

Stop Complaining
Philippians 2:14-16
Part 1

There is a lot of negative verbal agitation in this world. There are lots of people sowing seeds of discord through various kinds of negative speech. The apostle Paul, in the passage we will be considering this weekend, will be highlighting one of those areas; an area of speech that is very pervasive and yet commonly accepted by most people in the world and even some in the church as okay. I would hope that before we finish our message this weekend this will not be the case with us.

Paul in his final appeal to the Philippians to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ in Philippians 2:12-18, introduces three concerns. What was Paul's first concern that we have been considering over the past several weeks? Paul's first concern was that they work out their salvation. Let us read **Philippians 2:12-13, "So then, my beloved, 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; (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."**

The command to work out our salvation does not mean that we are to work for our salvation; that is absolutely impossible. Rather it means that we exert the necessary effort to live out a life of obedience consistent with the gift of salvation that we have received by grace through faith.

Certainly the Philippians, seeking to be obedient to this command, could have exerted various degrees of effort in many different areas of perceived weakness, but Paul in **Philippians 2:14-16** singles out one particular area of speech.

Let us read **Philippians 2:14-16** and look for the command, **"Do all things without grumbling and disputing; (15) 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, (16) holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."** What is the command? **"Do all things without grumbling and disputing."** This admonition introduces a very complex sentence that continues all the way down to the end of verse 16, whose emphasis is communicated through the command.

What is the second concern that we find in Philippians 2:14-16 that Paul introduces to us in his final appeal? Paul's second concern is that they would do all things without grumbling and disputing.

This command, though not grammatically connected to Philippians 2:12-13 by a conjunction, is nevertheless connected. As we have already seen, the church at Philippi is apparently being threatened with disunity. This problem is certainly implied by the emphasis that Paul gives to the importance of church unity in Philippians 1:27 through Philippians 2:3. But much more direct

and to the point is what Paul says in **Philippians 4:2-3** where he says, **“I urge Euodia and I urge Synteche to live in harmony in the Lord. (3) Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”** The waters apparently are not calm in Philippi and it appears that Paul takes the more general command in **Philippians 2:12-13** which is **“work out your salvation”** and now applies it. This application leads to the second command which we find in **Philippians 2:14-16**, **“Do all things without grumbling and disputing.”**

I would hope that the time we spend this weekend and next weekend on this passage of Scripture will be very profitable for us. I would hope our study would help us not only to identify when we ourselves might be guilty of grumbling, but that we might see truly how terrible this sin really is.

We know that we are not to be involved in grumbling and disputing. But what do these words mean? “Grumbling” (GONGYSMON) involves quiet verbal expressions of discontent or displeasure accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger which originate in our flesh. A synonym for this would be “murmuring.”

What do people grumble about? First of all they grumble about people. This might include their wives, their husbands, their children, their parents, their employers, their employees, their teachers, their neighbors, and on and on and on. Secondly, they grumble about circumstances. This might include their health, their jobs or their lack of a job, their house, their car, their clothes, their neighbors. It could be anything.

If you are in a restaurant and the waitress brings you a meal that you have not ordered, how will you respond? You have a number of different options. You can say nothing and graciously accept what they have brought. Would this be a righteous response? Yes. What is another response? You could choose not to accept what they have brought and graciously and respectfully ask them to serve you what you have ordered. "I am sorry this is not what I ordered. Could you please return this to the kitchen and bring me my ham and cheese omelet?" Would this be a righteous response? Yes. What is another response? You could say nothing and then grumble to your wife or to your husband and say, "I am tired of people not doing their job." Is that a righteous response? No, it is sin because you have chosen to quietly express your annoyed displeasure to your wife. This is grumbling. And it is sin. What is another response? You can choose to grumble to the waitress and say quietly to her, (annoyed), "This is not what I ordered" (annoyed). Is this a righteous response? No, it is sin because you have chosen to quietly express your annoyed displeasure to the waitress. What is another response? You can choose to sharply rebuke your waitress and firmly tell her in a very strong and loud way "Can't you do a better job?" This response would not most likely be defined as grumbling but rather simply as an outburst of anger. Would that be a righteous response? And of course the answer would be no since the anger of man is categorically condemned in the Scriptures.

What is grumbling? “Grumbling” (GONGYSMON) involves quiet verbal expressions of discontent or displeasure accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger which originate in our flesh. Typically people choose to talk privately to people who might be sympathetic to their

perception, but it can at times actually be expressed to the person who has annoyed them.

If you are here this weekend and would actually take time to think about instances this past week where you might have grumbled, I believe that there would be a significant number of people here this weekend who may have actually done this. Anytime we come across a situation that we believe has made our life or the life of another person we care about difficult, we may be tempted to grumble. It is one thing for us to be discontent and annoyed which certainly is wrong, but to choose to give verbal expression to our discontent and annoyances takes the level of our sinfulness to an entirely different level. How can we protect ourselves from adding sin upon sin? We must deal with our heart.

