

Series: Philippians Series 2024

Title: Hold Forth the Word of Life

Text: Php 2: 14-18

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**Philippians 2: 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16: Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18: For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.**

God makes his saints to shine as lights in the world. Christ Jesus is the Light in each of his saints throughout this world.

John 8: 12: [Christ said]...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

We were total darkness like every sinner born into this world, we were crooked and perverse, nothing but darkness. But God predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ so Christ sent the gospel and the Spirit of God to us and regenerated us and God shined within our hearts giving us the Light of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ is the Light of Wisdom in us. By Christ we have spiritual discernment to know him, believe on him, and follow him. By Christ the Light we know Christ is God in human flesh. By Christ the Light we have discernment to know and believe he is the brightness of God's glory, the express image of his person.

Christ is the Light by which we have spiritual discernment and believe that Christ accomplished the redemption of his people. By Christ's Light we believe that Christ was made curse for God's elect and delivered us from the curse of the law. By Christ's Light we believe he is our Righteousness in whom we are justified. By Christ's Light we believe he is our Sanctification in whom we are perfected forever and by whom we are separated out of darkness into his marvelous light, who keeps us separated unto him.

Therefore, by Christ our Light dwelling in his church, in each of his saints in particular, Christ said,

Matthew 5: 14: Ye are the light of the world.

As John the Baptist said, "We are not that light." Christ is the Light. Christ is the Sun of righteousness and we are like the moon. The moon does not have light in itself but reflects the light of the sun. We do not have light in ourselves. We reflect the Light of Christ.

We are always seen by this world.

Matthew 5: 14: A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

You have been driving down the road at night and up ahead there is a city on a hill. You see the glow of that city in the darkness. "*A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*" And that is according to God's purpose. God's purpose in giving his saints the Light of Christ is that we might be used of the Lord to bear witness of Christ and through the gospel, Christ gives Light to his lost sheep. That is what Christ said,

Matthew 5: 15: Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

He spoke of us as a city. He spoke of us as a candlestick. Christ's church is the city and the candlestick. His saints each have light. But together Christ is the Light who enlightened and united together to be the city shining on a hill, the candlestick to give light to others. Paul is writing these things to the Philippines as the

church of our Lord Jesus. Christ gave his church light to use us to preach the gospel--"*to hold forth the word of life*"--through which Christ gives light to his lost sheep who he redeemed. So Christ says,

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

There is a difference in doing good works "to be seen of men" and in the way Christ's church "*lets your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Christ said of the Pharisees,

Matthew 23: 5: all their works they do for to be seen of men...

They *give*--do alms--to be seen of men. They made long prayers and prayed in public to be seen of men. They fasted, denied themselves, to be seen of men. So that they might attract men to join them by those things. And when sinner joined with the Pharisee's they glorified them. The leaders gloried in what they constrained men to do. Paul declared that is why they constrain men to be circumcised, that they might glory in your flesh, that they might glory in what they made you do.

Galatians 6: 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13: For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Religious organizations today market their humanitarian efforts, their giving, their prayer meetings, their many programs and many other things for the purpose of attracting men and women to make a profession of faith and join their religious organization. And men glory in them. If you listen to people speak about their so-called church, they glory in the church. They glory in what all the church has to offer. But Christ is not preached.

Contrary to that, the motive Christ puts in the hearts of his people when he unites us with one mind is to preach Christ. Christ gives us one heart and one mind to hold forth the Word of Life, Christ Jesus. He gives us a heart to want to see God our Father glorified in Christ his Son.

Christ declares that when the Spirit of God visits one of Christ's lost sheep and gives them faith in Christ through the gospel, beholding your good works, they will glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel.

1 Peter 2: 12: Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

I have heard true brethren who were called out of freewill, legal religion speak about the good works they beheld in Christ's church when they first came. They say this of the good works of God's church, his saints, who Christ used to hold forth the word of life to them. They said the church did nothing to draw attention to themselves or to anything the church had to offer. Instead, they preached Christ. They turned all the focus to Christ.

