

INTRODUCTION

Many of you recall that in December 1989, President George Bush announced a new initiative program in America called "Thousand Points of Light." It was a recognition of services in the private sector that met some of the needs of local communities. Last year PATH, People Attempting to Help, here in Tyler, was awarded one of those Thousand Points of Light. That's a great idea, but it wasn't new with President Bush. The Lord Jesus Christ has been talking about the important of lighting our world for many centuries. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) In today's passage, Paul tells us about the important of letting our light shine.

Philippians 2:12-18. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

I. WORK OUT: The power to shine

There are three admonitions in this passage I'd like to focus on today. In verse 12, we are told we should work out. Charles Spurgeon said the essence of our faith is found in prepositions. For instance, in verse 12 it says "to work *out*" your salvation, it doesn't say to work *for*, because that's a big difference. There are a lot of people "working" for their salvation. You ask the common person on the street what it takes to go to heaven when you die and they're going to say, "Do good," a works-oriented salvation. Even Christians in the church still have that idea, that salvation is by works, by coming to church, by praying, by giving money to the church—that's not correct. The Bible says, "For by grace are you saved through faith." And that's not even of yourselves; it's a gift of God, not of works. Let your salvation work up and out of you.

Where does it come from? "It is God who works in you." The Bible doesn't say it is God who works for you, God who works with you, or God who works through you. It says it is God who works *IN* you to will and to do what he wants. That means when you are totally surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, God can even take control of your will and the things that you want to do can be the things God wants you to do. Not only that, he's the one who will give you the power to do them, both to will and to do His good pleasure. That's where the power for shining comes, from God working in you.

If I had a flashlight, it would be no good without batteries. God is energizing. That's what *energeia* means. We get our word energy from it. It's like the Energizer Bunny. That's what God does, he keeps on energizing you when you're surrendered to His power.

A. Reverence is evidence of God working in you

How do you know if God is really indwelling and working in you? This passage provides evidence for that. One of the ways to know God is working in you is that you will have a sense of reverence, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." (vs. 12) What is reverence in this case? It means fearing God, not having a terror of who God is, but living a life of caution because of the greatness and power of God. The Bible says, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10) I know very little about God relatively, but the little that I know of God, I'm afraid to live my life in disobedience to God because I know and I have seen his power and his might.

Reverence comes to each one of us when we see the greatness of God and how small we are compared to Him. Have you ever stood before something that is so big it leaves you in awe? A few years ago, my family and I flew out to Las Vegas when the Southern Baptist Convention met out there. We rented a car and we drove to Arizona to see the Grand Canyon. I was totally confused on the time, because when we landed in Las Vegas, it was Mountain Daylight Saving Time. We drove back into Arizona, which doesn't recognize Daylight Saving Time, they stay on standard time all year long, which I was unaware of. I got more and more confused as the day went by. I didn't know what time it was. We got to the Grand Canyon that night when it was dark, checked in our room and I still didn't know what time it was, but I decided to get up at sunrise and go out to see the Grand Canyon. Because I was so confused about what time it was, I got up about 4:00 a.m. and took my daughter Jenni and walked down in pitch darkness to the Grand Canyon. It's a wonder we didn't walk right into it. But we sat there expecting the sun to come up at any moment. We sat there. And sat there. The sun finally came up a couple of hours later. When the sun finally came up, it was an awesome sight to see the beauty and grandeur, but more than anything else, just the sheer size of the Grand Canyon. We prayed and thanked God for his creative majesty and sat there in reverence because of that huge scene before us.

The problem a lot of people have is their God is too small. He's not some Good Buddy, he's the Almighty God. And when you come to understand who he really is, you will have that sense of reverence.

B. Harmony is evidence of God working in you

"Do everything without complaining or arguing." (vs. 14) If you truly are indwelt by the power of God, you won't be a complainer. That word arguing (or murmuring) is the Greek word *gogguzo*, an onomatopoeic word; it sounds like the word it's describing, like hiss or buzz. Murmuring is not out-and-out complaining. Since the beginning of time, there have been murmurs. When Moses was leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land, they murmured against him all the time. I can almost hear them muttering, "If I eat this manna one more time I'm gonna scream!" "One more walk through the desert and I'm gonna give up! I want to go back to Egypt!"

Even in Jesus' ministry, there were those that murmured. The Bible says one day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a notorious sinner the Pharisees stood at the door and murmured against him. "Who does he think he is going into the house of a sinner?" murmur, murmur,

murmur. "He claims to be the Messiah." murmur, murmur, murmur. You know what murmuring is. The word of God says don't do it. It's not something that a spirit-filled Christian will do. Have you found a negative person can get a lot more attention than a positive person can? One negative person can take up more of your energy and more of your time than a hundred positive people. I think that's why some people are negative, because they know they can get attention by being that way.

