

Holding Forth The Word of Life

Philippians 2:14-16



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FOCAL Read Responsively Philippians 2:14-16 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 labored in vain.**

A young girl passed me as I left the supermarket the other day, and what was written on her shirt really caught my eye. In red letters across a pink shirt were the words “I hate people”. I wondered what would cause a young person to wear such a shirt, or what would cause a parent to allow such a thing to be on their child. “I hate people”. If you hate people, then isn't it true – since you are a “people” - that you also hate yourself? This child – not much past a teenager – is already soured on people and on life. How sad! Then I thought to myself, “What if this young girl came to our Church? Would she find what she needed to draw her away from such low self esteem and such anger?”

What could our local Church offer this young lady?
What could your local Church offer this generation?

Though the Philippian Church was a wonderful local Body of Christians the Apostle warned them – and us – of the necessity of a properly operating local Church in any society. Every election year I watch local Churches lose their identities and begin to do things that they were never designed to do. Some Churches allow and even encourage their pastors to preach polluted messages that

have nothing at all to do with **holding forth the Word of Life**. Other Churches cease serving the Lord and move into sensual carnality, much like the ancient Corinthian Church did. Yet other assemblies depart from **holding forth the Word of Life** and opt instead to **hold forth the Mosaic Law**. These bodies listen to the Judaizers, just as the Galatians did, and earn the admonition of God. **Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law: you have fallen from Grace (Galatians 5:4).**

When a disillusioned person comes into the assembly of the local Church that person needs to see a unified Body of Christlike Believers all working together toward a common goal. The local Church is on mission for the Father, saved by the love of the Son, and empowered by the Blessed Holy Spirit of God. As genuine believers the world needs to see us working together to **hold forth the Word of Life**. The world needs to see a local Church bound together by love doing what God has told it to do.

The young lady or young man who *hates people* will not respond to a local Church that is divided, argumentative, apathetic or half hearted. We offer the **Word of Life** to the world. We tell the world that **Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, and that we are all sinners**. We who are the local Church need to behave as **those who have life**. If what Jesus said is true:

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

Then the world needs to see a local Church that has **passed from death and into life**. Though it is true that no Christian is perfect – for we are all a continuing work of God – there should be more unity and more life in the local Church than there is in the world around it. **We are commanded to shine as lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse nation.**

We can only overcome Satan when we overcome

Revelation 12:11 ... him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

As Missionaries the Church is called to tell others what Jesus did for it. If you are saved then you have a **word of life in your testimony**. Tell the person on the pew next to you about the Jesus Who loves you so. I have heard of *and visited* local Churches that should have had *Frigidaire* written across their entrance. I have been to local Churches where no one has spoken to me. If I came in hating people like that young girl does, I would certainly not be led to Christ in such a Church. Tell the one next to you that you love them, then tell them about Jesus. **Hold forth the Word of Life to those in your periphery**. As Missionaries tell your families about Jesus, and let them see the Lord in how you live your lives. Let **holding forth the Word of Life** be your primary objective.

Years ago a restaurant had a sign next to its cash register saying:

We have made a deal with the bank. We will not cash checks, and the bank will not make pizzas.

That is good wisdom. As the local Church let's focus on being genuine in our calling, doing what God has given us to do. **Hold forth the Word of life** so that those who are bound to death can see Christ in you. **Hold forth the Word of Life, for it is God Who works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).**

1. The Watching World Needs To See The Local Church "Doing" The Things Of Christ

FOCAL Philippians 2:14 **"Do all things"**

No Christian is *ever* saved by doing, but the saved Christian always serves the Lord Who saved him. We read:

Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; {7} That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

You are **heirs of God** because you called on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His Blood that made your salvation possible, and the work of God the Holy Spirit that made your salvation an *eternal reality*. No Christian will stand in God's glory and bask in their own glory. None of us will stand before His Throne in eternity and

say to those gathered around it:

**"Look at me!
I'm so good!
I made it,
Like I knew I should!"**

Christians are saved by Grace, and *empowered by Grace*. The Christian is saved so that God's Presence and Redemptive Activity can be expressed through us.

God became man so that He could redeem that which is fallen. Once redeemed God's uses that which He has redeemed to reach others with His Plan of Redemption. We are to "do" for God, but our doing is not just busy work. **God wants to save the world, and offers salvation to the world by faith in Christ but through the local Church.** We have the Word of Life.

FOCAL Philippians 2:14-16 **Do all things ... {shining} as lights in the world; {16} Holding forth the word of life...**

The Church is called to be **lights in the world** – enabling others to see. The Church is called to **hold forth the Word of Life** so that others might live. We must allow God to *do* through us. If we are saved, we are **doers of righteousness**. We do what God tells us to do. Jesus says to us:

John 14:15, 21 If ye love me, keep my

commandments. {21} He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Our faith looks invalid to a watching world if we do not *live in our faith*. When we do that which Christ commands, then a watching world will be drawn to the Light of Christ in us. When we are apathetic or lazy in our application of faith the world discounts what we say as just so much hypocrisy.

If you love Jesus **you will do as He says**. And if you do as He says then **He will manifest or make Himself known unto you**. Too many professing believers do not have a growing relationship with God because they will not yield themselves to God. God wants His people to be holy and pure. He wants His people to display unity in all things. He wants His people to love one another.

Listen Beloved, God will use the local Church that makes itself available to Him. But we must be available. Do you remember the Lord's **Parable of the Talents** in **Matthew 25:14 ff**. The Lord gave **five talents** to one person, **two talents** to another, and **one talent** to the last man. When the Lord returned He praised the men who labored with the talents that He gave them, but the **unprofitable servant** lost his talent – and his reward – because he did not glorify the Master in his treatment of it.

As a local Church you have been given a wonderful mission to reach this lost and dying world with the glorious message of salvation. Use what God has given you for His glory and God will remove obstacles that stand in your way. God wants you to be Lights in this present dark world. **Do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)**.

2. The World Watches The Local Church For Signs of Death

FOCAL **Philippians 2:14** **Do all things without murmurings ...**

If we have and are **holding forth the Word of Life** then we should be operating in the sphere of love – not of hatred.

Every member in the local Church is commanded to **avoid murmurings**¹. The word **murmuring** refers to *whispered grumbling and complaining against either God or your fellow believer*. God's nation Israel was characterized by murmuring:

Exodus 16:2-3 **And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: {3} And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the**

¹ G1112, γογγυσμός, goggusmos, *gong-goos-mos*', From G1111; a *grumbling*: - grudging, murmuring.

full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Murmuring offends God, ruins the unity of the Body, and – if left unchecked – destroys the Body of Christ. Moses reminded Israel:

Exodus 16:8 ... the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.

Do all things without murmuring, for murmuring offends God. Let your love be so strong for one another that minor faults in your members are lovingly and openly corrected. Murmuring does nothing but conspire. Remember that **Satan accuses the brethren before God day and night (Revelation 12:10)**. Do not play the devil!

FOCAL **Philippians 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings**

Murmuring's twin is called “disputing”. Murmuring complains against the Providence of God. When Israel had discomfort they **murmured against God**. “**Disputings**”, on the other hand, complains and finds fault within the Body.

Look now at the word **disputings**², or literally **internal**

2 G1261, **διαλογισμός**, dialogismos, *dee-al-og-is-mos'*, From G1260; *discussion*, that is, (internal) *consideration* (by implication *purpose*),

argumentation. God has given us clear direction in His Holy Word – we know what we are to do. We are to “**earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (**Jude 3**), but we need to make sure that we are not debating every knotty point just so that we can be right. Whether I am “right” or you are “right” is of little matter. God has given us a job to do. Do it! God alone is always right. Stay on God's side.

Let your cry be that of Moses, who, on coming down from Sinai found Israel in terrible idolatry. Moses cared little for his own reputation, but cared for God. He cried out

Exodus 32:26 ... Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Moses always stood with God no matter what. Let that be your attitude. We should all stand in one accord on the Lord's side.

Some who profess to be Christian go about *looking for fault* in others, so much so that I believe the title “judge” should precede their names. We are not called to be judges, but to **hold forth the Word of Life**. We are on mission in this world telling every person that Christ will save them if they but call upon the Name of the Lord!

or (external) *debate*: - dispute, doubtful (-ing), imagination, reasoning, thought.

Do your job, do what God has called you to do, and, if a brother and a sister are doing their best, *encourage them*. There is but One Who will **judge the quick and the dead at His appearing (2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5)**, and that Person is Jesus Christ. Unless a brother or a sister is in grievous and obvious *sin*, clearly forbidden by the Word of God, then let God be their Judge. The Apostle said to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 4:2-5 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. {3} But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. {4} For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. {5} Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come ...

Judging and judgmentalism has destroyed many a Church. Thank God this evil thing is not among you! Remember the wisdom of the man who said **“never argue with a fool, for he will draw you down to his level, then beat you with experience”**.

You were not saved to go about arguing with and finding fault with others. You were saved so that you could represent Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. Jesus Christ alone can separate the wheat from the tares, and He alone can tell righteous from unrighteous.

Tell others about Jesus. Tell them to **call upon the Name**

of the Lord so that they might be saved. Do what God has called you to do, and trust God to be God!

