

Monday, 21 June 2021 – Weekly Inspiration from Rev. Jason

I used to have a Zippo lighter with the inscription "Philippians 2:15" on it. I don't know what's happened to it in recent years; all I can surmise is that it found one of the black holes of home ownership that seem to be one-directional, and more than often take individual socks. But it was (and continues to be, in my mind) a reminder of the quality of character to which we are called in Christ. "So that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world" (NRSV).

It can be easy to view Paul as a criticizer, always pointing out faults and telling people how they ought to behave, but the truth is that he is an encourager, an exhorter to live better lives. His desire is for people to be the best versions of themselves, in and through the relationship they have with Christ. For instance, he earlier writes, "I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding" (Philippians 1:9, NLT) and also, "Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith" (Philippians 1:25, NLT). The ministry of Paul, in Christ, is to encourage others to live as their best possible versions in Christ.

And you can't encourage someone into their best possible version if you're always criticizing. Neither can you do it without love. You can only encourage someone with, well, positive encouragement. Do you want someone to grow? Give encouragement. Do you want someone to do more or be better? Encourage. And do you want this for yourself? You know the answer by now: Encourage yourself, as you would others.

Prayer: Lord, in your Spirit help me to be the best Christian I can, so that others may likewise be encouraged by me, directly and indirectly. For the joy of my life, the sake of your Good News, and glory of your kingdom, we pray. Amen.