

Be Above Reproach

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:14-15)

As children of God, we are ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). As such, although we are in the world, we are not of it—our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). How do we represent Christ and how are we viewed by the nonbelieving world around us? Do we live and behave like the world or do we try to live by a higher standard?

To grumble or complain about our circumstances implies we do not really believe that God is in control or is accomplishing His will through us (Philippians 2:13). Paul learned to be content regardless of his circumstances, which is a good example for us (Philippians 4:11-13). We should evaluate our behavior—are we more likely to complain about something or be content?

Disputing with our fellow brethren, or anyone for that matter, is a symptom of pride and arrogance, and leads to disunity (I Timothy 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:14). We are exhorted to humble ourselves by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose (Philippians 2:1-8). It is better to hold our tongue than to try to get in the last word to prove our point. It is better to speak with grace and with words that are edifying, and to let the Holy Spirit open the hearers' ears to the truth (Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 4:29).

It is unlikely that believers have any influence on the behavior of this world, or their country, state, or city. However, we do have an influence on those who we come into contact everyday—family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, supervisors, teachers, etc. These people who are familiar with us are watching us. Unfortunately, many of us tend to mix in so well with the world that we do not appear to be any different. Although some believers put on an appearance of godliness, the people who know them often see them as hypocrites. Do we discredit anyone, boast of our accomplishments or possessions, cast blame on others, lie, steal, cheat, gamble away time or money, participate in worldly (sinful) festivities, or participate in any other activities that are dishonoring to God and our Lord Jesus Christ?

As explained earlier, we are lights of the world, or beacons of truth, and should avoid the deeds of the world, which are considered by God to be darkness (Ephesians 5:6-13; Romans 13:12-14; II Corinthians 6:14; Colossians 1:12-13; I Thessalonians 5:4-5). We should not give nonbelievers cause to blaspheme God because of our sinfulness (Romans 2:24).

For our proud confidence [rejoicing] is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. (II Corinthians 1:12)