

No Whining Allowed (Part 2)
Philippians 2:14-18
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Well I have to begin this morning with a word of apology. I heard that my message last week on grumbling ruined a number of Sunday lunches. People were sitting at the table with nothing to say. I also heard that a number of perfectly good conversations throughout the week were ruined as well. And so, I begin with an apology.

We are looking at the issue of grumbling, what the Bible calls grumbling or disputing in Philippians 2. We call it, in the colloquial, whining. No Whining Allowed is the title of last week's message, and part two today. No Whining Allowed. That really is the message of Philippians 2:14-18. Let me read them for you just to set the context of our discussion last week and this. And by the way, if you missed last week I would encourage you to get the tape because this week will build on that and I won't have the time to sort of go back over that ground. But it's really foundational, as you'll see in a moment. Philippians 2:14-18,

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. 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. You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Now last week we looked at the command itself, it's found in verse 14. The context of the command is verse 12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." That is, work toward and pursue sanctification in your life, verse 13, because "God is at work in you." And so that being the context, Paul intends to say that your entire Christian life, from the moment you come to Christ until you die or Christ returns, your entire Christian life is to be lived with this in mind, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing."

Grumbling is an interesting word, it simply means expressing dissatisfaction with your circumstances, whether you express that dissatisfaction under your breath where no one else hears it or whether you express it to others. Disputing, Paul adds, is also off limits for us as Christians. To dispute is to direct that dissatisfaction that we have with our circumstances, to direct it against God. Whether we do it to Him personally or whether we do it with those people around us, we basically argue with God and His purpose and plan. We call His plans, His acts into question. And the most common way that's done is in a phrase that you hear everywhere all around you and it's this, it's just not fair. Yeah, you understand. You can hear yourself saying that sometimes, can't you? And you certainly hear it in people around you.

Paul says, “Do all things without expressing dissatisfaction with your circumstances, under your breath or to others, and do all things without arguing with, disputing with God and His plans and purposes in your life.” That’s the command. But that brings us to the second part of this paragraph and that’s the reasons, the reasons. Notice verses 15 and 16. We’ll pick up here today and take a look at the rest of this paragraph, the reasons for not grumbling and not 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.

Notice how verse 15 begins with the words “so that.” In other words, for this reason. Paul says, I don’t want you to grumble, I don’t want you to dispute with God, and here’s why. Here are three reasons you should not argue with God, you should not grumble. Let’s look at them together. The first reason for not grumbling or disputing is for your own personal assurance, for your own personal assurance. Notice verse 15, “so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach.” Paul says, if you don’t grumble, if you don’t dispute with God, then you’re going to prove yourselves to be in reality what you profess to be. Notice the words he uses, “blameless.” In all but one case in the New Testament this relates to other people’s judgment of us. In other words, someone else is looking at us and making an observation. They’re looking at our observable conduct and they’re concluding that there’s no obvious fault.

Paul uses this same word in chapter 3 verse 6 where he says, “as to the righteousness which is in the Law.” Now he’s talking about his life before Christ. He says, “as to the righteousness which is in the Law of God, found blameless.” That word blameless is the same word. It means not that he was claiming there was never a violation of God’s law. He’s not saying I never violated God’s law, of course he did. He argues elsewhere that it’s absolutely impossible not to break God’s law. What he’s saying is, as other people looked at my life, the obvious things they could see in my life, they found me to be without fault in reference to the law of God. As far as others saw, he kept the law. That’s what it means to be blameless. It means, if you don’t grumble and complain, then you will prove yourselves to be blameless.

But also you’ll prove yourself to be “innocent.” This second word means unmixed, unadulterated, pure. It’s used in secular Greek to describe wine that hasn’t been mixed with anything and describe metal that doesn’t have any alloys in it, it’s pure. When it’s used of a person it’s speaks of sincerity or simplicity of character. You see, blameless describes what others see, innocent describes what you really are. In other words, when other people see you they see who you really are and they see that you’re innocent, you’re unmixed, pure, sincere.

