

# *Philippians 2:14-18*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 7/8/2007*

## **How can we live the Christian life? Whine or shine.**

### **Prayer**

Father, we praise You and we thank You for this day. We thank You so much that again You gave Your Son Jesus to die for us, to bring about the cleansing of sin, to redeem us from our sin, to pay the price that we could not pay. We thank You so much. And Father, we thank You that in this redemption You have given us a new heart, Lord God. A heart that can understand Your Word and respond to You, Lord God. And we pray oh God, that as we look into Your Word, that You would convict us and train us and reprove us and correct us that we would be sensitive to Your correction in this issue that we'll see today. Lord, You know that we all struggle with this, with complaining and grumbling. And I pray, Lord God, that we would have a clear view from Your Word concerning how You feel about it, and then Lord, Your strength and power to deliver us from it. Thank You for Your Word and thank You for this time. May You be greatly glorified in it. We pray this in Jesus' name.

### **Sermon**

Well I had to run a quick errand around 9:45 today and I went back home, which is real close. And as I was driving back there was a car in front of me that said, "Impeach Bush and torture Cheney." And I thought, "That's somebody who is really upset with the government." And I thought it reminded me of all the complaints that we hear on TV or whatever it is about politics and about the government. It's a continual complaint session if you watch TV or FOX news or whatever it is – somebody is complaining about something in some way or another. Now we as a nation don't just complain about, you know, politics. We complain about traffic jams, we complain about long lines, we complain about crying babies, misplaced keys, cold food, noisy neighbors, tight clothes, unsuccessful diets. We gripe about our bosses, our work situations, lazy coworkers, slow employees. We grumble about ineffective politicians as I've shared, irresponsible athletes, irritated relatives. We grumble about just about anything and everything in life. We complain about our spouses, we complain about our children, our pastors, finances, so on. But most often we complain about our circumstances, most often. Now the world has nothing to do but complain. They have no way to deal with the circumstances that God has aligned because they do not know God. But we believers should be different, right? We should be different. We shouldn't complain and grumble as we see in Scripture. But unfortunately we do complain and grumble. And I've heard it said that this passage of Scripture we're going to see today concerning complaining and grumbling is one of the most disobeyed commandments in the New Testament among the church these days, which is "Do all things without grumbling and disputing."

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Now today, we're going to see the second portion on how we can live the Christian life. And we're going to see, more specifically, that we can either as Christians choose to wince about our circumstances or shine in those circumstances in a dark world.

Would you turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2? And if you don't have a Bible, we have a stack of Bibles out front, and someone would be glad to get you one. Because really what I say is irrelevant. It's what God says through His Word that is relevant.

Paul has written a letter to a wonderful church that he loves very dearly. A church that he was blessed to share the Gospel with those in the beginning, to form the nucleus of this church, the Philippian church. Paul loved them and they loved him. They were the only church that supported him in certain situations. Paul was so thankful for God's work in this church. He was thankful for God's past work in them, their faith and trust in Christ. And he was thankful and praised God that God would complete that work that He began. And we saw that Paul wanted to correct their misunderstandings concerning his circumstances. Paul was in chains, and they might have thought, as we see in Scripture here, that the ministry was hindered because Paul was in chains. But Paul made it clear that it was through his chains and his suffering that Christ was being magnified as the Gospel pioneered throughout the Praetorian Guard and those also in Rome. Paul shared his mindset, which should be our mindset. To live is Christ – to live is to serve Christ and His people. To die is gain because if you live for Christ, when you die you gain Christ. You gain everything. It was all about magnifying Christ to the Apostle Paul. And he shared that with them also when he desired these Philippians also in their difficult circumstances to magnify Christ and allow Him to be glorified in every situation. They were to walk in a manner worthy. They were to live like heavenly citizens. They were to stand firm in the truth. They were to stand for the truth, and they were not to be scared of opposition to that truth.

And then in chapter 2, Paul changes the discussion to point to how they are to be like-minded, united in spirit, united in mind. And we saw that same-mindedness, like-mindedness, is manifest in the believer when the believer thinks like Christ – when the believer has the mind of Christ flowing in their hearts and minds. As the Spirit of God brings up the Word of God in the believer, then we think in a like-minded, same-minded fashion. We saw that because of all the wonderful truths that believers share together, they are to be of the same mind. They are to do nothing from selfishness. We are to do nothing from selfishness. Nothing in our lives motivated from elevating self or empty conceit – thinking we are something when we are nothing. But with humility of mind we are to consider others as more important than ourselves. We are to not merely look out for our own interests but for the interests of others. And then Paul explains and gives the supreme example of this, Who is the living God Who took on human flesh. And he says, *"Have this mind (or attitude, which is mind) in you which was in Christ Jesus."* And he shares the wonderful thinking and thought patterns of the living God as He took on human flesh. He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped even though He was God, we see in Scripture. That He humbled Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of man. He became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And we saw because of Christ's humility and obedience, being the Lord of all and humbling Himself to where if you

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were to look at Him during His incarnation you would not see the Lord of all, you would see human flesh – that God then highly exalt Him above all and gave Him the name which is above all names. That at Jesus' name, The Lord, that every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

And then we saw last week, because of this (because Jesus is Lord), and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, so then we saw we are to be working out our salvation with fear and trembling. With *phobos* and *tromos*. We are to fear the living God. We are to fear sinning against the living God. But He is a gracious God. He is not a God to hide from, He is a God to hide in – a gracious, wonderful God. A wonderful Savior is Jesus our Lord. And we saw last week that we are to work out our salvation. And I shared that it's not to work for our salvation. Christ has accomplished our salvation. We are to work out our salvation, the process of sanctification, being made more like Jesus Christ. And how is that done? Or why? Because God is at work in you. The living God is working in us, through His Word and His Spirit. We saw the human responsibility of obedience empowered by the Holy Spirit and God's work empowering in us. ***Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you. [Phil. 1:6]*** We need to be working it out because Jesus is Lord of all. And we, as believers, recognize that.

And now today we're coming to a portion of Scripture where we're going to see the first application of this working out our salvation. Which you think, the first application might be a different command than this. But this is the command that God gives us, and I believe that it is so crucial because complaining and grumbling cuts to the core of our relationship with Christ. And so we're going to see not only to we keep on working out our salvation, but we are to be doing without complaining and grumbling.

Now again, just to review the first portion and how we can live the Christian life – look in your Bibles, Philippians chapter 2 and I'll start in verse 5.

***<sup>5</sup>Have this attitude (or the word is literally "mind") in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men, <sup>8</sup>and being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. <sup>12</sup>So then my beloved brethren, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. [Phil. 2:5-13]***

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Again in review, how do we live the Christian life? Again, the first thing is we need to keep on working out our salvation. We saw that it was a continual, habitual action that we should be doing. That we should be doing with fear and trembling, a mindset of *phobos and tromos*. That God, the living God, is at work in us. And we saw exactly what working out our salvation meant, as He says in that first portion, “So then (verse 12) my beloved, just as you have always obeyed...” Working out your salvation is obedience! That’s sanctification, as we obey the Lord God, we obey His Word by His Spirit, we become more like Jesus Christ – that is the working out of our salvation. And it is God at work in us. And we are to do this with fear and trembling. We saw that believers should fear God, that it is a crucial part of our relationship with Him. And one characteristic of those who do not know God, as Paul would say in Romans chapter 3, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*” And folks, if there is no fear of God before your eyes, if there never has been a fear of God before your eyes, you are not saved. But some of us who have been saved have lost our fear of God. We have become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. It’s my prayer that we would encourage one another as long as it is called “Today” lest we be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are to have an obedient, reverent fear of the Lord Jesus Christ because it is our sin that put Him on the cross.

***<sup>17</sup> If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. [1 Peter 1:17]***

We have the paradigm of the Christian walk, ***Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you.*** And now at this point Paul comes and brings us to the first real application and command of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. Verse 14: ***Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*** We see the first command, the first aspect of being obedient, working out our salvation. “Do all things...” And it is extremely important that we understand that this command is the first one that Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, sees complaining as we will see as a major obstacle to working out our salvation, to our sanctification. Think about it. The first real, direct command concerning this working out of our salvation is this here: “*Do all things without grumbling and disputing*”

I could stop the sermon right now. We pretty much all know what that means. Now unfortunately, we live in a Christian culture that does not see complaining like God sees complaining. We live in a Christian culture that by and large does not fear God or fear sinning against God. We live in a culture that downgrades the seriousness of sin. We live in a culture that tailors sermons to the felt needs of the flock, and thus the grumbings! We live in a culture that has ignored these truths by and large. I agree with what John Walvoord writes. He says, “The first exhortation, ‘Do all things without murmurings and disputings,’ although very simple and direct, constitutes a sweeping command rarely obeyed by most Christians.” Rarely obeyed by most Christians.

