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“Our Witness Impacts Our World”

Philippians 2:12–18

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God calls us to live our faith out loud for others to see and hear about Jesus. Paul reminded us that we live in a “crooked and perverse generation,” and as we study from Philippians 2, we see that for this reason we must shine the light of Jesus in this dark world.

1. Reasons to rejoice
  - a. Paul’s joy
    - i. Paul wrote of “joy” 14 times in Philippians despite his circumstances.
      1. Paul was in chains for the sake of the Gospel.
      2. But while imprisoned, Paul wrote Philippians and three other epistles.
    - ii. Paul encouraged the Believers in Philippi, Greece, to rejoice with him.
  - b. Reasons to rejoice
    - i. God will finish what He began in us (**Philippians 1:6**).
    - ii. God will use our chains for His divine purposes (**Philippians 1:13**).
    - iii. To live is Christ, to die is gain (**Philippians 1:21**).
    - iv. Unity comes through humility; humility comes from following the example of Jesus (**Philippians 2:2–5**).
2. **Philippians 2:12–18** – “[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. [14] Do all things without complaining and disputing, [15] that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16] holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. [17] Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [18] For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”
3. Our witness impacts our world
  - a. The joy of our witness
    - i. Paul was being poured out.
      1. Paul knew he was being “poured out,” that he faced great peril, but Paul also knew Christ would be enough.

2. Paul would be beheaded for his faith during his second imprisonment.
- ii. Despite being poured out, Paul rejoiced, for he knew that sharing Christ with others was worth the cost.
  1. **Philippians 2:14–16** – “[14] *Do all things without complaining and disputing, [15] that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16] holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*”
  2. When we represent Jesus to others, we bring joy to ourselves, others, and the heart of our Father.
- b. The necessity of your testimony
  - i. Paul built on his earlier theme of humility.
    1. Paul explained why unity founded on humility, which is founded on the example of Christ, is an important part of our witness to the world.
    2. This dark world needs your testimony, but the world will not accept it if you do not represent the unity and humility of Christ.
  - ii. **Philippians 2:15** – Paul said he lived in “. . . *a crooked and perverse generation.*”
    1. Paul wrote Philippians around 62 A.D., during the time of the Roman Empire.
    2. Roman culture was hedonistic, cruel, and twisted—and so is ours.
    3. Our culture is filled with pornography, human trafficking, crimes against children, gender confusion, and so much more.
  - iii. The world is “*perverse.*”
    1. The Greek word for “*perverse*” is **diastrephō**, meaning “to turn off the right path.”
    2. The people in Isaiah’s day chose their own way, too.
    3. **Isaiah 53:6** – “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.*”
  - iv. The world is “*crooked.*”
    1. The Greek word for “*crooked*” is **skolios**, meaning “bent or curved.”
    2. The word “scoliosis” comes from the root word **skolios**.
  - v. **Amos 7:7–8** – “[7] *Thus He showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. [8] And the LORD said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb*

*line.’ Then the Lord said: ‘Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.’”*

1. When men deny God and adopt their own moral standards, they have become crooked.
  2. The prophet Amos saw a plumbline sent to Israel.
    - a. A plumbline was a string with weight on one end to help you measure the straightness of the vertical wall.
    - b. God is the plumbline—the objective standard, not culture.
    - c. **DISCUSS:** How do you evaluate the world (social media, news, movies, work conversations, etc.) through a Biblical framework?
  3. The Declaration of Independence bases our laws on the “laws of nature and nature’s God.”
    - a. This language is based on William Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, the standard law book of England.
    - b. In Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, under book 1, section 2, on the topic of the laws of nature, he said, “The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and they are to be found only in the holy scriptures.”
    - c. **DISCUSS:** How can we remind ourselves and each other to be transformed into the nature of God rather than conforming to whatever comes naturally to us?
- vi. **Deuteronomy 32:5** – When the Israelites rebelled against God, Moses said, *“They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation.”*
1. Moses described his generation around 1,500 B.C. using the same words Paul used.
  2. Every culture since the fall of man has been crooked and perverse, and every culture since the fall of man needs godly people to be salt and light.
4. **Philippians 2:12** – *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*
- a. Living up to the high calling of God
    - i. Paul began by commending the church for their godly living during his time at Philippi.
      1. Paul called the Believers at Philippi *“my beloved.”*
      2. Paul was proud of these Believers.

