

Rejoicing in Sacrificial Witness

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[0 : 00] So there are some echoes in this passage from the Old Testament. In Exodus 19, when Israel had been saved from Egypt, they had escaped the power of Pharaoh, they had come out to the desert, and they stood before Mount Sinai.

So they traveled all that time, they'd come all the way to Mount Sinai. So they're there, and they're about to see God descend upon that mountain with smoke and fire and lightning and trumpet sounds, and then they are about to be given the law, written on tablets of stone.

So in chapter 19 is kind of the setup. Chapter 20 is the law. Chapter 19 is the setup. So they're preparing, and he has, you have three days to prepare.

And so God says to them, to Moses to them, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession.

You will be a kingdom of priests. You will be a holy nation. And then you skip forward 40 years, after the wilderness, after a lot of grumbling, after they test God 10 times, after they rebel in the desert, after they basically say, God, no, we're not going into that promised land.

[1 : 44] There's giants. There's, you know, we don't want to go. Can't do it. So they fail in faith. After all that, so 40 years afterwards, after God says, you will be all this, if you keep my word and you keep my covenant, Moses says in Deuteronomy 32, almost the very end, Moses says, this people is no longer your children.

They are a crooked and twisted generation. The very words Paul uses of our world.

Israel, who's called to be God's children, in 40 years proved not to be his children, but in fact, worldly, crooked, twisted, with blemish.

So we have these echoes. So Paul, now here in Philippians 2, calls us to be the very thing that Israel failed to be.

He calls us to be that different, to be that light in the midst of a generation in our world that is crooked and twisted. He calls us to be lights and unblemished and spotless and blameless in the midst of a world of darkness.

[3 : 16] So that's what he's calling. And so it's interesting that Paul's playing on those words because he brings in the grumbling as well. That one of the ways we become spotless is by not grumbling.

One of the ways we become a light in our community is by not grumbling and arguing. So our mouth, we could somehow bridle the tongue, right?

As James says, we'll be perfect. Here Paul says, yeah, you'd be blameless. You'd be a light in the world. So it's a very fascinating perspective, especially with the contrast of how Israel had gone that different way.

They were natural. So our question today is, how do believers today do what Israel couldn't do?

They didn't do it. How can the church do it?

And does the church do it? How's the church doing? As a light. As not grumblers. Not arguers. So context is important.

[4 : 25] Remember what Paul has been doing since the very end of chapter 1, verse 27. He's been emphasizing the priority of unity.

The big issue is unity. In chapter 1, 27, he talks about let your manner be worthy or literally be a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ. Why? So that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are what?

Standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. So unity, united. That you are striving together for unity as citizens of the gospel.

So there he's talking about there's an outside threat so that you will strive together against your opponents, those who attack the gospel, that you'll continue to be united in the faith of the gospel. Right? So unity that way. And then he come to chapter 2, and again he's going to keep emphasizing unity. Verse 2 in chapter 2. Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in one soul and one mind.

[5 : 38] Again, verse 5. Think this. Think this way, which is the way Jesus thought. So again, cultivate a selfless attitude for the sake of unity.

And there he's talking about an inside threat. We don't just defend the gospel against outside threat, but there is a threat to our unity from inside. What's the threat?

Verse 3 in chapter 2. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but with humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you not look only to his own interests, but to the interests of others.

So in other words, what is a threat to our unity? Selfishness. Selfishness. Which is natural. Being naturally just focused on myself, my interests, my concerns.

And he actually dares to tell us, actually regard others more significant than yourself. Now who does that? Nobody's more significant than me. Right?

[6 : 38] Don't you agree? No, you don't want to agree? But we naturally think that. We don't really think that. We wouldn't say it out loud. But that's often how we act.

I want the most comfortable seat. I want the, you know, serve me first at the dinner table. You know, whatever. We have to restrain ourselves from being, you know, what we really think.

That's natural. So he's saying, there's some struggles that we have. And that's the internal threat against our unity. Is not being of the same mind, same love.

And not curbing our selfish ambitions. So here's the priority. Is unity. And he talks about fulfill my joy. Complete my joy by being united.

