

Lights in the World

Philippians 2:14-16 (NASB 1995)

¹⁴ *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will **prove yourselves** to be blameless and innocent, **children of God above reproach** in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom **you appear as lights in the world,** ¹⁶ holding fast **the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.*

Introduction

We live in a world filled with darkness.

Every day we hear of wars, violence, corruption, broken families, loneliness, anxiety, and despair. Many people are confused about truth and have lost hope for the future. The moral darkness of our world seems to grow deeper every year.

Yet this is not a new phenomenon.

Paul the Apostle wrote to the Philippian believers almost two thousand years ago and described his generation as "crooked and perverse." In other words, the world has always been dark because sin has always darkened the human heart.

But God never intended His people merely to survive in the darkness. He called them to shine in it.

Paul says, "*Among whom you appear as **lights in the world.***"

Think about that statement.

The Church is not called to hide from the world. Neither are we called to become like the world. We are called to shine in the world.

A small candle may seem insignificant, but when it is lit in a dark room, everyone notices it. The darker the room, the brighter the light appears.

Likewise, God has placed every believer exactly where he or she is—in the home, the workplace, the neighborhood, and the community—to shine for Christ.

How, then, do we remain lights in the world?

Paul gives us four instructions.

I. Refuse the Spirit of Complaining

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing." (v. 14)

The word "grumbling" refers to inward complaining and murmuring. Sadly, grumbling comes naturally to us.

The Israelites in the wilderness are a perfect example. God delivered them from slavery, parted the Red Sea, fed them with manna from heaven, and guided them with the pillar of cloud and fire. Yet they continually grumbled.

Their problem was not their circumstances. Their problem was their hearts.

Complaining reveals a lack of trust in God.

It says: "God, I don't like what You have allowed in my life." "God, I think I know better than You."

We complain about: the weather, our jobs, our health, our government, our families, our church, and even God's providence.

Let's remember: a complaining spirit damages our witness before the world. The world already complains. The world already lives in bitterness. But believers are called to be different.

This does not mean that Christians never experience sorrow or frustration. Even the psalmists cried out in pain and confusion. The difference is this: we bring our burdens to God in faith (Psalm 55:22) rather than grumbling against Him in unbelief.

Joyful obedience is one of the brightest lights a Christian can shine.

When we trust God in difficult circumstances, people notice. When we remain thankful in suffering, people wonder why. When we choose contentment instead of complaining, we shine.

II. Live as Blameless Children of God

"So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent." (v. 15)

Paul is not teaching sinless perfection. Only Jesus was perfect. Rather, he is calling believers to live lives of integrity.

The words "blameless" and "innocent" describe a life that is genuine and sincere before God. It is the life that our conscience is clear before our heavenly Father.

Paul says we are to be: *"Children of God above reproach."* Children often resemble their parents.

Likewise, believers should resemble their Heavenly Father. The world should see something different in us. Not perfection. But Christlikeness.

The apostle Peter says: "*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*" (1 Peter 2:9).

We belong to God. Therefore, our conduct matters.

Paul writes believers live "*in the midst a crooked and perverse generation.*" The world that has twisted God's truth and wandered from His ways.

Does that not describe our own generation? Truth is often rejected. Good is called evil, and evil is called good. Biblical values are increasingly mocked. Yet God never commands us to curse the darkness.

Instead, He commands us to shine in it. The darker the world becomes, the brighter our witness should become. Imagine a satellite picture of night earth. Do you see all the bright spots? In God's eyes, we are those lights shining in the world of darkness.

III. Shine as Lights in the World

"*Among whom you appear as lights in the world.*" (v. 15)

This statement raises an important question:

What is light? To understand our calling, we must first understand the source of our light.

1. God Is Light

The Apostle John writes: "**God is Light**, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Light represents truth, holiness, purity, hope, life, and salvation.

God's Word begins with light. The first words God spoke in creation were: "*Let there be light*" (Genesis 1:3). And there was light.

It also ends with light in Heaven: "*The Lord God will illumine them*" (Revelation 22:5). The story of redemption moves from darkness to everlasting light.

David declared: "*The Lord is my light and my salvation*" (Psalm 27:1).

Prophet Micah proclaimed: "*Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light for me*" (Micah 7:8).

God is our hope in darkness. He turns darkness into light.

2. Jesus Is the Light

Jesus said: "***I am the Light of the world***; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12).

John the Apostle writes: "***In Him was life***, and the life was the Light of men" (John 1:4). The world was dark because of sin. Then Jesus came. He brought truth to confusion. He brought hope to despair. He brought forgiveness to sinners. He brought life to the spiritually dead.

John continues: "*The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it*" (John 1:5). Darkness could not extinguish His light. Neither can darkness extinguish the light of Christ in His people.

3. We Are the Lights

Jesus said: "*You are the light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14). Notice that He did not say: "You should become the light." or "You will be the light later." He said: "You are the light."

Why? Because Christ lives in us. We are not the source of the light. We are the reflection of His light. Just as the moon reflects the sun, believers reflect the glory of Christ.

So, how do we shine?

We shine: by speaking truth, by showing kindness, by loving others, by forgiving, by serving, by living with integrity, by rejoicing in difficult circumstances, and by refusing to grumble like the world.

Jesus said: *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

The purpose of our light is not to draw attention to ourselves. The purpose is to point people to God.

IV. Hold Fast the Word of Life

"Holding fast the word of life." (v. 16)

This is Paul's final instruction. The phrase "hold fast" means to cling firmly. The darker the world becomes, the more tightly we must hold on to God's Word.

God's Word is called: "the word of life."

Why? Because it leads people to eternal life. The gospel brings life to dead souls. The Scriptures give wisdom, hope, comfort, and direction. Without God's Word, we lose our bearings. Without God's truth, we stumble in darkness.

Psalms 119:105 says: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

A lighthouse serves no purpose if its light goes out. Likewise, the church loses its witness when it abandons God's truth.

Today many people are searching for meaning. Some seek it in money. Some in pleasure. Some in success. Some in power. But only Christ gives life. Only the gospel saves.

Therefore, Paul says: Hold fast. Do not let go of God's truth. Stand upon it. Believe it. Obey it. Proclaim it. Pass it on to the next generation.

Especially I say this to our young people. You may think life moves slowly, but the years pass quickly. Use your youth wisely. Spend time in God's Word. Learn to pray. Know Christ deeply. Build your life upon the solid foundation of God's truth.

You will never regret it.

Conclusion

I already spoke about a satellite picture of the earth at night.

Most of the earth is covered in darkness. Yet scattered across the darkness are countless bright lights from cities and villages. That image reminds me of the believers in Christ.

We are those lights. Individually our light may seem small. But together we shine brightly in a dark world.

God has placed you exactly where you are to be His light. In your home. In your workplace. In your school. In your neighborhood. In your community.

Do not underestimate the influence of one faithful believer. One light can guide many people. One candle can ignite countless others.

Therefore: Refuse the spirit of complaining. Live as blameless children of God. Shine as lights in the world. Hold fast the Word of Life.

And may people who see your life be drawn to the true Light of the world, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.