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And as we will see, complaining, grumbling, arguing, all those things – disputing – are very serious! And this is first of all, as we will see in our text, a command. **Do all things without grumbling and disputing.** The verb in the Greek is in the imperative mood. What does that mean? It is a command! Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit – God is commanding us, the Philippians and thus us to do all things... Now remember He is commanding believers. This is the Philippian church. Not nonbelievers. You can't tell a nonbeliever to stop grumbling and complaining. They don't have the ability to; they're not saved. God judges them, but we do judge those within the church – 1 Corinthians 5. We are to do all things without complaining and disputing.

Now when you as a parent tell your child to do something and they don't do it, what do we call that? It's disobedience, right? It's rebellion, right? When a military officer gives an order to those underneath him and they don't do it, what do we call it? They are insubordinate. They're disobedient, right? They've disobeyed the orders. What do we call it when God gives us a command, and we don't do it? It's disobedience, right? It's disobedience to the living God. It's sin. And our verb here is in the present tense, which speaks of a habitual, continual action. Keep on doing everything without grumbling and disputing.

Now, the context of this passage is Christ has been exalted as Lord over all. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. So then, keep obeying, working out your salvation with fear and trembling. Do all things without complaining and grumbling. The context is the Lordship of Christ. If He is the Sovereign and the Lord of the universe, and you are grumbling about your circumstances as we will see, you are grumbling against Him and His sovereign hand in your life. **Do all things without grumbling or disputing.** I want to ask you, are you bucking the Lord of the universe with a little murmuring here and there? A little complaining? Folks, we are commanded to habitually, continually do all things without grumbling and disputing.

Now as we look at our text, there is a condition that Paul places on us. He says, "Do all things without..." And it's emphatic. Literally in the Greek text it is, "All things do without grumbling and disputing." So literally, how many things are we to do without disputing? All things, right? Certainly we can complain about suffering right? Nope! Certainly we can grumble about our job if we have a terrible boss, right? Certainly we can grumble about the terrible government that we have at times, right? Certainly we can grumble about our spouses if they're sinning against us or treating us badly, right? Certainly, if someone has wronged us we can complain about that? No. God is making it clear from the text that there is absolutely no room in the believer's life for grumbling and disputing. And we will see why in a little bit. One hundred percent obedience required, otherwise we are sinning and we need to confess it. And God is a gracious God who cleanses us of that sin.

Again I believe, brother and sister, this is one of the most greatly broken commands among Christians. There is not *phobos and tremos*, no fear and trembling concerning grumbling and complaining. Paul says, "All things do without grumbling and disputing." And I want to ask you, do you give yourself a pass to sin in this area? When something happens that's not good, do you grumble about it? Do you complain about it? He says, "All things do without this." This is a command! This should be convicting

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us. This is where the Word of God should be at work in our hearts as we learn this. When we are tempted to grumble in our circumstances, this passage should come to mind and we should ask the Lord of the universe to give us the ability to get through this temptation, to endure it because He is faithful.

Now do I need to explain what complaining is? Certainly, it's verbal; but certainly it can be nonverbal also. Either way, it's whatever is going on in your heart and usually it's manifested in your words. And folks, again one side note: the world functions this way. Those who don't know Christ complain and grumble. We hear it all the time! In our families; we hear it all the time at work; we hear it all the time at the grocery store; we hear it on TV. That is the way the world deals with situations. It is through disputing, arguing, complaining.

Ok so, what is grumbling? What does it mean to grumble? The word speaks of a quiet, verbal expression of discontent or displeasure. Often accompanied by feelings of annoyance and anger. Quiet verbal expression of discontent or displeasure. Often accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger. A synonym for this word would be "murmuring." It is an expression of dissatisfaction, which is complaining. It is sometimes translated, "complaint." It is translated in different versions in three ways, "murmurings," "grumbings," "complaining." And folks, all three of those describe this word. And so the translators had to choose the one they felt was the best. But really all three of these describe this word. Murmuring, grumbling, complaining. The word carries the sense of all of them. "All things do without complaining."