By maintaining your unity. So there's joy in this selfish unity. But what's the purpose of unity? Why is unity so important? What's at stake? And what we find here in this next passage, 12 to 18, is what is at stake is our witness.

[7 : 49] Our unity is critical because that's how we appear to the world. If we are ununited, what will the world think of the church?

What does the world think of the church when just one Christian in the world has a bad reputation?

Ah, see, the church is like that. When one Christian in the world grumbles a lot.

Ah, see, they're not any different than, Christians aren't any different than anybody else. Why should I be interested in that? Christians are, oh, you hear another church split. See, that can't even get along.

What kind of power do they have? I mean, that's that. You see, Jesus really meant it when he said, this is my new command, that you love one another as I love you. In other words, selflessly, laying down your life for one another.

Love one another as I have loved you. By this, all men shall know that you are, what? My disciples. How you treat one another will distinctively set you apart as my disciples.

[8 : 57] How you treat one another, your unity, your protection of that unity is your witness. It's the power of your witness. It's not just about my individual witness.

That's important too. But this text is really emphasizing our unity together, our plural witness, our church witness.

What do people think about little love? Some of you probably hear things. Every once in a while it gets back to me, but usually it doesn't get back to me.

Because I'll find out something like, what? Where'd you hear that? Oh, that's what they said. I'm like, really? How'd they get that idea? Well, someone's been to your church and they're grumbling about it.

Ah. Okay, that's natural. It's not Christian, but it's natural. So, you can see.

[10 : 05] And we have an opportunity in this time when there's so much darkness, when there's so much grumbling, so much arguing, huh, in our culture, to be a light.

People are getting really tired of being cooped up. People are really tired of being restricted. And it's starting to show.

It's been shown for a while, probably in some places. And so the people that are actually patient, kind, nice, really stand out. Nowadays.

We have an opportunity to show a difference. Why aren't you complaining like everybody else? My Lord's sitting on his throne. I know he's got this in hand.

What? You're nuts. You mean Trump? No. My Lord. So, the priority of unity comes to the purpose of unity, and that's joy and sacrificial witness.

[11 : 23] So, Paul reminds us now, he's going to remind us of two applications of our unity as a church, how we together become that light in the world.

So, in verses 12 and 13, he gives one application more general. This is where we start. This is kind of where it goes. And then, in verses 14 and following, a more specific application regarding our words and the purpose that that feeds into our witness.

So, first of all, general, verse 12 and 13, he says, therefore, my beloved. By the way, therefore is there for a reason, right? It's connecting the previous passage.

And what was the previous passage about? It was about unity. And then it was, more pointedly, it was about think like Jesus who, what? Was on the throne, stepped down from the throne, you know, covered his deity, did not lose his deity, but, but emptied and somehow his power of using that deity as he walked through life.

So, he humbled himself, he emptied himself, he obeyed. So, therefore, like Jesus, therefore, as you have always obeyed, just like Jesus obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, so keep obeying, in other words.

[12 : 51] But now he adds a different phrase. Here's the general call. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you, you together, plural, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Work out your salvation. So, here's the application. We are empowered to work out our salvation.

It's not just go work it out, it's you are empowered.

God is in you to will and to work for his good pleasure. We're empowered to work out our salvation.

So, we're called to do what Israel could not do. Israel was not empowered.

Israel was in the flesh. They tried, you know, and they succeeded for a little while and then they fell away, right? Because why? It's natural. They can only go so far. You can only do things in the flesh so far.

They didn't have the Holy Spirit. The difference we have, why can we do what Israel could not do? Because he's given us the power. He's given us the Spirit. He's given us grace that they did not have.

[14 : 05] So, he stresses three things here. First of all, our working in verse 12 and then what is his way for that and why then in verse 13.

Our work. I want you to notice that he says, work out. He doesn't say work for. He doesn't say work for your salvation. Try to earn your salvation.

Try to work to get it. No, he says you have a salvation. Work it out. Work out the salvation you already have.

