

Sermon Outline for FBC January 27th, 2019

Shine Like Stars as Lights to the World

Good morning!

Today my message is entitled “Shine Like Stars as Lights to the World!” Henrietta Mears put it this way: “We Are Luminaries for God in a Dark Age!”¹

As we continue to look at the book of Philippians, we see that we are to live with joy in all our circumstances. In fact, we are to shine that joy so bright that we light up the world around us.

Robert Morgan, in “Nelson’s Book of Stories”, has a story that helps us see the idea of being a star for God.

“There is a story that when the famed English architect, Sir Christopher Wren, was directing the building of St. Paul’s cathedral in London, some of the workers were interviewed by a journalist who asked them, “What are you doing here?”

The first said, “I’m cutting stone for three schillings a day.”

The second replied, “I’m putting ten hours a day in on this job.”

The third replied, “I’m helping Sir Christopher Wren build the greatest cathedral in Great Britain for the glory of God.”²

How do you see yourself and the job God has given you? Is it just a task, a requirement, or is it being part of an incredible purpose to bring a message of hope to a world full of people who need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ? How would you answer the journalist’s question?

Henrietta Mears, in “What the Bible is all about,” states:

“In order that your life may be purified, dangers avoided and progress made, Christ must be your joy, your trust, and your aim in life. Paul tells us of his joyful triumph over trying circumstances because of his trust in Christ.” (pg.508)

We are going to read through Philippians 2:14-30 to see what Paul shared with the Philippians and how it might apply today to help you answer the question “What are you doing here?”

Philippians 2:14-30 (NIV 2011)

14 *Do everything without grumbling or arguing,*

15 *so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” [Deut. 32:5] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky*

16 *as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.*

Eugene Peterson’s “The Message” writes this passage this way:

“Do everything readily and cheerfully – no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I’ll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You’ll be living proof that I didn’t go to all this work for nothing.”³

This is my message for you, and I hope every Pastor feels the same for their congregations.

Lawrence Richards gives us this thought, “It is the brightness of the Christian’s life that sheds light on the Gospel message we hold out for others to see.”⁴

In my Study Bible, it states this observation:

Even when Paul stayed in jail for long periods, God used the experience to advance the Gospel. As he wrote Philippians, conversions were occurring among the Roman palace soldiers, forced by guard duty to overhear Paul’s daily ministry.

In a sense, the guards were the captive ones, chained to Paul, they had to listen and see this man of God in action.

Now Paul switches thoughts and makes a word picture that the people would understand.

17 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.

18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

The Chronological Study Bible NKJV gives an explanation as to what Paul meant here.

“Every morning and evening an animal sacrifice accompanied by a drink offering was presented at the temple. For this the priests took somewhat more than a quart of wine and poured it out on the ground at the base of the altar. Paul likens his own life to the animal sacrifice and libation that were familiar practices in the ancient world.”⁵

And once again Paul brings joy into the forefront – to rejoice in being in God’s work.

Now Paul begins to talk about two fellow workers for Christ that he has a lot of feelings for. Timothy and Epaphroditus! He calls Timothy “his son” and Epaphroditus “my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier” First, Timothy:

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.

21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Next, Paul mentions Epaphroditus. This man had been sent by the church from Philippi to come see Paul.

Lawrence Richards, in the Bible Readers Companion, tells us about this man.

“This man, Epaphroditus, carried funds for the apostle’s support. In Rome, Epaphroditus became ill and nearly died.”⁶

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.

29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him,

30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out the following:

“Paul’s desire here illustrates how believers ought to relate toward those who may be misunderstood by others. Genuine Christian love, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), is always desirable, for it defends others and overlooks their faults (1 Cor. 13:7).⁷

Paul takes the blame for Epaphroditus’ return in case anyone there would be discouraged because he left Paul in jail and came home. And once again, Paul brings in the concept of joy and rejoicing. See how this letter is going, it is written to make us realize that in all circumstances, we can rely on God and rejoice in God’s work.

Let’s pray!

¹Henrietta Mears, pg. 511

²Robert J. Morgan, pg. 800

³Eugene H. Peterson, pg. 2138, 2139

⁴Lawrence Richards, pg. 807

⁵The Chronological Study Bible NKJV, pg. 1352

⁶Lawrence Richards, pg. 803

⁷The Bible Knowledge Commentary, pg. 658

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