There’s a third expression he uses here to describe what we’ll prove ourselves to be if we don’t grumble and complain and that is, “children of God above reproach.” We’ve talked often about

the fact, that amazing reality that we are children of God by adoption. God has adopted us into His family, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5-6, but Paul adds something here. Excuse me. He says, notice, “children of God above reproach.” “Above reproach” simply means, without spot, without blemish.

In fact, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, this word is used to describe those animal sacrifices that were to be offered, remember, without blemish, without spot; that’s what this word means. It’s used eight times in the New Testament. It never, listen carefully, this word never has reference to our own perspective of us nor does it ever have reference to others’ perspective of us, like the word blameless. Instead, it always has reference to God’s perspective of us. Notice Ephesians 1, this word appears in a very familiar context. Ephesians 1:4, “God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, in order that we would be holy and blameless.” The word blameless here in Ephesians 1:4 is the same word translated “above reproach” in Philippians 2. And notice how he finishes, we are to be “blameless before Him,” “before Him.”

Notice chapter 5 verse 27. In this context of husbands loving their wives, he mentions Christ and His love for the church and His giving Himself for the church, in order that, verse 27, “He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” Again, this word blameless is the same Greek word translated “above reproach” in Philippians 2. In other words, we are to be without blemish, without spot, just as God is. You know, God is described in Scripture as being without blemish. We are to share our Father’s character.

Now it’s important for you to know as we work our way through Philippians 2 and particularly even in reference to being the true “children of God above reproach,” Paul has an Old Testament reference in mind. He’s alluding to Deuteronomy. Let’s turn to Deuteronomy 32. Deuteronomy 32 is The Song of Moses. It’s the recounting of Moses of all that went on with the children of Israel in the wilderness. Notice what he says in verse 3, he says,

“I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. [*Now notice verse 5. Now he gets to the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. Notice what he says.*] They have acted corruptly toward Him, they are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation.”

Now, there are several interesting ways Paul takes Deuteronomy 32:5 and he had adapts it. Notice, first of all, he says that the children of Israel “are not God’s children” and notice the reason, “because of their defect.” Do you see the word defect? It’s interesting, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament here, the writers used the same word “above reproach” in Philippians 2, but they did what often happens in Greek, they added what’s called the alpha

primitive to it, or the alpha negative. It is to negate the word, like we do in English. For example, take the word symmetry. That means one thing. If you add an alpha to it, or an a, it negates it, asymmetry or asymmetric. It's the opposite. That's exactly what he does here. He says, the children of Israel were blemished, whereas in Philippians 2 he says, we are to prove ourselves to be true children of God, unblemished.

You see, in Deuteronomy 32 Israel is the crooked and perverse generation. Israel is called that because of her sinful grumbling. You say, well, grumbling doesn't seem like a major offense. I mean, why does God call them no longer His children and call them defective, blemished, because of grumbling? It's because their grumbling revealed a much deeper more serious issue. And that is, it revealed their unbelief. The writer of Hebrews makes this point. Turn to Hebrews 3, Hebrews 3. This was the real issue. And folks, this is the issue, this is the danger that if we're prone to constantly grumbling against God and against His providence in our lives, it may well indicate that we have a heart of unbelief, that we're not believers at all.

And this is the warning the writer of Hebrews provides. Notice Hebrews 3:7. He begins by quoting a good portion of the psalm that I read a few moments ago, Psalm 95, the end of that Psalm. And then he makes this application in verse 12. Notice verse 12 of Hebrews 3,

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we've become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said,

"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS
WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

For who provoked Him when they had heard? Wasn't it all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Now, I don't have time to develop it, but if you go to the end of chapter 4 the writer of Hebrews makes the point that the rest described in Psalm 95, God said, you're not going to enter My rest, had nothing to do or didn't primarily, I should say, have to do with a piece of real estate in the Middle East, it had to do with their souls' salvation. And so because of their evil heart of unbelief they were not able to enter the rest of salvation as well as the rest of the Promised Land. Verse 4, or excuse me, verse 1 of chapter 4,

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, [*that is, entering eternal salvation*] any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard [*this is the key*] did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter into the rest of salvation.