Bring it from the inside out. Work it out. That's the crux for us, right? We have all this. We have been saved. We have the Holy Spirit.

We have all this grace. We have forgiveness. We're called holy children. We have all of that. How do we live like what we are? See, that's what he's saying. Work it out.

[15 : 03] Pull it out. Bring it out. He's not saying work for it nor is he saying now that you are saved now it's up to you to go do it. You're saved by faith but you're sanctified by works.

We need another reformation. We had a reformation that saved the gospel now we need another reformation to save sanctification because that's a subtle message we hear even in Christian churches.

Saved by grace but now it's up to you. Now you need to work get with it. It's like again, that's all I'm just going to fail at that. But Paul says it carefully.

He says, yeah, work it out. We have a responsibility to work. We have a responsibility to carry out but God hasn't left us to ourselves. The whole reason we can do it is because there's a power in us. So now he says, how do we do that? The end of verse 12. Work out your salvation with what? Fear and trembling. What's that? That doesn't sound fun.

[16 : 08] Can't we just translate that reverence and caution? Why fear and trembling?

Fear and trembling. By the way, since Paul added trembling, the translators couldn't tone down the word fear. Because then we'd be reverence and trembling. That wouldn't make any sense.

No, it's fear and trembling. So what is that? Fear of what? Trembling with what? And again, the word fear there is the Greek word phobia.

Anybody have a phobia? How do you respond to phobia? It's like, right? So, okay, so what is this? Work out our salvation with fear and trembling. I believe it's fear like, remember when there was the storm and the disciples are in a boat and Jesus is sleeping through the whole storm.

[17:11] Remember that? It's like, where's Jesus? He's asleep. What? We're about to die here.

And they go down and they get Jesus. Jesus, don't you know we're about to die? There's kind of a, you know, and the boat's going, whatever.

And what does he say? Oh, you have little faith. There's a storm! And he gets up and says, hush, be still.

And the storm becomes calm. And what was the response of the disciples? Fear, phobia, and a comment, who is this?

I thought this was Jesus. All of a sudden, Jesus got really big in their eyes.

Like, okay, that's like creator of the world kind of stuff. So he's not just Jesus. He's also Yahweh.

[18:28] So what's fear and trembling? Well, I think it's a holy dread of offending my Lord. It's not fear of him, a fear of disappointing him. Well, he doesn't get disappointed, but a fear of offending him in some way.

I think it's also an awareness. See, what's our view of Jesus? Have I become really comfortable with Jesus? And please let me clarify that.

I don't mean that there is a way we get comfortable with Jesus. But I think there's a way we can get over-comfortable. You know, where we just think, okay. Because he's also sitting on the throne right now with everything going on, right?

He's also sovereign. And remember John, who wrote the book of Revelation, John was the disciple that was probably the most close with Jesus.

Right? He's the one laying on his breast at the upper supper. He's the one who, oh, by the way, my name was the beloved one. You know, he likes to talk about, I'm the one Jesus loved.

[19:34] I'm the one Jesus loved. Right? So, so I think they were very, very close. So when he gets the vision of Jesus in Revelation 1, what's his response? Dead man, I am.

And then Jesus comes over and touches him and says, hey, it's me. Oh, I didn't recognize you.

You're kind of shining really bright. You're kind of a little scary. Oh, you're the same Jesus.

Yeah, I'm the same, and I'm not the same. This is who I really am. But I'm still kind. I'm still gentle. So I think that's what the fear is.

It's not treating God so casual. Treating God as God. I work out my salvation with fear and trembling because I'm working this out before a holy God who's also has, who's humble and gracious and merciful, all that too.

And then with trembling, a holy awe lest we grieve the Holy Spirit. And I think the time we would become trembling is when we catch ourselves being so casual in our faith.

[20:48] When I have forgotten who my Jesus is. And the Holy Spirit gently reminds me.

And then I can tremble a little bit. How could I do that? I don't know. That's, yeah. Sorry, Lord. You are worth everything I am.