We do not have to be happy about our circumstances. But we do not have to grumble or allow those circumstances to diminish the joy that we have in Christ. What does **James 1:2** tell us? **“Consider it all joy, my brethren when you encounter various trials.”** If we are able by faith to continue to rejoice even in the midst of difficult circumstances, we will not experience a spirit of discontent or displeasure. And if we don’t experience discontent or displeasure in respect to a particular circumstance, we certainly will not have a problem with grumbling.

Aren’t there times when it would be acceptable to grumble? What is the answer to that question? What does the verse say, **“Do all things without grumbling.”** How many things? **“All things.”** There is not an occasion when it is permissible for us to grumble.

How serious a sin is grumbling? There are few sins that are uglier to God than grumbling. Why is this? Let me ask you a question. Has anything entered our lives that God is not aware of? What does **Psalm 139:1-3** tell us? **“O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. (2) Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thoughts from afar. (3) Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways.”** Has anything entered our life that God is unaware of? And the answer is absolutely not. Let me ask you another question: Has anything entered your life that God has not permitted to be there? What does **Ephesians 1:11** tell us? **“We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”** What does **Proverbs 16:9** tell us? **“The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.”** Has anything entered your life that God has not permitted to be there? The answer is absolutely not! Let me ask you another question, “Has anything entered our lives that God will not use to accomplish good things?” What does **Romans 8:28** tell us? **“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”** Has anything entered our lives that God will not use to accomplish good things? The answer is absolutely not. These various truths that I have just shared with you are the very reasons why we can consider it all joy when we experience various trials.

The reason why grumbling is such a serious sin is because it means that in essence we are upset with God and choosing not to trust Him. It is a sin of pride (Exodus 16:1-8). We are saying we know better than God what is best for our lives. We are saying to God He has no clue as to what will actually serve us. When therefore we are grumbling we are in effect grumbling to God.

Listen to Exodus 16:1-3, **“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. (2) And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (3) And the sons of Israel said to them, “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 who are the sons of Israel complaining to? They are complaining about their rotten circumstances to Moses and Aaron. What happened next? Let’s continue to read starting with verse 4, **“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. (5) 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.” (6) 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; (7) and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, for He hears your grumblings against the Lord; for what are we that you grumble against us? (8) 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.*”**

Are you in a difficult situation at school? You could very easily be tempted to express your discontent or displeasure quietly to a friend or an acquaintance, perhaps even the teacher, accompanied by feelings of annoyance or even anger. Are you having a difficult situation at work? You could very easily be tempted to express your discontent or displeasure accompanied by feelings of annoyance or even anger quietly to coworkers or perhaps even your employer. Are you having a difficult time in your marriage? You could very easily be tempted to express your discontent or displeasure to your spouse accompanied by feelings of annoyance or even anger. You could possibly even be tempted to share your marital discontent or displeasure accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger with others. All of these expressions are sin. They are condemned in God’s word. And in the ultimate sense they are various expressions of rebellion against God.

If our discontented spirit leads us to grumble, a number of serious negative consequences can quickly follow.

We may suffer increasing conflict in our personal relationships. Let us again look at **Philippians 2:14, “Do all things without grumbling and disputing.”** If we go around quietly expressing our discontent or displeasure to various people, accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger, it will not be very long before we are involved in open disputes and arguments.

What is the meaning of the word “disputing?” The word “disputing” (DIALOGISMOS) literally means “through reasoning,” but because of the context the word is translated “disputing” (NAS)

or “arguing” (NIV). If somehow we can’t by the grace of God get on top of our discontented spirit and curb our grumbling, it will invariably result in open conflicts. It will result in conflicts at work, in our home, and even in the church. And that is exactly what was happening in Philippi.

Something was not going according to Euodia’s plan or Synteché’s plan and their response was apparently to grumble and it had spilled over into open conflict, which threatened to embroil the whole church. If our discontented spirit leads us to grumble, a number of negative consequences can quickly follow. The first of those consequences is we may suffer increasing conflict in our personal relationships. In addition to this...

We may as a child of God be disciplined by Him (1 Corinthians 10:6-10). Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:6-10, “Now these things (the things that happened to the nation of Israel) happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. (7) 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.” (8) Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty three thousand fell in one day. (9) Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. (10) Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.” What is Paul alluding to in this passage? After Korah, Dathan, Abiram and fellow rebels were destroyed by the Lord in **Numbers 16:32-35**, we are told that that “all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying “you are the ones who have caused the death of the Lord’s people” (V. 41). God was so incensed at their complaints about divine justice that He immediately sent a plague that killed 14,700 people.

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CONCLUSION

We are commanded not to grumble or complain. We are commanded not to be going about when annoyed or angry, quietly expressing our discontent or displeasure. Are there people in your life or circumstances in your life at this present time that are annoying you or provoking you? Have you been verbally sharing these various expressions of displeasure and discontent with friends, family or acquaintances? You need by the grace of God to stop! It is a serious thing. We are in effect opposing God and this will invariably result in deteriorating relationships with people and perhaps discipline from the hand of God.