

## #43 “Do Everything Without Complaining”

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Philippians 2:14-16 says,

“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, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”

Paul labored hard among the Philippians to bring them the gospel and to teach them such that they would grow to maturity in their faith. He wanted them to persevere by continuing to grow, serve, love, obey, and...not complain. There are lots of ways that Christians can stand out from the world, and not complaining is one that we might not often think about, though it certainly makes sense. The world is constantly unsatisfied, trying to climb another rung, notch another achievement, or impress another person. There is zero contentment or gratitude towards the Lord for what He has given to them. We as Christians should shine into this darkness as bright lights which thank God, trust God, praise God, and refuse to grumble about our circumstances.

In Philippians 2:14, the word translated “grumbling” could also mean “murmuring,” “muttering,” or a “secret displeasure not openly avowed.” The word translated “disputing” means “the thinking of a man deliberating within himself.” It implies an inward arguing, doubting, or hesitating. We know from God’s dealing with the Israelites in the Old Testament, who complained time after time against both Him and Moses, that God hates complaining (Exodus 32:9-10). He is displeased when we, like Israel, lack faith, doubt His power, question His ability or willingness to provide, and hesitate to rest in His love. Whether the people of Israel were captive slaves of Egypt or wanderers in the wilderness headed for the promised land, they complained. Nothing could make that generation happy. There was always something that they found to gripe to God about.

Rather than condemn Israel by thinking that we would never have done such things, we need to look at our own lives. It is easy in retrospect to trust Christ, but it is difficult to trust Him today as the battle wages, as we grow weary, and as temptation comes. We are to learn from Israel, understanding that complaining is not uncommon to man. We must learn, as Paul did, to be content in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11). Part of contentment’s work is to teach us not to complain. Sometimes we complain out loud to others about our circumstances, grumbling against what we have to endure on a daily basis. Other times we keep

our resentful feelings bottled up inside, acting outwardly like we trust God while inwardly we have a secret displeasure and dispute with Him. Sometimes we can even deceive ourselves into thinking that we are justified in our complaints against God as if He really did do us a disservice or treat us unfairly. Yet there is no reason to doubt or question God's love, and never is our complaining justified.

Israel witnessed miracles, and yet they doubted. We have the testimony of God's love in giving us His Son, and yet we challenge His love. In some ways, we are even more hideous in our complaints. God has kept nothing back in terms of His love in giving us Christ, and yet we still complain. Paul said, if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content (1 Timothy 6:8). Yet how many things can we find to complain about, let alone our food and clothing. We might complain about our tight finances, our health, our lack of free time, how our kids have turned out, or how we didn't get to hear our favorite hymn last Sunday. We might complain about the weather, we might get down about our favorite sports team losing, and we might complain about the traffic. Then there is politics, the leak in the roof, the mortgage payment, another car repair, and the furnace that gives out in the chill of winter. Every new challenge can become a new excuse to complain and grumble. Truly, we are not all that different from Israel.

Complaining and grumbling about our circumstances is a stench to God, and it is something that we have no right to do. Yet there is an alternative to complaining. We can pray and bring our requests before God, for the prayers of the saints arise as incense into the presence of God (Revelation 5:8). God knew what He was doing when He came up with the idea of prayer. He knew we would need it, for we would need a way to humbly and gratefully express our burdens and petitions to God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7). Rather than complain, we must choose by faith to thank God no matter what, and we must let Him take charge of our burdens and cares as we bring them before Him in prayer (1 Peter 5:7).

Too often, we are so bad in the area of complaining, and we have no excuse. So let us confess our complaining as sin, not arguing against God or becoming bitter against Him, but let us believe that where we are today is a place where God desires to work and to cause all things to result in our good. Rather than complain, let us thank God and offer our requests to Him in prayer.