Okay? I think that's what it is. I think that's the fear and trembling. And then he tells us, how is it that we can do this? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Why? Verse 13. Because God is working in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. How can I in all my weakness and all my failure and all, in my, I tried and I failed again.

How can I sustain these holy efforts? I'm constantly fighting my flesh. There's this, there's still this flesh in me, this natural desire, this, this tiredness, this discouragement, this depression, this stuff, right?

[22:04] How can I keep working now? And he tells us, verse 13, because God is working. He is always working. He's working. The word in the Greek is energeo.

Can you hear an English word in there? Energe, ener, energy, energize. He's the energizer. Yeah, no, let's bring it down.

It's bigger now. We would say empower. But he's working. In other words, he's working. He's not just sitting there ready to wait when you're ready. He's constantly energizing.

He's constantly working to do two things, to will and to work. To will, to change our wills, to change our lack of will.

How do I do it when I don't have the will? Well, you know, I'm tired. I'm discouraged and I've, I've fallen and, and I just don't have the drive anymore.

[23 : 15] I don't have the passion. I don't have the want to. How do I do it then? Well, he's working in you to will.

This is one of, I, I use this verse regularly to pray. Lord, do the willing and the working in me for your good pleasure. Because often I don't have the will.

I don't have the want to. I don't have the drive. I don't have the passion. I've been worn down. And, a lot of that is my fault.

Some of that's just the Lord's humbling. You're not trusting enough. Let me work on you a little bit here. Okay. work. All right.

To will and to work. To will and to empower. And by the way, he says, God is working in us. That's again, plural. This whole passage is in the plural.

[24 : 14] This whole passage is not about me, myself, and I doing this Christian walk. Me all by myself.

this passage is about you working out your salvation together. You, he's, he, where's he working? He's working among you, in you. Does that mean he's not individually? Oh, absolutely. He's working individually. You have the Holy Spirit. Yes. But his priority is your unity.

His priority is the witness of you together. My witness by myself, tiny little candle, you know, about to just barely lit our witness together.

Right? Christmas, oh, are we going to be able to do Christmas Eve? You know, we do the candle lighting thing. You know, it starts, it starts all dark. You just light one and then you light up the whole chapel. It's like, oh, you can see pretty good.

[25 : 17] All the candles are lit, right? What a difference. And that's God's design. He did not design to just choose kind of individuals and you kind of do your own thing. He chose us to be a body.

He chose us to be a building that's built together, every stone connected, not this kind of Lone Ranger thing. So we're empowered to work out our salvation.

What is this salvation he's talking about? What does he mean? What's the salvation that we're working out? What is it about salvation that we work out, that we bring out?

What is, what do I possess as salvation that I want to bring out? Well, Ephesians 2 talks about salvation. He describes our salvation in terms of who you were and now who we are.

Okay? So he talks about that change, who you were, what you were saved from and then what you're saved to. So I think this will help. Ephesians 2. Paul says, you were, this is what you were, you were dead in your trespasses and sin in which you walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

[26 : 37] That's what you were. You were doing all that. You're doing all that worldly stuff. And among whom we all once lived, this is who we were, in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

So before we're saved, we're like everybody else. We're dead to God. We're absorbed in our trespasses and sins.

In fact, we're captive to it. Right? We're ensnared and we're following that. That's how we, that's where, that's natural. Then he says, but God, wait a minute, didn't I do something?

No. Watch very carefully. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when, wait a minute, what?

Even when we were dead. Wait a minute, where's my part? Well, apparently it's coming later. Even when you were dead, made us alive.

[27 : 46] I thought I did something first. Well, that might be how I remember my experience. But what Paul's telling me is, no, God was working first.

God woke you up. You didn't wake yourself up. You were dead. Woke you up. Somehow, that's the mystery. He did that. He made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved. There's the transition. You were, now you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

So, he's making us trophies in his trophy case. For by grace, you have been saved. What's our part? Through faith. Oh, there we go.

There I got it. I got it in there. Through faith. I have been saved. He did the saving. I received it through faith. And this, wait a minute, even my faith, this, not of your own doing.

