

# **Shining As Lights In The World**



**How To Live As Children Of God  
In The Midst Of A Crooked And Perverse Generation**

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# Shining As Lights In The World

## In The Midst Of A Crooked And Perverse Generation

### INTRODUCTION

1. A grave concern to any thoughtful Christian is how quickly our society is changing, and clearly for the worse
2. As some theologians would describe it, we now live in a “**post-Christian culture**”...
  - a. This simply means that the old norms once held true are no longer accepted by the majority
  - b. For example, people as a majority once believed in God, that the Bible was the Word of God, and that Jesus was the Son of God; but such is no longer the case
  - c. The majority no longer accepts certain basic principles of morality taught in both the Old and New Testament, even ridiculing those people who do as “old-fashioned” and “unenlightened”
3. That we live in a “post-Christian culture” is true **both socially and religiously**...
  - a. Socially, in that divorce, remarriage, living together without marriage, and homosexuality are now commonly accepted as “alternative lifestyles”
  - b. Religiously, in that women in the role of church leadership, homosexual ministers, and various forms of “new age” religions are now accepted by many
4. How are Christians to react to this change in our society?
  - a. **What can we do to change the direction in which our society is heading?**
    - 1) Should we form “political action committees” and try to change it using the organizational powers of the church?
    - 2) Should we resort to boycotts, picketing, or other forms of “economical blackmail”?
    - 3) Should we resort to violence, both verbal and physical, if necessary?
  - b. **What can we do to protect ourselves, and our children?**
    - 1) Should we simply change our views to conform to those of society?
    - 2) Should we isolate ourselves, or form communes?
5. I believe that the Scriptures provide the correct answer, in a letter written by Paul to a church which, like many others in New Testament times, lived in a “pre-Christian culture”
  - a. The letter is **the Epistle to the Philippians**
  - b. Written to Christians living in city heavily influenced by the Roman culture, with its paganism, intellectualism, and immorality
  - c. What Paul wrote to them, is very likely the sort of things he would write today
  - d. Especially the things mentioned in **Ph 2:12-16**
6. This lesson is the **first in a series** designed to notice carefully what Paul wrote in this passage...
  - a. Which I believe contains direction for Christians living “*in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*”, whether then or now
  - b. Providing directions which will help us to “*shine as lights in the world*”

[With this lesson, we shall simply touch upon those things we can glean from this passage. In succeeding lessons, we shall develop each point more thoroughly. For example, if we are going to shine as lights *“in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”*, we must do so...]

## **I. BY WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION FIRST! (12a)**

### **A. AS JESUS PUT IT, “FIRST REMOVE THE PLANK FROM YOUR OWN EYE” - Mt 7:1-6**

1. This passage, often misused to prevent any proper judging, is emphasizing the importance of “getting your own act together first”
2. Notice, that once you have “removed the plank”, you can then (and should) be used to “remove the speck” in another’s eye

### **B. IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, WE MAY LOSE OUR SALVATION IN THE WAY WE REACT TO OTHERS!**

1. Many people go about trying to change society for the better, using methods that will keep themselves out of the kingdom of God! - cf. **Ga 5:19-21**
2. Paul saw the need to be very careful when trying to save others - cf. **1 Co 9:27**

[How tragic it would be, if when we go around preaching to others, do it such a way as to “disqualify” ourselves! We can be more careful, and “shine as lights in the world”, if we do so...]

## **II. WITH “FEAR AND TREMBLING” (12b)**

### **A. THE WORD “FEAR” IN CONNECTION WITH GOD IS NOT POPULAR TODAY...**

1. Perhaps a reaction to the “hell, fire and brimstone” preaching of another generation
2. But could it be that we have gone to the other extreme?
  - a. Have we diluted the concept of the “fear of the Lord” by our definitions?
  - b. To the point there is no place for “trembling” in our definition of fear?
3. Jesus certainly taught the “fear of the Lord” - **Mt 10:28**

### **B. THE NEED TO HAVE PROPER “FEAR AND TREMBLING”...**

1. Without it, it is unlikely we will seriously make the effort to “work out our own salvation”
2. Could this be a reason there is so much apathy and fruitlessness in the church today?

[There may be another reason for such fruitlessness; and that is, if we don’t “shine as lights in the world”...]

## **III. BY LETTING GOD WORK IN US (13)**

### **A. TO SUCCEED AS “LIGHTS IN THE WORLD”...**

1. It will be essential to let God do His work, something He is able to do beyond our ability to comprehend - **Ep 3:20-21**
2. He is there “working in you”! - cf. **Ph 1:6**
3. How? Both...
  - a. To **“will”** - helping us in our motivation

- b. To “do” - helping us in our ability

**B. BUT IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, WE CAN EASILY...**

1. Quench God’s efforts to work in us
2. Prevent God from using us altogether (at least for doing things for our own good)!

[Later, in another lesson, we shall examine how God is at work in us, and what we can do to promote such activity on His part. Another important element in our “shining as lights” is that we go about our task...]