When someone starts complaining to you, just say you don't want to hear it. You wouldn't let them come over to your house and dump trash in your living room; don't let them come up to you and dump trash in your ear. Instead, counteract it by being positive. "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable...think on these things." (Philippians 4:8) My mother used to have a saying, "If you can't say something good about somebody, don't say anything at all." Negative people seem to get so much attention.

I read an editorial from the *Los Angeles Times* by Barry Siegel, written with tongue firmly in cheek. "Alarmists, worrying about such matters as nuclear holocaust and pesticide poisoning, may be overlooking much more dire catastrophes. Consider what some scientists predict: If everyone keeps stacking *National Geographics* in the garages and attics instead of throwing them away, the magazine's weight will sink the continent 100 feet sometime soon and we all will be inundated by the oceans. If the number of microscope specimen slides submitted to one St. Louis laboratory continues to increase at its current rate, that metropolis will be buried under 3 feet of glass by the year 2024. If beachgoers keep returning with as much sand clinging to them as they do now, 80 percent of the country's coastline will disappear in 10 years. It has been reported that pickles cause cancer, communism, airline tragedies, auto accidents and crime waves. About 99.9% of cancer victims have eaten pickles some time in their lives... So have 100% of all soldiers, 96.8% of communist sympathizers and 99.7% of those involved in car and air accidents. Moreover, those born in 1839 who ate pickles have suffered a 100% mortality rate and rats force-fed 20 pounds of pickles a day for a month ended up with bulging abdomens and loss of appetite." (Barry Siegel, "The World May End with a Splash," *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 1982.)

We get tired of hearing all these negative things. The Bible says we shouldn't do things with murmuring and complaining. Instead, we ought to be positive. God loves us. The Bible says there are some things God *doesn't* love. In fact, there are some things God hates. Proverbs 6:16-19 says, "There six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers." Anything God hates, we need to have a holy sense of detest and hatred for ourselves, including murmuring and complaining.

There are two ways the Bible says we can tell for sure if God is working within us: Reverence and harmony.

II. SHINE OUT: The place to shine

The Bible says God has given us a life. He is the life that lights every man. Jesus said to put our light on a candlestick, not under a bushel. Most adults and children know the song "This Little Light of Mine." "Put it under a bushel? NO!" I like how they always shout that. Where do you let your light shine? It's easy to let it shine at church. The place where light is needed is out there where it's the darkest. We come to church and get out our light and wave it for a while; but as soon as we leave church and go to work or school, we hide our light and go through the week with our light hidden. Maybe we meet someone at work by the copier who's a Christian and we don't know it and they hint they're a Christian and then you have a holy huddle and you let your light shine. You don't need light where there's already light, you need light where there's darkness. That's the place to let your light shine. Get out of this place and go out into a dark world and let your light shine for Jesus this week.

A. We live in a dark society

The first thing we need to understand about the place to shine. There is a lot of spiritual darkness around us. We're not fighting against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness in high place and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Everybody knows John 3:16, but you need to read the verses after that. Jesus said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him...this is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:17, 19)

Have you ever noticed how bars are so dark? How do I know they're dark? I've heard. I used to go to them in college and pass out tracts. People like those places to be dark so they can go meet their friends in low places and do whatever they do. It's like when you pick up a rock and you see bugs go scurrying because they're so used to the darkness, they don't like the sunlight. What would happen one Saturday night in one of these joints if you went in there around midnight and suddenly turned on about a 5,000 watt light? You'd see some other kind of scootin' wouldn't you? For the exits! They don't want to be seen. They like darkness rather than light.

It is a dark world out there and we need to let our light shine where it's the darkest. But the problem is we as Christians have become accustomed to the darkness and it doesn't bother us. Have you ever walked into a dark restaurant during the daytime and you can hardly see anything? And you sit down at a table and try to read the menu? But after a few moments your eyes become adjusted and you get used to the dark and it doesn't bother you anymore. Sadly, the same thing has happened spiritually in America. We've become accustomed to the darkness. Things that ought to bother us don't bother us anymore.

My father told me when "Gone With the Wind" premiered, Rhett Butler turns to Scarlett in the last scene and says, "Frankly my dear..." and you know the rest. He uses what we would call a mild profanity. Dad said when he said that, the audience gave a collective gasp. *He said that word on the screen?!* We've come a long way. But in the wrong direction.

