

# Radiate

20 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians  
Church on the Park I Sunday, 21 May 2017

**Text:** “Do all things without grumbling or disputing [human reasoning/logic, *dialogismos*]; so that you will prove yourselves [note, better translation: **become**, *ginomai*] to be blameless [without fault] and innocent [without mixture], children of God above reproach [without spot] in the midst of a crooked [warped/bent] and perverse [twisted] generation [Moses’ Song, Deut. 32:5], among whom you appear [shine/illuminate] as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run [*trecho*] in vain nor toil [labour to the point of exhaustion] in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.” (Philippians 2:14-18)

**Theme:** Radiate the light of God’s Word in a dark and twisted world.

**Intro:** In this short passage, Paul uses numerous images to call us to be like blazing torches, radiating God’s light in a dark and twisted world. The overarching image is Israel in the wilderness. In Moses’ song, Moses calls Israel a “crooked and perverse generation” because they did not trust God, but grumbled and complained (Deu. 32:5). Paul also uses this phrase, and teaches us how to become holy, shining lights. Today, I will use the word ‘RADIATE’ as an acronym to sum up what Paul is saying.

## RADIATE

**R - Resist** grumbling

**A - Accept** God’s Work

**D - Differentiate** from the darkness

**I - Imitate** Joshua and Caleb

**A - Act** in faith

**T - Take** up the Word of life

**E - Evangelize** by spreading the Good News

### 1) Resist grumbling and Accept God’s work (Phil. 2:14-15; Num. 11:1-6; Num. 14:1-3).

- Today, in order to deal with this passage properly, I need to do some simple **exegesis**, which means drawing out the meaning of the passage.
- Without exegesis, we won’t fully understand what Paul is saying.
- Let’s quickly **break down** this passage. See text notes above.
- Mainly, I want to replace ‘**prove yourself**’ with ‘**become**’—what the text actually says.
- Grumbling, complaining and human reason will **stop** you from **becoming holy**.
- God wants you to **become a child of God (John 1:12)**. That begins by being born again.
  - Once you are born again, God’s **seed** is now **in** you.
  - But now, the **seed** needs to **grow**.
    - And in order for the seed to grow, you need to let **God work within**.
    - You need to **recognize** how **God** is **leading** you and what he is doing.
  - The **children of God** have the same nature as the **Father—holy—without fault, without mixture, pure and straight**.

- In the wilderness, the Israelites were constantly **fighting** against God. God was attempting to work in them, but they **rejected** his work.
- Let's look at some **examples** of this:
- **Numbers 11:1-6**
  - **Complaining** stems from **seeing** the **adversity** rather than the **ability** and **awesomeness** of God.
  - If you only see the **challenge** and not God's **character**, you will **complain**.
- The **issue** with the **Israelites** in the wilderness is that they did not allow God to **work within** them. They didn't accept his **teaching** and **training**.
- **Stop fighting** what Father is doing in your life. **Accept** his work.
- The **wilderness** was meant to be **God's honeymoon** with his **people**, but they saw it as a torture chamber.
- The **worst** example of **grumbling** is when God brought them to the **edge** of the Promised Land, at Kadesh Barnea (**Numbers 14:1-3**).

## 2) Differentiate from the darkness and Imitate Caleb and Joshua (Num. 13:1-2, 27-33; 14:5-10, \*14:24).

- Paul is calling us to be **different** from the world, like the **stars** shining in the **darkness**.
- We are called to **be holy**, without fault, without mixture and spotless.
- **Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones** said, "Once you have lost the **division** between the world and the church—the church ceases to be truly Christian."
- *Do you remember the story of Joshua & Caleb in the wilderness? \*Numbers 14:24, 30; Numbers 13:1-3; 17-24; 25-33; \*14:1-4ff*
  - Even though the people **experienced the goodness** of the land, they didn't want to go into the Promised Land.
  - They spread a **bad report**. In other words, **bad news**, the opposite of good news.
- *What is God's response?*
  - "How long will this people **spurn** [to despise/abhor, in spite of favour] me? And how long will they **not believe** in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?" (Numbers 14:11)
- "But My servant **Caleb**, because he has had a **different spirit** and has **followed Me fully**, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it..."
- **Honouring God** means **living holy**, different in spirit from the world.
  - It's **fear** and **selfish** that drives you to be **like the crowd**.
  - Instead, let something else **move** you—let **God's Word** and **God's glory** move you.
  - **Fear** makes you try to **fit in**. **Faith** makes you **stand out**.

## 3) Act in faith, Take hold of the Word of Life and Evangelise (Phil 2:14-18; Num. 14:6-9).

- What made **Joshua and Caleb** different is their **faith in God's Word** despite the **hostile crowd**.
- They believed even though the people wanted to **stone** them.
- They **took hold** of **God's Word of Life**.
  - It's like the choice between the **Tree of Life** and the **Tree of the Knowledge** of Good and Evil.
  - They believed God was a **living God**, that his **words** were **full of life**, and that God is greater than the giants.
- Be like Joshua and Caleb who held the **Word of Life** out like a **torch** in the darkness.
- Preach **good news** when the world only gravitates toward **bad news** and **fake news**.
- *Do you know what the word evangelize means?*

- It means to spread **good news**, the **report of victory**.
- We report the **victory of the cross**.
  - Jesus has **conquered sin, satan and sickness**. Jesus has conquered the worlds unbelief and hatred. Jesus has **won** the **Promised Land** for us. You just need to follow in his footsteps like the Joshua's generation followed Joshua into the Promised Land.
  - Everything that God has **promised** in his word is **yours** in **Christ Jesus**.

**Conclusion:** R - Resist grumbling, A - Accept God's Work, D - Differentiate from the darkness, I - Imitate Joshua and Caleb, A - Act in faith, T - Take up the Word of life, and E - Evangelize by spreading the Good News.

## END NOTES

There are numerous images in this small passage...

1) We see the Israelites on a journey in the wilderness. They are God's children, but not living as God's children. They are not becoming what they are called to be because they are grumbling and complaining in the wilderness, they are using their human reasoning to reject God's way. They became impatient with the way.

2) Then we see the image of stars in the night, radiating in the darkness of a twisted generation. This is the call of Abraham's children. The Lord said, pointing to the night sky, "So shall your offspring be." And when he said that, he did not just mean in quantity, but in quality—you will be like stars in the night, illuminating this dark world.

3) Next we see the image of a race, a race in which a runner is carrying a blazing torch [a herald & athlete]. The torch is the Word of life, the Word of God. God's Word is living—it's not the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that brings death. No, God's Word is like the Tree of Life, which gives eternal life. (not just quantity, but quality) to all who eat it. You have now been given access to this tree through the cross of Jesus Christ. The Christian life is a race, a marathon. That's one of the great images Paul brings out in Philippians. He's running a race. He's forgetting what is behind, pressing on to what is ahead. As a runner, hold your torch high because this is a dark world, and wherever you go, you bring light to those in darkness.

Remember, my first 24 hours in New York, on a five kilometer walk; the lady said she was drawn to the walking group because of their devotion, in and out of season.

Remember Elijah running. (1 Kings 18:46)

TDNT suggests that the prophets of old were known to be physical runners because of the importance and urgency of their message. (see article on *trecho*)

4) Another image, is that of a labourer, someone working to the point of exhaustion. There seems to be a myth in the Christian church that if something is of God, it's easy—there's no exhaustion. Nothing can be further from the truth when reading Paul. Your love of Jesus should move you to work for him to the point of exhaustion. Yet, at the same time, God doesn't want you staying exhausted. You will need to be refreshed also. This is a joyful labour, like Jacob working for Rachel—he does not know where the time went because he is so in love.

5) The last picture is that of the temple and the altar. Paul is being poured out like a drink offering. The people are also sacrificing and serving like the priest. But, though it's labour, it's a labour of love and they are filled with the joy of the Lord, the joy that comes from God's house.

Preaching is more than words, being a light is more than sharing your gift—it's living a holy life, a life that is a message and a gift to the world.