



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## The World Needs Lights”

By Mark McCrary

Viruses. Racism. Injustice. Riots. Financial upheaval.

It is tempting to think that things have never been worse, yet our field of vision over the course of time is very narrow. The reality is human existence has always been filled with all of the above, along with earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, famines, awful diseases, conquests, pillagings, dominations, food and water shortages, mosquitoes, snakes, lions and tigers, and bears... and the lists go on and on.

Reasons to be upset, scared, anxious, concerned, frustrated and the like are nothing new. They have been the constant companions of the human experience and while we travel this earth, they always will.

Despite these realities, the Bible holds several enticing possibilities before us: we can have hope ([Psalm 42:11](#); [62:5-6](#); [Romans 15:13](#); [1 Timothy 4:10](#)), joy ([Psalm 16:11](#); [John 15:10-12](#); [Galatians 5:22-23](#)) and peace with others ([Psalm 34:13-15](#); [Isaiah 32:16-17](#); [Luke 2:13-14](#); [Romans 12:17-18](#); [1 Corinthians 13:11](#))—even in this life. It does not give us these things by taking us out of the world, but by giving us tools to use while in this world. What are these tools?

There are numerous passages we could look to, but let's spend a few minutes contemplating Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life..." ([Philippians 2:14-16](#)).

Under inspiration, Paul gives us some simple, doable actions we can put into place in our lives. First, he tells us not to complain. All of us complain from time to time. Sometimes, those complaints move from "time to time" to all the time. Spend some time this week paying attention to your speech; look over your social media posts. Be honest. How much do you see yourself complaining? It may be more than you think. We can post all the Bible verses we like on Facebook or Instagram, but when we complain—especially when people know we are a Christian—we aren't showing the world that we are any different than anyone else. So, check your complaining. Complaints stem from too close a proximity to the world. Paul's attitude (and Christ's for that matter) was radical because he focused on different things: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" ([2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#)).

When you make the decision to stop being negative, you must follow that up with an equal decision to being positive—shine as a light. Point people from the chaos of the world to the love and peace of God. You aren't being self-righteous when you decide to model this; people need to see that it really is possible to have the peace that "surpasses all understanding" ([Philippians 4:7](#)) in the "midst of a crooked and twisted generation." People need to hear that injustices are real, that life stinks sometimes, but when one sets their mind on God in obedience, it really can change one's life and outlook. We need to be living proof of this.

Finally, all of this is made possible because you "hold fast to God's word." Every day we are all tempted to cast aside the Biblical teachings to some degree or another. Don't. Always remember that real freedom comes from following God and His word ([Romans 6:15-19](#)). The more we submit to God's wisdom rather than our own, the more peace we will have. Hold on desperately to God and His word.

God needs a hitter this week in this game we call life. Let's step up to the plate.

## Big "I"

by Ray Ferris

" . . . I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts 26:29.

Perhaps many of us recognize these words as those spoken by Paul to Agrippa when he told Paul that he had almost been persuaded to become a Christian (KJV). Have we ever stopped to think of what it would require for us to be able to make the same statement that Paul made to Agrippa? It would mean much more than being just a member of the church. It would mean that I could examine the type of life that I am now living, and yet be able to say the world would be a much better place to live in, even if every other person in the world were living that same type of life! It would mean that the universal church of Christ would be more like what the Lord would have it to be, even if every other Christian lived and served the same way that I do! It would mean that the local congregation of the body where I worship would be more active and more zealous in doing that which is pleasing to the Lord, even if every other member of that congregation attended the services, gave of his money, and helped to do that which must be done just as I do. Remember, Paul said ". . . I would to God, that . . . all that hear me this day, were . . . altogether such as I am . . ." What a sobering thought!

But now, let us apply the thought. Are you a member of the Lord's church? Then ask yourself this question: "If every other person in the local congregation where I am a member worshipped, labored for, and served the Lord as I do, what would this church be like?" We all think it is wonderful for the church to do very great things, but when the time comes to do, oftentimes "Big I" am not to be found.

## Stop Perverting the Straight Ways of the Lord

By Jamey Hinds

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked directly at Elymas and said, "O child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, you are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery! Will you never stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:9–10)

It may seem that some people can't help themselves when it comes to perverting the straight ways of the Lord. They may have only ever heard it perverted, and haven't read God's word themselves to recognize what is true. The perversion of the gospel began in the New Testament, and continues today.

So, what can we do? First, we can know it ourselves thoroughly. Not just knowing it to recognize some of the points of the gospel, but knowing it thoroughly so that if anyone preaches a different gospel than what we've received, we would quickly know it to be able to expose it (Gal. 1:6–12; Eph. 5:10–13). Secondly, knowledge alone puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1). So, we need to do the things we know to do from God in order to please Him: "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good purpose" (Php. 2:12–13).

The gospel of God is actually pretty simple (see 1 Cor. 15:1–8). People make it complicated by diluting its power with their own ideas—whether adding to or subtracting—it is diluting the power of the gospel unto salvation (Rom. 1:16–17; 1 Cor. 1:18). Read it, know it, believe it, do it, share it