Folks there's a real danger when grumbling appears as a characteristic of your life it may prove, as it proved with the children of Israel who came out of Egypt, that there was in them an evil heart of unbelief; they didn't believe in God at all. So by not grumbling, here's Paul's point in Philippians 2, when we don't grumble and when we don't dispute with God, we prove ourselves to be the true children of God without blemish, unlike the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 32 who weren't the children of God and who were blemished because of their grumbling which proved their unbelief.

When you face life's difficulties and trials without grumbling under your breath or without arguing with God, you provide evidence to yourself, to others, and before God that you're the real thing, that you really do believe God, you really do have confidence in God. It evidences your trust that you genuinely are a child of God. So Paul says listen, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing;" for your own personal assurance. "Prove yourselves to be blameless, innocent, the children of God above reproach."

But there is another reason Paul gives not to grumble, he says, don't grumble for the unsaved, for the unsaved. Notice the middle of verse 15,

in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life

Paul makes another interesting change to his citation of Deuteronomy 32:5, he adds the words "in the midst of." You remember back in Deuteronomy 32, Israel was the perverse, the crooked and perverse generation, but here he says to the Philippians, you really are the children of God and you live "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Of course, he's describing all the people of Philippi who weren't in Christ. Listen, notice how Paul describes the people of Philippi and, honestly, the people of Southlake, and the people of Keller, and the people of Dallas, and the people of Fort Worth. He says, you live "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

The word crooked refers to something that if you lay a straight edge next to it, appears immediately curved. The Greek word is the word we get our English word scoliosis from, the curvature of the spine. My sweet mother is, will be 90 years old this year, and she has terrible osteoporosis. So much so that her spine is curved where when she sits in a chair her chin literally rests in her lap. I've seen her shrink through the years. I believe, I don't think I'm exaggerating here, she's about 10 inches shorter than she was when I was growing up. That's

the picture behind this word crooked, something that is terribly off the strait. You see, God's Word is the straight edge against which we measure human thought and conduct, but if you take the souls of those who don't know God and you lay them next to the straight edge of God's Word, you'll find them to be terribly bent and crooked.

But Paul adds, not only is the generation in which we live crooked, but it's perverse. This is a much stronger word. This is a word that refers to that which is terribly twisted and distorted. It's used figuratively in both the Old Testament and the New to refer to those persons who seek to pervert the straight ways of God. In fact, in Proverbs 2 Solomon puts it this way, he says, there are those, verse 14,

who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil; whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

Paul says, the people around you, the people whom you see day after day, they may wear nice clothes, they may drive nice cars, they may live in respectable homes, but you live "in the midst of a crooked and terribly twisted generation." They have taken the straight ways of God and they have distorted them for the pursuit of their own pleasure.

Notice our mission in the context of that kind of generation. He says, "among whom you appear as lights in the world." Literally, "among whom you shine as lights in the world." In the midst of that darkness, in the midst of cities and neighborhoods filled with people who are crooked and twisted, we are to shine. You and I are called to shine. We're to shine as lights. That word lights is most often used of the stars. In fact, if you go back to Genesis 1 when God created you'll find in the Septuagint that it's used there to describe the stars.

I have a fascination with stars and I read some more about them this week. You know, stars are simply huge balls of glowing gas. On a clear dark night, if you stand outside, with just the naked eye you can see about 3,000 stars. In the process of a year, of course, you see different stars. And so, with the human eye, through the process of a year, if you were to go out every night and look and you were to count the different stars, you would come to about 6,000 stars. If you were to take a small telescope, one like you could buy at a store down the street and about a three inch telescope, you would be able, through that same year's time, to see about 600,000 stars.