[28 : 48] It's a gift of God. Oh, wow. I didn't stir up the right kind of faith. No, he even, he even kind of worked that puppy for you because there are, there are different kinds of faith in Scripture.

Demons have faith. not a saving faith. Right? Jews in John 8 had faith and then Jesus called them children of the devil. So, yeah, there's different kinds of faith.

So, it's not about the faith I stir up. It's a gift. Give me that faith, Lord. It's a gift of God, but not a result of works that no one should boast. Not about you. For we are, now we get to the are.

What I was, now what I am. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for hanging out. For sitting at home.

Created in Christ Jesus to come to church just before it starts and then quickly leave after it's over. No, I'm teasing. I'm, I know I'm preaching to the choir here.

[29 : 54] Just teasing. For good works. We're created for good works. not good works to be created, but we're created to do good works.

That's what we are now. We were something else. Now we are those God has created and crafted for good works which God prepared beforehand that we may walk in them.

So, what are we working out? What's this salvation we're working out? It's new life. You were dead, now you've been made alive. You have been given life. Now we walk not by our flesh, not by our natural impulses.

We now walk by His Spirit. We now have a new identity. We're His children. We're His workmanship. We now have new values. We've now been created to do good works.

Not to earn something, but out of gratitude. gratitude. So, why do we do this? Why do we work out our salvation with fear and trembling since God has empowered us to do that?

[31 : 06] Why? For what purpose? To what end? So, we look good? Well, yeah, actually. So, we look good to a particular audience. Here He goes on. Now, in verses 14 to 16, He now gives a specific.

So, He gave a general in verse 12, work out your salvation. Now, He's going to give a very, very specific application. Do everything without grumbling or questioning.

Why? So that you might be lights in the world. That you might be light. Not just lights, but blameless, pure, innocent, children of God without blemish kind of lights.

How can I do that? I can't. I'm not pure. I'm not blameless. Okay, let's watch what He says. So, here's the second application. We guard our words for the witness of the church in our world.

I'm saying that very deliberately. We don't just guard our words for witness in the world. We guard our words for church witness in the world because it's about our witness together, not just my individual witness.

[32 : 14] I do have individual witness. Yes, of course. We're to be able to give an answer for our hope when we're asked. We're part of this body and when we are alone in this world, we represent both Jesus and this flock if you call this your home.

That's how we get a reputation. Okay? So, okay. So, we guard our words for this church witness in our world that we together shine as a light.

Okay, so He brings up three issues. First, our words, then our witness, and at the end, our woes. I got kind of stuck on W's this week. I don't know if you noticed. I got this obsession with alliteration, right?

So, it's usually P's. I got stuck on W's this week, so there you go. Whoa. Oh, yeah, that works. So, that makes me feel good. It has nothing to do with it.

So, words, our words. So, He brings up our words, verse 14. Do all without grumbling, complaining, whispering our discontent, speaking of our unhappiness.

[33 : 30] Grumbling. We probably don't need to spend any time on this, right? Nobody. We all do. I mean, it's probably every one of us goes, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Because it's the most natural thing to do. Especially if we're tired, you know, we're a long week, and had a, especially if we've had a hard time. It's like, oh, man, I'm not going to translate that.

You get the, never mind. So, in other words, unity is more important than our venting, our dissatisfaction.

Now, if you've got dissatisfaction, you need to vent. Vent it to the Lord. That's absolutely okay. In fact, that's encouraged.

That's what the psalmist did. Right? He already knows you're thinking it. Just, and that allows you to get it out. That's part of mourning.

[34 : 38] The mourning are comforted when they get it out. Or disputing, he says. Now, this Greek word is dialogue, so it, by itself, the word doesn't have a negative connotation, but when it's coupled with grumbling, okay, he's probably talking about a dialoguing that's not a positive dialogue.

So, it's arguing or questioning or raising doubt. Like, like the people who were Jesus' opponents were always dialoguing, you know, kind of whispering to one another, who does this guy think he is? Oh, he doesn't follow the traditions.

You know, he's eating with sinners. You know, they're disputing, dialoguing, they're questioning him, and Jesus sometimes would call them on it. Same, you know, we hear grumbling, we think of Israel.

