign and see that it's a bit faded, maybe out of date with today's culture and choose to ignore the sign.

Another driver might read the sign and misunderstand the message. They might conclude that it must be for someone else.

Still another driver might read the sign and understand its message but believe they can make it anyway on their own because the sign might be wrong.

Anyone who continues without heeding the warning will find themselves in great peril.

The Bible was given to point people to God and some miss the message because they're too busy looking around at everything else.

Others see the sign and think the message needs to be changed to fit the times.

Others think the message is outdated and irrelevant.

Others think they can't understand the message.

Still others understand the message but think they think it doesn't apply to them or they think they will try it on their own anyway because maybe the message is wrong.

Just as a light is used to illuminate dark places and reveal possible dangers so the Bible is a light that exposes the darkness of sin and points to safety.

Taking the theme of verse 19 I would like us to turn to Matthew 5:14-16. The first thing I notice is our purpose – we are to stand out.

## I. OUR PURPOSE – WE ARE TO STAND OUT – Matthew 5:14

The opening statement is a declaration.

“You are the light of the world”

It’s a statement of fact that is in the present. As a Christian you are right now and all the time, the light of the world. It doesn’t say you were the light of the world or that you will be the light of the world or even that you can turn it on and off any time you like. You are now and always will be the light of the world. It’s like saying that today and always your name is Bob or Karen or Bill. That you are the light of the world means that you are to shine in dark places. That’s the purpose of a light.

Now when we look back at John 1 it says that the Word, referring to Jesus, was life and this life was the light of men. Jesus is life and Jesus is light. It then says that this light shone in the darkness but the darkness didn’t understand it. I don’t think it was because Jesus was veiled in some obscure formula. The Old Testament was quite clear about the markers to look for. Some were unwilling to understand it. Others were looking in the wrong places and therefore couldn’t understand it. Some just flat out refused to look.

John 1 then describes John the Baptist who came to bear witness or be a testimony concerning the light so that through the light all men might believe. Those who believe and receive the light are given life and become known as the children of God.

Then in John 8:12 we read that Jesus said that He is the light of the world and those following Him would never walk in darkness. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus said that we are the light of the world. Our function or purpose is to serve as a light to the world. Taking these two passages together it means that we are to reflect Christ. Just as the moon

reflects the light of the sun, so the Christian is to reflect the light of Christ.

Just as Jesus came to give direction and point men to God the Father, so we are to point others to Him. Until Christ returns He has given us marching orders. We are to be His light to shine in dark places. We are to carry the light of the gospel to those who need to hear about Christ. We are to be the warning signs for others to see of the looming dangers if they don’t heed His Word. We are to take His Word and shine it in dark places.

We are the light of the world. Light stands in contrast to salt because light is visible, you can see it. Its purpose is to point in a particular direction, to illuminate an otherwise dark area. It points out dangers. It shows the right path.

Jesus says that “a city on a hill cannot be hidden.”

I want to take you on a quick tour of my trip to DC from a couple of weeks ago. One evening we were given a tour of the capital.

Oh, wait that’s what we had for dessert one night. That’s a delicious white chocolate replica of the Capitol with a smooth strawberry mousse inside.

Here’s the Capitol. There’s a reason they call it Capitol Hill. It’s visible. You can’t miss it, especially when it’s all lit up at night. You can see it for a long ways.

We stood inside the Rotunda which is the large room separating the two chambers of congress. You can fit the Statue of Liberty inside and still have 30 feet to the top of the dome.

We were taken on what they called the “spiritual heritage tour”. David Barton took us back to the beginning of the nation showing us the impact God’s Word had on the founding of our country. It begins with the pilgrims. This is a painting depicting them kneeling in prayer with an open Bible committing their voyage and establishment of a new colony to God for His glory. This Bible had

notes in the margins outlined from Scripture Biblical principles by which they would establish their government. They realized that the laws of England didn't follow Scriptural teaching and so they set out to establish laws consistent with God's Word.

156 years later 56 men would gather in a room to sign a Declaration of Independence from England. 29 of the 56 signers were pastors. Most were dedicated followers of Christ. Perhaps the only two in question about any faith are the two at the center Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, yet when Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence you can see carved into that document a foundation of Biblical principles on which this nation was built.

