

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Stop Complaining Philippians 2:14-16 Part 2**

A month ago Lynn and I had our four year old twin grandsons over to our house. I was playing with them in the back yard. One of them had a rope tied to the end of a plastic bat and then hung it over a limb of our cherry tree. When he pulled the rope the bat would flip up and hit the branch next to it. This totally excited him. Our other twin grandson wanted to do the same thing. So he tied a rope to the end of a racquet ball racquet and hung it over another branch. He would pull on his rope but he could not get the same effect. And he started to cry. So I went over to him and asked him if he wanted help. He responded by whining. Which is just another form of grumbling but with an annoying twang. I said to him I will be glad to help you but you need to stop whining. He looked up at me with the most sincere expression with tears running down his cheeks and said, “But I don’t know how to stop whining.” This might be exactly how you presently feel after trying to apply last week’s message but hopefully the message this weekend will encourage you to keep up your good effort.

So let us go back to the second chapter of Philippians. 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 considered several weeks ago? Paul’s first concern was that they work out their salvation (Philippians 2:12-13). 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 their salvation does not mean that they were to work for their salvation; that is absolutely impossible. Rather it means that they exert the necessary effort to live out a life of obedience consistent with the gift of salvation that they have received by grace through faith.

Having introduced his first concern Paul then becomes much more specific by explaining how he wants them to do this. This leads to a second command and therefore to the second concern. Paul’s second concern was that they do all things without grumbling and disputing (Philippians 2:14-16).

Let us read **Philippians 2:14-16** “**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.**” Apparently there were certain Philippian Christians who were upsetting the peace and unity of the church at Philippi through the way that they were talking. Paul therefore follows up on the more general command in **Philippians 2:12-13** to “**work out your salvation**” with the more specific command in **Philippians 2:14-16** to “**Do all things without grumbling and disputing.**”

We know that we are not to be involved in grumbling..... But what does this word mean? “Grumbling” (GONGYSMON) involves quiet verbal expressions of discontent or displeasure accompanied by feelings of annoyance or anger.

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This sin is particularly troubling because it is in truth an outward verbal expression of an inner lawlessness and rebellion that shakes its fist in the face of God and repudiates His right to rule, that questions His love and His wisdom..... This spirit of rebellion can be expressed when we grumble about such significant things such as our health or marital status or such unimportant things as a longer than anticipated wait in a fast food line.

But the command in Philippians 2:14 involves something more than just doing all things without grumbling. Look again at Philippians 2:14, **“Do all things without grumbling and..... disputing.”** The word “disputing” (DIALOGISMOS) literally means “through reasoning” but because of the immediate context the word is translated “disputing” (NAS) or “arguing” (NIV). If people continue to sow seeds of discontent through their quiet verbal expressions of annoyance and anger certainly it won’t be long before fighting could break out.

This weekend we will continue to examine the very lengthy sentence that Paul introduces in **verse 14** and does not conclude until the end of **verse 16**. As we continue to examine this sentence we will discover two very specific reasons why Paul wanted all things to be done without grumbling and disputing. Reasons that have very little to do with us and much more about others.

I would hope that as we explore Paul’s stated reasons for his command that we will find ourselves once again energized to give a concerted effort to remove all expressions of grumbling and disputing from our lives..... What is the first reason that Paul gives for the Philippians to do all things without grumbling and disputing?

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The first reason for the church to do all things without grumbling and disputing is that it might function as a beacon of light to a faithless world (Philippians 2:1516). Let us read **Philippians 2:15** and the first part of **verse 16**..... **“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, holding fast the word of life .....**” Paul is without a doubt concerned about the unity of the church when he commands them, **“to do all things without grumbling and disputing”** But why is he so concerned? He is concerned because if the church does not do this they will fail to put themselves in the best position to fulfill their function as that beacon of light. In other words if the church does not do this they will dilute the power of the message that they have been commanded to proclaim. If they fail to do this they will diminish the brightness of the light that they are commanded to project.

If you are a Christian parent and you are a grumbler you are in effect extinguishing the light that you need to be for your unsaved children..... If you are a Christian employee and you are a grumbler you are in effect extinguishing your light in the workplace. God has given us a particular function in this world. If we fail to do all things without grumbling and disputing we will diminish or perhaps even extinguish our ability to be a light to unsaved people who happen to cross our path. However if we heed this command, if we do all things without grumbling and disputing it will enhance our ability to function as God has intended for us.

How does doing “all things without grumbling and disputing” put us in a position to fulfill our function? It renders us as the children of God blameless, innocent, and above reproach.

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Let us go back and again read the passage, **“Do all things without grumbling and disputing that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach....”** We need to understand if think we are a Christian, a follower of Christ then we have certain responsibilities before God.

Who are we? We are the children of God. What does **John 1:12** tell us, **“But as many as receive Him to them gave He power to become the children of God.”** Before we receive Christ we are not God’s children but after we receive Christ by faith we become His children. We become His children because we are joined to the only begotten Son of God by the baptizing work of the Spirit. And as the children of God we receive all the rights and privileges of sonship. But with the rights and privileges come some responsibilities. Remember the theme **Philippians 1:27-2:18**. The theme of this section of scripture is “walking in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” And a part of walking in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ is doing all things without grumbling and disputing.

If we do this the power of the gospel is validated and we prove ourselves to be blameless, innocent and above reproach. If we don’t do this then the power of the gospel is not validated and we are therefore not blameless, innocent, and above reproach.

What is the meaning of the word “blameless?” Blameless (AMEMPTOS) means “unblamed.” Paul wants them to do all things without grumbling and complaining so that the finger of accusation could not be pointed at them by the Lord or anyone else.

What is the meaning of the word “innocent?” Innocent (AKERAIOS) means “unmixed” when referring to people it carried the notion of simplicity of character, purity, sincerity. Paul wants them to do all things without grumbling and complaining so that if the finger of accusation were pointed at them by the Lord or anyone else the charges would not be able to sustained..... Paul then goes on he says, **“Do all things without grumbling and disputing that you may prove ( or manifest by the way that you are living) yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach.”**

The phrase “above reproach” is simply supplementing and reinforcing what has already been said. The word “reproach” (AMOMOS) means “unblemished.” Within the NT, the term is employed to portray what believers are or should be in God’s sight. If we are blameless and innocent then certainly we could be characterized as unblemished. This is what God expects from us not only in the area of our speech but in all areas of our lives.

What does **Romans 12:1** say? **“I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”** Another way of reading this verse would be, **“I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and unblemished sacrifice.”**

How does doing “all things without grumbling and disputing” put us in a position to fulfill our function in the world? Doing all things all things without grumbling and disputing renders us as the children of God blameless, innocent, and above reproach.

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Being blameless, innocent, and above reproach in this area of speech sets us apart from the world in such unique way that it will very likely capture the world's positive attention. Let us again look at **V. 15** but this time let us read the last part of the verse **“Do all things without grumbling or 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.”**

We as God's children have been placed in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation by God. The crooked and perverse generation that Paul describes here is simply the unsaved world. The word “crooked” (SKOLIOS) means “curved, something out of proper alignment.” We get our English word “scoliosis” from this word which refers to a curvature of the spine. The unsaved world has scoliosis of the heart.

The word “perverse” (DIASTREPHO) means “severely twisted or distorted.” The unsaved world has a very severe case of scoliosis of the heart..... So many Christians complain about how horrific the unsaved world is and are trying to clean it up. The horrific nature of the unsaved world is not all that bad in respect to our function. The darker the world the greater our opportunity.

How does Paul describe us in relationship to the unsaved world . He describes us as lights. Look again at the verse, **“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.”** If we will simply obey this command we will stand out from the world around us in the same way as the moon and stars stand out in the night sky. We will be functioning as a beacon of light in the midst of a lost world.

When our twin grandson's were much smaller than they are now, when we would be help Tom and Erin, our daughter and son-in-law, take their children to the car at night long after the sun had set. They would point up at the night sky and say “moon.” They were not scared of the moon, they were not annoyed with the moon, they were fascinated with the moon it had caught their attention in a very positive way. The same thing should happen when the world takes the time to look at us.

The crooked and perverse generation which would refer to the unsaved people around us would be similar to the night sky. If we are obedient to this command to do all things without grumbling and disputing proving ourselves to be blameless, innocent and unblemished we will be like the moon. Hopefully our lives will stand out from the world in a positive way. Hopefully so much so that the world will be able to point us out with the same sense of fascination that my twin grandson's did when they saw the moon

There is an underlying implied sense of urgency for us to succeed in respect to this matter of setting ourselves apart from the world when we consider the words that Paul chooses to use in this passage. Paul borrows certain words from **Deuteronomy 32**. In **Deuteronomy 32** Moses gives to Israel a song and within this song he contrasts the unchangeable fidelity of the Lord within the perversity of His faithless people. Let me read for you the verses that proclaim the fidelity of the Lord in **VV. 3-4**, **“For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God! (4) The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.**

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But then Moses abruptly changes from proclaiming the fidelity of God to prophetically declaring the future perversity of His faithless people. Listen to **V. 5** **“They (referring to Israel) have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect (blemish); But are a perverse and crooked generation.”** Paul knew exactly what he was doing when he chose to express himself as he did in Philippians 2:14-16. He is clearly communicating to us an implied sense of urgency.

God put Israel in a position because of their covenantal relationship with him to be the light to the nations of the world but they failed. They did exactly what Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 32. Since they failed as God’s covenantal people to be the light who is now to fulfill their function? The church is now been placed in this position in the world by God. We are to be the light. Do you feel the sense of urgency for us as the church not to fail in this mission as God’s covenant people? Has Israel blown their chance to fulfill this expectation? And the answer is no. In fact, God has promised them based on **Isaiah 58:8-10** that they will, in their millennial kingdom, in fact succeed whereas in the past they had failed.

I shared with you that there is an underlying implied sense of urgency for us to succeed in respect to this matter of setting ourselves apart from the world. Hopefully you now appreciate the urgency of this work. If we fail to set ourselves apart from the world by the way we live then we should question whether we are “in the midst of” or “a part of” the “crooked and perverse generation” (Deuteronomy 32:3-5).

Another way of saying this would be if we fail to set ourselves apart from the world by the way we live then we should question whether or not we are holding fast the word of life.

Let us go back again and read these verses but this time we will stop at the beginning of **Verse 16**, **“(14) do all things without grumbling and disputing; 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.”**

We are to hold fast the word of life. What is the word of life? Let me ask you this question. What is the word that gives life? It is the gospel. How do we know if we are holding the gospel fast? We know that we are holding fast the word of life when we are putting ourselves in the position to be God’s beacon of light to a faithless world. (Philippians 2:15,16a).

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### CONCLUSION

I know that if we fail to put a cap on our grumbling and disputing that it can have a negative impact on our inter-personal relationships. I know that if we fail to put a cap on our grumbling and disputing that it can perhaps lead to the discipline of the Lord. All of these things I shared with you last week. But beyond this Paul wants us to understand that if we fail to put a cap on our grumbling and disputing it will limit our ability to function as a beacon of light to an unsaved world and even raise the question if we are a beacon of light at all. It will raise the question whether the saving power of the gospel is truly a part of our lives.

I hope that these thoughts will again encourage you to step forward and exercise continuing and increasing energy to do all things without grumbling and disputing.