But those who have the largest telescopes, and the scientists tell us that instead there are, to date, by best of human reckoning, and this is an incredible number, ten billion trillion stars. So what's a billion trillion, what's ten billion trillion? Well, here's the best way for me to explain it to you. If we were to take the stars that have been observed by the largest telescopes and we wanted to really count them, and we assigned every person living on Earth the job of counting, and if every person on earth could count 1,000 stars a second, which of course is an impossibility, but if each one of us could count 1,000 stars a second, and we did that 24 hours a day, and every person on

earth did it, it would take 50 years of all of us counting 1,000 stars a second, 24 hours a day, to count all the stars – that we know about.

When you look at a star, the energy source from each star is a continuous nuclear reaction between the hydrogen atoms at the center of that star. It has something to do with the incredible weight of the star itself on the center of it that creates this sort of nuclear fission, or fusion rather, that goes on in the middle of the star. Our sun, that we enjoy the light and heat from each day, is a medium sized star. But its diameter, even though it's medium sized, its diameter is 100 times that of the Earth on which we live. So imagine that for a moment, if you could lay out side by side 100 Earths, that would be how wide our sun is.

The largest stars, our sun is medium, the largest stars, and this is shocking to me but this is what the scientists say, would literally fill the distance, one star of the largest variety, would fill the distance between the Earth and our sun. In other words, a star with a diameter of 93 million miles. It's shocking. But on a moonless night, you stand out and look at the sky, all those stars only sparkle like tiny jewels against the darkness. You and I are to be like that. Our lives are to be like tiny sparkles of brilliant light to the people around us, people engulfed in absolute darkness.

This idea of shining like lights is not new to the New Testament. In fact, look at Daniel for a moment, the prophet Daniel in chapter 12, he's talking about the time of the resurrection. Notice chapter 12 verse 2, he says, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." Verse 3, "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." Daniel's looking forward to a time in the future, but Paul says listen, if you will, you can have that same kind of influence today, you can shine like the stars of the heaven in the midst of the darkness of the people around you.

How can we do that? How can we shine in such a way that our light dispels darkness? Well, Paul explains in the next phrase in Philippians 2. Notice verse 16, here's how to shine, "holding fast the word of life." "Word of life" means the word that brings life. The apostle John, you remember, uses this phrase in the first verse of his first epistle, where he says, we saw, we beheld, we touched, "the Word of Life." He uses it in reference to Christ Himself. But this word really refers to the gospel, the good news of forgiveness in Christ. Turn for a moment to John 6. Christ makes this clear, this idea of the Word of Life, in John 6, through an interchange with his disciples.

Now let me remind you of the context here, beginning in verse 52, the Jews are arguing with Him because he says, I want you to eat of Me, and so they start arguing, but Jesus rather than making it easier for them, makes it more difficult. Verse 53, He says,

“Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourself. Whoever eats My flesh, drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.

That’s hard. What does he mean? It sounds like cannibalism. Well, it created a lot of difficulty. Notice verse 60, “many of His disciples, when they heard this said, ‘This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?’” Lord, this isn’t really seeker sensitive. You are going to drive these people off.

But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble? What if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?” [*You think you’re surprised now? Wait until you see that!*] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.

Now here’s the key to this whole passage and a lot of people have misunderstood it because they haven’t read this part of verse 63, “the words I have spoken to you are spirit.” They’re spiritual words. I’m not talking about eating my real body and drinking my real blood. I’m talking about the fact that if you want part of Me you have got, as it were, to consume Me. You’ve got to commit yourself and your future and your eternity; you’ve got to look to Me for all the sustenance that you have.

Verse 66,

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

You see, “the word of life” is the good news of the gospel about Jesus Christ.

You see this in other places in the New Testament. In Acts 5:20, you remember, when the angel came and let the apostles out of prison, he says to them, I want you to go and I want you to preach “the whole message of this Life.” In 2 Timothy 1:10, Paul says that Christ has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” So when he says “the word of life” he’s talking about the gospel, the good news.

Now, notice what he says, he says I want you to “hold fast the word of life.” Now, the word translated “hold fast” can either mean to cling to something, to hold on to something, or it can mean to hold something forth, that is, to offer it to someone. It’s possible here that Paul intends

both. I mean, after all you can't really hold forth something that you aren't holding fast to. But in the context, I think it's best to see it as holding forth or offering it, because he's talking about shining as lights, he's talking about reaching out into the world. So I think in the context the idea is, you're to hold forth the truth. Certainly you are to hold it fast, you are to hold fast to the gospel, but as you hold fast to it you're to offer it to others. We're to shine in the midst of the darkness around us.