Now what is disputing? We know what grumbling or complaining is. What is disputing? The Greek word "disputing" is *dialogizomai*. It's where we get the word, "dialogue" or "discussion" or "debate." It speaks of negative dialogue, characterized by arguing. It's negative dialogue between two people or a group of people. And the command here is "All things without complaining and arguing..." And you wonder, "What is arguing?" And probably many of us had arguments on the way to church this morning. We know what arguing is! When you have children you realize what arguing is. When you have families, you realize what arguing is. When you're around people, you realize what arguing is. "All things do without complaining and arguing."

Now with this in mind, I believe there are a couple things that Scripture reveals concerning grumbling and complaining that we must understand. And we'll get these portions from Exodus mainly. All of our grumbling, although directed at others, is ultimately directed at God. All of our grumbling, although directed at others, is ultimately at God. Hold your fingers in Philippians and turn with me to Exodus 16. And we'll start with verse 1. We get a lesson in grumbling from the Israelites. Exodus 16:1,

**<sup>1</sup> Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt.** (It's been basically 2.5 months since they were delivered from Egypt. God's mighty hand manifest His power! They were delivered from Egypt.) **<sup>2</sup> And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel**

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**grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.** (So they're grumbling here at face value were against Moses and Aaron.) <sup>3</sup> **And the sons of Israel said to them,** (And here's their grumbling,) **"Would that we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."** (So we have the sons of Israel complaining to Moses and Aaron about the rotten circumstances. It's their circumstances right? They've started this trek and it's not as fun as they thought it would be and they started to grumble. They're saying, "Are you going to let us die here now?") <sup>4</sup> **Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.** (And by the way, the Lord is testing us today in this instruction here also, whether we will walk in complaining or grumbling.) <sup>5</sup> **And it will come about on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily."** <sup>6</sup> **So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; <sup>7</sup> and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD** (Right? Earlier, he says "against Moses and Aaron."); **for what are we that you grumble against us. <sup>8</sup> And Moses said, "This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the Lord hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD. [Exodus 16:1-8]**

Folks, when we grumble, we're ultimately grumbling against the Lord, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who allows our circumstances to be as they are as such. Ultimately for our good! But He allows them as such; and when we grumble about our circumstances, no matter how difficult they are – and I mean there are difficult circumstances we go through. We have situations in our families, children are sick, whatever it might be, deaths or whatever; we have difficult situations. But God is sovereign over those. And all of our grumbling ultimately is directed at God. The next time you complain to somebody about something, you might as well just picture yourself standing before the Lord complaining against Him because that is what you are doing. That is what we are doing. And folks, we need to get this point. We need to understand this because Jesus is Lord of all, because He is sovereign over all things (even our circumstances) - that when we grumble we are grumbling and complaining against God no matter what our earthly focus is or our circumstances are. Folks, we need to recognize next time we complain, it is against God.

Now the second point I want to share from Scripture is grumbling is a very serious matter and God hates our grumbling. Listen to God's view towards the Israelites who grumbled at the spies' report in Numbers. Just kind of flip up to Numbers 14:22. And folks, this applies to believers. This is the Old

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Testament, who saw His mighty hand and then grumbled. We believers who have been redeemed from our sin have seen His mighty hand. We have nothing truly to grumble about. Numbers 14:22:

***<sup>22</sup> "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, <sup>23</sup> shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. <sup>24</sup> But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it. <sup>25</sup> Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys; turn tomorrow and set out to the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." <sup>26</sup> And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, <sup>27</sup> "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me." [Numbers 14:22-27]***

He calls them "an evil congregation that is grumbling against Me." And if you noticed earlier in that passage, He commented on the fact that they wouldn't listen to His voice. Not listening to the Word of God and grumbling to the Lord goes hand in hand. Folks, complaining and arguing and grumbling is so serious! Let's skip up to 1 Corinthians 10, and we'll take a look at Paul's account of what happened back here in the Exodus and God's attitude towards it. First Corinthians 10:

***<sup>1</sup> For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses (That means they were identified with Moses.) in the cloud and in the sea; <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food; <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. (They had all the benefits of the living God leading and directing them in the wilderness. But it says, here.) <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. <sup>6</sup> Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. <sup>7</sup> And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." <sup>8</sup> Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. <sup>9</sup> Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. <sup>10</sup> Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. [1 Corinthians 10:1-12]***

These things were written for our instruction! There, we better take heed to what God says in His Word. For God was not well-pleased with them. I want to ask you, are you in a difficult situation at school or work or home or marriage? Is someone that you love suffering physically? We could be easily tempted

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to grumble and as we shared, it's just a quiet expression of discontent or arguing. And the first command concerning the Lord of the universe is, "All things without grumbling and complaining." And if you have a complaining spirit or a grumbling heart, you need to fall before the Lord right now and repent of that. And He is faithful. He'll forgive you because Jesus paid the price. We need to take this command seriously. Grumbling ultimately shows a lack of trust and a total misunderstanding of the Word of God and the grace of God manifest in Jesus Christ. God hates our grumbling and our complaining.

Such complaining is a deep-seated, spiritual problem, and it is really a failure to trust God. In your circumstance, it's a failure to go to God concerning your difficulty when you complain about your circumstance. I want to ask you, is there any area in your life that you have been grumbling, Complaining about anything? "All things without grumbling and complaining." It's serious! It's a serious sin, and we should not be part of that. When someone in church comes to us and starts complaining about something, we need to graciously remind them of this truth and point them to Christ and His sufficiency and sovereignty and goodness concerning their circumstances. We need to take it seriously.

Folks, we'll see here if we don't repent and we complain and grumble, if you are truly His, you will be disciplined. The Israelites were disciplined for their grumbling in the wilderness. They did not get to go into the land; there was discipline. And maybe you are experiencing His discipline today because you are a grumbler or a complainer. And God is gracious. Just confess it. Just say, "Lord God, I'm sorry. I've complained and argued. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I haven't trusted you in my circumstances. I'm sorry." Confess your sin. Stop by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a serious matter. Don't take it lightly. As I shared in the beginning of the message, this is one of the most disobeyed commands among Christians. "All things do without complaining and arguing."

Now besides the obvious fact that we are to obey because Jesus is Lord, right? The obvious fact that we are to obey because He is working out our salvation in us, the obvious fact that God is going to discipline us when we sin if we are truly legitimate children – what is the rationale that Paul gives here now for doing this? Verse 14: **<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing <sup>15</sup>that you may 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]** He is speaking of our witness to the world. To an unbelieving, perverse and crooked world. Now verse 15 begins with a clause in Greek *hina*, which means "that" or "so that." It introduces a purpose clause. We're to do all things without complaining and grumbling so that, so that you may prove yourselves, or the word *ginomai* literally means "become." So that you may become, or "be," blameless and innocent children of God above reproach.

Why are we to not complain and grumble? Because God is working out in us the image of His Son. We are to be blameless, innocent and above reproach. The term blameless speaks of being free from fault or defect. No one can look at you and say, "Aha!" "Innocent" speaks of something that was unmixed or

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unadulterated. It spoke of wine without water. It spoke of metal without alloy. Innocent. Above reproach. Spoke of something that was unblemished. It spoke of sacrifices that were unblemished. Folks, when a child of God, one who has been adopted into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ grumbles or complains, he is subject to blame and fault before the Lord. He is mixed and adulterated with the world's ways. And he or she is not above reproach and is blemished. But when the child of God obeys the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit and does not complain and grumble, understanding God is sovereign over your circumstances, having the Word dwelling richly in their hearts, this child of God will become blameless, innocent children of God above reproach. It is Christ-likeness through obedience that God is manifesting in His children when we don't complain and grumble. Folks, grumbling goes to the core of our relationship with Christ. It is inconsistent with our true identity as children of God. 1 John 3:1:

***<sup>1</sup> See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. [1 John 3:1-3]***

If we are grumbling, our walk with Christ has a defect. It is adulterated and it is blemished. It is serious stuff to complain and grumble. I want to ask you, is your walk with Christ defective? Is it adulterated? Is it blemished because of a complaining spirit or argumentative attitude? Will Pounds, one pastor, writes:

*Someone said, "We have no more right to put our discordant states of mind into the lives of those around us and rob them of their sunshine and brightness than we have to enter their houses and steal their silverware." There will always be someone ready to rob you of your joy in life. Remember how the Pharisees stole the joy from the parents of the man born blind that Jesus healed? Then there are some people who are never happy unless they are fighting with someone.*

Folks, we don't want to be like that. We don't want to destroy, as we'll see, our testimony because we complain and grumble. It's the first command after the Lordship of Christ. Are you going to whine or shine? Are we going to be blemished and side-lined from usage for the kingdom of God, or will we be lights? Matthew 5:13:

***<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup> You are (not "you are becoming.") the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do men light a lamp, and put it***

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***under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.” [Matthew 5:13-15]***

Now in our passage, we need to realize this verb “might become” is in the subjunctive mood. Well what does that mean? It is the mood of possibility in Greek. You might become innocent and blameless and above reproach. There is the real possibility that if you trust Christ and obey His commands, yes you will become this way. But there’s also the real possibility that you won’t! It is not a sure thing for believers in here that you will not complain and grumble or continue that way for the rest of your life under the hand of God’s discipline. Folks, it is serious stuff and we need to take it seriously. Simply put, there is the real possibility that we may or may not be lights in the world. There are some believers in disobedience who are not lights. They are blemished sidelines because of their complaining and arguing.

Folks, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ and you have complained and grumbled in front of the world, your relatives or anyone, confess it now. Go to them and say, “You know what, I’m sorry. I’ve sinned against God by complaining about these things and I’m sorry.” Repent and God is gracious! Ask for mercy upon the people in whom you have damaged your testimony for Christ. Ask for mercy. God is a gracious God. I want to ask you: Is your testimony trampled because you whine and complain? Are you going to whine or shine as a light in this world?

Now in context, how is it that we believers shine as a light in the world? I think it’s by obeying, not by grumbling. Verse 14 again:

***<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing <sup>15</sup>that you may 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]***

Work out your salvation in obedience, doing all things without complaining and grumbling. When we do that, we effectively reflect the light of the One working in us, who is Christ. Folks, there’s no way not to complain and grumble apart from the living God acting in your life. You don’t have the power not to do it! And when Christ acts in your life, and you submit to Him and you trust Him to deliver you from the temptation because He is faithful and He does – then people will see Christ in you in the midst of a perverse and wicked generation. “Crooked” means “dishonest.” “Perverse” means “twisted,” i.e. morally perverse. As we obediently follow Jesus, forsaking all grumbling and complaining, His light shines through us to a dark world. Will your testimony be hidden, adulterated and blemished (or is it already) by the great sin of arguing and complaining? Are we going to whine or are we going to shine in Christ? Ephesians 5:8:

***<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness (That’s who you were!), but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do***

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***with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." <sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [Ephesians 5:8-15]***

There's going to be a judgment, and everything will be revealed. And we are not those who enter into God's judgment for sin. We have been delivered from that. Folks, we need to not do the things that Christ forgave us and died for us for.

Now our text shows one other way in which we shine. We see we shine by obeying and not grumbling. Obviously, we shine when we obey and we don't grumble. That's obvious. Well how also do we shine? Again, verse 14:

***<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing <sup>15</sup>that you may 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, <sup>16</sup> holding fast the Word of life. [Philippians 2:14-16a]***

This term "holding fast" can be translated two ways. "Holding fast" or "holding forth." So it could literally mean "holding fast to the Word of God." You're holding on to the Word of God so tight, which I believe is true. We have to do that. But it can also mean "holding forth" as to offer something to someone. I believe both these things are true in this passage. But in context, I think possibly it's speaking of "holding forth." As we appear as lights, we then have a platform to offer the Word of God. Holding forth the Word of God. And the word "Word" there is emphatic, that is the focus. It is the Word of God that we hold forth. It is not our examples. It is not our righteousness we hold forth. It is the Word of God that we hold forth, as God gives us a platform, as Christ lives through our lives. And I believe that's what this passage is saying. Our witness and behavior will open the door for the offering of the Word of God. Again one pastor (John Walvoord) writes,