We then walked into a little room to the left of this flag. Probably not much bigger than these two front classrooms combined. But inside that room there are currently some 60 congressmen and women who meet regularly to pray for the spiritual healing of our land. They want to stand out for Christ and make a difference while they serve in Congress.

We then went into what was the Old Senate Chambers. It was in this room, in the Capitol of these United States, that our government leaders met for church services. There was never any intent from our founding fathers for the separation of church and state. There was never any discussion about keeping faith out of the public square. Some of our early Presidents even led in prayer. They understood the significance of our spiritual heritage and worked to ensure its continuation for the duration of this great nation.

We heard from Jason and David Benham whose HGTV show was cancelled because of their Biblical stance on certain social issues. We heard from Michele Bachmann and Todd Starnes, who have a deep seated love for God and His Word. They are passionate about standing up for their faith and the ability of Christians to have a voice in the public square. They are fighting for faith and freedom.

And then what a privilege it was to hear from our Vice President, Mike Pence, who spoke about what the current administration is doing to protect those religious freedoms we cherish. In spite of vicious attacks He is not afraid to say the name Jesus in public, to proclaim the gospel.

These folks are not afraid to claim the name of Christ, to stand out like a lighthouse to point from danger to safety in Christ.

Each of us has been left here to be a light, to point people to Christ. We are to stand on a hilltop and let that light shine.

Let me remind you of what you already know. A lighthouse is a tower or structure designed to shine a light brightly out to sea to be a navigational aid to ships. They mark dangerous coastlines and hazardous reefs. They guide ships safely into a harbor.

Before lighthouses were built, fires lit on hilltops guided sailors. Putting the fire on a platform greatly improved the visibility which led to the development of the lighthouse.

Our Michigan coastline is dotted with lighthouses. They serve a purpose. They don't point inland to its beautiful scenery but point instead to the dangers that lurk nearby.

Sometimes in the night sky you can see a spotlight shining brightly. Usually it indicates something special happening like the opening of a new restaurant. It's a way to attract attention.

God didn't leave us here out of convenience or to live in compromise to His Word. He left us here to be a light of His grace, to carry His message of hope to a world lost in darkness. He left us here to communicate His love through the visible testimony of our lives showing others the possibility of a transformed life by Christ and the verbal testimony of our lips sharing the good news.

Think of some Bible characters who stood out, often alone, in their culture when everyone seemed to be opposed to them.

Noah

Joseph

Moses

Daniel

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

Elijah

Stephen

Paul

These and others stood out as a light of the truth in a world immersed in darkness.

Our purpose is to stand out.

Husbands and fathers and men, grandfathers and uncles and brothers are you standing out, shining as a light in dark places in your family?

Wives and mothers and women, grandmothers and aunts and sisters are you standing out, shining as a light in dark places in your family?

Neighbors and citizens and employees and retirees and consumers are you standing out, shining as a light in the dark places of your neighborhoods, places where you work or shop?

Declare as openly as Paul “I am not ashamed of the gospel”. Be a light for Christ because that is what you are, stand out.

Jesus then points out our potential – we are to stand up.

## II. OUR POTENTIAL – WE ARE TO STAND UP – vs. 15-16

In verses 15 and 16 we read “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men.”

To me this is saying that we need to stand up. Sometimes conflict can come that batter us like waves against the lighthouse. They threaten to

collapse the structure. The structure is only as good as its foundation. A well-built structure on a solid foundation will not fall. It will stand up.

I’m currently reading Todd Starnes’ book *The Deplorables Guide to Making America Great Again*. It’s not a political book although it talks about politics. It’s a book about faith and standing up for your faith in a culture that constantly batters the lighthouse, if you will. In the book he recounts the attacks of agencies like Freedom From Religion, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Right Wing Watch. You would think the last group is a conservative agency looking out for those who come bearing their teeth to try and shut down any expression of faith in the public square. They are anything but that. They are a very liberal group whose sole purpose is to bully Christians into backing down from their rights of free speech and openly proclaiming Christ.

Let me share a few of their stories to show you that there are Christians in our nation who have said enough. They aren’t just standing out, they are standing up.

It’s been the longstanding tradition at West Laurens Public High School in Georgia to pray and for the band to play hymns of the faith before their Friday night home football games. The hymn of choice was “How Great Thou Art.” Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed a complaint that the school should stop this violation of the establishment clause in the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment. Not wanting trouble, the school board decided to comply with the complaint. As the new season opened and the fans gathered for the first game they all stood and recited the Lord’s Prayer after which instead of playing “How Great Thou Art” the band played “Amazing Grace.”

They are standing up and standing out.

In another incident in Mississippi a school band was told not to play its selected hymn. During half time a lone voice echoed through the stands singing

Fellowship Bible Church 6/17/2018 Pastor Howie Wideman

“How Great Thou Art” followed by scores of people joining in.

They are standing up and standing out.

In Villa Rica, Georgia a football coach asked the local Baptist pastor to baptize him after football practice on the field. Someone hauled out an old feeding trough in the end zone and filled it with water. A mixed crowd of 75 people young and old, black and white gathered to witness the immersion. Inspired by the coaches actions a number of the players got right with Jesus and asked to be baptized as well. It was all done voluntarily on their part, no coercion, no bullying, no intimidation or peer pressure. But the liberal folks at Freedom from Religion didn't like it. In a statement by the pastor he said that the town has been in a tough spot and school district has suffered. The church provided some financial assistance so the team could hold a football camp and they have helped the school in other ways. It was done voluntarily and on their own time.

They are standing up and standing out.

So Gabe, on your football team you stand out and stand up.

In Palmdale, California a school ordered a 7 year old to stop handing out Bible verses in school. A deputy was sent to his home to enforce the school's position. Every day the tiny tot received a new verse of encouragement in his lunch from his mom. He would share his notes with his classmates and pretty soon they were asking for copies of those notes. Mom was more than willing to accommodate the requests sharing a little explanation of the verse. The school said they couldn't be passed out during school but he could stand at the gate and pass them out. Then that was banned and the school told them they could only stand on a public sidewalk. But hours later a knock on the door from the local sheriff was meant by the school administration to further intimidate the family into stopping altogether.

They are standing out and standing up.

This is closer to home in the state just to our southeast. It had been the tradition of the East Liverpool High School to sing the Lord's Prayer at their graduation ceremony. They were told a week before commencement that they would not be allowed to perform that time honored tradition. Just before the ceremony was to begin the entire senior class met and decided to do something that would make national news. At a pre-determined time the entire class stood and recited the Lord's Prayer. They argued that they were told not to sing it, so they spoke it.

They are standing up and standing out.

These aren't isolated cases. Last year in greater Detroit a church became the target of hatred, with death threats to the pastor because they were going to hold a seminar on the issue LGBT at the request of teens in the community.

A couple years ago, all the pastors of Houston, Texas were told to hand over their sermons to determine if what they were preaching could be construed as hate speech. Five defied the order.

When the assault of others seeks to silence our witness, when it feels like the raging blast of an angry sea, will we stand out and stand up? Will we stand secure on the foundation of Christ and choose not to be silenced?

This is Sam Brownback. He is the ambassador at large for international religious freedom. It's his responsibility to scan the religious horizon around the globe and report back to the president about unfair treatment against those of faith, particularly where Christians are in any way marginalized for their faith. Many in other countries who stand out and stand up become the target of brutality.

This picture was taken inside the newly opened Bible Museum. It's a circular room that is filled with rows and rows of books. Each book represents a language. The books are all color coded. This is just one bank of books in one section of books that



depict which languages have a copy of the entire Bible in that language. Other sections show what languages only have portions of the Bible, maybe all the New Testament and part of the Old Testament or maybe just a couple books. This section in yellow shows all the languages that have no portion of the Bible at all in a language and this was just one of three or four sections this big.

We need to pray for people like Cassy Fleming who want to get God's Word into the heart language of a tribe or people group.

How about you? How about us as a church? What can you do, what can we do to stand out and stand up?

Let me show you a short video. VIDEO

Every year the company Robyn works for does a service project to help someone in the community. This happens to be a faith-based organization in Pontiac assisting women coming out of sex trafficking. They did some clean up and put in garden boxes.

