

“**HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE...**”

I was searching the scriptures for something and I kept thinking of this particular scripture. It had nothing to do with what I was looking for or

reading about. But...it kept coming to my mind. So...I decided to meditate on it for a while.

I am referring to Philippians 2:14–15. It reads: *“Do all things without murmurings and disputes: 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; Holding forth the word of life...”*

This scripture is a well known scripture and being that it is well known, sometimes it is overlooked. It simply encourages the true believer to do the things of God, such as living the Christ-like lifestyle, without grumbling or murmuring. For some of us this may seem like a simple task. For others, as we read it, it may seem like a very hard admonishment to us.

It is simply telling us that we are to live our lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul is encouraging the Philippians as well as all believers today, to do this without any “murmuring.” In other words, we are not to complain about things that may or may not come our way. This may seem an easy task for us, but...is it?

If we are honest and if we really take a good look at our lives, we see that we “grumble,” “murmur,” “complain” and even “argue with ourselves” over many things. We do this concerning things in our own lives, as well as about the things in this world around us. Paul is encouraging the true believer to put those things aside. Why? Simply, so that it will allow us to be, and to be known to those around us, as the “sons of God.”

Paul states that we are to be “blameless and harmless” as children of God upon this earth. To be “blameless” literally means to be free from fault or defect. In other words, to be free from people calling you something that you are not. We should desire for people to know us and call us by who we truly are – children of the most high God. This is established by our character and the things we do and the way we do them. We should be doing them in the character that God encourages us to live by as found in His Word.

The word used in this scripture, “harmless,” literally means unmixed, to be pure as in a pure wine or a pure metal – not to be mixed with anything that would make you impure. It means to be of a sure and sound mind that is without a mixture of evil. It means to be free from guile, to be innocent, to be simple. It literally means to simply be a child of God if we are calling ourselves a child of God.

As mentioned the culture that Paul was writing to was to the Philippians 2000 years ago. Things haven’t changed much, at all. I think we can say that today’s culture is just as crooked and perverse as it was back then in many ways and unfortunately, even more. However, Paul tell us that as believers, we must understand and always remember that **our citizenship is now in Heaven**. This is so important for the true believer to grasp and understand.

We may be presently living in a certain state or a certain country. However, now, as children of the most high God, we are just “passing through” this earth. We must remember that we are first and foremost a **citizen of Heaven**. That is what our salvation has made us. We are totally **new creatures** in Christ. We are children of the most High God. We belong and have been made citizens of His domain – the Kingdom of God.

Having said that, Paul tells the believer that they are to “shine” in this dark world as bright lights that will lead and guide others to God, through Jesus. Each of us are the “*light of the world*,” as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14. Paul declares this as he states that we are to shine as “a light in a crooked and perverse generation” – a “light” that will lead others to Jesus.

How do we shed light in this dark and perverted world. Paul tells us that we are to shine as lights in this dark and sinful world. This may seem easy to say and easy to read about, unfortunately, reality is another story. I am saying this only because the truth of the matter is that we all have much darkness still within us. I am not saying that we are all hardened sinners. However, what I am saying is that all of us must “*work out*” our own salvation each and every day. (Philippians 2:12)

We are to “*work out our own salvation*” as Paul encourages us by “*fear and trembling*.” The Greek word translated “fear” in this scripture literally means a “reverence” or “respect.” The sense in which we are to work out our salvation in “fear and trembling” is twofold.

First, the Greek verb rendered “*work out*” means “to continually work to bring something to completion or fruition.” We do this by actively pursuing obedience in the process of sanctification. Sanctification is the day to day lifestyle of the child of God. We are working out, day by day, our new life in Jesus. It is part of the process of living a life of “holiness.”

The “trembling” Paul mentions is literally the attitude that we as true believers are to have in pursuing this goal. It is a healthy reverence and respect to understand that we may offend God through any kind of disobedience to His will and His Word that we may do. We are to all have an awe and respect for God’s majesty and holiness – all that He is!!! Psalm 2:11 sums it up perfectly, “*Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.*”

We are to serve our God and be what He wants us to be and act and live because we have a great awe and respect, as well as a tremendous reverence, for our God. We are to “*rejoice with trembling*” because we are to live as Jesus lived upon this earth. If I be persecuted or if I must die because of that, it is gain to me – I will be going home to Heaven. (Philippians 1:21)

Yes, we are saved. However, as we all know, we are not a “picture perfect believer.” I am afraid that we all have areas in our lives, that if we are totally honest, we know must be changed. We are still saved and children of God but the Holy Spirit desires to work in each of us to help us to grow in Him and ultimately get rid of those areas that are not particularly becoming to our God. Hmmm.....

There is still the darkness of our sin — our selfishness, pride of life, fears, lusts of the flesh and of the eyes as well as some bitterness that we may be holding on to. Having said all that, we still read and are encouraged by Paul as he tells us that we must, “*shine as lights in the world.*”

Jesus, Himself, tell us in the very beginning of His ministry that we are to be “*the light of the world.*” In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus tell us very clearly that we are the “*light of the world.*” He tell us that we are like a “*city on a hill*” that all can see and look at. In other words, others should see the “light,” the Light of Jesus, coming forth out of each of us.