How do we shine? We shine in two ways, Matthew 5:14-16 says that we shine through our behavior. You remember what Christ said there in the Sermon on the Mount? "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Our behavior shines in the midst of the darkness, but here there is another way we shine. We shine by holding forth, or offering, the good news of God's love for all men and the forgiveness that's found in Christ.

You see, it's an important thing to balance that in our Christian life and experience. There are some Christians who think that they're going to have their only witness, their only testimony, be their lives and they never open their mouth to speak for Christ. There are other Christians who spend their whole time talking about Christ but whose life and whose conduct and whose work ethic undercuts and undermines the message they're speaking. We have to hold the two in balance. Both are important for us to shine as lights in the world.

You see, effective evangelism flows from two things, the content of our message and the credibility of the messenger; they both have to be there. We're to shine. Paul says, "Do all things without grumbling and disputing so that you may shine in the darkness as God's witness." You see, it's impossible to point others to a sovereign God who saves, all the time that you're grumbling about God's sovereignty in your own life. Absolute unwavering trust in God through all the circumstances of life is one of the greatest testimonies to God's redeeming power.

My wife's mother was a quiet, really retiring woman, but she spent several months in the hospital with leukemia battling that terrible disease. It was fun to sort of get her room ready. We knew she'd be there for some time. And so we raised more than a few eyebrows when we came into the hospital bringing recliners and then lamps, and we set up the room so that it would be comfortable for several months stay. We basically lived there for those months. We enjoyed her, we enjoyed each other. We'd bring treats like Starbucks and donuts to the nurses station on a regular basis, bring special food. Her room became a kind of a refuge.

In fact, this was funny to us, even the nurses would take their breaks in her room and come and sit and chat and talk, enjoy her, enjoy the family. Sheila's mom faced the awful disease of leukemia and the almost equally terrible treatment that goes along with it, with a quiet peace and joy. Two years later, after she went through that bout in the hospital, the cancer came back and took her life. The nurses that we had gotten to know two years before came to her funeral and

I'll never forget the reality that they were still talking about, and they were still visibly moved to the point of tears, by her quiet trust in God facing death.

You see folks, when Christians face trials and even death itself without grumbling or disputing, it's a stark contrast to the world. We shine as lights. D.A. Carson writes, "Christian contentment stands out in a selfish, whining, self-pitying world. As Christians hold out the word of life there must be no trace of self-pity, but a life characterized by sincere gratitude and by godly praise." And when we do that, Paul says, we'll shine, we'll shine like the brilliance of the stars in the sky.

There's a third reason not to grumble. Not only for our own personal assurance, not only for the unsaved, but for your spiritual leaders and mentors, for your spiritual leaders and mentors. We're not used to thinking this way, but I want you to follow Paul's argument here. Notice the second half of verse 16, "so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." "The day of Christ" is a phrase he's used already in verse 6 of chapter 1, verse 10 of chapter 1; he also uses it, a sort of variation of it, in 1 Corinthians 1:8. It refers to Christ's return and specifically to the judgment seat of Christ.

You see, as believers we will all stand before Christ and our work, our effort, our ministry will be evaluated; 2 Corinthians 5:10 makes that point. Paul says this in Philippians 2, he says, on that day, on the day when I stand before Christ, Christ will evaluate my work and effort as your spiritual leader and mentor, and when that happens I want to have reason to glory. Now Paul isn't talking about boasting in himself and his own achievements. In fact, let me just put that to rest forever. Look at Romans 15. He's not talking about building himself up here. Romans 15:17,

Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

He said listen, I'm not taking any personal glory here. When I glory I'm glorying in Christ because He has worked through me to accomplish something. That's what he's talking about in Philippians 2. He says, on that day I want to have reason to glory in Christ for enabling me to complete His divinely appointed mission and for enabling you to live like Christians in the world. And Paul says something interesting; he says, I'll be able to boast in Christ on that day when I stand before Him, "if I did not run in vain." What does that mean, "if I did not run in vain."?