*The first exhortation, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings," although very simple and direct, constitutes a sweeping command rarely obeyed by most Christians." (And then he writes,) "The qualities of life extolled in verses 14 and 15 are a platform on which Christian testimony can go forth. Ultimately, Christian testimony is more than just a life; it is a spoken word, a heralding of divine revelation. Hence in verse 16 Paul speaks of "holding forth the word of life." It is a holding out of the Word of God, an offering as one would offer food or a gift. A Christian walking in fellowship with God is in a good spiritual state to assure any who will hear that the Word of God which he is offering will satisfy the hungry heart.*

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See why it's so important not to whine? See why it's so important not to complain? It has to do with our testimony. We're ambassadors for Christ – that's why we're here. And if we stain and adulterate that testimony through complaining and whining, we really leave ourselves ineffective to be used by God and that's a serious thing. When you enter into difficult circumstances do you realize God wants to use your response and behavior in that to open the door to shine Christ and thus give an opportunity to offer the Word to those around us? 1 Peter 3:13,

***And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? (If you're doing the right thing, who's going to harm you because God is on your side right?) 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, (Don't fear the suffering that will come upon you for doing the right thing.) 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. [1 Peter 3:13-15]***

When you do the right thing in the context of your suffering, God opens opportunities to share His Word. Therefore, we've got to set Christ apart as Lord of our hearts. When you complain and grumble, Christ is not Lord of your heart, folks. But when we submit to Him and obey Him, He is.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Our testimony is submerged in how we react to the difficulties God allows to come our way. Do we whine or shine forth? Our grumbling and complaining has implications in the progression of the Gospel and the Word of God. So then the first reason we're not to grumble in the midst of this perverse generation is that God is using us as light in the midst of a perverse generation.

And secondly, we're going to see that there is an element of blessing those who have ministered in our lives in eternity. This is an amazing portion. I'm going to go back to verse 14.

***<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling and disputing <sup>15</sup>that you may 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, <sup>16</sup>holding fast the word of life (certainly we hold fast to it but we also hold it forth) so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. [Philippians 2:14-16]***

A few messages ago, I shared about the day of Christ. The day of Christ - when Christ will come for His church and He will reward them at the judgment seat for the deeds they did and the deeds they didn't. The day of Christ – when we will be rewarded for the things we allowed Christ to do through us. And it's at that point we will see the ultimate fruit of the lives of the believers we were graced to serve during this time. And I think that's going to be part of the reward – seeing the final result of what God did in those people He allowed us to serve. Paul says, "Holding fast (or holding forth) the Word of Christ, so that in the day of Christ (this day where we stand before Him and He rewards His people) I may have

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cause (Paul is saying) to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.” The athletic metaphor, that he’s in a race. That he didn’t run for no reason. The toil in the Christian life is a race and it is toil. It is not a life of ease. And there was the real possibility that if these Philippians argued and complained and blew their testimony that he would not be able to glory in them in the day of Christ. And he wants them and exhorts them to do so so he can glory in that day; that his work in Christ would not be in vain.

The Christian life is not a life of ease and comfort, but toil. But only for a season, then we will be rewarded eternally forever. And all true believers of the faith, we see in Hebrews chapter 11, were looking forward to the reward. Now folks, if you continue to grumble and complain, those who have ministered to you the Word of God in this life will ultimately see you in the judgment and see that their toil was in vain. What an eternal shame. Paul deeply desired his toil in Christ. He says he toils but “yet not I but Christ in me.” He desires this toil for the Philippians not to be in vain. That he may glory when he sees what Christ did in them for all eternity.

Do you realize that arguing and complaining jeopardizes the work of God through you and other faithful servants? It’s serious stuff. Now at this point, Paul gives them his example and then an exhortation. Verse 17, ***But even if I am a being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. [Philippians 2:17]*** Paul’s example. He says, “Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering...” A drink offering was not the major sacrifice. It was given in addition. Kind of the icing on the cake. And he’s saying, “Even if I am being poured out as a final offering on your service, this great service that God has done through you, I will rejoice.” And he’s speaking of his death. Even if he is going to die. If this is it. Paul isn’t complaining. This is his example, “I rejoice.” He’s not saying, “Oh the terrible Romans; the food is terrible. I’ve got these chains on me. I can’t get to you guys; I’m trying to get there; I can’t. These guys that come and visit me – they’re not very encouraging.” He doesn’t complain at all. He says, “I rejoice and share my joy with you all.” Oh if we all did that in our circumstances, where instead of calling someone when things go bad and saying, “Ooooooh,” we add in the eternal realities of what Christ is doing. And I don’t mean we’re not sad, and we’re not concerned, and we’re not heart-broken. But we see among that what God is doing, and we don’t lose heart. And we rejoice.