That's something we can do.

What we do doesn't have to be big, it's just something to make a difference, to be Christ's light. You don't need the blessing of the church Board or me as the Pastor. Stand up and stand out.

We need Christians who will volunteer in the public square.

Volunteer to be a helper in one of the local schools. We need Christians who will serve on the school Board. You may say, but my kids are all grown. Be a voice. It is that Board who decides on what is taught in our schools. Stand out and stand up.

I have a meeting this week with a representative from Forgotten Man Ministries, the jail ministry here in Livingston County. She said she has lived in Hartland for 20 years and couldn't quite place where our church is. We have been here for 45 years, how is that possible?

We need to stand out and stand up.

Stop into the township office and poke your head in to see the supervisor. Tell him who you are and ask if there's anything you can pray about for him

What are we doing to be a light in a dark world? I come back to a picture I showed earlier of the Capitol. Notice the contrast between the light and the darkness. That's the world we live in. We are intentionally surrounded by a world lost in darkness and we are to be that shining light in the darkness pointing others to Christ.

John Stonestreet from The Chuck Colson Center recently stated that "Christians can't let themselves be irrelevant to a changing culture... We must keep a Christian witness in the public square, even if it is a public square that increasingly doesn't want us there. Loving God and loving neighbor, as Christ commanded, requires us to be there."

Daniel serves as a terrific example of someone hated by others in the public square but he continued to shine as a light in that dark place. Isaiah 60:1-3

Israel was placed in the center of the known world to be a beacon that would draw the surrounding nations to God. Instead they chose to be separatists. They hid their light.

God has commanded us to stand out and stand up.

Let me close with one final thought. It's important to be reminded that we cannot achieve our purpose by standing out or recognize our potential by standing up, if we don't understand our power source by staying connected.

### III. OUR POWER – WE ARE TO STAY CONNECTED – Isaiah 41:10

Just as the moon needs the power of the sun to shine and a lamp needs to be connected to a power source for its bulb to shine, so we need to stay connected to the Lord in order to shine for Him. He is our power

source.

This past week I heard an interview on the news with comedian Larry the Cable Guy and his wife. They were promoting her new book *Unbridled Faith*, which is a series of devotions meant to be evangelistic. They are her journey of finding a relationship with the Lord through caring for horses. In the middle of the interview Larry the Cable Guy said something rather profound. He was talking about how he had grown up in a Christian home but over the course of his career he had drifted away from his relationship with the Lord. He talked about how his wife had not grown up really knowing anything about God but it was in the course of her seeking after God and coming to have a personal relationship with Christ that he reconnected with the Lord. His light went dim because he left his source.

Folks if we are going to stand out and up for our faith, we need to stay connected to the Lord.

Jesus came into the world to shine in dark places. He didn't stay hunkered down in the mountains till it was time to go to the cross. He interacted with a people that were all messed up, living in spiritual darkness. Not everyone was drawn to His light, but He went none the less to seek and save the lost. We should do no less. He has left us to be lights in that same world.

In their book *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, Bill Hybels and Lee Stroebel speak about the result of our interaction with the world. They call the end result Maximum Impact. In order for maximum impact to occur there needs to be High Potency and Close Proximity.

A couple of weeks ago Blaze got a bit too close to the back end of a skunk. The high potency and close proximity caused maximum impact. You get my drift.

If we are going to be lights to the world we cannot

stay inside in the comfort of our sanctuary. We need to get out into the world to expose the darkness of the world with the light of the gospel. The more time we spend with Christ the higher our potency will be as we venture out into the world. Potency is proportional to our time in Christian disciplines.

When we got Blaze a year ago we found a tic. Through reading we discovered that tics are repelled by peppermint. We bought a small vile and put one drop on the tic and within 5 seconds the tic was out and Blaze was running around wildly because of that one drop of concentrated peppermint. High potency and close proximity brought maximum impact.

But those aren't enough. There must also be Clear Communication. We need to be able to share the gospel clearly.

That we are to be a light means that there is darkness where our light needs to shine.

Will you be a light in your home or school or factory or shopping center or neighborhood or community?

How will you light up your world?