

“Jesus Will Shine Through You”

Philippians 2:12-30

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(Lord’s Day Service, March 1st, 2020)

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Light in the World

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

²⁵I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Introduction

In our church, we have an event called Mini-Olympics. There are a lot of different reasons why we have this event. It really pictures many different aspects of the Christian life. For one, how we are to press on toward the goal for the prize, to try hard and win. At the end of the event, there is one small group that wins the trophy as the winner of Mini-Olympics. It really pictures the aspect of Christian life that those who are in Christ have already been given the trophy of Christ because of what he has done for us.

Therefore, it’s not about winning but it’s about shining and becoming more like Christ: to humble ourselves, to love each other, to have compassion, to put others’ interests before ourselves. Paul says in this passage that the trophy, the light of Christ, is already in those who are in him. In other words, you are already loved, you are already a child of God, and you are already shining the light of Christ. The light of Christ will shine through you. We are flashlights in the hand of God to show, display, and reflect the light of Christ to the world. So, the question is, how is your bulb, how is your battery, how is your beam?

As Christians, we should always be evaluating our bulb – our life so that the clarity of Christ would shine through us. Our battery – the sustainability of Christ to shine through us. Our beam – the invincibility of Christ to shine through us. God promises that Jesus' light will shine through us so that we can become more like Christ for the glory of God.

I. How is your bulb? – The clarity of Christ [12-15]

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

The first question that we want to ask is, how is our bulb? This is a picture of a bulb of a flashlight. It is representative of our lifestyle. A bulb of a flashlight can be clear, dusty, or dirty. As light is trying to come out, the clarity of the bulb matters. How clear is the bulb of our life?

A. Work out your own salvation [12]

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

This verse sounds like a works-based gospel. But as we know, in all the writings of Paul, he believes and proclaims that it's a grace-based gospel, a grace-based Christianity. So what does it mean to work out your own salvation? "*To work out your own salvation*" means to become more like Christ. Salvation is justification. Justification is our declared righteousness before God made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Working out your own salvation is sanctification. Sanctification is our gradual growing righteousness made possible by the Spirit's work in us. The more we become Christ-like, the more clarity there will be in shining Jesus to others. The more we grow, the more we glow. Working out our salvation doesn't mean we earn our salvation, but because we are saved, we grow in our sanctification. The verb "*work out*" does not mean to create something, but to form and fashion something that already exists. Paul is saying that since God has already saved you, let God now shape you. Work out what God has already worked in you.

This reminded me of a cooking show called *Cupcake Wars*. In the show, contestants are already given everything and all they need to do is to form and shape. Each cupcake will be unique and different. This is the idea here. Work out Christ's likeness in you, through your life, through your lifestyle. So as we work out, work out with fear and trembling.

B. With fear and trembling [12]

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

Fear and trembling are talking about our motive. Work out your own salvation – become more like Christ – but with the right motive. Our motive should be to please God, not to please anyone else. “*With fear and trembling*” can mean dread or terror in the face of danger or it can mean reverence or awe of God. When we fear something or someone, we encounter dread or terror. When we fear God, we have reverence and awe. So which one is it? As we look at the context right before verse 12, Jesus is the emptied and exalted King. He is crowned where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord. Therefore, this means to work out our own salvation not with terror or dread, but with reverence and awe. We don’t strive to become more like Christ because God is out to get us or yell at us if we don’t, but because He has saved us and has already rescued us from the well of our sin and selfishness. One day, we will be worshipping Him and crowning Him Lord of all. So, our motive is out of love, out of reverence, out of worship.

What is your motive? Why do you desire to grow in the Christian life? Why did you choose to serve? Why do you observe Lent? Our motive is to want to grow out of reverence and awe of God and what He has done through Christ. But what if I want to have that kind of motive but I don’t?

C. For it is God who works in you [13]

¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

“*To will*” means God changes our will, our desire, our heart. This is a heart-work God does. “*To work*” means God changes our actions. This is a hand-work. God does both. God changes our hearts, our motives, our desires, but also helps us to act. Heart-work and hand-work for God’s good pleasure.

D. Do all things without grumbling or disputing... In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation [14-15]

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Because God is working in us, we can do all things without grumbling or disputing. “*Grumbling*” means not getting what we want. “*Disputing*” means people didn’t give us what we want so we dispute. In Scripture, grumbling and disputing are both sin. Sin can dull and dust up our life. We are to repent of these sins so that we can become more like Christ. During this Lenten season, say no to sin and yes to Christ, which makes the bulb of our witness brighter. Jesus shines through with more clarity.