He says, “I rejoice and share my joy with you all.” Folks, Paul saw every circumstance in the context of serving Christ. Every single one. Therefore, he didn’t complain when things went bad. He rejoiced. Listen to what he says in 2 Corinthians 4:7,

***<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup> we are afflicted in every way (This is the Christian life.), but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus***

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**also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you. [2 Corinthians 4:7-12]**

He's saying that when God brought these situations that almost brought them to death, it gave opportunity to manifest the life of Christ, to minister to the Corinthians. "So death works in us, but life in you." Folks, we don't want to manifest spiritual death, when situations come in our lives, by complaining and grumbling. This is what we need to do when difficulties come – count them all joy, my brethren. Paul saw his circumstances in the context of serving Christ. Therefore, he didn't complain. And thus, now the Philippians are encouraged to do likewise. Verse 17, "*But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.*" Earlier in chapter 1, he told the Philippians in verse 29, "*For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in my and now hear to be in me.*" And Paul is saying, "I rejoice in these conflicts. You rejoice, too. I urge you. For the same reason, (literally "you also) rejoice and rejoice with me."

If you know what Christ is doing, you can rejoice and you don't lose heart! Paul wrote later on in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, he says,

**<sup>15</sup> For all things are for your sakes** (He says "All these difficulties that came upon me is for you guys."), **that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.** (We sang, "To God be the glory" this morning, and that was Paul's mindset.) **<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart,** (We don't lose heart because we see Christ in every circumstance.) **but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.** **<sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,** **<sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. [2 Corinthians 4:15-18]**

You too rejoice in these circumstances! He suffered, and instead of grumbling, he exuded joy. He could be joyful because he trusted a good God who works all things together for good. And Paul was exhorting them to live the same way. That he could rejoice with them also. John says, "I have no greater joy than this, than to hear of my children walking in the truth." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you. Do all things without complaining and grumbling." How are we to live the Christian life? It says Christ lives through us and manifests his life in us.

Let me ask you, do you complain and grumble? For some of you, that's your way of life. You have nothing other than that. You have no way to respond to the difficulties in life, and that is what we do. There's no other way to get around it. You have no way to respond.

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Folks, that's because you don't know Christ. God is a gracious God who died for you. He paid the penalty for every complaint and every sin you ever did. And He graciously offers you forgiveness. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you trust in Him, the God who became flesh and bore your sins in His body on the cross, and rose from the dead – call out to Him to save you from your sin. He will save you.

Then some of us who are believers have been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are grumblers, and we are complainers. And we need to take it seriously what God says here. We need to stop by the power of the Holy Spirit, because we are destroying His testimony in this dark world. Stop complaining. Repent. Renew your mind with truth concerning your circumstances. And then you will be able to rejoice. Now for the rest of us, which is not many left because we all complain, right? When we're tempted to complain on a daily basis, trust that God is faithful. No temptation has come upon us, except that which is common to man. And God is faithful who will provide a way of escape that we may endure it. Complaining is a serious thing. And if you complain, you're complaining against God. Trust Him to work through you instead, for His glory.

## **Prayer**

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You so much for Your faithful servant, Paul, who exemplifies a trust in You, who rejoiced in the circumstances, knowing Your faithfulness and what You are doing eternally. And I pray for this body, Lord God, that we would be convicted when we complain. That we wouldn't complain, Lord God. That we would be a body that shines forth the righteousness of Christ, in circumstances in which the world would complain. That you would use us as a platform, God, for Your Word. That people would see why and ask why we have hope. Father, may we set Christ apart as Lord in our hearts, sanctify Him, and obey these commands. And Father, for those of us who are struggling, You need to change our hearts. We can't do it. We ask You to change our hearts. That You would be at work in us for Your glory. We thank you now in Jesus' name.

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