

Philippians 2 12-18 (ESV)

Lights in the World

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, **15** that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. **17** Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. **18** Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

In the reading for today, I have taken the liberty of underlining words and phrases that are significant and that will be mentioned in the message. You might want to take some time to meditate on these.

Last week's reading was this same passage but I only got through verses 12 & 13. Let's take a moment to review what the context is of this passage. In chapter 2:5-11 Paul is speaking of the greatness and the humility of Christ. His humility was displayed when He laid aside His glory and came to us as a child. He also took on the role of a servant, not a king or emperor. Then He humbled Himself and became obedient even to death on the cross for our salvation.

Paul makes a shift here and calls believers to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," (v12). This means that with God working in us (v13), you deal with the bad habits and attitudes, you learn to walk by faith. And the only fear you should have is of not fulfilling God's purpose and plans in your life.

In verse 14 Paul writes. "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Some translations use complaining or arguing, with various combinations. These words give us a picture of a church where disagreements are common and dissatisfaction is threatening the body of Christ. This is not the way believers are meant to act, it is not the way of Christ.

Why is it so important to live differently? Because the *World is Watching*.

One of my theological professors shared a story of his first year in university. It is normal for students to stay on campus and have roommates assigned to them. He shared that he was running away from God, in rebellion to God's calling. When he met his roommate, an avid Christian, he made an

agreement with God. He said if my roommate does anything wrong through out this year, then I'm going to walk away from my calling. If he doesn't then, I will follow you. At the end of the year he gave his life to Christ because he saw Christ in his roommate. His roommate wasn't perfect but he made things right in every situation. Others are watching us as Christians to see how we reveal Christ to the world.

Paul then encourages us to live blameless and innocent as children of God in a "crooked and twisted generation." (v14). If you listen to the news, you know that we live in a crooked and twisted generation. What as once called wrong is now called right, there is deception in business and governments, anger and violence are on the increase, and every sort of theory is put forth to explain what's happening. Beware of theories like Critical Race Theory which cause division between races and Gender Fluidity which causes confusion in our children. This crooked and twisted generation leads to darkness and despair.

The encouragement that Paul gives is a challenge to us that we are to "shine as lights in the world." (v15). Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14). Christians are meant to shine in the world, being a beacon of hope in this dark world. You shine when you live as Christ commanded and when you "hold fast to the word of life" (v16). This is the message of life in Christ that sets people free from sin and offers them abundant life.

One final phrase to look at, "the Day of Christ" (v16). This refers to the day of Christ's return when we will stand before him and we will give account for our lives. Paul is saying that on that day if the Philippians are "shining lights in the world" then they will have reason to rejoice and so will Paul. The Philippians will because they have been obedient and lived their lives for Christ and Paul because his effort and work was not in vain.