

Lights to Our Generation
Philippians 2:12-18

Good morning.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Isaiah 5:21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! NKJV

I believe we are living in the types of days Isaiah prophesied about. Sometimes we may hear people talk about the fact that society is so different today than it was years earlier.

My grandfather grew up during the Depression era and he was the person I probably looked up to the most as I was growing up.

I remember my grandfather talking about politics in the 1970s and early 1980s.

He would constantly say how crooked and perverse things were during those times.

I wonder what he would say about the world we live in now.

Please open your Bibles to ***Philippians 2***, as we continue in our verse-by-verse study of Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

Last week was part three of a series, on ***Philippians 2:5-11***, the Apostle Paul wrote, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Commentators refer to these verses as a hymn or a poem written by the Apostle Paul. That hymn tells us to have the Mind of Christ, and there is also a breakdown of the character of Jesus.

The portion of scripture we looked at last week told us that Jesus is “*Highly exalted*” in *Philippians 2:9* and “*Highly exalted*” can be translated as super exalted.

God the Father chose to give Jesus a name, that has no rivals and is far greater than any other name in the universe.

Because of who Jesus is and the lengths that He went to save lost sinners, (God humbled Himself to come in the form of a slave to pay sin’s price), Jesus deserves **adoration** and praise.

There is more to the statement than simply stating that every knee **should bow**. We should bow as a response because someday, everyone **will bow** to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Then we learned there is cooperation between believers and the Lord when it comes to fulfilling His call in our lives.

Our PART: *Philippians 2:12, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* In the original language, *fear* means respect and *trembling* means quaking with fear.

God's PART: *Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV*

This exhortation to *work* is for believers in Christ, to respond and live in the new life in Christ, showing the fruits of salvation.

Jesus is the most exalted person in the universe, so we should stop and realize who the Lord is as we serve and worship Him!

Today, the Apostle Paul will encourage believers to live as lights in a dark world and then he will explain how he was being used as an offering to the Lord.

I. Complaining and disputing.

Read *Philippians 2:12-14*

I struggle in the area of ***complaining***, even against myself at times. I have an idea of how I want to see things happen and I can gravitate towards the negative at times.

Complaining or grumbling is the word *gongysmos* (gon – goose – mose). According to the Greek Lexicon, it means an utterance made in a low tone of voice or behind-the-scenes talk.

In the original language, ***complaining*** is a **petty** dialogue, behind the scenes, that calls every decision into question.

Kenneth Wuest defined this word as, “*Discussions which carry an undertone of suspicion or doubt.*”

Paul may have been referring specifically to the conflict between the two women he will discuss in *Philippians 4* because disputes and complaining are not new in the church.

Throughout the history of the church critical, complaining people have existed. But I want us to think back to the best or worst, depending on how we view it, complainers in scripture.

The Children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt for a period of four hundred years. Israel became enslaved in Egypt after Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers.

This enslavement happened through many different trials and situations. Eventually, Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dreams and prevented a major famine from destroying Egypt.

Later, due to the famine, Joseph's family went to Egypt which had grain for them, and Israel prospered under that Pharaoh.

When that particular Pharaoh died, the new Pharaoh was concerned that the Israelites were too powerful and might join their enemies to defeat them, so he enslaved the Hebrew people.

Exodus 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Exodus 1:9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;

Exodus 1:10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

Exodus 1:11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. NKJV

Fast forward in the timeline and the Lord heard the cries of His people and decided to rescue them from the bondage of Egypt.

Exodus 3:7 And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

Exodus 3:8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

The Lord sent Moses to Egypt and after many plagues and threats, Pharaoh finally released the Children of Israel.

Here we are all of these years later and some of us are not that different than the Children of Israel.

Exodus 16:2 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." NKJV

We don't have time to cover what took place in the desert after their release from Egypt.

Because of the murmuring and **complaining** of the Children of Israel, that entire generation, except Joshua and Caleb, were **forbidden** from going to the Promise Land.

The Children of Israel complained because the supplies they had with them from Egypt began to run out, and they needed sustenance in the wilderness.

Because of their fear of the future, the Children of Israel thought they would die from lack of supplies.

At the first thought of hunger, the Children of Israel assumed the worst would happen.