The devil knows if he can get us laughing at something, we'll accept it before long as normal. Just watch one of today's sitcoms. As Christians have got to stand up in a dark world and be a light.

B. We live among doomed souls

We may be the only light some people who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ ever get. I used to say the world is going to the dogs, but I quit saying that out of respect for the dogs. Men do things dogs would never do. I don't have to give you a catalog of the long list of evil in the world. It's on the evening news. What this world needs is someone who will be a light. Like the song says, it may be that your light is only reaching two or three, but wherever God puts you, light your world, because there are people who need your light.

III. HOLD OUT: The persistence to shine

We read about that in verse 16. Paul says, "As you hold out the word of life." There are two things involved in that phrase "hold forth" or "hold out." One is the idea of literally offering something. The other is the idea of endurance, persistence, keep on doing it. Paul says, "in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing." (vs. 16) Paul is talking about the greatest job anyone can have is holding out the word of life.

A. The greatest job

The application of this is every week many of you come to church and we hold out the Word to you. You go to Sunday School and you have a teacher who studied and got into the word all week and they hold out the word to you. Have you ever taken the word and then passed it on to someone else or are you holding out to others? Or are you someone who just keeps on receiving? You come to church and you sit and you soak. You go to Sunday School and you sit and you soak. Are you involved in a ministry of holding out? The greatest job in the world is simply holding out the word of life.

Let me get more specific. Some of you sit in a Sunday School class when you ought to be teaching a Sunday School class. If your excuse is you're not trained, we still need workers in our children's Sunday School; someone who'll tell these small children God loves them—holding out the word of life. Jesus died for you holding out the word of life. For some of you struggling right now, the very best thing you can do is get involved in a ministry teaching children or teaching Sunday School and hold out the Word. That's the greatest job in the world.

Paul says it's like being poured out. That's what Sunday School teachers do. They pour out their lives in their class. That's what the choir does when it sings. They're pouring themselves out to you. When I preach, I hope I'm pouring out my life to you through the Word. When you teach, that's what you're doing. But when you pour something out like that, you don't lose it. You get it back in return.

B. The greatest joy

Paul says, "I am glad and rejoice with all of you." (vs. 17) When you pour yourself out in ministry, you find real reason for rejoicing. Are you letting your light shine?

The world has its ideas of whose stars are—celebrities. Have you ever heard ever heard a television program advertised as a star-studded night? You know who the Bible says the real stars are? "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3) God says the stars are those who act in movies or produce rock videos. The real stars are people who lead others to righteousness. They'll shine like stars for ever and ever.

CONCLUSION

Not long ago I heard Dr. Bailey Stone, director of evangelism for the BGCT, brought something I had never heard before to my attention. Many of you remember in August 1987, Delta flight 1141 took off from DFW and the 727 accelerated down the runway and rotated, but because the front leading-edge slats and flaps were not correctly deployed, it lumbered into the air for a few moments before it twisted and fell to the earth and ignited. There were 108 passengers on board. Miraculously only 14 were killed in the inferno that followed.

One of those 14 victims was Scott Owen, who was on a business trip. Scott had recently married a young girl from Odessa, TX and they were living in Dallas. The young widow had to deal with her grief as best she could. She kept repeating, "Why, God?" A couple of weeks after she buried her husband, there was a knock on her door. She opened the door to find a stranger who said, "You don't know me, but on the day of the plane crash, I was seated in the seat next to Scott. As we were sitting there at the jetway and the passengers were boarding, I noticed he was reading a book and I asked him what it was. It was a Christian book and he began to tell me about his faith in Jesus. Even as they pushed the jet away from the jetway, he talked to me about how to become a Christian. As we taxied out and waited for takeoff, he began to share with me the difference that Jesus had made in his life and how one of the greatest things Jesus had given him was a good wife. And even as we were accelerating down the runway, he was talking to me about his faith in Christ." And the man said, "I don't know why he died and I survived. But I want you to know that Scott didn't die in vain, because I've accepted Jesus Christ and now I'm a Christian."

Aren't you thankful for a guy like Scott who let his light shine? Could it be there is someone who's living in darkness around you that you need to let your light shine for? I encourage you to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

OUTLINE

I. WORK OUT: The power to shine

"continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" vs. 12

Evidence of God working IN you:

A. Reverence

B. Harmony

II. SHINE OUT: The place to shine

"shine like stars in the universe." vs. 15

A. We live in a dark society

B. We live among doomed souls

III. HOLD OUT: The persistence to shine

"as you hold out the word of life...so that I did not run or labor for nothing." vs. 16

A. The greatest job

B. The greatest joy

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes