

“Shining as Lights in Darkness”
Philippians 2:15
(Preached at Trinity, January 1, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This section actually began back in **Chapter 1** and **Verse 27**. Paul begins to instruct the Philippians regarding how they should live in this present age. He reminded them of their great duty as citizens of the Kingdom of our Lord.
Philippians 1:27 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel"
2. As I pointed out last time, the Philippian church was facing obstacles from without *and* from within.
 - A. From the outside they were facing severe persecution from the citizens of Philippi. It was the same opposition Paul and Silas faced when they arrived in Philippi ten years before.
Philippians 1:28 NAU - "in no way alarmed by *your* opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them"
 - B. As always, they had to guard against error. The Church of Philippi was dealing with false teachers who were threatening the very heart of the Gospel.
Philippians 3:2 NAU - "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision"
 - C. From among their own members they were struggling with several sin issues.
 1. It would seem that they were suffering with some issues of disunity; of selfish pride. Paul admonishes them:
Philippians 2:3-4 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
 2. The steady creep of worldliness was having an effect upon them. Perhaps they were growing weary of the constant demands of the Christian life, particularly in the midst of unceasing opposition. Paul instructs them to press on.
Philippians 2:12 NAU - "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling"

3. Some were beginning to grumble and complain. It may have been complaints regarding the constant opposition they faced. They may have been grumbling towards one another or towards the leadership in the church. Using language from the Old Testament their thoughts would have been drawn to Israel in the wilderness.
All grumbling and murmuring is ultimately against God.
Exodus. 16:8 NAU - "for the LORD hears your grumbings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumbings are not against us but against the LORD."
Numbers 14:27 NAU - "How long *shall I bear* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me."
3. Paul reminds them again of the nature of this present age. He describes Philippian Christians as dwelling "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" Again, Paul is drawing upon language from the Old Testament. Moses used it to describe the evil generation of Israel who perished in the wilderness.
Deuteronomy 32:5 NAU - "They have acted corruptly toward Him, *They are* not His children, because of their defect; *But are* a perverse and crooked generation."
4. Paul's purpose is to point out the great difference between New Covenant Christians and those who are outside the faith. Paul uses great contrasting words:
- "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"
5. Paul was reminding the Philippians (and us) that we are profoundly different. We must shine forth in this wicked world showing ourselves to be blameless and innocent.
6. Let's take a few minutes to look at the great contrast.
- I. Paul describes the condition of lost humanity
- A. Paul calls them "crooked and perverse "
1. The word for "crooked" is σκολιός – we get our medical term scoliosis which describes the curvature of the spine.
- a. This describes the way of life for lost humanity. Instead of following a straight course towards God and His holiness they veer off course and pursue the path of lawlessness.
- b. The word has become synonymous with the wicked who do not follow after the way of righteousness.
Psalms 18:26 NAU - "With the pure You show Yourself pure, And with the crooked You show Yourself astute."
Psalms 125:5 NAU - "But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, The LORD will lead them away with the doers of iniquity."
Proverbs 21:8 NAU - "The way of a guilty man is crooked, But as for the pure, his conduct is upright."
Acts 13:10 NAU - "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

2. The word for “perverse” simply refers to corruption. Similar to the word for “crooked” it means “to turn away” or “mislead.”
- B. Paul implies that we dwell in a world of darkness
(light shines brightest in darkness)
Isaiah described the darkness that Christ has dawned upon
Isaiah 60:1-2 NAU - "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² "For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you."
1. Sin has always been compared with darkness
"For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples
The first Hebrew word in this verse for darkness is חֹשֶׁק (choshek) – which refers to obscurity
The second is עֲרָפֶל (araphel) – used to describe a heavy or dark cloud, gross darkness, thick darkness
 2. Darkness is a perfect metaphor for lost humanity
 3. Darkness describes blindness – a blind man cannot perceive light
 - a. The world is in great darkness, gross darkness symbolizing the absolute ignorance with regards to God - There is great blindness
 - b. Lost humanity simply cannot see beyond this present world. They cannot see beyond the physical, the flesh, the world.
 - c. This blindness enables a man to live in sin and approve of it. He is senseless to his wretched condition.
 4. This blindness has seized the world – Satan is an active agent in this blindness. He deceives and clouds the understanding
2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NAU - "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
- C. Paul describes the righteous as dwelling in the midst of this crooked, perverse--and darkened world.