The Children of Israel went from singing to ***complaining*** very quickly. The Children of Israel **selectively** remembered the past and thought of their time in Egypt, as a good time.

The Children of Israel lost sight of God's future promises for them, and they also twisted their past memories to support their ***complaining***. This thinking is common for those who complain.

Numbers 32:13 So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone. NKJV

They said, ***“You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly”***

The Children of Israel insisted that Moses and Aaron had evil intentions, by bringing them into the wilderness.

This was a horrible accusation to make but this is typical of a ***complaining*** heart that often finds it easy to accuse the person they complain against of having the worst motives.

If the Lord is in charge, the worst part about ***complaining*** as a Christian is we are ultimately ***complaining*** against the **Lord**.

When Christians ***complain*** we are saying, that we either do not trust Jesus to supply for our needs **or** we want our will to be done, instead of His will to be done.

II. Blameless and harmless Children.

Read *Philippians 2:15-16*

First Paul gave a perfect rationale for not ***complaining*** or disputing ...that we ***may become blameless and harmless Children of God without fault.***

Warren Wiersbe said, “*Paul contrasted the life of the believer with the lives of those who live in the world. Unsaved people complain and find fault, but Christians rejoice.*”

Society around us is twisted and distorted, but the Christian stands straight because he measures his life by God’s Word, the perfect standard.”

Another version says, “you may be ***blameless*** and ***innocent.***”

Blameless means deserving no censure, or free from fault or defect. The word ***innocent*** has the idea of being pure or “unmixed, or unadulterated.”

The word *innocent* or pure was used to describe wine that wasn't mixed with water or metal that wasn't mixed with alloy.

The Philippians lived in the crooked and perverse culture of 1st-century Rome. We could say the same thing about the culture we live in today.

And notice, Paul says although we live in a *perverse and crooked generation, we shine as lights in a dark world.*

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
NKJV

This world is in a state of decay, and it is also in darkness but God's remedy for this dark world is for His children to shine!

Christians are the ones the Lord uses to light up this world.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." NKJV

The miraculous thing is the same Jesus Who said, "*I am the light of the world*", also told us "*We are the light of the world*"

A Christian is only the “*Light of the World*” because of his/her relationship with Jesus, who is the ultimate “*Light of the World*”.

We are not simply to receive the light from the Lord, we are to be the light to a lost and dark world.

Jesus never challenges us to become the Light of the world, He simply said, we are the “*Light of the World*”.

The issue is whether or not we are living a surrendered life to His Spirit which causes us to have the characteristics of a light to the world; **or** are we insisting on ruling our own lives?

As Christ-followers, He is **living in** and **through us**, which causes us to be Salt and the “*Light of the World*”

Before our relationship with Christ, we also were in utter darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light NKJV

The moon simply reflects the sun and does not provide light from itself. Just like the moon that only gives light to a dark world because of its relationship to the sun, so we reflect Jesus.

Allow me to give you two insights:

1. Light exposes darkness.

Look at the life and ministry of Christ, His words and His deeds exposed the darkness.

Our lives should be so full of light that they expose darkness; but then...

2. Light shows a way out of darkness.

In *John 3*, Jesus told Nicodemus that someone to go to heaven, “They *must be born again*”

As we live in this dark world, our lives and words should expose the darkness but that is not where it should end. We need to lead people out of their darkness, as we live it and proclaim Jesus!

God did not save us to go and hide from the world but to shine for all to see. We are not called to retreat and hide from the world in some commune somewhere.

We are called to light this place up! *Matthew 5:16* does not mean, I’m going to let my light shine **to aluminate me**...

Matthew 5:16 means let your light shine in such a way, in such a manner that the world will see your good works and in turn glorify your Father in heaven.

Our lives are lived to show other people how to glorify God.

We are to point the world to the One who is responsible, and Who is to be credited, for any good that comes out of you.

F.F. Bruce said, “*Christ knew that there would be strong temptation for the men that had it in them to be lights to hide their light. It would draw the world's attention to them and so expose them to the ill will of such as hate the light.*”

So, it comes down to this: You and I are to become JUST LIKE JESUS in this world.