**IV. WITHOUT MURMURING AND DISPUTING (14)**

**A. BY MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE...!**

1. Living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation can easily get us down, where we can become constant complainers
2. But allowing that to happen will render us less effective
3. And as with Israel, “murmuring” can lead to our own downfall - **1 Co 10:10-12**

**B. BY GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR BRETHREN...**

1. Unity among brethren is extremely important as we try to convince the world concerning Jesus - **Jn 17:20-23**
2. Disputing with one another simply reveals we have some growing up to do! - **1 Co 3:1-4**

[If the **Body of Christ** is going to influence the world the way it should, it cannot be devouring itself through such destructive forces like “murmuring” and “disputing” among themselves. But also important is our relation to those in the world, and that they truly see us...]

**V. AS CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT FAULT (15)**

**A. WHICH REQUIRES US TO BECOME “BLAMELESS”...**

1. Not that we are perfect, but like elders are to be blameless, we are to be “above reproach”
  - a. We may be sinners, but we quickly confess our sins and make amends when it is called for
  - b. We should live in such a way that we have no “outstanding faults” that are clearly evident to others
2. Nothing hinders our ability to “shine as lights” like inconsistency and hypocrisy, especially that which is evident to all!

**B. IT ALSO REQUIRES US TO BE “HARMLESS”...**

1. Though we may firmly oppose sin in all forms, sinners should never fear bodily harm from us! - again cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26**
2. Sadly, many so-called “Christians” appear to be using “Old Covenant” methods in their efforts to change others, and come across as likely to produce great bodily harm!
3. But as Jesus said, we are to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” - **Mt 10:16**

[Finally, if we are to really “shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”, we must be...]

## **VI. HOLDING FAST THE WORD OF LIFE (16)**

### **A. REMEMBER, THE WORD OF GOD IS THE “SWORD OF THE SPIRIT”...!**

1. It is the **only** “offensive weapon” we have in the armor of God - **Ep 6:10-17**
2. It is the instrument by which the Spirit convicts the world of sin, produces repentance and brings about the new birth - cf. **Ja 1:18; 1 Pe 1:23; Ro 1:16**
3. Thus it is truly the “word of life”!

### **B. WE MUST BOTH “HOLD FAST” AND “HOLD FORTH” THIS POWERFUL WORD!**

1. Some translations say “hold fast”, others “hold forth”
2. Both are called for, as we should:
  - a. “Hold fast” the word in our own study and application
  - b. “Hold forth” the word as we proclaim it to those we are trying to change
3. In this, we would do well to follow the example of Ezra, and the order in which he applied himself - cf. **Ezra 7:10**
  - a. To first “seek the Law of the Lord”
  - b. Then “to do it”
  - c. Finally, “to teach” others

## **CONCLUSION**

1. In these verses, then, I believe we find the way Christians are to **“shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”**
2. It involves...
  - a. Working out our own salvation
  - b. With fear and trembling
  - c. By letting God work in us
  - d. Doing things without murmuring and disputing
  - e. As children of God without fault
  - f. Holding fast the word of life
3. If our ultimate objective is not just changing legislation, but the hearts of men to the ways of God, then this is how we can do it!
4. And this is how we will “rejoice in the day of Christ” -- and know that our own labor will not be in vain! - cf. **Ph 2:16**

We will expand upon these thoughts in succeeding lessons; but for now, have you given serious thoughts as to how **you** shine in the world...?

# Shining As Lights In The World

## By Working Out Our Own Salvation

### INTRODUCTION

1. Faced with **the challenge** of living in *“the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”*, it is natural that we wish to react against it
2. But how shall we do it? In our first lesson I suggested that we *“work out our own salvation”* first!
  - a. Otherwise, we may jeopardize our own salvation in **how we react**
  - b. As I fear many are doing in the way they are trying to change others
3. In talking about *“working out our own salvation”*, perhaps a word or two is in order before we actually begin...
  - a. We should remember that we are *“saved by grace through faith, not of works”* - cf. **Ep 2: 8-9**
  - b. But as those saved through faith without meritorious works on our part (though we did have to respond to the gospel with its conditions of faith, repentance, confession and baptism), we have been *“created in Christ Jesus for good works”* - **Ep 2:10**
  - c. As Paul told Titus in **Ti 3:1-8...**
    - 1) We are to be ready for every good work - **1**
    - 2) Though we were not saved by works of righteousness - **5**
    - 3) But were saved through the mercy of God bestowed in the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (a reference to baptism) - **5**
    - 4) Therefore those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works - **8**
  - d. Why the need to be careful?
    - 1) Because though we were not saved by good works...
    - 2) We can lose our salvation if we with God’s help do not produce them! (as we see later in this lesson)

[How then should those who are saved *“not of works”* go about *“working out their own salvation”*? I suggest two major thoughts, the first one being...]

