



That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (Phil 2:15)

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; (Luke 12:35)

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

There is much to be said about LIGHT in the Holy Bible; in fact, LIGHT is a burning and profound allusion to the Person of Christ. LIGHT secondarily refers to those who are light-bearers for Christ - it is HIS LIGHT they bear, and His glorious illumination they reflect. "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*" (Matt 5:14) We often speak of the Hidden Manna of God's Word, but it is easily found if we will remove the shrouds of doubt and deceit that cover it. God's Word is LIGHT and, once uncovered, comes penetrating through the darkness of ignorance and misunderstanding like a flash of morning sunlight.

Several years ago, I wrote a devotion on today's hymn which went out to the mailing list. There was a dear old saint (now deceased), Francis Eichler, living in Florida who sent me a letter about that devotion. She said that her father was a sea captain who was stranded in the harbor of Port au Prince. His ship was quarantined due to yellow fever aboard. Mrs. Eichler's father died of that affliction. A folded up copy of today's hymn was found in his belongings. This lady said she never knew the meaning until she had read my account of it, and was comforted to know of it. It was, as well, an encouragement to me that the devotion had been helpful to someone.

BRIGHTLY BEAMS OUR FATHER'S MERCY

Brightly beams our Father's mercy,
From His lighthouse evermore,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Refrain: Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor struggling, fainting seaman
You may rescue, you may save.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother;
Some poor sailor, tempest-tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.

The music and words of this beautiful and touching hymn were composed by Mr. Philip P. Bliss, of Philadelphia, in 1871. He wrote the words following a description by D.L. Moody of a maritime disaster near the harbor at Cleveland, Ohio, Lake Erie. Here is the account as related:

On a dark, stormy, night, when the waves rolled like mountains, and not a star was to be seen, a boat, rocking and plunging, neared the Cleveland harbor. "Are you sure this is Cleveland?" asked the captain, seeing only one light from the lighthouse.

"Quite sure, sir," replied the pilot.

"Where are the lower lights?"

"Gone out, sir."

"Can you make the harbor?"

"We must, or perish, sir!"

And with a strong hand and a brave heart, the old pilot turned the wheel. But alas, in the darkness he missed the channel, and with a crash upon the rocks the boat was shivered, and many a life lost in a watery grave.

Brethren, the Master will take care of the great lighthouse: let us keep the lower lights burning!

(D. L. Moody.) Philip P. Bliss, *The Charm: A Collection of Sunday School Music* (Chicago, Illinois: Root & Cady, 1871)

It is quite obvious to the Christian professor of that which is exemplified by the great Lighthouse of the Harbor - it is the LIGHT of God sweeping the tumultuous waves and billows of the sea as a boon to lost seaman. But what of the Lower Lights? Those Lower Lights are you and me who receive our oil from the Holy Ghost to light the small channels of the harbor once the Lighthouse has wooed the ships of sea near to entry.

Brightly beams our Father's mercy, From His lighthouse evermore, But to us He gives the keeping Of the lights along the shore. There is no light comparable to that of God. As a matter of fact, there is no LIGHT apart from God. We are the keepers of the Lower Lights along the shoreline.

When visiting our churches in Haiti a few years back, I noticed the Port au Prince Lighthouse standing erect near the head of the harbor of the city. It was starkly visible both during the hours of darkness as well as daylight; however, at night, there were lesser lights to be seen all along the harbor channel. These were the Lower Lights intended to guide the big sea vessels to safe anchorage in the harbor once that had been brought near by the Lighthouse Light.

The darkness of sin is stifling to the soul's eye. *"Dark the night of sin has settled, Loud the angry billows roar; Eager eyes are watching, longing, For the lights along the shore."* The Sun settled on this old world at the Fall of Adam in the Garden at Eden, but we have the promised and constant Light of Christ to light our paths throughout the long, dark night of our souls on this orb. He is our Bright and Morning Star from evening to Sunrise through our hours of darkness. He is our Day Star at dawn, and always the brightest Light in the Heavens. As the storms of life and the billows of sin build and crash, we are made to feel secure by the prospect of that unquenchable Light of Christ above us and in our hearts.

"Trim your feeble lamp, my brother; Some poor sailor, tempest tossed, Trying now to make the harbor, In the darkness may be lost." A lamp is of no use without oil. And the soul is of no value without the oil of the Holy Ghost to provide fuel for light. Remember the ten virgins. Five had made provision for oil when the Bridegroom came, five did not. Those five virgins who did not make provision were still virgins and of good character, but good character will no gain entrance into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb - we must have the grace and oil of the Holy Ghost to Light our Way. If we have oil, we must also have fire! Our souls must be the wick whereby the oil feeds the fire of light. All who are near us may find their way by the Light we shed forth. We never know where the perishing soul may be, so we sweep the waves by the Light of God in constant search. By and by, the beam will catch the sight of a seaman lost on the perilous waters of sin. As he homes in on the Light, he draws close to harbor. He will then see the Lower Lights, too, to guide him to safe docking at the harbor haven of rest.

Are your Lights burning?