What an easy thing to do, *right?* Well, it is an easy thing to do, all it takes is a complete surrender!

When a person accepts Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into (indwells) their life permanently. The Holy Spirit indwells for several purposes but ultimately, He indwells to glorify Christ

Once you are surrendered to the Holy Spirit in your life, then you are able to be a **Light** to a lost and corrupt world.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." NKJV

Then notice the words, “*holding fast to the word of life*”.

Richard Cimino said, “*There are 2 ways we can understand this:*

1. Holding fast to the word of God in the sense of allowing it to be the authority of our lives, allowing it to inform and shape every area of our lives.

2. One translator said we could read this as holding forth the Gospel in the sense of holding it out; offering it to the world by our lives and with our words.” (Richard Cimino)

So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain

Paul did not want his work to be in vain and he knew his ministry was profitable to people so, if the Philippians did not continue serving the Lord, there was a sense it was all in vain.

III. A Drink Offering.

Read *Philippians 2:17-18*

2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. NKJV

When the first fruits were offered to the Lord, a grain offering was also to be burned, along with a gallon of wine poured out.

The drink offering was only to be offered in the Promise Land.

The instructions in *Leviticus* say, "*When you enter the land which I am going to give to you*" (v. 10)

Leviticus 23:12 And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD.

Leviticus 23:13 Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, NKJV

The wine was not wasted, but it was to be poured out onto the ground, as an **offering** to the Lord.

The Law for the drink offering said that God wanted this offering to be offered after His people entered the Promise Land.

When Jesus, instituted the Lord's Supper before His death,

Matthew 26:29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." NKJV

In **2 Timothy**, Paul said his life was a drink offering because he realized his mission in life was finished and he was going to go to heaven to be with the Lord.

Paul was about to get his heavenly reward of eternal life in heaven. Paul's life was being poured out to serve the Lord.

For the believer in Jesus Christ, we know we are eternal beings and even when this physical tent is put away, the real person inside of us lives on forever.

Notice, ***"the sacrifice and service of your faith"***. The Greek word for **service** means, ***"Service to God or His cause... any priestly action or sacred performance."***

If we are in Christ, we are priests.

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. NKJV

IV. Practical Application. Re-read *Philippians 2:18*

Paul's life being a sacrifice for Jesus Christ, whether he lived or died, was the source of joy for his life.

Paul wanted these Philippians to have the same attitude.

Remember, the *Book of Philippians* is known as the **book of joy**, not based on circumstances, but despite the circumstances, our joy is based on the relationship we have with the King.

Max Lucado in his book, *God Came Near*, tells a fictional story about a group of candles. One night when the electricity went out during a storm, Max went to a closet to look for candles.

He found four candles that looked good to light the rooms in the house. But he was surprised when the candles began to protest.

The first candle said, *"I'm not ready; I need more preparation."*

The candle described how he had been studying wind resistance and was listening to a series about wick buildup and it was reading a book on flame display, called *Waxing Eloquently*.

The second candle also protested, he was busy meditating on the importance of light and said, *"It's an enlightening experience"*.

The third candle said, *"I'm waiting to get my life together. I'm not stable enough. I lose my temper easily and I guess you could say I'm a hothead."*

The last candle explained, *"I'd like to help, but lighting the darkness is not my gift."*

*I'm a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly.” With that, she sang “**This Little Light of Mine.**”*

Finally, Lucado confessed that one by one he blew the candles out since they refused to do their job of giving off light.

The punchline of the story comes when he goes back to his wife and asks, “*Where did you buy these candles anyway?*” to which she replies, “*Oh, they’re church candles.*”

Remember that church that closed down across town? I bought them there.”

Too often those of us who are called to be the light of the world give excuses for why it’s not our gift to do evangelism or to live a life that lights up a dark and corrupt world.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Our lives are to be lived in such a way that other people may see our good deeds and glorify God.

Christians are to point the world to the One Who is responsible, and Who is to be **credited**, for any good that comes out of us.

The miraculous thing is the same Jesus Who said, “***I am the light of the world***”, also told us “***We are the light of the world***”

We are not simply to receive the light from the Lord, we are to be the light to a lost and dark world.

So, like Paul let’s live our lives to light this dark world up.