

“Lights In The World”

“Do all things without murmuring and questionings, that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:1-16a).

Ancient Israel was particularly given to murmuring and questionings. When their way grew difficult in their wilderness wonderings, they frequently murmured. The idea of murmur is a “low-keyed” complaint: it is the undertow that brings many brethren and congregations to ruin. Israel “murmured” against the leadership God provided for them in the person of Moses. When adversity befell them, it was Moses’ fault, of course. Never mind that they were slaves no more and had prayed God for a deliverer! Never mind that they had daily food from God; that He was guiding them, if slowly, at least certainly to the land He promised their fathers. They murmured because they were “deprived” of a few things Egypt had permitted them, melons, leeks: those things which were the result of cultivation but which they could not have, journeying from place to place as they were. They questioned. Why could only Aaron and his sons offer sacrifices? Their end was (is) a warning to God’s people in all ages: we must not murmur nor question the edicts of God. If we murmur and doubt, we cannot be blameless and harmless; God’s children without blemish. Jesus instructed His disciples, *“Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves”* (Mt. 10:16). We are told that this word *“harmless”* literally means sincere and appears only two times in the scriptures. It is Christ’s desire to *“present the church to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 5:27). Paul’s desire was that he might present the Corinthian Christians as a *“pure virgin to Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:2). It is not possible to be without blemish and blameless if we are constantly given to murmuring.

We are to be children of God without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Because Moses gave this description of the Israel of his day, some think Paul is commanding Gentile Christians to be God’s children in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation of Jews. That does not follow. Unbelieving Jews were crooked and perverse, but no more so than unbelieving Gentiles. The contrast here is between those who are God’s children (Christians) and those who are Satan’s children -- a crooked and perverse generation to which term applies equally of those who are determined to do their (His) will, whether that one be a Jew or Gentile. The thought of *“crooked”* suggests something devious; calculating, designing. A perverse person is one who is contrary to that which is right and good.

Christians are to be seen of lights in the midst of a crooked world. So Jesus instructed, "*Ye are the light of the world ... let your light shine before men*" (Mt. 5:14, 16). A lighthouse on the shore can guide a storm-tossed vessel to safety. Christians, by our lights can give guidance in the darkness of a sin-cursed world and help lead those in danger to safety. We are to hold forth the Word of Life -- the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16). Since we also live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation we can, by being blameless and harmless, be seen as lights in the darkness and ignorance of sin, and reflect the way which leads to safety.

Let us hold forth the Word of Life. There are still those who are trying to find a safe, secure passage to safety.

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