### I. DEVELOP A CHRIST-LIKE “CHARACTER”

#### **A. BY GROWING IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST...**

1. As Peter admonished in **2 Pe 3:17-18**, as an antidote to falling away
2. In **2 Pe 1:5-11** Peter defines what is involved:
  - a. Developing “Christ-like” qualities - **5-8**
  - b. It requires diligence, and an ever-increasing growth in these graces - **5,8**
  - c. To lack these things jeopardizes our entrance into the “everlasting kingdom of our Lord” - **9-11**
  - d. Thus the need for “diligence” on our part! - **5,10**

## **B. BY PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN, AND PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN...**

1. As Paul wrote in **Co 3:1-17** to the Colossians
2. As we examine this text, we see that it involves...
  - a. Setting our minds on things above - **1-4**
  - b. Stop doing the things upon which God's wrath is going to come one day - **5-9**
  - c. Putting on the "new man", which is according to the "image of Christ" - **10-11**
  - d. Developing "Christ-like" qualities - **12-14**
  - e. Allowing "God's peace" to rule in thankful hearts - **15**
  - f. Letting "Christ's word" to dwell in us richly, through singing - **16**
  - g. Doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus - **17**

[By developing such Christ-like "character", we will not only save ourselves, but we will truly "shine as lights in the world"! And that is because we are simply reflecting in our lives the glory of Christ that shines in our own hearts. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians":

***"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Co 4:5-6)***

In our efforts to change others, are we coming across as "preaching Christ" or "preaching ourselves"? Developing a Christ-like "character" will go along way, not only to work out our salvation, but to effectively preach Christ! In the above passage (**2 Co 4:5**), Paul intimates that in one sense we **are** to preach ourselves. That is, as "your **servants** for Jesus' sake". This leads to our second point as to how we can "work out our own salvation"; that we...]

## **II. DEVELOP A CHRIST-LIKE "SERVICE"**

### **A. FULFILL YOUR FUNCTION IN THE BODY OF CHRIST...**

1. As Paul admonishes in **Ro 12:1-8**
2. We have a "reasonable service" to perform, which is to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" - **1-2**
3. To do this effectively...
  - a. We need to maintain a proper spirit of humility - **3**
  - b. We need to remember that the body of Christ has many members but they don't all have the same function - **4-5**
  - c. We need to exercise whatever "gifts" we have - **6-8**
    - 1) For some it may be a form of teaching
    - 2) For others it may be a form of serving

### **B. MINISTER YOUR "GIFT" AS A GOOD STEWARD OF GOD'S MANIFOLD GRACE...**

1. Notice what Peter said in **1 Pe 4:10-11**
2. Each person has a "gift" to minister to others - **10**
3. Because God's grace is "manifold" (multifaceted), we should expect some diversity in our

- service - **10**
4. But everyone is to be a “good steward”, which means we will one day have to answer for what we did - cf. the parable of the Talents - **Mt 25:14-30**
  5. So let us exercise our “gifts” (or service) in such a way as to glorify God through Jesus Christ! - **11**

## CONCLUSION

1. Much more could be said, but developing a Christ-like **character** and **service** will go a long way in *“working out our own salvation”*
2. And “working out our own salvation” in this way will certainly help us to *“shine as lights in the world”*!

Are you being *“careful to maintain good works”*? (**Ti 3:8**) Remember what Paul wrote about Jesus’ death on the cross...

*“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself [His] own special people, zealous for good works.” (Ti 2:14)*

Are **you** “zealous of good works”, or did Jesus die in vain in **your** case?

# Shining As Lights In The World

## With Fear And Trembling

### INTRODUCTION

1. **In the previous lesson**, we noticed that in order to “shine as lights in the world”, that we would do well to first “work out our own salvation” by...
  - a. Developing a Christ-like character
  - b. Developing a Christ-like service

2. But it is important to notice that Paul said we should do this **“with fear and trembling” (Ph 2:12)**

3. In writing about the early church, Luke recorded:

**“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” (Ac 9:31)**

Note that they were “walking in the fear of the Lord”!

4. As mentioned in our introductory lesson, the concept of “fear and trembling” in connection with God is **not a popular concept today...**
  - a. People prefer to hear about God’s love, longsuffering and mercy
  - b. Sometimes, when we point out God’s righteous indignation, holiness, and justice, people reply **“My God is not like that!”**
5. The emphasis on God’s love and mercy today is probably an reaction to the **“hell, fire, and brimstone” preaching** of another generation
6. But could it be that we have **gone to other extreme?**
  - a. Where there is no concept of “fear and trembling” as it relates to the Christian?
  - b. Could this be why many Christians are apathetic in their service?
  - c. Could it be we have forgotten Whom we should fear if we are negligent in our service?
7. In this lesson, **I hope to accomplish three things:**
  - a. Define the “fear of the Lord”
  - b. Point out why the “fear of the Lord” is important to the Christian
  - c. Suggest how we can develop a healthy “fear of the Lord” without going to one extreme or the other

[We begin by...]

### I. DEFINING THE “FEAR OF THE LORD”

**A. THE WORD “FEAR”...**

1. In the **Hebrew**, the word is **YIR’AH** and is used in the Old Testament to describe:
  - a. fear, terror
  - b. awesome or terrifying thing (object causing fear)
  - c. fear (of God), respect, reverence, piety
2. The **Greek** word is **PHOBOS**, and it is used to describe:
  - a. fear, dread, terror
  - b. that which strikes terror

**B. IN CONNECTION WITH THE “FEAR OF THE LORD”, IT IS OFTEN DEFINED AS “REVERENCE” OR “AWE”...**

1. Which is fine as far as it goes...
2. But **I wonder if this definition truly goes far enough...**
3. For though the terms “reverence” and “awe” imply a place for “trembling”, do most people make the connection?

