

Philippians 2:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Analysis

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (ἴνα γένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης, ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ, hina genēsthe amemptoi kai akeraioi, tekna theou amōma meson geneas skolias kai diestrammenēs, en hois phainesthe hōs phōstēres en kosmō)—Hina genēsthe ("that you may become") states purpose. Amemptoi ("blameless") means beyond reproach; akeraioi ("harmless, innocent, pure") combines a- ("without") + kerannymi ("mix")—unmixed, unadulterated. Amōma ("without blemish") is sacrificial language (Lev 1:3).

Children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ, tekna theou) identifies believers' status. Context: **in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation** (μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης, meson geneas skolias kai diestrammenēs)—quotes Deut 32:5 (Moses's description of Israel). Skolias ("crooked") and diestrammenēs ("twisted, perverted") describe moral corruption. Believers are countercultural. **Shine as lights** (φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες, phainesthe hōs phōstēres)—phōstēres ("luminaries") usually means heavenly bodies (Gen 1:14 LXX). Christians are cosmic lights in moral darkness.

Historical Context

Deuteronomy 32:5's application to Greco-Roman culture (not just Israel) universalizes moral corruption. Ancient paganism involved sexual immorality, violence, injustice—Christians' ethical rigor was conspicuous. 'Lights in the world' echoes Jesus's teaching (Matt 5:14-16). Second-century apologists (Justin Martyr, Athenagoras) defended Christians by pointing to their ethical transformation—lights in darkness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How are you 'blameless and harmless' in a morally 'crooked and perverse' culture?
2. What does it mean to 'shine as lights' (*phōstēres*)—and how is your light visible to others?
3. How does being 'children of God' (*tekna theou*) motivate ethical distinctiveness?

Interlinear Text

ἵνα γένησθε ἀμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι τέκνα θεοῦ
That ye may be blameless and harmless the sons of God
G2443 G1096 G273 G2532 G185 G5043 G2316

ἀμώμητα ἐν μέσῳ γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ
without rebuke among the midst nation of a crooked and
G298 G1722 G3319 G1074 G4646 G2532

διεστραμμένης ἐν οῖς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν
perverse among whom ye shine as lights among
G1294 G1722 G3739 G5316 G5613 G5458 G1722

κόσμῳ
the world
G2889

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 2:12 (References God): Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Matthew 5:45 (Parallel theme): That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Isaiah 60:1 (Light): Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

Deuteronomy 32:5 (Parallel theme): They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

2 Peter 3:14 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (References God): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:8 (Parallel theme): Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:10 (References God): Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Matthew 5:48 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

1 Peter 2:9 (Light): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: