

Intro: As Paul began his epistle to the Philippians, one of the things he told them was how he was praying for them. Cf. 1:9-11. (Read.)

Look at the expression, "the fruits of <sup>(an expression)</sup> ~~the~~ righteousness." In the original it is the fruit (singular). Our translators have probably made it plural because there is more than one part to the fruit, but the singular brings out the fact that, if you are righteous, you will experience all that goes to make up the fruit.

The same is true of "the fruit of the Spirit" in Gal. 5:22, 23, in contrast with "the works of the flesh."

In the passage before us tonight Paul is appealing for righteousness in the lives of the Philippians. And, in doing so, he touches on a part of the fruit of righteousness. It is this: the impact that holy lives can make on the people of Philippi who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us take this passage tonight and apply it to Portland. The Word would be incomplete if it simply told us that we are to evangelize Portland without telling us how. But here we find the answer, and we would do well to listen as Paul directed by the Holy Spirit tells the Philippians how they can reach their city with the Gospel.

As we consider this tonight, let us be careful to notice that Paul does not indicate that every Philippians will be saved. There is a difference between evangelizing and Christianizing. The world is not going to be Christianized, i.e., completely won to Christ. Anyone who believes this needs to study the Word more carefully. But we can evangelize the world, we can be sure that everyone has a chance to hear the Gospel, and to hear it under the power of God. Cf. v. 16 b.

How can it be done? Let us note how Paul approaches this subject.

- I. Look first of all at what he has to say about THE PEOPLE OF GOD, i.e., what he says to the saints in Philippi, and what he would say on this subject to the saints of Central Bible Church ~~xxxxxxxsubject~~ if he were here tonight.

- A. What we must never DO. See v. 14.

The very fact that he approaches this negatively may mean that this was going on in Philippi, or it may mean simply that there is a tendency for every Christian to be guilty along this line.

I have said never do because this is what Paul says. Lit., "Do all things constantly, habitually without murmurings and disputings."

So these are never acceptable at any time.

What are they?

The relationship between these two words is very interesting. "Murmurings" can be defined as secret displeasure (Thayer, p. 120). "Disputings" are open disputes.

*The secret of the outward is the inward.*

The first is something IN us; the second is something which everybody can see and hear. We all feel that it is a tragedy when arguments, division, and alienation break out in the Church, but do we know that it is just an indication that we have let things go on secretly in our hearts.

"Murmurings" were the chief fault of the children of Israel in the wilderness! It is mentioned again and again. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:10.

It speaks of unrest, dissatisfaction. We think that we can keep our dissatisfaction concealed, but Paul wants us to understand that, if it is allowed to stay in us, eventually it will come out--and, when it does, you have an explosion.

Cf. Martha in Luke 10:40.

Now, why do I need to keep dissatisfaction out of my heart? Because it has a formative influence on what we are.

So Paul speaks, secondly, of ~~what we must seek to~~

- B. What we must seek TO BECOME (This is the meaning of the verb "be" in 1:15).

But, become what?

I am sure that you may not understand Paul immediately when I respond, "You need to become, lit., the children of God."

You say, "Paul could not possibly mean such a thing. He would never say that you can become a child of God by doing away with murmurings and disputings."

But you read it again. That is exactly what he says.

Of course he does not believe that you enter into the family of God by what you do, but in this verse he is talking about becoming the children of God "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," or generation

You may know you are a child of God, and God may know it, but you will only become one to the world when you live like it. And if you are caught up in murmuring and disputing, you will never get the world to believe you when you claim to be a child of God.

You see, this expression, the children of God," means basically one who shows the family likeness. And if you claim to be a child of God, the world asks for some evidence that God is your heavenly Father!

How do we do this? By avoiding "murmurings" and "disputings" so that we will be:

- (1) "Blameless" before men--with respect to these two words. This is like "disputings," in that it is what men see.
- (2) "Harmless" down in our hearts. This points to the fact that there is no foreign mixture within us. We are genuine, sincere. A good illustration is found in James 3:10-18.
- (3) "Without rebuke" before God. Here we have an expression which speaks of excluding anything which would render a sacrifice unfit to offer to God. In Heb. 9:14 it is used of Christ and translated, "without spot."

So we go from men to ourselves to God in these three expressions. AND WE WILL NEVER APPEAR TO BE "THE CHILDREN OF GOD" BEFORE MEN UNLESS WE ARE CLEAR IN ALL OF THESE AREAS.

But, assuming that we are in the clear on this point, there is one other expression we need in our text to complete the picture. It is, "Holding forth the word of life."

"The Word of life" is the Word of God. Cf. John 5:24. It is the Word which produces life.

What does it mean that we are "holding forth the Word of life"?

Immediately we say, it means we are preaching, or at least witnessing. We are telling others what we know about the Saviour. And this thought is in the words, BUT IT IS NOT ALL. It means to offer it to others,

BUT IT ALSO MEANS TO OBSERVE, TO ATTEND TO, TO KEEP ON APPLYING THE WORD TO OURSELVES.

One commentator has remarked, in effect, that Paul is here not so much concerned about the effect of the Word of God upon the world, as he is upon the continuing effect of the Word of God upon those who are witnessing to the world.

The Word in your life will accomplish things that the Word only in your lips will never do. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:1.

But, you say, why is all of this so important?

- II. Because of THE NATURE OF THE WORLD we are trying to reach with the Gospel of Christ.

Twice in this passage Paul points out how closely, how intimately, related to the world we are:

- (1) "In the midst of."
- (2) "In the world."

We are so closely related that it is easy for the world to see if we are genuine or not.

But what kind of a world is it? "Nation" or generation is a word which describes all men as being common in their origin, pursuits, character, etc.

- A. It is "crooked." Its standards are not God's standards and will never be the same. That has never been more apparent than it is tonight.
- B. It is "perverse." If it does anything with the Word of God at all, the world will pervert the truth, and pervert the plans and purposes of God. It is a world of active opposition before God.

You say, "Then it is impossible to reach." I think we must come to that feeling before we can realize exactly what our task is.

How can the world ever be reached? Note

- III. THE TASK OF THE CHURCH: "among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

Lit., it is, among whom ye appear as heavenly lights in the world.

What is the purpose of heavenly lights, the sun, the moon, and the stars? Cf. Gen. 1:15, 17. Without them all would

be darkness! This gives us a strong clue as to the impact of a life filled withlight!

Concl: A perfect illustration of the effect of a believer's life is seen in Matt. 2:7 where Herod used the same word translated "shine" but there it is translated appeared.

(Read Matt. 2:1, 2. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from theeast to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.")

IT WAS THE LIGHT OF THE STAR THAT CAUSED THE WISE MEN TO START LOOKING FOR JESUS CHRIST. This is the picture in our text. We as heavenly stars, children of God, are simply to let our lights shine in this dark world, crooked and perverse. If we will do so, the results will be just as startling as they were when Christ was born long ago.

The angels served the same purpose with the shepherds. After the ~~shepherds~~ appeared and then left, the shepherds said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hathmade known unto us" (Luke 2:15b).

Paul and Silas appeared as lights in a Philippian jail, and before the night was over, the jailor had fallen on his knees before them, and was saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Oh that God would grant us the wisdom to reach men the way He knows they can be reached!