True brethren have told me that when they sat and heard the gospel preached by one of God's true preachers, it was the first time they heard a preacher confess from the pulpit that he was a sinner. They say that God's saints did not pretend to be holier than them and make them feel inferior. God's saints all confessed themselves to be sinners saved by grace.

The good works for which they glorify God is that you did not draw attention to yourself but turned their attention to Christ and his works. When God saved those brethren, they glorified God our Father in Christ, for making those brethren be united together of one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, so that they set forth Christ the Light--they held forth Christ the Word of Life--rather than drawing attention to the church and attempting to attract them by their works and programs and such.

This is another reason the Spirit of God used Paul to remind us of the good news that *"it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* Our risen Redeemer is in each of his saints. He is in the midst of his church, *"working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

In Matthew 18, Christ declared what that will is. Speaking of God's elect who Christ redeemed, he said--

Matthew 18: 14:...it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Christ is working in each of his saints to fulfill that very will of our Father. He will not permit one of God's elect to perish. Christ bought us with his own blood. He is working in his church both to will and to do of his good pleasure so that we preach Christ and him crucified through which the Spirit of God gives Christ's lost, redeemed sheep, eternal life through faith.

## **DO ALL WITHOUT MURMURING AND DISPUTING**

**Philippians 2: 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;**

Having given us the blessed assurance that Christ is in our midst working the will of God, we have no reason to murmur or dispute, not with men of this world, and certainly not with each other. We each know our Savior was sovereign to work his will in us and he continues to do so. He effectually called us, personally, to repentance and faith. And Christ has continued to do so from the first day until now.

John 1: 12: As many as received him, to them gave he power [privilege] to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So having experienced Christ's Power to work his will and good pleasure in us, we know only Christ can work his will in lost sinners to whom we bear witness. We know only Christ can work his will in our brethren. And we have Christ's word that he is doing just that. So we have no reason to murmur or dispute with anyone.

We do not want to murmur and dispute so that we *"may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."* The only way we will be blameless and harmless before God is in Christ. Christ has made his saints perfectly righteous and holy in him alone. So he shall present us to the Father without spot in that day in his righteousness and his holiness. But our motive, our heart's desire due to Christ's love toward us, is to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, before men--*"in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in this world."*

Brethren, unregenerate sinners, especially unregenerate *religious* sinners, will certainly accuse us. They did so to Christ and he was without sin. Brother Don used to say, "Do not think unregenerate sinners will see Christ in you, they did not see Christ in Christ!"

In fact, they hated Christ because he is the Light, because Christ is righteous and holy. Christ's presence exposed their very best deeds as sin, as not being righteous and holy like they boasted. Their evil sins were their own self-righteous religious deeds. When Christ came and preached the gospel to them and did the works no other man did, they had no more cloke for their sin. Their so-called righteousness and holiness was exposed as coming short of the glory of God. Christ said,

John 15: 22: If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. 23: He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24: If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25: But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

The evil sins which religious sinners do not want exposed by Christ the Light is their religious deeds.

John 3: 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

By God's grace, the Spirit of God makes us hear the gospel and behold Christ's works and the Spirit reveals our very best religious deeds are evil. But the Spirit sanctifies the word to our hearts so that we come to Christ the Light, confessing that Christ alone worked the deeds of the law for us and justified us. To do truth is to come to Christ the Light confessing that Christ alone is our only righteousness and holiness before God.

The Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous hated Christ because Christ is the only Righteousness God will receive. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The carnal man minds the things of the flesh such as touch not, taste not, and handle not. But the unregenerate sinner cannot keep God's law nor will he nor can he submit to the gospel of Christ.

Therefore, they tried every means to discredit Christ so they could justify themselves for not hearing and believing his gospel. Depraved sinners have not changed. They do the same in our day. But we do not want to murmur and dispute with men, certainly not with each other, so as to give men a reason to accuse us. We want men and women to come hear the gospel of Christ. We want their focus on Christ, not on us. So knowing Christ is working in his people both to will and do of his good pleasure, do all things without murmuring and disputing. Only Christ can make men believe on him. Preach Christ and try to make yourself unnoticeable.

## **HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE**

### **Philippians 2: 16: Holding forth the word of life.**

Simply tell your friends and family what Christ has done for you. When Christ cast the devil's out of that brother, he wanted to go with Christ.

Mark 5:19: Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Hold forth the word of life by telling your friends how the LORD chose you from before the foundation of the world in Christ. You can tell them, "I know he did because if he had not chosen me and revealed himself in me, I certainly would not have chosen him."

Hold forth the word of life by telling your friends, "Christ sent forth the Spirit and regenerated me. I was a dead sinner and did not want to hear of Christ. But he sent the Holy Spirit and gave me faith. For the first time I agreed with God that I am the guilty sinner. For the first time, I believed Christ alone is all my Righteousness."

Or if you are not able to put it into words then invite them to come hear the gospel preached. Philipp told Nathaniel he knew where Christ is. When Nathaniel objected, "Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (Jn 1: 46). You can tell your friends that you have found a place where Christ is preached in truth according to the scriptures, "Come and see." The woman at the well "went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him" (Jn 4: 28-30).

Each of us united by Christ in one spirit and one mind are "*holding forth the word of life*" each time the gospel is preached from this pulpit. That is our mission. That is the charge Christ has given us. It is why the church is yet in this world, to hold forth the word of life.

It is preaching Christ and him crucified. Christ is the Word. Christ is the Life. He gives eternal life and Christ is that eternal life. He prayed to the Father and said,

John 17:2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Christ already redeemed those the Father gave to him! That is what Christ declared.

John 17: 4: I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Now our risen Redeemer is sending this gospel by which Christ gives life to his redeemed.

1 Corinthians 1:21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Do not murmur and dispute with men. We cannot force sinners to believe the gospel. Remember "*it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" The Spirit of God must bear witness of Christ in the heart.

1 John 5: 10: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12: He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

## **THE PRICELESS VALUE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**

**Philippines 2: 16...that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18: For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.**

In these two statements, Paul declares the priceless value of the gospel of Christ. Paul's labor was preaching Christ. Paul is not suggesting that the word of life ever returns to God void. Paul knew and declared constantly that Christ works these works in his people through the preaching of the gospel. God said,

Isaiah 55: 11: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Paul knew that. But Paul's desire, in the day of Christ's return, was to rejoice that Christ made the word effectual in those to whom Paul ministered. By that he would know he had not run in vain neither labored in vain. Until the Lord made me a pastor, I never realized how things I did affected my pastor. God unites the heart of his pastor with those to whom Christ gives life like a father and his children. The greatest rejoicing to me now is beholding Christ work in you. It is evident that you believe on Christ. I rejoice to behold you hold forth the word of Life to one another and pray for one another, trusting one another to Christ. You do the same for others. That makes a pastor rejoice that he has not run in vain nor labored in vain. The Word of Life accomplished that in you.

This is how important the preaching of the gospel is. Here is how the gospel of Christ is of priceless, inestimable value to us. Paul said, "*Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith*"--if I am martyred, killed, as I serve you by preaching the gospel of Christ to you--"*I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*" The gospel of Christ was such unsearchable riches to Paul that he would rejoice to be killed preaching the gospel to his brethren. It was of the same value to the Philippian brethren. Paul said that if he was killed preaching Christ for the good of their souls, "*For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.*" The Word of Life is Christ. His riches are unsearchable. His gospel is priceless to those Christ has given life. May the Lord increase the value of the gospel unto us and make us of the same mind and same love with Paul and our Philippian brethren.

**Amen!**