

## HOW TO WALK AS LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

### Philippians 2:14-18

Our western society is by far the *most prosperous culture in the history of mankind*. With very few exceptions, people have *all they need* and *much of what they want*, yet, many are *seldom satisfied*. Consequently, ours is also arguably the most *discontented society ever*. As the economy has become increasingly richer, people appear more *discontent* and *complain more* with each passing generation. Adding to the discontent are the *fantasy worlds* of *movies, television, video games, fantasy sports, and advertising*...all creating a *false sense* of what's *real*.

The media, in order to *create dissatisfaction*, continually assaults us with the idea that *there is always something else that we need*...that *one thing* that will make us *happy*. They *create unrealistic images and expectations*. Also fueling this is the staunch conviction that *personal happiness*, though elusive and unattained, is the *supreme objective of life*.

A sociologist recently observed that the *typical modern young person* lives in a *state of sullen discontent* and is *continually dissatisfied* with things as they are. Many, if not most, may have trouble *believing his observation*...much less *accepting it*...but he suggested that *part of the problem* is *smaller families*, families in which there are *fewer children*. When there are fewer children in the family, they are *able to demand more of their parents' attention* and *do not have to share anything* with brothers and sisters. Combined with *affluence* and *materialism*, that situation tends to produce *selfish, self-indulgent children* who are *never content* with what they have. Instead of bending to the *needs of the family*, as is necessary in larger families, the family *bends to them*.

Adding to this situation are *absent parents*, regardless of the reason...*working, shopping, or playing*. In response they try

*quick fixes* for their children's *demands*. They tend to *give them what they want* in order to *stop the conflict*. Children in that situation have little desire to *grow up*. Realizing that adult society *will not cater* to their every whim, they want to *postpone the responsibilities of adulthood*...a *job, marriage and family*, and other such *commitments*...as long as possible, because those things *demand a considerable degree of responsibility and conformity* to others. When such children become adults and *don't get what they want, when they want it, discontentment increases*...as does *frustration, anger, anxiety, complaining, bitterness, and depression*.

*Discontentment* also breeds *impatience*, another defining characteristic of our times. Among the seemingly endless causes of *impatience*, and often *hostility*, are *long lines, interruptions, rude people, high prices, traffic, inconsiderate drivers, and crying babies*. The last two have actually become *causes of serious crime*. *Inconsiderate drivers* often produce *road rage*, which in turn increases the frequency of *assaults, gunfire, and murder*. *Crying babies* have led to *child abuse*, which all too often results in *serious injury*...and even the *death of a helpless baby*.

These verses address *each of these issues* that we face *every day*. They *give specific instructions* on how to *work out* God's "*good purpose*" (vs. 13) in relation to *daily living* as a Christian.

#### I. THE COMMAND: (vs. 14)

**Do all things without grumbling or disputing (vs. 14)...**

The biblical command for believers to not *grumble, argue, quarrel, or complain* is evidence that the church isn't immune from *discontent*. The church, through the years, has had more than its share of *malcontents* and *complainers*.

**Grumbling** and **disputing** is nothing new:

- **Moses** complained to the Lord that He *didn't deliver Israel from Pharaoh quick enough* (**Exodus 5:22-23**).
- **Israel**...three days into the wilderness complained that the *water at Marah was bitter and not fit to drink* (**Exodus 15:23-27**).
- **Israel**...complained about the *lack of water* (**Exodus 17:1-7**).
- **Israel**...complained about the *lack of food* (**Exodus 16:2-8**).
- **Israel**...refused to enter the land of Canaan based on the report of the spies. *Their faithlessness brought God's judgment* and they *grumbled* against **Moses** and **Aaron** (**Numbers 14:1-3**).
- **Israel**...they then grumbled against God *for even bringing them out of Egypt* (**Numbers 14:3**).

Their *complaining* ultimately turned into out-right *rebellion*.

*“Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? So they said to one another, ‘Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt’.”*

~Numbers 14:3-4

They rejected *God's plan...God's chosen leaders...and finally God Himself*.

*“The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?’...Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilder-*

*ness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it...Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me...According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition. I, the Lord, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.’ As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report concerning the land, even those men who brought out the very bad report of the land died by a plague before the Lord.”*

~Numbers 14:11, 22-23, 28-29, 34-37

In reality...every *complaint* a believer makes *is ultimately against God*. For a believer *to fail to willingly...even joyfully...submit to God's sovereign and providential will* ...it's a deep-seated and serious *sin*. *Discontentment* and *complaining* are attitudes that can become *so habitual* that they are *hardly noticed* by one's self. Eventually, it leads to *bitterness*.