Wow!!! That means that Jesus is telling each of His true disciples that they are to be **seen** by everyone around them. They should be **seen** as His disciples who are expressing the life that Jesus expressed. He goes on to say that we are to be like a “*candle*” that lights up the whole household so that everyone can see the full picture of who Jesus is and who we are in and through Him. Why? So that people may see Jesus and be saved. It is so that others would want to receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

In Philippians 2:16, Paul continues to state, “*Holding forth the word of life...*” we must remember that when Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians there was no such thing as the New Testament. Therefore, Paul was not necessarily writing about the Word that we now have as found in the New Testament. Paul's reference to the “*word of life*” appears to point to Jesus, Himself, who is the “*...Word of life.*”

We also read of this as it is written by another apostle who had no inclination of what Paul was writing. We read this by the Apostle John in 1John 1:1, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of **the Word of life.***” These scriptures are both confirming and telling us that Jesus is the “*Word of life.*” It was all God ordained!!!

We are to “shine” by holding fast unto the Word – holding on to both Jesus and the Word found in the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Philippians 2:16 encourages the true believer to hold fast to that “*Word of life.*” The term, “holding fast,” translates from a word that means to hold your position or to hold your gaze. If you are in the army it means to “hold your position” no matter what – just hold and keep it. In other words it means to keep a close watch on Jesus and His Word so that we can live as He lived, speak as Jesus spoke and act as Jesus lived.

The idea is to “hold fast” with your total attention and holding your gaze, or holding your position. If we read Philippians 2:15,16 with that understanding we can see that it is telling us that “*you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.*” We must hold our gaze on that “*word of life*” – Jesus. We must hold our position and never leave that “*word of life*” – Jesus. We must fix our mind on the “*word of life*” – Jesus, as well as we must give ourselves totally to the “*word of life*” – Jesus.

The way that you shine as “lights” in a dark culture is by holding fast to the Word of God – all of it. Stay with it. Peter said to Jesus, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*” (John 6:68) In this world with all its failures and frailties, where are we going to go? Who or what can we truly rely on or trust in? Only God, the Father and Jesus have the words of true life. The Holy Spirit will help us grasp its truths.

We must grasp the fact that the “*word of life*” is also the “*bread of life.*” Manna was the miraculous bread given to the Israelites as they traveled through the desert. Enough was given to them to satisfy their hunger for just that day. If they kept any for the next day, it would spoil with worms. Jesus overturned traditional Jewish beliefs by referring to Himself as the “bread of life.” We need to read His Word every day to be able to exist and survive in this world we are in. Yes, we must eat of the “bread of life,” and read the “word of God,” every day.

The Jewish leadership referred to this bread, or manna, as their “spiritual food.” Yes, it fed the children of Israel every day but it was a symbolic gesture by God to let the people know that someone greater would be coming. It would be the true and living manna, the true “bread of life.” It would be their Messiah!!

Therefore, this was not a totally new concept. Jesus, however, took it one step further by calling Himself and letting everyone know that He was that “bread of life.” The Apostle John records Jesus explaining that He is the “Bread of Life” as we read in John 6:30-33, “*They said therefore unto him, What sign do you show us then, that we may see, and believe thee? what work do you do? **Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you **the true bread from heaven.** For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.*”

Jesus of course was speaking about Himself. He was the living “*bread of God*” that all people could partake of and be renewed. As the people yearned for the “heavenly bread,” the manna from God, the rabbis interpreted this “bread” to mean the wisdom of or the life-sustaining presence of God – in other words, God’s Word. What we must grasp is that these terms, the “*bread of life*” and the “*word of life,*” are actually synonymous. They are one in the same and they give us life and life more abundantly.

We must always remember that Jesus is “...*the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Him.*” He is the only way to eternal life for only Jesus is the “**Bread of Life**” and the “**Word of Life.**”

Below are a few scriptures for you to meditate on concerning the God’s Word.

- Hold fast to the Word for the sake of faith. “*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the **word** of Christ*” (Romans 10:17).
- Hold fast to the Word that Jesus gives to us for it gives you true joy. “*These things I **have spoken to you**, that **my joy** may be in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11).
- Hold fast to the Word for it gives you freedom. “*If you abide in my **word** . . . and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:31–32).
- Hold fast to the Word because it will bring you into holiness. “*Sanctify them in the truth; **your word** is truth*” (John 17:17).
- Hold fast to the Word for it is life. “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that comes from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4).
- Hold fast to the Word for strength and stability and fruitfulness. Your delight will be “*...in the **law of the Lord**, and on his law you will meditate day and night. You will be like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that you do you will prosper*” (Psalms 1:2–3).

We must hold fast unto Jesus who is to the living “**Word of Life**” and the living “**Bread of Life!!!**”