Israel from the get-go. They're just saved from slavery. They're saved from tyranny. They're saved from abuse and punishment. They're out, now they're out in the desert, and, man, we had a better in Egypt.

Seriously. Yeah, we had food and water. You know, we had hot food. We had meat. Out here, you brought us out here to die. Well, good is that. We'd rather be back in Egypt.

[35 : 55] At least we could eat. So what does God do? Okay, bread from heaven. I'll feed you. Bread, bread, bread. Next day, or a few days.

Well, we have no water. We've got plenty of bread. Now we've got no water. All right, okay, go hit that stone, and okay, now you've got plenty of water. Go into the land.

Oh, here's the promised land. Oh, man, it's just what God said. It's all this stuff. It's all this. But there was something else. The Nephilim were there.

What? I didn't think those guys really existed. You know, those big giant guys? The big Goliath guys? Seriously? No, I don't want any of that. Oh, and the cities.

Yeah, they're not these little villages. They're like huge walls. Here we are. We're just slaves. We're not warriors. Yeah, okay, we vote no. We're not going in.

[36 : 56] Oh, you brought us out here just to do, you know. Grumbling, glumblng, glumblng. Oh, it was back there. It's called murmuring. And Moses, you know, and Aaron, I mean, they grumbled about everything.

So do we. It's the most natural thing in the world. how do you change that? So, why do we do it all without grumbling?

Verse 15, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked, twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Our witness. the reason we guard our words is for our witness. That our witness will be blameless, innocent, without blemish, children of God kind of people.

I mean, it's as simple as that. There's not a list. It's just guard your mouth and then you're an innocent, blameless, without blemish witness.

[38 : 13] Yep. That's what Paul said. He didn't add anything else. And look at the characteristics. He says, he uses three different ones.

Verse 15, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish.

So you're blameless, blemishless, and innocent. Really? Is he talking about inside?

No. He's talking about observable, hearable behavior. Remember the scriptures say, you know, our leaders of the church need to be these blameless, right, guys?

And I haven't had a guy yet we've talked to that says, that ain't me. Said, not talking about internal stuff God's still working on.

[39 : 18] Do you have something the community could say about you? There's something people have observed about your behavior that could say, oh, you know what? I see the way he talks about people or whatever, whatever.

It's observable, it's external. In an external sense, in other words, if your mouth is guarded, what can they say that you've said? Blameless.

It's not that you don't speak, it's just that you don't speak with grumbling or questioning. That makes you innocent. Shining as lights together in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

A crooked, a crooked, crooked, crooked? Where'd that go from? The most interesting things coming out of the mouth, that's probably why you need to guard it more. Crooked, like skewed. Is our world skewed? Is it crooked? Does it take straight things and make them crooked?

[40 : 31] Is it a twisted world, distorted, perverted? Has it taken sin and called it righteousness? Yeah.

So, it's nothing new. This is first century. And as Moses said, it's what Israel themselves became. So, it's not like, oh, our society is so, so evil. No, they're what they are. They're without God. It's what they are. It's what you become. It's not. So, that you shine as a light in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation means that you stand out.

You're distinct. That we stand as representatives of Jesus Christ and individually representatives of this local church and our following of Jesus Christ.

So, next time you want to grumble about the church, just consider what's more important. You may have a legitimate grumbling, okay?

[41 : 51] Not saying there aren't reasons to grumble. How does Jesus say we should deal with those? I got to complain against my brother. What should I do? I got two choices.

I either go to my brother. If it's important enough, I go to my brother. I care about my brother. And I take the log out of my eye first, right? I go very gently. Or, I bear with it.

Okay? I'm going to live with that. That's my choice. But to go to so-and-so? Not a choice here. So, if that's where you are.

And all of us are there sometimes. Except for me, I never get to that. I never grumble, do I, about the church, right? Yeah? She said no.

I can't believe she said no. Because I know that isn't true. She's being kind. So, how do we shine?