*“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.”*

~Hebrews 12:15

**Grumbling**...Gk. *gongusmos*, describes a *bad attitude in response to something unpleasant, inconvenient, or disappointing...arising from the self-centered notion that it's undeserved*. It was used to describe the *resentful laborers* who had worked a full day and then grumbled at the landowner for being paid the same as those who had only worked one hour (**Matthew 20:1-16**). It was also used to describe the *Pharisees and scribes* who began grumbling at Jesus and His disciples when they questioned why they ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners (**Luke 5:27-32**).

**Disputing**...Gk. *dialogismos*, has the *basic meaning of mistrusted reasoning...rebellion*. It reflects a *legal connotation* of *settling a dispute*.

**Grumbling** is essentially *emotional*...**disputing** is essentially *intellectual*.

A person who continues to *complain* and *protest* against God will eventually *argue* and *disagree* with Him.

We should learn from **Paul**. His example shows that such *righteous behavior* is possible.

*“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”*

~Philippians 4:11-12

## II. THE CHARACTER: (vs. 15)

So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world (vs. 15)...

**Blameless**...Gk. *amemptos*, has the root meaning of *being without defect or blemish*. A believer should seek to be *without moral or spiritual blemish...righteous* in the sight of the Lord.

**Innocent**...Gk. *akeraios*, has the basic meaning of *being unmixed or unadulterated*. The term was used to describe *pure wine* that was *unmixed with water*...or *pure metal* that was *not alloyed*. The believer's life is to be absolutely *pure...unmixed* with *sin* and *evil*.

**Above reproach**...Gk. *amomos*, closely related to **blameless**...both words *describe what is without blemish or imperfection*. This **Greek** word is used numerous times in regards to *sacrificial animals*.

**In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**...this phrase is borrowed from **Deuteronomy 32:5**, where **Moses** describes *unfaithful* and *rebellious* Israel as a people who had become *“a perverse and crooked generation.”*

**Crooked**...Gk. *skolios*, refers to what is *bent, curved, or twisted*. We get the medical condition *scoliosis* from it. An *abnormal curvature* and *misalignment of the spine*.

**Perverse**...an *active verb* describing someone who is *perverted, misleading, and distorted*.

Most of *modern culture* has a *radically distorted and deviated view* of God's standards of *truth* and *righteousness*. That's why believers shouldn't *complain* because of the *negative impact* that it has on the *unsaved*...and should be **blameless** and **innocent** as a *positive witness* to them.

In the first part of *verse 15*, **Paul** speaks of *Christian character*...what believers are to be; **blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach**. He now speaks about how they *are to live*...as **lights in the world**.

**Among whom you appear as lights in the world...**

The way believers *live* as **children of God** has a *dramatic impact* on how they *influence* the godless world around them.

*“For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light”*

~Ephesians 5:8

### III. THE CHARGE: (vs. 16a)

**Holding fast the word of life (vs. 16a)...**

The *light* of God’s Word not only *reveals truth* but *exposes evil*.

**Holding fast...**it literally means *holding forth* or *holding on to firmly*. It’s used to describe one *offering wine to a guest* at a banquet. *Holding it forth, firmly* not to drop it or spill it.

We are to *hold out/offer* the **Word of life** to others.

**Word of life...**refers to *Scripture...the Gospel*.

*“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”*

~I John 1:1-2

### IV. THE CELEBRATION: (vs. 16b-18)

**So that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain (vs. 16b)...**

Paul’s heart shines through in his deep desire that the **Philippians** would stop **grumbling** and **complaining...**so **that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory**. He wanted to be able to *look back and rejoice* in the *faithful-*

*ness* of those beloved brethren. The people that he had *served* would be *a source of his eternal joy*.

**Because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain...**It’s *every pastors desire* that the *reward of his efforts* will be *full...* that the people that he has *taught God’s Word...*to those who have *come under his care...*will *love* and *obey* the Lord *without grumbling* or *complaining...*and with their *lives* and *words* effectively *demonstrate the gospel* to be *true* and *believable*.

*“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”*

~III John 4

**But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all (vs. 17)...**

Paul’s example was evident in the *price he was paying* in *pouring out his life* to God like an Old Testament *drink offering*. Both **Jews** and **Gentiles** would have understood the implied imagery of a **drink offering**.

*“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.”*

~II Timothy 4:6

**You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me (vs. 18)...**

**Paul** wanted his friends at **Philippi** to experience the same *joy* he had...and to *be glad* and *rejoice with him*. He describes a *deep mutuality* of *purpose* and *feeling*.

### LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- A believer must learn to see every **CIRCUMSTANCE OF LIFE** from God’s perspective...and willingly and joyfully accept His sovereign purpose without complaining. There

should never be either emotional grumbling or intellectual disputing.

- **Living FAITHFULLY and PURELY** is an absolute prerequisite for fulfilling the Lord's mandate to carry His gospel of salvation to a world lost in sin.
- Every believer has been called to walk and live as **LIGHT** in a **DARK** world. And part of that responsibility is to not complain or enter into disputes...but to actively hold forth the Gospel to an unbelieving, crooked, and perverse world.