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## HOLD FAST

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As we begin week five of our study, we are almost half way finished, and there is still so much to learn and ponder, so hold fast! That's not the meaning of today's title but it certainly is applicable for us to press on. Perhaps we will join the Psalmist of Psalm 119 when he said,

"How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart."

Then again, in v. 18 when he says,

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law."

I pray He has been opening your eyes to wonderful things through this study. Let's dive into Week Five with fervor!

Last week's study thoroughly challenged us to prove ourselves to be "blameless and innocent children of God" appearing as "lights in the world". We pick up today in verse 16, but to set the context, which is always so important, go ahead and **read Philippians 2:14-16**. **Then write out Philippians 2:16 here:**

This verse begins with: "Holding fast the word of life"

The idea behind this phrase is interesting, it means to be one who holds up a torch for others to see. In other words, when we are living for Christ, we will be shining a light on Him. As we live out the gospel, others will see Him illumined by our life choices and behaviors.

**Take a look at Matthew 5:14-16. How would you summarize these verses?**

In Paul's encouragement for believers to mature in Christ, he says, not only are we to appear as "lights in the world", but also to "hold fast", or as the KJV says, "hold forth the word of life". Picture the Statue of Liberty with her torch of light held high, or better yet, think of the men and women carrying the torch for the Olympic Games. The one holding the torch tends to stand out among the crowd, don't they? Paul says we are to hold forth the word of life. When others see our daily walk, it should be obvious to them that we are living according to the word. Trusting it, thriving in the promises and the joy available in Christ, who gives us eternal life. We should be a walking gospel.

What is it that we are to hold forth? The word of life - the good news that Jesus Christ died for all, and He is the giver of everlasting life.

Paul continues to convey the thought we saw in chapter 1:21, "to live is Christ, ...". Back in the book of Acts, we saw that Paul was a man who *committed* himself to what he believed, both before and after he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. His conversion changed the focus of that devotion until his every thought and action revolved around Christ Jesus and his strong desire that the good news of salvation by grace be preached. That is how it is to be for us as well, because according to this verse, it's not a suggestion, it's a command that *we are to make it a matter of principle to continuously let Christ's life be revealed through us.*

**Stop and think. How is Christ's life currently being revealed in your life?**

Paul wants the church to understand there is great purpose in living this way. Our lives should reflect the word of life so that others may gain life as well.

**Just look at the life offered in John 10:10. What kind of life is He offering?**

**We have the hope that others are seeking! But do they see us living out that hope?**

**Thought: Is there an area that you know that you need to let Him shine in your life more? If you are willing to commit to change, write it out as a prayer and a tool of accountability between you and God:**

As we grow in the knowledge of Christ, absorbing His mind through study of the scripture, our lives begin to reveal Christ and "the word of life" to others, making us productive for the cause of Christ.

**We have previously read John 1:1-14, but refresh your memory by looking at verses 1-3 & 14 again.**

**Now read John 5:24.** "Truly, Truly," is Christ's way of saying, "listen up".

**What do we gain by listening up and believing?**

What a blessing to know that we who have believed do not fall under the judgment of God because Christ paid the price for our deeds.

Do others know by our behavior that we have been set free, or are we acting as the walking dead? In other words, are we living like those in the world who are dead in their trespasses? Paul's command to us is to live like we have been set free from the death that was surely ours to own. In Jesus Christ we are given abundant life, *so we need to live like it*. That happens as we put off the old self, and put on the new.

**Read Ephesians 4:22-32. We find a whole list of "to do's" in these verses. Write them:**

Do you see a pattern of these in your life? As believers, we are privileged to be recipients of a great exchange that takes place as we utilize the mind of Christ. Engaging and applying the knowledge of His word to our every day, nitty-gritty life means our reactions will be different. Our responses will be guided by His Spirit. Maturity, wisdom, patience, joy, all of it, is the nature that will be revealed in us as His Spirit shines through, because that is His nature. As we mature in Him, we have the added result that we will no longer be children tossed to and fro by every whim of doctrine, and we will have stability.

**Read Ephesians 4:14-15**

Have you noticed that it seems God has placed in a woman's heart the desire for security? We go searching all over for it, in various forms. But, His word is what brings security to our hearts as we grow in the knowledge of it, and as we apply it to our life, the muscles of trust are strengthened. Our faith is deepened like a wall of protection around us.

His word, Dear One, produces stability, and that produces peace, and peace allows joy in our life regardless of the circumstances. Yes, in spite of the circumstances, joy can be ours because stability is a direct result of our trust in our God. When we become secure in the knowledge of who we are in Christ, and in what God has promised to do in our lives, we can have joy. Reading His word and submitting to His Spirit working, who produces His fruit in us, gives us the ability to hold fast the word of life. The result is, also, that others will be drawn to a life with Him as they see our walk of trust and dependence.

**A little challenge for you: Write out a prayer asking for help in a particular area where you haven't been as faithful as you need to be.** Remember, God is for you! He wants to see your growth. He's at work accomplishing it! (We read that in Philippians 1:6.) Perhaps there's an area you need to be more intentional about.

**Or, perhaps the Lord is reminding you of someone that you would want to be a testimony of the good news to, but you struggle in doing so. Put your prayer on paper so that it serves as a reminder, as well as an opportunity to later see how God has answered.**

**My prayer:**

REVIEW

~ We are to hold fast the word of life - living the mind of Christ for others to see.

Matthew 5:14-16,

~ Christ offers life abundant (John 10:10)

~ The benefits include eternal life and no judgment John 5:24

~ We've been instructed how to live. Ephesians 4:14-15, 22-25, 29-32

~ Abundant life should be evident in our lives. Live victoriously!