You see, running is a favorite metaphor of Paul for his entire ministry, 1 Corinthians 9, he describes his entire ministry as running. He's in a race and he doesn't want his ministry to be in vain. The word vain is an interesting word; four times in the New Testament this word vain is translated "empty handed." Picture Paul as a runner. He's trained for months, even for years, to

prepare for the race. He's in a race, he's running, he gets to the finish line and he discovers that he's lost or that he's been disqualified, and he walks away from the race after all of that work, empty handed. That's the picture. He says, I don't want that to happen when I stand before Christ. And he adds, I don't want to "toil in vain." Toil, the word toil, simply means hard work. It speaks of labor to the point of exhaustion. Paul uses this word often to describe his ministry, but it's interesting, he also uses it to describe his work as a tent maker in 1 Corinthians 4:12 and in Acts 20:34-35.

I make that point because there's an interesting secular use of the phrase "labor or toil in vain" in the Greek text or in the Greek language rather. In secular Greek, that expression "to labor or toil in vain" described a skilled weaver who was paid by the piece. He would work for a period of time producing pieces of fabric, weaving pieces of fabric, just as Paul did, and when payday came he hoped to show up before his master with a number of pieces of fabric that passed the test and would be purchased by the master. He would receive his wages for them. But if on that day the master rejected a piece or all of the pieces as badly woven and therefore didn't pay for them, the weaver was said "to have labored in vain," he labored in vain. Paul says, I don't want that to be true of my ministry, I don't want that to be true. He says, listen Philippians, "Do all things without grumbling and disputing" and you will prove yourselves to be true Christians. And if you prove yourselves to be true Christians I will be able to boast about you to Christ when I stand before Him and I will receive approval from Christ because of you.

Not only should you do all things without grumbling and disputing for your own assurance, not only should you do it because you'll shine as lights in the middle of a dark world, but you should do it for those people who had spiritual influence on your life. Again, we aren't used to thinking this way. If you've been a Christian for long at all, you are in serious debt to a number of people who have influenced you. Perhaps a Christian parent who influenced you for Christ as you were growing up. Perhaps a friend or family member who shared the gospel with you, a pastor, an older Christian who put his or her arm around you and sort of taught you what it meant to lead the Christian life.

Paul says, listen, if you will live like a Christian ought to live and in this case specifically if you will "do all things without grumbling and disputing" you will encourage those people in this life. But more than that, here's the key, all of those people who have had an impact on your life will stand before Christ. And when they stand before Christ, if you live that way they will find that they "did not run in vain," they didn't "toil in vain." They will be able to boast about you before Christ, not for their own glory but for the glory of God who is at work in you. Paul says, do it for these reasons.

Verse 14 provides us with the command, verses 15 and 16 with the reasons. Just for a couple of minutes I want you to look at verses 17 and 18 where Paul gives us a living example. We've seen the command, the reasons, and now the example. 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. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Now, as you hear me go through this passage this morning you may wonder, you know, can I really live that way? You look at the difficulties and the troubles of your life, and you say, can I face life's troubles without grumbling, without disputing? Paul says, yes you can, follow my example. He uses the metaphor of a sacrifice. That's an image that both the Jews in Philippi as well as the Gentiles would have understood. Now follow the metaphor, he says, "I'm being poured out as a drink offering." In the metaphor the Philippians are the priests offering a sacrifice and their sacrifice Paul calls "a sacrifice and service." Now in English as in Greek, those two nouns have one article so it's probably best to see them as one idea, so we could translate them this way, "your sacrificial service." And he adds, "it's the sacrificial service of your faith." That is, your faith is what prompted you into sacrificial service for Christ. And your sacrificial service is the sacrifice. Picture it on the altar, the Philippians' sacrificial service is there on the altar being offered to God. Paul says, I am merely a drink offering added to your sacrifice.

Now what's the picture? In the Old Testament as well as in the pagan world, when sacrifices were made, the worshipper would offer an animal and that animal would be consumed on the altar by fire. To complete the sacrifice, the worshipper would take either wine or oil usually and pour it, often on the sacrifice itself. And of course as he did that, because of the heat and flame that was there, that oil or wine would be immediately dissolved into steam and ascend in the smoke to God. It completed the sacrifice. You can read about it in Numbers 15 for example. Paul says, that's me, that drink offering that completes the sacrifice, I'm being poured out as that offering right now. Notice he says, "I am being poured out." The pouring out must refer to his present suffering. Paul's point is, my current imprisonment and suffering is simply a drink offering poured out to complete your service to Christ.

The only other place in the New Testament Paul mentions this idea of a drink offering is in 2 Timothy 4 where he talks about his coming execution. He says I'm already being poured out as a drink offering. You know what Paul's saying? He says, listen, the suffering I'm going through right now, and even if it means execution eventually, is just the completion of your sacrifice in service to God. So even when my suffering reaches the maximum, which is my death, I will still rejoice.

Remember when Paul wrote Philippians, where he was? He's in his own rented quarters according to Acts 28. He's in his own rented quarters, chained with an 18 inch chain to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day, every day for two years, unable to serve, unable to fulfill his apostolic ministry, to serve as the missionary that is in his heart to do. But notice what Paul doesn't do. This is what I want you to see. Paul doesn't grumble about his troubles. He doesn't point out

that if the Roman bureaucracy had its act together he'd be out of prison a lot sooner. He doesn't dispute and question God's providence; for two years he sits in Rome.

Instead of grumbling, instead of disputing, he does something remarkable, he rejoices, he rejoices. Notice the last part of verse 17, "I rejoice and share my joy with you all." What an amazing example. How could he do this? How could he be filled with joy instead of grumbling and disputing? It wasn't that Paul was some sort of masochist that sort of enjoyed suffering. He was looking beyond his present circumstances. He had an eternal perspective. He embraced God's sovereign purpose. He saw that God had a plan, even if he didn't understand it. Perhaps you're thinking, yeah, but that's Paul. I mean that's just not human. No normal Christian could endure what Paul was enduring and rejoice like that. You can't live like that.

Notice how Paul ends this section in verse 18, Philippians, Countrysiders, "You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me." He says listen, you can have this mindset too, you can have this mindset too. Think about Paul, what an amazing example, instead of going through what he went through and the incredible troubles and trials that he went through, and grumbling and disputing God, he was filled with joy and he rejoiced and he says, I want you to follow my example, I want you to live like that. "Do all things without grumbling and disputing." For your own personal assurance, for the unsaved, and I want you to do it for your spiritual leaders and mentors. And if you want an example to follow, Paul says, just follow me. I'm happy to be a drink offering poured out, even if it's my life itself, to complete your service. May God help us to think that way. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your word. We're rebuked by it, because Lord we have to admit to You we seek Your forgiveness for grumbling and disputing You. Lord, how often have we found ourselves expressing our own dissatisfaction, sometimes over the trivial events of life, sometimes over the deep dark trials that come. Lord, forgive us. Help us to do all things without grumbling and disputing. Lord, help us to do it for our own assurance, that we would prove to ourselves and to others, and before You, that we are truly the children of God. Lord, help us to do it so that we may shine as lights to those who are unsaved. Lord, help us to do it even so that those who have had such amazing influence on us through our lives may stand before You and boast in Christ because of what You've done in us. Lord, help us to follow the amazing example of the Apostle, when we face trouble to look beyond our trouble to You, to Your sovereignty, to Your plan. Help us to trust You and not have an evil heart of unbelief.

Lord, I pray for the person here today who does have an evil heart of unbelief, who lives in grumbling and disputing because they don't believe You, they don't trust You, they don't believe Your word. Lord, help them today to come to the place of submission and surrender, to repent of their sins and to believe in Jesus Christ Your Son as their only hope. It's in His name I pray, amen.