To summarize, if the light of Christ is in us, we are the flashlights of God. In a flashlight, what makes a light bright or faint is the clarity of the bulb. Is it clean? Is there dirt? Is it cracked? Sometimes it’s on the inside, sometimes it’s on the outside. Sometimes it’s our motive, sometimes it’s our actions. We work out our own salvation so that the clarity of Christ will shine through. The more we work out, the more others will see Christ more clearly. As we shine, we

will all show different aspects of Christ. The question is, how is your bulb? Evaluate. Repent. Recommit so that the clarity of Christ will shine through you and people will see Jesus.

II. How is your battery? – The sustainability of Christ [16]

¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

To hold fast is to hold a light towards something. As you try to grow and become more like Christ, where does your sustaining power come from? Who do you give credit to for your strength? Paul says that daily, we need the Word to remind us that we are already shining because of Christ in us. We hold fast to the Word of God because it sustains our power to shine Christ.

So what does that mean for us? When we do our quiet times and devotions, when we listen to sermons, when we do bible studies, it's not a burden or more things that cause us to burn out, but that is the very thing that gives us life. It's our battery. It points to the sustainability of Christ in us so that people don't see our self-sufficiency, but people see God's all-sufficiency.

Where do you get your power to shine? A lumen is a standard term used to describe light output. For example, a candle gives off about 12 lumens. A standard 100W bulb gives off about 1,750 lumens. How many lumens do you think is the sun? 6,840,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 lumens. I don't even know how to say that. To better illustrate how much output the sun gives, it's like having a chandelier, about 100,000 lumens, a few feet above your head. Why am I sharing this? Because we often hold fast to the battery power of a candlelight to sustain us. We sometimes chase after other batteries in life that we think will give us life: possessions, relationships, positions, temptations. We keep replacing those batteries to no avail when God offers us to hold fast to the Word, like a chandelier, not a few feet above our heads, but inside our hearts. The Word of God is living and active, pumping life into us as we plug ourselves into the Word so that our insufficiency and our reliance on God's sustainability will shine the light of Christ through us. It is communicating that we don't have it all together, but Jesus sustains us through His Word.

I read an article that said, "I don't need to look good so Jesus can look good." Often, Christians feel that when they are at church or at a bible study, they have to look good so that Jesus can look good. But when we make a mess of things, the last place we want to be is church. When we know we can't remotely pretend things are together, it's simply easier not to go. Best to keep the mess away from the sanctuary, from the church, from small group. But when we point to the sustainability of Christ through His Word, the assumption stops being that we have to be good if we're coming to church. Rather, we can be a real mess to show up. When people see our insufficiency and our reliance on God's sustainability of His Word, this will shine the light of Christ through us.

I pray that for CFC, we will stop assuming we have to be good or perfect or sinless to come to CFC, but because we are a mess, because we sinned yesterday, we are welcome here. I remember someone once telling me that she appreciates those who get drunk on a Saturday night, who are in depression, or are discouraged, yet show up to church on Sunday morning. At least they are here at church. Church is

supposed to be a place where a bunch of broken, sinful people gather to show off the light of Christ. So, we keep holding fast to the Word.

On a side note, it is only here on this earth that we hold fast and hold on and cling because one day when we see Jesus face to face, the Son will shine upon us. We will no longer need to hold fast or to hold on because we will be with the Son. We will no longer need to refill our batteries with His Word because Jesus will be our solar power for all of eternity. And we will be proud that we did not run or labor in vain through all the holding on that we did in His Word and in prayer, verse 16, *“holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.”*

III. How is your beam? – The invincibility of Christ [17-18]

¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

The beam of a flashlight is the impact. As the bulb is clear or dirty, as the battery is full or empty, the beam of the light of Christ will continue on. This is the invincibility of Christ.