**C. THE “FEAR OF THE LORD” SHOULD INCLUDE A PLACE FOR TREMBLING”!**

1. Even as Paul indicates in our text, combining “**fear and trembling**” in our text - **Ph 2:12**
2. The **Greek** word for “**trembling**” is **TROMOS** and means “**a trembling or quaking with fear**”

**D. A PROPER “FEAR OF THE LORD” WOULD THEN INCLUDE...**

1. “**reverence and awe...**”
2. “**being afraid to offend God in any way**” - **HENDRICKSEN**
3. A trembling and quaking if one knows they have offended God and have not obtained forgiveness! - cf. **He 10:26-27, 30-31; 12:28-29**

[The value of such an attitude is seen as we continue on and now notice...]

**II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE “FEAR OF THE LORD”**

**A. FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, WE LEARN...**

1. The “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of knowledge - **Pro 1:7**
2. The “fear of the Lord” will cause one to hate evil - **Pro 8:13**
3. The “fear of the Lord” will prolong life - **Pro 10:27**
4. The “fear of the Lord” provides strong confidence and is a fountain of life - **Pro 14:26-27**
5. The “fear of the Lord” prompts one to depart from evil - **Pro 6:6**
6. The “fear of the Lord” leads to a satisfying life, and spares one from much evil - **Pro 19:23**
7. The “fear of the Lord” is the way to riches, honor, and life! - **Pro 22:4**

**B. WITHOUT THE “FEAR OF THE LORD”...**

1. We close ourselves to the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge!
2. We will flirt with evil and be corrupted by it
3. Our lives are likely to be shortened by our refusal to heed God’s word (e.g., suffering sexually transmitted diseases because we did not heed His Word on sexual relationships)
4. We will not come to know the love of God that gives us assurance and confidence of our

salvation

5. When fallen into sin, we will not be motivated to repent and turn to God!
6. We will not be motivated to truly “work out our own salvation”!

[Without the “fear of the Lord”, we cannot please God (cf. **Isa 66:1-2**). Only the person who “trembles at His Word” has God’s promise to receive His tender mercy! (cf. **Psa 103:17-18**). But **how does one develop the proper “fear of the Lord”** without going to the extreme of earlier generations?]

### III. DEVELOPING THE “FEAR OF THE LORD”

#### **A. THE “FEAR OF THE LORD” COMES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD!**

1. Just as “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (**Ro 10:17**), the same can be said for the “fear of the Lord”!
2. Notice **Deu 31:10-13**, where the children of Israel were told to gather every seven years to read and hear the Word...
3. The purpose? “...*that they may learn to fear the Lord*”!
4. As one reads the Word of God, they should gain a healthy degree of the “fear of the Lord”
  - a. Consider the words of Paul in **Ro 2:4-11**
  - b. Or how about the words of Peter in **2 Pe 3:7-14**

#### **B. THE WORD OF GOD, PROPERLY USED, WILL MAINTAIN A PROPER BALANCE...**

1. It is important to emphasize, however, that **to avoid extremes, we must read ALL of God’s Word**
  - a. Some read only those portions which will reveal God’s love and mercy, and have no “fear of the Lord”
  - b. Others emphasize the “fire, hell and brimstone” passages, and know nothing of God’s everlasting lovingkindness
  - c. The one develops an **attitude of permissiveness** that belittles God’s holiness and justice
  - d. The other develops a **psychosis of terror** that forgets God’s grace and compassion
2. Even in the passages noted above, the context of each speaks much of God’s grace and forgiveness for those who will repent!
3. So we must be careful how we use the Word of God, but use it we must!

### CONCLUSION

1. The Psalmist said...

**“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all [them that are] about him.” (Psa 89:7)**

2. **Why do we need to “fear the Lord”?** So we will be sure to **“work out our salvation with fear and trembling”!**

3. **The warning is necessary**, for as it is written in Hebrews:

*“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard [it].” (He 4:1-2)*

And again...

*“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” (He 4:11)*

4. With the proper “fear of the Lord”, we will “work out our salvation”, we will **“be diligent to enter that rest”!**
5. And we will not only save ourselves with God’s help, but will also be able to “shine as lights in the world”!

*“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”  
(2 Co 7:1)*

Are you **“perfecting holiness in the fear of God”?**

# Shining As Lights In The World

## By Letting God Work In Us

### INTRODUCTION

1. “Shining as lights in the world” is a **daunting task**...
  - a. Especially living in a world that is becoming increasingly crooked and perverse
  - b. But the passage which serves as the basis for this series (**Ph 2:12-16**) provides both **direction** and **hope**
  
2. We have already begun to see some things about the “**direction**” we need to go in...
  - a. We need to “**work out our own salvation**” first!
  - b. We need to do so “**with fear and trembling**”
  
3. But in **Ph 2:13**, we see something that should give us great “**hope**”...
  - a. “**For it is God who works in you...**”
  - b. We are not alone in our efforts to “shine as lights in the world”!
    - 1) Even as Paul wrote in **Ph 1:6** - “**...He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ**”
    - 2) And in **Ph 4:13** - “**I can do all things through Christ (Him) who strengthens me.**”-- Yes, there is “power” from God to aid us!
  
5. In this lesson, I shall endeavor to accomplish three things:
  - a. Increase understanding and appreciation for the power God makes available to the Christian
  - b. Suggest the source and purpose of this power
  - c. Propose the means by which we can be sure to allow God’s power to work in us

[First, then, I suggest we turn to Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians as we strive to learn more about...]

