

Blameless and Harmless Lights in This World

By Ginny Larsen

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings, so that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Among these you shine as lights in the world.”

(Philippians 2:14-15)

When I sat in church recently, looking around me at my brothers and sisters in Christ, it dawned on me what a witness we are to one another, even in the Body of Christ. We think of *witnessing* as something we go out in the world to do...and it is, but it is also something we are every day to those who are around us, and in fact, that is where we have the greatest impact on lives. I look around me and see these dear people and really know very little of their daily lives, but each Sunday I see them, and each one has been a testimony to me in some way. They have all ministered Christ to me without realizing it. Their presence in church is sorely missed each time one person is not there on a Sunday morning. I guess that's one advantage of being in a small church.

All the more important, then, that all we do in our home, in our community, our work, and our church is done without murmurings and disputings but in the love of the Spirit in us, working through us, with thanksgiving. This is a witness and a light to everyone in our lives, that something outside of ourselves is present in our hearts. Something outside the natural response to life is having a greater impact on us, and it doesn't go unnoticed. It's not the natural way of the flesh...of the world. It stands out in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. His Light shines through us, when we “put on Christ” and walk in the Spirit and by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, not letting them control our actions, thoughts, and words. As we walk and live by the Spirit, we become a witness (or testimony) of something greater than ourselves – of being saved from our own base reactions to life and circumstance, and we become His vessel of light to a dark world.

For the word “harmless,” Robertson's Word Pictures defines it “**Harmless** (*akeraioi*). Unmixed, unadulterated.” When we have pollution in our lives from worldly thinking, fleshly appetites, or anything contrary to His Word, we have a mixture. People see a confusing message. When they see we claim to be a Christian and then go along with another philosophy that is unbiblical, there is confusion in our witness. We are not “harmless” anymore in our testimony. Instead, we become “harmful” to the true testimony of the Gospel, and our witness is mixed and adulterated. How important it is then to be in the Word of God daily, that we might know the mind of God and the heart of God, allowing that to fill us. It's when His Word fills us that we are able to act according to it by the power of His Spirit at work in us, mortifying the deeds (thoughts and actions) of our flesh. If we are reading the writings of others without being Bereans and checking what is written in the Bible, we can have a mixture in our thinking, and bring a mixed message to others as well.

For the words “murmurings and disputing,” Vincent Word Studies says, “Better here *questionings* or *doubtings*. . . . The murmuring is the *moral*, the doubting the *intellectual* rebellion against God.” If we look in the beginning of Philippians chapter 2, we see Paul talking about the humility of Christ, and this is the mind we are to have, just as Christ had even though He was God, taking on the form of human flesh, humbling Himself to be

obedient even unto death. When we murmur and complain, doubting and questioning God's plan in our lives or providence in our lives we are in rebellion against Him and cannot be His testimony in this world. But as we put on the humility of Christ in our thoughts and actions toward our circumstances in life, giving Him glory, we become a light that shines brightly to all around us. We become a light that stands out against the corruption of this world. We become undefeated by the forces of darkness, because Christ is very much at work in us to work all things together for our good, according to His purposes. We become a Body growing together as a family of God, and a light to the world.

When there are murmurings and disputings against that light within the body of Christ, rather than a humility of all of us learning together (as we are all being conformed to His image and the unity of the Spirit), we are no longer “harmless” but have become a mixed message and a harm to the truth of the Gospel. All things that we do, as Believers, must be done in that spirit of humility, each esteeming others as more important than ourselves, remembering that we are not the only ones God is able to teach but having patience with one another as we are learning and growing together. We can be so “right” that we're terribly wrong. We can also be wrong and unable to receive light to correct our thinking, because of “*vain glory*” (Philippians 2:3) – then comes murmurings and disputings in our hearts and minds against one another.

We must in all things put on Christ in order to be His true light in this world...His unadulterated, harmless, and unmixed message to a lost generation, as well as to one another in the Body of Christ. As the world in these last days becomes darker and darker and more evil, we must all the more be filled with His Spirit to be lights that shine all the brighter. As we do, the darkness will hate that light increasingly and come against us. Yet, just as Jesus, we must be obedient witnesses of His glory, even unto death if necessary, not showing any intimidation or fear of them, “*only let your conduct be as becomes the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you, or else am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, striving together with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and terrified in nothing by your adversaries. **For this is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For to you it is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake***” (Philippians 1:27-29).

To a world that rejects Christ and persecutes the Church, we are an evident token of their perdition. We are a witness to them of the judgment that they will suffer if they do not turn to Christ in repentance and faith. We are also a testimony of the salvation we have in Christ to them and the righteousness of Christ as we take a stand with Him and show no fear of them, not being intimidated into shying away from that stand.

We are also a testimony to the angelic powers and the powers of darkness of the wonderful grace of God, “*so that now to the rulers and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Our *witnessing* to a lost world would be so much more effective, then, if we were first to become His witness...and only as we “*do all things without murmurings and disputings, so that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Among these you shine as lights in the world*” (Philippians 2:14-15). How important it is then to BECOME His witness, rather

than just to GO witnessing. Both are important, and one should not be without the other.

Father in Heaven, may we put on Christ in our daily lives, every day, at home, at work, or at church, to be lights in a dark world, unadulterated by the world. Work in our hearts to bring us closer and closer to that which You call us to each day. In Jesus name, amen.