

## Keep the Flame Burning

Roy Assanti—May 21, 2016

Good afternoon, brethren! It's amazing how God works; sometimes the messages follow one another. In some ways my message is part two of Eric Scott's message: *Keep Our Light Burning Bright*.

Our calling is not a game; it's not trivial. *It's serious!* It's a matter of life and a matter of death. Yesterday's achievements fade. We have to continually grow, bear fruit, be strong and go from strength to strength.

- How serious is this calling?
- How serious is the goal that God has for us?

Revelation 1:13: "And in *the* midst of the seven lampstands *One* like *the* Son of man, clothed in a *garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate." Let's put our imagination to work here.

Verse 14: "And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His eyes *were* like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like fine brass..." (vs 14-15)—as finely polished. That's the best that John could do given this spiritual image that was before him.

"...as if *they* glowed in a furnace..." (v 15). What kind of energy and composition is John describing? It's something beyond the vocabulary that he had, probably beyond the vocabulary that we have.

"...and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters" (v 15). Can you imagine walking down the beach and you hear the sound of the waves coming on shore and then you multiply it two times, four times, ten times. It's hard to describe!

Verse 16: "And in His right hand He had seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth, and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power." We're talking about energy! We're talking about something that makes nuclear sound like a little spark of nothing that's here and gone. This is real incredible power!

It's a message from the future. Look at how it made John feel, look at what it did to John, v 17: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead; but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.'" Big impression!

Why? Why this big impression on John? *Three times Christ went on to say* 'message to the churches.' Why? *For impact!* The idea is to take

heed, 'listen to what I'm going to tell you.' One of those messages relates kind of, in varying degrees, to us.

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of the Ephesian church, write: 'These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands.' I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars" (vs 1-2).

- Did we have some liars in our recent midst?
- Have we had some people who were falsifying the Truth?
- Have we had some people trying to palm off traditions and falsehoods?

I think we shared something in common there.

Verse 3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured... [we've had to endure. We had to find our why; we had to stand alone.] ...and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you... [take note] ...that you have left your first love" (vs 3-4).

We had to look at the *first love* that we had. We had to try and picture it and try to emote it, feel it, think about it, define it: *the first love!*

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent." So, the call is to *repent!*

Verse 6: "But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans..."—*the works of hierarchy*. I recall at a Feast of Tabernacles that an area director had a full bar, a complete full bar. One of the ladies who was actually a waitress as a profession and she went up to do the flowers and it was a complete bar. Where did the money come from?

There was another occasion was when a certain visiting minister from 'headquarters' drove over in this nice shiny car, and the guy who was in charge of the parking this minister looked at him and said, 'Look at this car and don't let your eyes off of it.' So, he had to stay and watch the car while the minister went in and preached.

"...which I also hate. The one who has an

ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the Tree of Life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God” (vs 6-7).

God's Spirit within us is like a flame; it burns within! We'll have a look from the inside. What is it like to be close to Christ and the Father? Let's consider this first: *the world doesn't know!* It's got know idea! It can't look outside. We know, and in an individual and particular way.

John 17:13—Christ's prayer to the Father: “But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them. I have given them Your words... [part of the joy] ...and the world has hated them because they are **not of the world**, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one. They are **not of the world**, just as I am **not of the world**. Sanctify them in Your Truth; Your Word... [we understand God's Word; it lights us up] ...is the Truth” (vs 13-17).

Sometimes driving to Passover service I stop the car at lights and look around and everybody is going wherever they're going, but they're not going where I'm going. They're not thinking what we are thinking. It's the same thing for you. You're headed in a particular direction, to do something, to confirm a covenant that no one outside has an idea of. *We are not of the world!*

Let's start to get a feel of what it's like from the inside to be called. If we can just picture this: We have Christ's teaching and there's someone sitting down and just soaking it in.

Luke 10:38: “Now, it came to pass as they were going that He [Christ] came into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat down at Jesus' feet and was listening to His message” (vs 38-39).

There was a time when it began for us, that we began to listen just like Martha was listening; she's taking it in, she's mesmerized. She feels that joy, that flame! She's listening.

Verse 40: “But Martha was distracted because of much serving; and she came *to Jesus and* said, ‘Lord, is it of no concern to You... [a little attitude coming out] ...that my sister has left me to serve alone? Now then, speak to her, so that she will help me.’ Then Jesus... [with love, understanding and compassion] ...answered *and* said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are full of care and troubled about many things; but there is one need *above all else*; and Mary has chosen the good part, which shall

not be taken from her” (vs 40-42).

She is sitting there and taking it in. What was it like when we first began to understand, and we just sat there and took it in. A lot of people just can't help but devour the information that is sent to them, to listen, because they feel and sense that joy, that flame, that love. It's like that.

Let's get another idea, a different story, Luke 24:13: “And behold, on the same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, which was about sixty furlongs from Jerusalem.... [Christ had been crucified] ...And they were talking with one another about all the things that had taken place. And it came to pass, as they were talking and reasoning, that Jesus Himself drew near *and* went with them; but their eyes were restrained, *so that* they did not know Him” (vs 13-16).

I wonder how many times we've read and the light has gone on, that flame has caught 'fire' and sort of warmed the inside and given us light, and we really don't know or realize that Christ Himself is inspiring the knowledge that is coming to us. It doesn't come from people, not flesh and blood, not from outside, but God Himself is giving us, by some kind of spiritual osmosis. That warmth, that flame is being fanned within us.

Verse 17: “And He said to them, ‘What *are* these words that you are exchanging with one another as you walk, and *why* are you downcast in countenance?’” Why are you upset? What's going on?

Verse 18: “Then the one named Cleopas answered *and* said to Him, ‘Are You only traveling through Jerusalem, and have not known of the things that have happened in these days?’” Don't you know what's happened? This is the news! This is incredible!

Verse 19: “And He said to them, ‘What things?’...” It's amazing how Christ would draw stuff out of us. Whatever we feel or think He would ask questions and would bring it out.

“...And they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus the Nazarean, a Man Who was a prophet, Who was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests...’” (vs 19-20).

Death leaves a certain sting, especially the death of a righteous man. I recall a time that in our neighborhood a thief was shot in the head. What the police did was build a barricade, but you could look. There was all this blood left there on the dirt. It left you with an eerie feeling just to look as see this death.

Here there was a righteous Man {Christ} who did so many just things, fed so many people, and everybody followed Him and He was crucified brutally. It left something in the air, a tragedy.

Verse 21: "And we were hoping that He was the One Who would redeem Israel. But besides all these things, as of today, the third day has already passed since these things took place. And also, certain women from among us astonished us, after they went to the tomb early" (vs 21-22); they're telling him the story.

Verse 25: "Then He said to them, 'O foolish...'" Imagine that when we don't get something how does God see us?

"...and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary... [then He began to explain] ...for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses, and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (vs 25-27).

He explained to them that this thing had to happen. They were receiving knowledge. The flame was beginning to be fanned. They could feel it; they could sense it. They listened in rapt attention. He wanted to move on.

Verse 29: "But they constrained Him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is declining.'..." They wanted more of this flame, this understanding, this joy that was in them and they began to understand.

Verse 30: "And it came to pass, as He sat *at the table* with them, He took the bread *and* blessed *it*; and after breaking *it*, He gave *it* to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He disappeared from them" (vs 30-31).

It's incredible! Look at what they said, and this is what I was talking about and leading to, v 32: "And they said to one another, 'Did not our hearts burn...'" The flame, the joy, the knowledge that is not outside that God give us, that you have experienced and you looked at God's Word and it empowered you.

"... 'Did not our hearts burn within us... [that's what was happening] ...as He was speaking to us on the road, while He was opening the Scriptures to us?'" (v 32). Christ opens the Scriptures to us and we burn, we rejoice, we have that light.

I had an interesting experience that I'll share with you. In my early days I was basically taken out of society, friends and so on, and I shouldn't have been happy. It was a time when I should not have

been happy. But I was rejoicing over a Friday, Saturday and a Sunday. Why am I happy? Why am I like this? After the third day I realized *the knowledge of God was in my mind and I was joyful*. We all have had experiences like this. That's why we're sitting down here and listening.

It's really incredible to me that when I began to understand things. I thought this was stupidity; there are no saints floating in the air. There is no Mary in heaven. You look at God's Word and you understand and there is a conviction. What did Christ say? *Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but might Father in heaven!* When we receive that knowledge, the foolishness just sort of falls away and we become a little bit unsteady. Where will we go? Where am I going?

Luke 12:32: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. Sell your possessions... [it's not about what you have] ...and give alms... [do the right thing] ...Make for yourselves purses... [that's how you do it] ...*that* do not grow old, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief can come near, and no moth can destroy" (vs 32-33).

I had a good friend, we were very close friends, and we went to Spokesman's Club together, we hung around, we understood, took in the sermons. He had been gone for something like 15 years and I recently met his wife just by mistake, and we embraced. I rang him and talked to him.

His idea is that God blesses you, 'He's blessed us and we've got this position and that one. The boys have been blessed because they're successful and so on.' Where are you? I thought. His view of the old Worldwide Church of God, 'Well, they're serving God the way they know. God is blessing me and I know He's with me.'

But where are you? He was really *nowhere!* I thought: Wow! It seemed very much like Laodicea: 'I have much, I am wealthy.' *But you're blind, naked!*

Verse 34: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded..." Not sitting down, not just taking it easy. You're ready to move! Just like Israel when they came out of Egypt, they were ready to move. We have got always be ready to move! Not to sit down, always on the move, always growing!

"...about and *your* lamps burning" (v 35). You've got to have that Spirit burning within you continually, day-to-day. There's a big reward.

Verse 37: "Blessed *are* those servants whom the lord, when he comes, shall find watching. Truly I

say to you, he will gird himself, and will make them sit down, and will come *and* serve them.”

- Big reward!
- He'll elevate us!
- An incredible reward!
- Be motivated!
- 'Watch and wait and see what I'm going to do for you!'

We have to be diligent!

Verse 38: “And if he comes in the second watch, or comes in the third watch, and finds *them watching*, blessed are those servants. But know this...” (vs 38-39). I'm going to take you off guard. You've got to be diligent! 'If I can, I'm going to trick you whether you like it or not, because this is the way it works.'

“...that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into” (v 39).

I had a business and I was broken into one time and I tell you what, you do suffer a loss. It's not pleasant.

Verse 40: “Now you, therefore, be ready; for the Son of man is coming in an hour *that* you do not think.” I'm telling you beforehand that I'm going to take you off guard if I can. You've got to be doing day-by-day continually.

There's a flipside to this, with a warning, a little bit of a warning not to let down. We need to fan those flames daily by study, by prayer.

Hebrews 6:9: “But, although we speak these things, beloved, we are persuaded *of* better things concerning you, even *the fruits* that accompany salvation. For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work, and the labor of love *by* which you have showed *honor* to His name, *in that* you have served the saints and are *continuing* to serve *them*” (vs 9-10).

A way of life; you've done it in the past and you're continuing to do it. Present participle, you're *keeping on doing it*, nonstop! It says *serve*; it doesn't say *argue*, it doesn't say *accuse*. When reviled—here's an example—we bless (1-Cor. 4). What about if someone has a go at you? Brethren, what happens? What do we do? *It's between you and God!* Silent, no one sees. God knows the heart! So, the principle is:

- when we are reviled, *we bless*
- when persecuted, *we endure*
- when slandered, *we try to conciliate*

We become, and I'm now as, the refuse of the world

and the off-scouring of all things. It's a call to *humility*. You take the lowest seat; it doesn't matter.

