

Stars in the Sky

Scripture Reading — Philippians 2:14-18

*Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. —
Philippians 2:15-16*

Good preachers know the value of strong imagery. Metaphors and similes paint word pictures in our minds. In this passage Paul has two similes, one lovely and the other painful.

On the one hand, when we behave in Christlike ways as Paul has been urging throughout Philippians 2, we can shine like stars in the sky. Though the world around us may often seem like a morally dark place, in God's strength we can be like nighttime stars that pierce the darkness and twinkle in beauty.

On the other hand, Paul raises the possibility that he might not live much longer. He says he could be poured out like a drink offering to complete the sacrifice of service the Philippians were engaged in through their Christian living. If the star imagery warmed the hearts of the Christians in Philippi, this drink-offering -image probably gave them a chill. They would not want their founding pastor to die.

But Paul does not want them to feel sad. He sees the possibility of dying for Christ as a reason to rejoice! Jesus said that the servant is not greater than the master. If the world mistreated Jesus, his followers may experience the same.

So shine like stars, but don't be surprised if some people in the world do not like that. And if they don't, do not despair. Look to Jesus on his cross and rejoice.

Prayer

Increase our faith, dear God, so that we too can be confident that whether we witness to you by our lives or by our deaths, we can find endless reason to rejoice in you. Amen.

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