### I. THE “POWER” AVAILABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN

#### **A. THIS “POWER” IS SOMETHING PAUL WANTED US TO KNOW...**

1. As mentioned in his prayer to the Ephesians - **Ep 1:15-23**
2. Along with other things, Paul wanted them to know “**what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe**” (19)
3. Note that Paul says this “power toward us” is “**according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ...**”
  - a. “**when He raised Him from the dead**”
  - b. “**and seated Him at His right hand...**”
  - c. The power available to Christians is akin to that power used in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus!

[There is the same kind of power available to Christians? Well, let’s read on...]

**B. THIS “POWER” IS DESCRIBED FURTHER BY PAUL...**

1. In his second prayer for the Ephesians - **Ep 3:14-21**
2. The source and purpose of this power is hinted at in **Ep 3:16** (which we will return to later)
3. But elaborated upon in his “doxology” in **Ep 3:20**
  - a. He mentions that God is “**able to do . . . according to the power that works in us**”
  - b. Note also the superlatives used to describe this power:
    - 1) “**exceedingly**”
    - 2) “**abundantly**”
    - 3) “**above all that we ask or think**”

[Yes, there is power available beyond our imagination that is at work in us, if we will only access it! But what is the source of this power, and what is its purpose?]

**II. THE SOURCE AND PURPOSE OF THIS “POWER”**

**A. THE SOURCE IS GOD’S “SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN” (Ep 3:16)...**

1. Even as Paul said in **Ph 2:13**, “it is God who works in you”
2. I understand this to relate to **the indwelling of the Holy Spirit** in the lives of Christians
  - a. As promised by Jesus, and explained by John - **Jn 7:37-39**
  - b. As promised by Peter on the Day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:38-39**
  - c. As referred to by Paul - **Ro 8:9-11; 1 Co 3:16; 6:19**
3. The Holy Spirit, then, is the “**instrumental agent**” by which God indwells the Christian - cf. **Ep 2:22**
  - a. Christians may not all agree on HOW the Spirit may indwell the Christian
  - b. But that He does, and that He is “source” of power, seems evident from **Ep 3:16**

**B. THE PURPOSE OF THIS POWER IS TO PROVIDE “STRENGTH” (Ep 3:16)...**

1. To be “strengthened with might”
2. For what purpose?
  - a. To “work out your own salvation” - cf. **Ph 2:12-13**
  - b. To “put to death the deeds of the body” - **Ro 8:12-13**
  - c. To “glorify God in your body” - **1 Co 6:19-20**
    - In other words, to “do” what is necessary to “shine as lights in the world”!
3. But notice carefully in our text (**Ph 2:13**), that God “works in you both to will and to do”
  - a. Strength not only to “do”
  - b. But strength to “will”
    - I.e., the power is also there to help our motivation, our hope! - cf. **Ro 15:13**

[As wonderful as this “power” is that God provides through His Holy Spirit for strength and motivation, it does us no good if we don’t access it!]

**III. ACCESSING THE “POWER” AVAILABLE TO CHRISTIANS**

**A. THROUGH PRAYER...**

1. In other words, ask for it!
2. This is what Paul was doing for the Ephesians in **Ep 3:16**

3. Certainly it would be appropriate for us to ask it for ourselves!
4. Those who do “wait on the Lord” (which includes prayer) are promised strength - cf. **Isa 40:28-31**

## **B. THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD...**

1. In instructing the Ephesians to “**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**”, he tells them to “**put on the whole armor of God**” - **Ep 6:10-13**
2. Indispensable to this armor are such elements as:
  - a. Truth - **Ep 6:14**
  - b. The gospel - **Ep 6:15**
  - c. Faith - **Ep 6:16**-- All of which are inseparable from the Word of God
3. But the Word itself is described as the “**sword of the Spirit**” - **Ep 6:17**
  - a. Certainly we should use it as a weapon to reach others
  - b. But does not the Spirit of God use the same word to reach ourselves?
    - 1) Through the Word of truth, we have been born again - **1 Pe 1:23; Ja 1:18**
    - 2) And through the Word of truth, we will save our souls! - **Ja 1:21**
4. So allow the Word of God to be an avenue through which God strengthens us in the inner man, and to work in us, both to will and to do for His good pleasure!

## **C. BY JUST DOING IT!**

1. We receive a lot of help through the Word of God and prayer (primarily in the area of strengthening the “**will**”)
2. But the ultimate demonstration of God’s power is to be seen when we “**do**” His will
  - a. But it won’t be seen until WE decide to do it and then do OUR part
  - b. Isn’t this what is implied **Ph 2:12-13**?
    - 1) God is at work in us (through His indwelling Spirit)
    - 2) But only if we are also working out our salvation with fear and trembling!
3. So it is by **faith** that we believe that the power to do God’s will is there, and it is by **faith** that we act upon it!

## **CONCLUSION**

1. If Christians are not “shining as lights in the world”, perhaps it is because God is not at work in them
2. If such is the case, it would only be through lack of faith on our part...
  - a. Lack of faith **to believe** in God’s Word about the power to do God’s will that is available to Christians through the indwelling Holy Spirit
  - b. Lack of faith **to access** that power through prayer and the Word
  - c. Lack of faith **to do** simply what God says to do, trusting Him to provide the ability
3. But from our text (**Ph 2:13**), we know that it is in keeping with God’s “**good pleasure**” to empower us to do His will

Therefore, let’s do all that we can to have “**God work in us**”, so that we can truly “**shine as lights in the world**”!

# Shining As Lights In The World

## Doing All Things Without Murmuring And Disputing

### INTRODUCTION

1. In this series on “**Shining As Lights In The World**”, we have been given both direction and hope
  - a. **Direction** in the form of the admonition: “**Work out your own salvation...**”
  - b. **Hope** in the assurance that “**it is God who works in you...**”
2. Now we have a **warning**, and found in **Ph 2:14**, it is that we “**Do all things without murmuring and disputing.**”

[The need for this warning should become more apparent as we proceed in this lesson. [First, let’s consider...]

### I. MURMURING

#### **A. THE DANGER OF MURMURING...**

1. Murmuring is defined as: “**To complain in low mumbling tones; grumble.**”
2. The people of Israel “murmured” frequently throughout their wilderness wanderings, and many were destroyed because of it! - cf. **1 Co 10:10-11**
3. In describing those who would be apostates, “murmurers” are included in the description! - **Jude 3-4, 16-19**
4. Not only are our souls at stake, but when did anyone ever go about a task seriously all the while “complaining in low mumbling tones”?
  - a. E.g., an employee at work
  - b. E.g., a student with his or her homework
  - c. Or a Christian who is to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”!
5. How can we then “shine as lights” if we are seen to be a group of complainers?

#### **B. REPLACE MURMURING WITH THANKSGIVING...!**

1. When a person is murmuring, it is an indication of dissatisfaction
2. But a Christian has so much to be thankful for, including:
  - a. Salvation in Christ Jesus, which includes every spiritual blessing - **Ep 1:3**
  - b. Assurance of a Heavenly Father who understands and will provide our needs - **Mt 6:31-33; He 13:5-6**
  - c. Indeed, the help of God, who “works in you both to will and to do...” - **Ph 2:13**
3. Yes, if anything, the people of God should be known as filled with “thanksgiving”, not “murmuring”! Consider what Paul wrote to the Colossians:
  - a. We should thank God for our inheritance - **Co 1:12**
  - b. We should abound with thanksgiving - **Co 2:6-7**
  - c. Be thankful for the peace of God ruling in our hearts - **Co 3:15**
  - d. Give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ - **Co 3:17**
  - e. Be vigilant in prayer with thanksgiving - **Co 4:2**

4. Surely an “attitude of gratitude” will help us “shine as lights in the world” much better than murmuring, grumbling and complaining!

[How do people see us? As **murmurers** who complain about the economy, the government, everything? Or as people, who though we see much evil in the world, also see much good, and are known for being **thankful**? Another potential for hindering our ability to “shine as lights in the world” pertains to...]

## **II. DISPUTING**

### **A. THE DANGER OF DISPUTING...**

1. The word **disputing** simply means: “**arguing; disputing**”
  - a. It is not describing the discussions of differences between individuals who seek to find common ground
  - b. But rather **divisive “wrangling”** condemned in **1 Ti 6:3-5; 2 Ti 2:14-16; Tit 3:9**
2. Such disputing can devour those in the body of Christ - **Ga 5:15**
3. It can also destroy our ability to convince the world concerning Jesus! - **Jn 17:20-23**

### **B. BEING DIFFERENT IN HOW WE HANDLE OUR DIFFERENCES...**

1. There will always be difference among brethren...
  - a. We come into the kingdom with many different backgrounds and perspectives
  - b. It will take a while until we all develop the **mind of Christ** and the **oneness of mind** for which Paul pleaded in **Ph 2:2**
2. Until then, we can still “shine as lights in the world” in the way we handle our differences!
  - a. With attitudes of **gentleness, patience, humility**...prescribed in **2 Ti 2:23-26**
  - b. With qualities of **longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness**...described in **Co 3:12-13**
  - c. With willingness to **forego personal liberties**...exemplified in **1 Co 8:13**
3. We can truly “shine as lights” and make a positive impact on the world for Jesus, if we can:
  - a. Disagree, without being disagreeable!
  - b. Be different in the way we handle our differences!

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Too much harm has been done in the past by the way we have dealt with differences, and the tendency to complain
2. If we can only take to heart the warning of Paul and other scriptures against **murmuring** and **disputing**...
  - a. Perhaps the harm can be undone
  - b. And those who wear the name of Christ can truly “shine as lights in the world”
3. If we will only let God truly work in us...
  - a. Helping us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling
  - b. Then perhaps we will be more successful in developing a Christ-like character that will really “shine”!

# Shining As Lights In The World

## As Children Of God Without Fault

### INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen in this series of lessons thus far that in order to “shine as lights in the world” the apostle Paul has given us **direction, hope**, and a **warning**...
  - a. **Direction** - By saying, “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*”
  - b. **Hope** - By reminding us, “*for it is God who works in you...*”
  - c. **Warning** - By telling us to “*do all things without murmuring and disputing*”
2. But what is **the ultimate goal** of these admonitions of Paul?
  - a. Is it not that we be “**children of God without fault**”? - **Ph 2:15**
  - b. And is this not how we will truly “shine as lights in the world”? Living as “children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”?
3. Children of God without fault...surely **THEY** will “shine as lights” and make a positive impact upon the world in which they live!
4. But please note carefully, it is not enough just to be “children of God”...
  - a. We must also be “***without fault***”
  - b. And this will be true only if we are “***blameless and harmless***”
5. What does it mean to be “blameless” and “harmless”? And is this how the world sees those who profess to be “the children of God”?

[In an effort to answer these questions, let’s first consider...]

### I. BLAMELESS

#### **A. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLAMELESS...**

1. The Greek word is **amemptos** {**am’-emp-tos**}, which means to be “**blameless, deserving no censure, free from fault or defect**”
2. Certainly this does not mean we are to perfect, for we all sin - **1 Jn 1:8,10**
3. Rather, as Paul told Titus, to live and act in such a way that those who oppose us have “**nothing evil to say of us**” - cf. **Ti 2:7-8**
4. I.e., living such that we have **no “outstanding faults”** that are clearly evident to others

#### **B. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE BLAMELESS...**

1. Nothing hinders our efforts to influence others like **inconsistency** or **hypocrisy**
2. If we have glaring faults that are evident to others, they will not take our message seriously
3. Especially if we are trying to point out “their” faults!

#### **C. HOW TO BECOME BLAMELESS...**

1. Certainly, we should **practice what we preach!**
2. This would include **working out your own salvation!**
3. When we sin, confess our guilt immediately, especially when it is evident to all
4. When one endeavors to preach to others, do it in the spirit of gentleness, patience and humility - **Ga 6:1; 2 Ti 2:24-26**

[Otherwise, those who oppose us will quickly find fault in our attitudes and character, and use that as justification to reject our message! To be “without fault”, it is also necessary that we be considered by others as “harmless”...]

## II. HARMLESS

### A. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HARMLESS...

1. The word Paul uses is **akeraios {ak-er'-ah-yos}**, which in this context means **“without a mixture of evil, free from guile, innocent, simple”**
2. It is used three times in the scriptures:
  - a. When Jesus was preparing His disciples for the “limited commission - **Mt 10:16**
  - b. By Paul, in his epistle to the Romans - **Ro 16:19** (the word **“simple”**)
  - c. And here in **Ph 2:15**
3. To be **harmless**, then, would mean:
  - a. To be free from any taint or suspicion of evil
  - b. To never be suspected of duplicity, saying one thing, meaning another
  - c. To never be feared of potential harm or violence
4. Again, it means to be **“harmless as doves”**

### B. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE HARMLESS...

1. To be **“without fault”**
2. So that **“one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” - Ti 2:7-8**
  - a. How does this apply to some in the pro-life movement who use intimidation, harassment, and sometimes violence to further their cause?
  - b. Or to those who threaten “economic blackmail” (i.e., boycotting) in an effort to force others to change
  - c. Or some within the Christian Coalition, who advise digging up dirt on political opponents?
  - d. Do not such efforts, though well-intentioned, often give others reasons to speak evil of those who call themselves Christians?
  - e. Should we not have the attitude of Paul, who said:
    - 1) **“We give no offense in anything that our ministry may not be blamed” - cf. 2 Co 6:3**
    - 2) **“providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” - cf. 2 Co 8:21**
3. So the name of God will not be blasphemed by our conduct! - cf. **Ro 2:23-24**
  - a. Though written in reference to inconsistent Jews, cannot Paul’s rebuke apply to Christians who resist to evil in the wrong way?
  - b. Do not many people speak evil of the faith because of the way some are trying to force

others to change?

**C. HOW TO BE “HARMLESS AS DOVES”...**

1. React to evil the way Paul said we should react, not with evil but with acts of love; that is how we truly **overcome** evil! - **Ro 12:17-21**
2. Love your enemies the way Jesus taught us, with **active good will** this is how we demonstrate ourselves to truly be “sons of the Highest”! - **Lk 6:27-36**

**CONCLUSION**

1. The challenge we face is that we are so repulsed by evil, we are tempted to respond in ways not in keeping with the gospel of Christ
2. But if our ultimate goal is changing the hearts of men, then it must be in accord with the way God has changed our own hearts, through the gospel of love, sacrifice, and mercy!
3. If we are truly the “**children of God without fault**”...
  - a. Then we imitate our Heavenly Father’s efforts by using love, prayer, doing good
  - b. To change those who are still part of this “crooked and perverse generation”
4. By following in steps of our Savior, Jesus Christ, then we will truly be “**blameless and harmless**” and “**shine as lights in the world**”!

# Shining As Lights In The World

## By Holding Fast The Word Of Life

### INTRODUCTION

1. In our efforts to determine how we might truly “**shine as lights in the world**”, we have gleaned from Paul’s comments that we must...
  - a. Work out our own salvation - **Ph 2:12**
  - b. Do so with “fear and trembling” - **Ph 2:12**
  - c. Allow God to work in us - **Ph 2:13**
  - d. Do all things without “murmuring and disputing” - **Ph 2:14**
  - e. Be children of God without fault, by being “blameless and harmless” - **Ph 2:15**
  
2. Fundamental to our ability to do all these things, and to “shine as lights in the world”, is that we “**hold fast the word of life**” - **Ph 2:16**
  - a. It is the “word of life” that instructs us HOW to work out our own salvation
  - b. We saw that the “word of life” is designed to teach us the “fear of the Lord”
  - c. The “word of life” is the “sword of the Spirit”, and therefore a crucial element to allowing God to be at work in us
  - d. Through the “word of life” we learn the danger of disputing and murmuring
  - e. And with the help of the “word of life”, we can be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault
  
3. But for all this to occur we must **hold fast** the “word of life”; what is the proper way to do this?
  - a. From **Ezra**, a young priest in the Old Testament, we can learn what is necessary, and the proper order
  - b. In **Ezra 7:10**, we learned that he “had prepared his heart...”
    - 1) To seek the Law of the Lord
    - 2) To do it
    - 3) And to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel

[Following his example, I would suggest that we first “hold fast the word of life”...]