II. Now let's look at Paul's description of the righteous

Philippians 2:15 NAU - "blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach"

- A. Paul is describing the fruit of our justification
1. Paul describes us as "blameless and innocent." But in the context Paul is describing the condition of life that flows forth from our positional righteousness.
 2. We can see this distinction in **Ephesians 1**
Ephesians 1:4 NAU - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."
ἄμωμος – same word translated “above reproach” in **Verse 15**
We have been saved in order that we might be declared righteous as well as to live righteously.

3. The NASB isn't the clearest here. Paul uses the common word γίνομαι which is a word that describes "existence." It means to be or to become. Paul says here in **Verses 14-15**, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may be blameless." He is describing how we live in this world. Paul is simply saying that our righteous lives put our justification on display. By refusing to complain or grumble we are displaying what we are.
- B. We are the "Children of God."
1. Paul surely has in mind the corruption of the Israelites and forfeiture of their right as children of God.
Deuteronomy 32:5 NAU - "They have acted corruptly toward Him, *They are* not His children, because of their defect; *But are* a perverse and crooked generation."
 2. Through Jesus Christ we, both Jew and Gentile, have been adopted as God's children
John 1:12 NAU - "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name"
 3. We bear the image of our Father. We are distinctly different from the people of this world.
- C. In contrast to the darkness of this world we shine forth as bright lights
1. The common Greek word for light is φῶς – 73 times in the NT
The word for light here is φωστήρ – only used twice. It refers to a luminary; something that emanates light.
 2. The only other time the word we used is in **Revelation 21** where it refers to the brightness of the New Jerusalem.
Revelation 21:10-11 NAU - "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper."
- III. How does this work out practically?
- A. Paul says we must shine brightly in this world of darkness
Philippians 2:15 NAU - "among whom you appear as lights in the world"
1. God has saved us out of this world of darkness
1 Peter 2:9 NAS - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"
 2. Those who have been saved out of the darkness now shine forth with brilliant light. Does this describe you?
John 8:12 NAU - "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Matthew 5:16 NAU - "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."

3. Paul is describing the great contrast
 - a. You cannot mix darkness and light. Light dispels darkness
 - b. God dwells in unapproachable light. John writes:
1 John 1:5-7 NAU - "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

B. We are to demonstrate this transforming grace to the world

Ephesians 5:8 NAU - "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light"

1. If we allow selfish ambition and pride to divide us we are behaving just like this crooked and perverse generation.
2. If we go through life grumbling and complaining and disputing we are living more as the people of this world than as the children of God.
3. We are shine forth in brightness that exposes their deeds of darkness.
Ephesians 5:11 NAU - "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;"
 - a. The word for "participate" means to have fellowship with
 - b. The people of this world share a common mindset that leads to a common behavior. With one accord they love darkness
4. Shining in the darkness also has evangelistic overtones. We shine brightly unto this dark world that they might see the glory of Christ.
Daniel 12:3 NAU - "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Conclusion:

1. One of the great weaknesses of modern Christianity is the failure to display the great transformation that has taken place. We weaken the demands of the Gospel. We diminish the display of the Gospel.
2. Christians must press on. This world of darkness continues to draw us. The ruler of the darkness of this age lies to us. He makes promises that the darkness will bring us happiness.
 We must continue shining brightly in this dark world. We are saved now but we haven't yet entered into glory. Paul says regarding the Philippians:
Philippians 2:16 NAU - "so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."
3. Paul always had his eye upon the ultimate conclusion. It is those who endure until the end who are taken into glory. We must keep the Day of Judgment always before our eyes.
Philippians 1:9-10 NAU - "and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;"
Philippians 3:14 NAU - "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."