“Even if I am to be poured out” is an allusion to an Old Testament practice where the Israelites would pour out a drink offering over the sacrifice. As they poured the drink offering over the sacrifice, they would see a vapor and mist. As Paul was in prison, he is writing in verse 17, *“I am glad and I rejoice with you all.”* Why? Because the invincibility of Christ will keep shining through either in his death or the life of the Philippians in the church. The point is that the beam of the gospel will keep shining on with or without Paul. It will still serve to advance the gospel. So, Paul is glad and rejoices with the Philippians. Paul’s joy was never based on circumstance or situation but based on a life totally committed to Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Someone said that unless we let our lights shine, we are hidden from recognition and may only be stumbling blocks. They shared a story about a blind beggar who was sitting on a sidewalk on a dark night with a bright lantern by his side. Someone walked by this blind beggar and puzzled, turned back and asked, “What do you keep a lantern burning for? You can’t see.” The blind beggar replied, “So that others may not stumble over me.” We should keep our light burning for the sake of others as well as for the good of being in the light ourselves. We should keep our light burning for the sake of others, for the sake of the gospel to go forth. In order for us to keep burning for the sake of others, it will require sacrifice and a total commitment to Christ. We may be invisible. The way we serve may be unseen and unappreciated. But together, we can show the invincibility of Christ. Whether it is imprisonment or disillusionment or discouragement, nothing will stop the good news of Christ so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

At the end of Philippians 2, just as Paul himself was an example of how the light of Christ shines through us, Paul shares about Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus aren’t talked about to put them on a pedestal, but God calls us to have examples in our lives.

Philippians 2:22 – *But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.*

Here, Timothy represents those who have worked out their salvation. He has shown his proven worth, one that wants to shine by serving faithfully. Epaphroditus represents those who want to shine by sacrificing. He was a fellow soldier who went and ministered, almost dying from illness.

Philippians 2:29-30 – *Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger*²⁹*So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,*³⁰*for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.*

Whether we serve or sacrifice, we are called to be examples to shine the light of Christ. The light of Christ is in us. We can hide it or we can shine it for the glory of God. Jesus is the greatest example of being a light to the world. But God uses people to be His flashlights. We all know people who God used to be a light to us, people who shined the light of Christ so brightly to us that it made us want to love Jesus more. We need them. We need each other to shine so that we can shine until the end, until we see Jesus face to face.

I wanted to end our time today with an announcement. As pastors, we are sad to share that yesterday, Jipsanim, which is translated as deaconess, passed away to be with the Lord. Since the beginning of CFC, she has been our spiritual mother and grandmother. She's someone that was very close to our CFC family. Every single day, praying for us, fasting, sacrificing, supporting us through her presence at every single church meeting and event.

I just want to take some time to share about her. She has been one person that God used to shine the light of Christ to CFC, to many alumni over many years and generations. Personally, since 1997, I have known her and being on staff here at CFC for the last 12 years, often seeing her daily and having her speak into our lives, praying over me. A lot of lessons learned from her, where morning prayer was not just a culture, but a time to meet Christ. Where repentance was not just conviction of your sins but to love Christ. Where sacrifice was not just giving up your life but gaining more of Christ. I remember when I was single for many years, we were games partners at pastors' Christmas parties because she didn't want me to feel alone. And when I got married, she was so happy with tears, saying, "Finally." But more than that, spiritually, she shined so brightly, especially with her intimacy with Christ in prayer. She believed prayer was a relationship with God, not something that you do here and there. Prayer was a source of grace to sustain her. What a woman of prayer she was. I remember one prayer meeting, I fell asleep and she came by and woke me up. She knew I was praying for my family, for my brother. She woke me up saying, "If you don't pray for your brother, who will?" Ever since then, I have been praying not only for my family but for others in the same way. She taught me how to pray. We need Jesus. He is the example. But we also need the Pauls, the Timothys, the Epaphrodituses, the Jipsanims in our lives.

Death meets us with many goodbyes, but also many hellos. As we say goodbye to her, more like a see you later, imagine the many hellos she is receiving now. The hellos of many CFC alumni who passed away and are in heaven now, greeting Jipsanim and saying to her, "Welcome home." And above all, she is finally together with the one she always wanted to be with, Jesus Christ himself. The one she always

talked about every day at morning prayer. The one she prayed to with every breath that she had. The one that she pointed us to at every chance.

Jipsanim, thank you for all that you did for this church, for all the alumni, and for the kingdom of God. You shined the light of Christ so brightly. Now you're with the Son. I can only imagine how happy you are. I can only imagine how you're just worshipping. Jipsanim, we will miss you, but now you can finally rest in peace in joy and with Christ. As you rest in heaven, we will be here, working. We will be here raising up kingdom workers. We will be here trying to shine the light of Christ.

Let's pray that we'd shine the light of Christ to others, that we will shine so brightly in our places of work, in our communities, and to the world, that they may see Jesus clearly, so that they may give their life to Jesus Christ for the glory of God.