If you are attacked, hurt by someone, the bottom line is that God sees. He says He won't forget your works and how you are enduring.

Verse 11: “But we earnestly desire that every one of you be demonstrating the same diligence, unto the full assurance of the hope until *the end*; so that you do not become lazy...” (vs 11-12). That's there because it can happen. Do not become lazy. We've got to guard against becoming lazy, letting down.

“...but *that you be* imitators of those who through faith and **steadfast endurance** inherit the promises” (v 12).

I wonder if anybody has jogged or run and you become exhausted and it's hard to keep going. And emotionally the same thing, as well, when circumstances don't go your way, it's pretty hard to do the right thing. But that is when it counts. That is the endurance to do the right thing under pressure. Not what I want, but what God expects of me.

It's amazing how some of the Scriptures come up twice; Matthew 25:1: “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be compared *to* ten virgins, who took their lamps *and* went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish” (vs 1-2).

They were virgins; they were not those who are deceived. They were virgins, they were not those who kept the world's feast days of Christmas and Easter; they were virgins! The bottom line is that they failed to grow.

Verse 3: “The ones who were foolish took their lamps, *but* they did not take oil with them... [they didn't have the Holy Spirit] ...but the wise took oil in their vessels *along* with their lamps. Now, when the bridegroom was gone a long time, they all became drowsy and slept” (vs 3-5).

He's going to come at a time we don't expect. How many times are we told that we're not going to know? Don't try to know when Christ was going to return. That's wrong; we won't know; that's what He tells us.

Verse 6: “But in *the middle of the night*... [when you least expect it, when you're asleep] ...there was a cry: 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him.' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us *some* of your oil... [What does this mean?] ...because our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, '*No*...' [there's a reason why]: ...lest *there not be* enough for us and *for*

you...” (vs 6-9).

You've got to buy. What happens when you buy? *You've got to give something to receive something in return!* You can't develop righteous character just like that. It can't be done.

At the end of the book it says, 'Let the righteous be righteous and the filthy be filthy' (Rev.). You're going to be a certain way.

Romans 6:1: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin..." We've got to continually overcome sin; continually grow. The more we grow the more we find that we have to overcome.

"...so that grace may abound?" (v 1). Grace saves us, but there's a *doing* involved. There's an *endurance!* What about Passover? *We have to be unleavened!* We have to continually put the leaven out.

Do we say that we don't have to keep Passover anymore because we've done a fine job last year? *NO!* It's continuous! We have to go from strength to strength.

Verse 2: "MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" We always find leaven that we haven't taken out. That's the lesson, you can't take it all out.

We'll just follow this line of righteousness, what we've got to be doing, and why:

Matthew 22: 11: "And when the king came in to see the guests, *he* noticed a man there who was not dressed in *proper* attire for *the* wedding feast; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you enter here without a garment *fit* for *the* wedding feast?' But he had no answer. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind his hands and feet... [you don't belong, you can't be there] ...*and* take him away, and cast *him* into the outer darkness.' There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.... [here's the point: 5 virgins were wise, 5 were foolish]: ...For **many are called, but few are chosen**" (vs 11-14).

- Am I one that is called with God's Spirit?
- Will I be chosen?

*If I'm diligent!* Yesterday doesn't count; it's today! Tomorrow doesn't count; it's today! You've got to keep it up! Let's continue with the same line of reasoning as the Scriptures reveal. Here we have defined what is righteousness:

Revelation 19:8: "And it was granted to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he said to me, 'Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God'" (vs 8-9).

That's what we need for garments. We only attain the garments day-by-day. Yesterday doesn't count! That's the principle that is outlined in Ezek. 18. You can't rely on yesterday; you can't rely on past performances. It's a day-by-day keeping that flame alive from the start and continuing.

Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.... [here's the principle]: ...The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins... [repent] ...which he has committed, and keep all My statutes... [grace; He puts it aside, we become unleavened] ...and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. **All his transgressions that he has done, they shall not be mentioned to him...** [as far as the east is from the west—done, disappear] ...in his righteousness that he has done he shall live" (vs 20-22).

Verse 24: "But when the righteous..." 'I've done right, I've been right, I've served God, but didn't we Lord, do these great works in Your name?' Isn't that what it says? What did Christ say? *I never knew you* to certain who were disobedient, who did not, who stopped producing, growing.

"...turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, *and* does according to all the abominations that the wicked do, shall he live? All his righteousness... [everything that he's done right] ...that he has done **shall not be remembered; because of his trespass that he has trespassed, and because of his sin** that he has sinned, because of them he shall die" (v 24). There's the principle.

There's a New Testament equivalent in John 15:4: "Dwell in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can* you *bear* fruit... [you can't] ...unless you are dwelling in Me." That's day-by-day; we don't stop! We keep going!

Verse 5: "I am the vine, *and* you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears **much** fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not... [here's the 'other side of the coin'] ...dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch..." (vs 5-6). A branch doesn't wither just like that, it takes time, but slowly it begins to wither. That's why we need to draw on that sap, draw on that nourishment from Christ.

"...and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are burned" (v 6).

Here's a point: Christ said that 'you are My friends if you do what I command you.' He called us *friends*. So I say, 'Friends, let's not be deceived! Let's not be deluded!' You and cannot afford to slacken off.

There's one more principle; there are two choices here:

Matthew 7:24: "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock... ['petra,' the giant boulder] ...and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house... [not just rain; this is a beating rain and wind] ...but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock" (vs 24-25).

Again, a different example of the vine; where in the vine we will stand.

Verse 26: "And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand." A moving foundation; our own reasoning; what we think. We've got to be anchored to God's Word.

Verse 27: "And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

As Christ said to the Pharisees, 'You're going to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.' You're going to see it! You're going to see an incredible glory that you cannot describe of power and joy that you will miss out on.

Sometimes in the morning I'm lazy. I don't want to pray. I want to do what I want to do. But I have to say, 'NO! NO! This is what I'm doing.' First thoughts soak. Start it at the start and you have the strength for the day. That's what we need to do. And study.

One time I was in catering and ran a motel for 36 years. We'd have conferences and sometimes we had people coming; it was busy. I'd say to myself, 'I can't break it! I can't break the system!' So, you finish at midnight tired, and I just prayed and asked, 'Please give me strength to wake up.'

So, I don't know how it happens, but I'll wake up at 4 o'clock for a 6:30 start, wide awake so that I can pray, study and be energized. I let down at times, but I try not to. But that's an example. You've got to keep it up day-by-day-by day.

The time is going to come when we will reap, when we will have eyes like flames of fire, when 'our faces will shine like the sun' itself with power (Dan. 12). We'll have a body like polished bronze with energy and power.

As Christ said, 'You're My friends.' What I say is, '***Friends, let's keep that flame burning day-by-day, and the time will come when this vision of life will become a reality!***'

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 1:13-17
- 2) Revelation 2:1-7
- 3) John 17:13-17
- 4) Luke 10:38-42
- 5) Luke 24:13-22, 25-27, 29-32
- 6) Luke 12:32-35, 37-40
- 7) Hebrews 6:9-12
- 8) Matthew 25:1-9
- 9) Romans 6:1-2
- 10) Matthew 22:11-14
- 11) Revelation 19:8-9
- 12) Ezekiel 18:20-22, 24
- 13) John 15:4-6
- 14) Matthew 7:24-27

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Corinthians 4
- Daniel 12

Also referenced: Sermonette: *Keep Our Light Burning Bright* (Eric Scott)

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