

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philipians ...

Lights in the World

God anticipates that each Christian will be a living representative of His goodness and grace. While it is true that the world in general and each adult in particular has rebelled against Him, God still loves those made in His image and desires their reconciliation to Him. The message of reconciliation will not be thundered from on high, however, but will be tendered through His representatives whose feet tread this earth, as the apostle Paul stated: God "reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). The carriers of this message,

then, must exhibit the care and concern of God for each lost person, and must radiate His attitudes to attract those lost people.

- **No whining** — As Jesus was finishing up the institution of the Lord's Supper, and preparing to make His way to the garden of Gethsemane to anguish in prayer, He made an amazing statement. "These things I have spoken to you," He asseverated, "that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:8). In the midst of the world's worst suffering, He still had joy and was conscious of the need of the saints who were yet to come to be able to have joy also. The apostle Paul, then, building upon the point that God is at work in each Christian strengthening their wills, exhorts, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may prove yourselves blameless and innocent ..." (Philippians 2:14,15). Christians, being joyful, are not complainers; they understand that this world has been cursed since Adam and Eve sinned, and they comprehend that not everything is going to work perfectly all the time. They recognize that much difficult and repetitive work has to be done by somebody, and if it is their turn, they jump into their tasks with joy. They have great attitudes, and do not fight or argue with those who have charge over them. They are the best workers, demonstrating the character of Christ to those around them.

- **Proving yourselves** — The old saying is, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one." While the word of God must be preached, that preaching is most effective when it is lived out in the lives of believers. "Prove yourselves," the apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit enjoin the brethren, "to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). The saints are obligated to demonstrate to the world that they are transformed individuals. They are to be honest and upright, taking responsibility for mistakes or misunderstandings that usually happen in the course of human interaction. They are to be innocent; they are not to be conniving or manipulative, or have hidden motives and agendas.

- **Lights in a dark world** — "The whole world," the apostle John pointed out, "lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). The scripture repeatedly refers to those trapped by their own sin and the lies of Satan as "a crooked and perverse generation." The call is for those who would be God's children to come out of the darkness, and, by their behavior, "appear as lights in the world." As the Lord Jesus Himself exhorted, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that *they may see your good works*, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

When the apostle Paul described the gospel of Christ to the Corinthian brethren, he noted that it included the fact that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was resurrected on the third day. But the apostle does not stop there; he also included the expression, "He appeared" (1 Corinthians 15:5). That appearance was the key point in establishing the truthfulness of His resurrection. Christians, in a parallel manner, die and are buried with Christ in their immersions, and are resurrected to walk in newness of life. But their participation in the gospel does not end there either; as Christ *appeared*, so are saints to *appear as lights* in the world, the continuing key point in establishing the truthfulness of Jesus' resurrection!

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peared, so saints
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JAY WILSON