- ii. Paul then asked the Philippians to live godly even in Paul's absence.
    - 1. Paul wrote to the church he had planted ten years prior, for Paul cared that they live up to God's call for the church.
    - 2. We are called to obey God in the absence of spiritual leaders. God sees all.
    - 3. **DISCUSS:** How do you live out your faith knowing that God is in the room with you always?
  - b. Working out our salvation
    - i. Paul was not saying we earn our salvation.
      - 1. Paul was writing to people who were already saved.
      - 2. Christianity is not a works-oriented religion but a faith-based relationship.
      - 3. **DISCUSS:** When have you felt you must earn your way to God? What caused that belief? How do we avoid falling for that lie in a world that often acts as if we must earn love?
    - ii. Paul was saying that we must let others see we belong to the Lord.
      - 1. We are to work out what God works in us (**Philippians 2:13**).
      - 2. We are to have a healthy fear of the Lord (**Philippians 2:12**).
      - 3. **DISCUSS:** How do we distinguish a healthy fear of God from an unhealthy fear of our idea of God (**Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 14:27; 1 John 4:16–18**)?
      - 4. Our faith cannot be private—that would mean we are embarrassed or ashamed of God or the Gospel.
      - 5. **DISCUSS:** What has stopped you from witnessing to others? How can you boldly share Jesus with others this week (**Romans 1:16; Romans 10:14**)?
      - 6. **Matthew 3:8** – “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.”
      - 7. **John 15:8** – “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”
5. **Philippians 2:14–15** – “[14] Do all things without complaining and disputing, [15] that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”
- a. No complaining
    - i. When we go around complaining or arguing, we tarnish our witness.
    - ii. **DISCUSS:** What can you do instead of complaining after a hard day?
  - b. Blameless and harmless
    - i. The world is “*crooked and perverse*,” and by contrast, we must be “*blameless and harmless*.”
    - ii. The word “*blameless*” means “without accusation.”

1. *“Blameless”* does not mean we become perfect and sinless this side of heaven.
2. *“Blameless”* means we do not give people reasons to accuse us.
- iii. The word *“harmless”* is translated to *“innocent”* in the ESV and *“pure”* in the NIV.
  1. Our lives should be a witness of the transformative power of God.
  2. Remember we are Christ’s ambassadors to this world.
- c. Lights in a dark world
  - i. The word *“lights”* is translated as *“stars”* in some Bible versions.
    1. The original Greek, **phōstēr**, can mean “luminaries.”
    2. Paul is implying with the word *“lights”* that this world is dark and in need of the light of Jesus.
  - ii. We should be reflecting the light of Jesus.
    1. **Matthew 5:16** – *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*
    2. **John 3:19** – *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”* (1984 NIV)
- d. Forgiven and free in Christ
  - i. People respond in one of two ways to the light of Christ.
    1. Some hate the light because they fear exposure.
    2. But those who are vulnerable and humble themselves before Christ find joy, forgiveness, and freedom in Him.
- e. **1 Peter 2:11-12** – *“[11] Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. [12] Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”* (1984 NIV)
  - i. Defining terms
    1. Believers are *“aliens”* in this world, and it is healthy for us to sometimes feel we do not belong to this corrupt world.
    2. The word *“pagans”* is another word for unbelievers.
  - ii. The warning and the command
    1. Peter warned that we must not fall prey to the perverse ways of this generation that we were delivered from.
    2. Peter conveyed God’s command that we live for the Lord, letting Him shine through our words and deeds.
    3. The word *“see”* implies that our testimony needs to be visible, not giving way to the philosophy and customs of this world.

4. **Colossians 2:8** – *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”* (1984 NIV)
  5. **DISCUSS:** What pulls you to the things of this world? How do you fight it?
- iii. **Romans 12:2** – *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* (NIV)
1. The mission of the world is to conform us into its image.
  2. The mission of the Lord is to transform us into His image.
  3. As the church, we must take up God’s mission by sharing Christ and the transformative Word of God.
  4. **Isaiah 40:4–5** – *“Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; [5] The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)