[43 : 01] He says, he adds in verse 16, holding forth the word of life. It could either be translated holding forth the word of life or holding fast the word of life.

It's not clear in the Greek. It's, the word can go either way. So, it's kind of which way do you want it to go? So, am I a strong light in the world by holding fast to the word of God?

That makes some sense because the word sustains me. The word grounds me, right? The word gives me hope, gives me direction. But it could also be holding forth the word of God. If we're lights in the world, then there's some sense of holding it forth, right?

And of course, the word of life gives life, right? So, it could go either way. It doesn't matter. But then he brings in this perspective in verse, the end of verse 16.

Do this, be lights in the world so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. What's that?

[44 : 03] Remember, Paul's facing, he may be, he doesn't think he's going to die. but he is facing possible death. And so, if I'm poured out, you know, I want to know all the work I put into you Philippians, I want to know it didn't go for nothing.

I believe in you. You're a great church. You've ministered to me. You've given to me. I love you guys. I have an affection for you. But I also have some concerns.

Not all of you are getting along. And he's going to name two of them chapter four. These two ladies. You've got a unity issue. You're a good church.

Very good church. Gospel church. Love it. But you also have a serious threat to your unity.

And if your unity goes, your testimony goes, your power goes. So I'm praying hard and I'm calling you to do this so that you have this unity.

[45 : 09] Stop grumbling and complaining and arguing so that I can go home in peace. When I go, if I go, I know I got the Philippians.

I know that's going to count for me. I'm going to get a jewel crown. Whatever. I don't know what he's... I just don't want to die thinking that it was all in vain.

And then he adds, but even if, verse 17, even if I'm poured out, actually literally says, even if I am being poured out, so he is, what he's going through, as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and I rejoice with you all and I want you to rejoice with me.

Here comes joy back into this whole thing. This whole thing about how we act toward one another and our unity and our witness. Here comes back in this perspective of joy.

I rejoice. Even if I'm poured out, I rejoice. And man, I'm really going to rejoice if you guys work out this.

[46 : 24] A little struggle you've got going on that could become a big struggle. So here's our woes. There's a perspective, perspective of cost.

You know, our words and our witness, you know, it's like, oh, is it all hunky-dory then if I guard my mouth and we have a good witness? That means everything goes well, right? That means everything goes well.

That means I won't get any persecution. It means I won't get any bad words coming my way. It means, you know, I'm good. If I just do this, I have my best life now. Right?

No, Paul did it all. Where'd that get him? Prison. Prison. Jesus did it all. Where'd that get him? Cross.

Do you think it's any less for you? Well, he paid it all. Now, I don't have to pay anything. Right? I'm sorry, I can't find that in the scriptures unless you take a verse out of the way.

[47 : 30] So even if, I will rejoice because you know what? Unity matters more than my preference. To live is Christ, to die is gain. What really matters?

Not the things I grumble about. If after I grumble and then I re-evaluate what I grumbled about, I'll think, was that worth all the effort? Usually not.

It goes on for a few days and it might be something. Okay. So how do we find joy in sacrificial witness? So in our witness, you know, we guard our mouth and we have this witness in the world but it leads to persecution.

It leads to sacrifice. How do we find joy in that? That's all about perspective and mindset. Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 5. He said, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

It doesn't sound like you're blessed. If you're persecuted, you're persecuted. So I think you're cursed. Now Jesus says, No, you're blessed. You're blessed for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, it proves that you're part of the kingdom.

[48 : 44] If everybody loves you, there's no proof that you're in the kingdom. If there's people that hate you and persecute you, that's a mark of, that's just what happened to Jesus.

That's what happened to Paul. That's what happened to Peter. That's a mark of being in the kingdom. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

What should you do? Rejoice. Woo-hoo! It's not that kind of rejoice. It's an inter, you know. And be glad.

How can I be glad in that? For your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. In other words, you experience this kind of tribulation and this kind of trouble because you identify with Jesus.

You have a prophet's reward coming. Your reward's great. It's not just reward. Your reward is great. Because that's how they persecuted the prophets. And the prophets sustained and they were miserable on earth.