3. Does The Watching World See A “Son Of God” In You?

FOCAL **Philippians 2:15 THAT ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke ...**

We who are His by faith are to be **blameless and harmless, the Sons of God**. Think about these two words, **blameless** and **harmless**. We represent our Father as **Sons of God** in this present world. Think on the Lord's prayer for a moment. We are to pray:

**Our Father, Who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name. (Matthew 6:9)**

Pastor John Piper says “The first thing in the heart of Jesus is the hallowing of His Father's Name. The top priority, the number one priority in the heart of Jesus is that the Father's Name be hallowed. So when we wake up in the morning by grace the first thing on our minds should be “hallowed be Thy Name”. “Let Your Name be hallowed. Work in me and in Christians all over the world that Your Name might be hallowed today”.³

God is not **hallowed** or **set apart and glorified** by the Christian who **murmurs and mutters**. God is not **hallowed** by the **apathetic Christian**. Remember that

³ From *Christ Is Hallowed In Us When We Hope In Him* by John Piper

God the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as a Dove, not a Hawk or a Raven. The Dove is most peaceable, a loving creature, and a wonderful illustration of the Eternal God.

The great preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** wrote:

“Remember, O Christian, that thou art a son of the King of kings—even God himself. Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in his beauty — let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the golden streets — let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are soon to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy. As “the sons of God, “ remember that the eyes of all are upon you; more is expected from you than from other men, because ye have a higher pedigree, for ye are descended from the very Highest himself, and therefore should be the highest and best in the world.”⁴

The world will find fault with you, but let them not find fault in how you serve your God. The world hates the righteous, and looks for fault. Live your life like Daniel lived his. His enemies looked at Daniel's life and said:

Daniel 6:5 ... We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

They could find nothing wrong with Daniel other than the fact that, according to them, he was a *little too Christian*. So they conspired against him, and had him thrown in the lion's den because he was *too faithful in praying*.

If the world finds fault with you, let them find it in your praying, in your worship of the Lord, in your obedience to the precepts of Scripture, in your attempts at imitating Christ in your own lives.

God will bless that type of life, and will close the mouths of the lions when they gather around you. But God will not defend the believer who is an imitator of the world and its hatefulness. **Be sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.**

FOCAL **Philippians 2:15** **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;**

The Christian, living for Jesus, has the inherent power to change the world around them. This power does not come from us, but from *God in us*.

The more obedient we are for God, the more we will quite supernaturally shine for the Lord in this world. The Church was not designed to be a monastery, but a living missionary!

⁴ From *Believers – Lights in The World*, September 28th, 1862

The monastery is a Catholic invention where professing Christians joined together in little sects, shaved their heads, and stayed secluded behind stone walls so they could “get closer to God”. The concept of a monastery is totally alien to the Scriptural pattern of the local Church. Look at the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus called people out of the world:

Matthew 4:19 ... Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

A fisher of men does not hide behind wall and dress in funny robes. A fisher of men goes out with the intent of catching others for Christ. What did Jesus say of His Church?

Matthew 5:13-16 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. {14} Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. {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. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt does no good in the salt shaker! Light does no good behind a wall.

You can eat a meal, find it unsavory, and look at the salt in the shaker all day and never be satisfied. Salt must come out the shaker and go where its needed, or it is totally useless. **You are the light of the world.** Light does no good unless it is carried to where the darkness is. Your faith is absolutely no good to the world in the monastery – or in the assembly of the local Church. There are many who profess Christ who are only joyful and open Christians in the midst of the assembly of the local Church. Our faith was meant to be public. We are called to be **shining lights in the world.**

And finally, note that we are **shining LIGHTS**. This is plural, not singular.

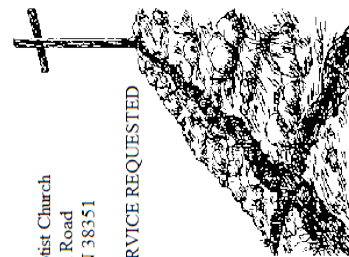
Like the stars in the sky, Christians bond together in the local Church in order to light the night. Like an army, Christians cannot stand alone. Our enemy, Satan, commands forces that are much greater than one of us could withstand. Yet when we stand together in Christian unity Jesus has promised:

Matthew 18:18-20 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. {19} Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. {20} For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

There is power in the unified Church focused on worshipping the Lord. Though we individually have insufficient power against the enemy, united we can defeat Satan because **greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)**. We are the light of the world. We **hold forth the Word of life**.

As **lights**, we point others to the only Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. As **lights** we warn every person that **he that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, for he has not believed on the Name of Jesus (John 3:18)**. As **lights** we do not proffer our opinions as to right and wrong, but **hold forth God's Word** as that which is inerrantly true. As **lights** we do not seek to please ourselves, but our Lord Who is **THE Light of the world. (John 9:5)**.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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