### I. THROUGH DILIGENT STUDY

#### **A. DILIGENT STUDY REQUIRES...**

1. Longing for the Word like a baby longs for milk - **1 Pe 2:2**
2. Receiving the Word with meekness, and implanting it our hearts - **Ja 1:21; Ps 119:11**
3. The only way I know that this can be done, is through:
  - a. Daily Bible reading on your own - cf. **Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3**
  - b. Taking advantage of every opportunity to study with others (e.g., Sunday morning and midweek Bible classes)

#### **B. SUCH DILIGENT STUDY IS NECESSARY - 2 Ti 2:14-16**

1. Otherwise, we can lead to the ruin of hearers!
2. Because we might shamefully mishandle the word of truth!
3. Rather than leading others to God, we might instead increase to more ungodliness!
  - a. Notice Paul's warnings to the young evangelist Timothy - **1 Ti 6:3-5, 20-21**
  - b. Also to the evangelist Titus - **Ti 2:7-8; 3:9-11**

[So if we really want to “hold fast the word of life” in a way that will help us “shine as lights” and **not be ashamed**, we must start by preparing our own hearts to study it diligently! We must also “hold fast the word of life”...]

## **II. THROUGH CONSISTENT APPLICATION**

### **A. THERE IS THE DANGER OF BEING A HEARER, BUT NOT A DOER - Ja 1:22-25**

1. We deceive only ourselves - **22**
  - a. Not God (He knows our hearts)
  - b. Not the devil (he has us right where he wants us, as hearers only)
  - c. Not those who know us (they can see our inconsistency)
2. We deprive ourselves of the true blessedness of God's Word, which comes in the **doing** of it, not just in the **hearing** (or reading) of it - **25**

### **B. THE WORLD ALREADY HAS ENOUGH “PHARISEES” - Mt 23:1-3**

1. That is, people who “say, and do not do”
2. Even though what they were saying was correct, they failed to “practice what they preach”
3. Nothing undermines our efforts than those who claim to be Christians, but do not live accordingly!

### **C. BUT THROUGH CONSISTENT APPLICATION, WE DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF THE WILL OF GOD - Ro 12:1-2**

1. By offering what is “reasonable service”, we can “prove” (demonstrate) that the Will of God is “good and acceptable and perfect”
2. Where people might not listen just to our claims, they might think differently if we demonstrate in our lives that God's way is the best and only way!

[So after we have learned God's Will, let's be sure to live it! Then, and only then, are we in a position to do the next thing as we try to “hold fast the word of life”, and that is to do so...]

## **III. THROUGH TEACHING IT TO OTHERS**

### **A. THE NATURAL FOLLOW-UP TO STUDY AND APPLICATION...**

1. Ezra realized that this was the proper order - **Ezr 7:10**
2. Sadly, many people go about it in reverse order (teach, attempt to do, and then study)
3. But if we have properly studied and applied God's Word, people will take note, and want to know more about who we are and why we are the way we are!

### **B. AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD, PROCLAIMING THE “WORD OF LIFE” IS OUR PRIMARY FUNCTION IN THIS WORLD - 1 Pe 2:9-10**

1. We are to **“proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”**
2. Is this not another way of saying that we are to teach others, to share the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ with others?

**C. HEREIN LIES THE GREATEST HOPE OF SHEDDING LIGHT IN THIS DARK WORLD OF OURS...!**

1. For if God has called **us** through His gospel out of darkness into His marvelous light...
2. ...then perhaps he will do the same for **others** with whom we share the same gospel!
3. So as we endeavor to “shine as lights” with the help of that Word which was used to call us into God’s marvelous light, let’s not neglect to share it with others!

**CONCLUSION**

1. Like many others, I am very concerned about the direction our society appears to be going
2. I do not take issue with the motives and zeal of others, but I question the **way** some people who believe in God are to try to change our society for good
3. Can we not learn from **the failure of the Civil Rights Movement** to change the hearts of men through legislation or even violence that maybe there is a better way?
  - a. Not to say that changing legislation through legitimate means is not a worthy goal for Christians
  - b. But to say that it alone is inadequate
4. The **better way** is the way God used His people to ultimately change a “pre-Christian culture” (known for immorality and injustice) into one that at least on the surface held up Christianity as a religion of preference rather than ridicule
5. How did they do it? Though it took several hundred years, it was done by **“shining as lights in the world”**, in the manner in which Paul wrote in **Ph 2:12-16!**

With the help of God, perhaps we can do the same. At the very least, we can assure that we will save ourselves through God’s grace!