[49 : 54] Just read Jeremiah. But man, their reward is great in heaven. So will be yours. But prophets reward. Wow. Why prophet?

Because prophets usually say things that don't always sound politically correct or stuff like that. Yeah, I don't know. Then he says, you are the salt of the earth.

Not you individually, you, plural. You, together, are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, if it's lost its distinction, how shall its salt in us be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's foot, foot, feet. You, not you individually, but you together, are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house.

[50 : 56] In the same way, let, interesting how Jesus says this, let your light shine before others. Wait a minute, aren't we supposed to do things in secret?

Aren't we supposed to let the right hand know what the left hand is? Aren't we supposed to not be proud and not be, you know? No, watch what he says. He says, you do need to be in the world and you need to let your light shine before others, which in this context in Philippians is not grumbling and arguing.

They're just guarding our mouth. So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Let your light, I like the way the New American Standard translates this.

Let your light shine before others in such a way that they see your good works but don't glorify you. They glorify the Father.

So you do your work. So in other words, we're very careful about how we do our good works. We're not doing it to get attention. We're not doing it to point to me. We're doing it in such a way and somebody raised a question this morning and said, how do you do that?

[52 : 07] Well, I think it's about a long term. I think it's about when we're asked. We say, for Him. Why do you care about these people?

Because He cared about me. You pointed to Him. But I think it's a long, longer term. And it's about a church, really, as Jesus is talking about you together having this light.

Let you together let your light shine before others in such a way that they see your good works as a church and give glory to your Father who's in heaven because they already know you're a church. You're a people of God.

Why do they do what they do? Why are they doing those good works? Why are they caring for people? Why are they reaching out? Is it to earn their way into heaven? No, you know what? I've met some of them. They do it genuinely. They do it humbly. They'll get it. It's like Jesus said, love one another as I've loved you.

[53 : 07] By this they will know. We have to trust what He said. It's not a program. How do I do that? If you love one another, they'll know.

They will know. Look at the early church. It couldn't keep people away until the Ananias and Sapphira thing. But before that, before people start dropping dead.

Before that, it couldn't keep people away. That was kind of the fear thing that came in. So joy and sacrificial witness.

How do we have joy? Well, because it's a perspective. Recognize that you are actually blessed when you're persecuted. That it's a mark that you are in the kingdom.

That you're taking shots. You know, you're just the messenger. I remember taking shots and just thinking, man, don't shoot the messenger. I'm just the messenger. Yeah, you're the messenger.

[54 : 13] So you get shot. Taking shots as a representative of Jesus. Those are shots really meant for him. Okay? And it's a joy that's set before us.

We have a reward that is great in heaven. So it's all the more worth it. So are you reviled for your faith? Have you been mocked? Ridiculed?

Slandered? Hated? Belittled? Dismissed? Have others said evil against you falsely?

Because you identify with Jesus? Rejoice. Be glad. I don't usually do poems but when I do...

No, I don't have a line for that. I need a line for that, right? But when I do... I do. Huh? When you do, you do them.

[55 : 18] When I do, I choose this kind of poem. Making fun of a commercial. I don't usually do poems because I don't usually get them, right? So they're like too deep.

So this was nice and simple so I'm going to share this one. Break it down. Break it down. Hebrew poetry I can get because I figured out eventually. Okay.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter a day, by deeds that you do, by words you say. Men, read what you write, whether faithless or true.

Say, what is the gospel according to you? See, it's kind of simple enough. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this challenge, Lord, that we need to hear in this day. Father, I pray that you might protect our unity as a church.

[56 : 27] That we together, Lord, as people who love one another, who love you, who love this church, who love this community, Lord, that you would impress upon us how much that unity matters.

And what a threat it is that when we kind of slip into that natural mode of complaining, what we can do. And so help us, oh, Father. Help us to be mindful.

Help us to be careful. Help us to keep the purpose in mind. It's not about just do's and don'ts. It's about the why and how we do it because of the power that you already have put in us.

So, Father, may you be lifted up. May Jesus be lifted up in our community by our relations with each other and with this world. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.