

Do Not Complain – Philippians 2:14-16

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: James 3; Philippians 2:12-16.
- Outline:
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Introduction—The Problem of Complaining

- The problem of complaining: We live in an affluent society, yet the more people possess, the more they want; media advertisements try to stimulate all kinds of desires; and psychology makes the search for self-defined satisfaction the ultimate goal of life ... So, complaining has become the norm.
- Behind complaining is the resentment that often accumulates and leads to more serious sins. Resentment towards a spouse leads to domestic violence and extramarital affairs, resentment towards traffic leads to car accidents, and resentment towards life as a whole often leads to suicide. People denounce these great sins, and yet they don't take complaints seriously at all, as if these sins did not begin with complaining.
- All complaints are directed against God - "The foolishness of man ruins his way, And his heart rages against the Lord." (Proverbs 19:3). The first complaint of a human being: "The woman whom You gave..." (Genesis 3:12) - the essence of complaining is to throw a fist against heaven, protesting against God's actions.
- For forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites never stopped complaining. Complained about lack of meat to eat, complained about lack of water to drink, complained about the leadership of Moses and Aaron, complained about the body size of the Canaanites... In the warning of 1 Corinthians 10:5-11, complaining ranks with serious sins such as idolatry and adultery.

Do Not Complain (v14)

- "Do all things": Do all things as you "work out your salvation" (v. 12), that is, every effort in pursuing sanctification. The principle of pursuing sanctification is no complaint. Whenever you complain, you are not doing the things of sanctification.

For example: Why can't I see the result of my effort? Why does nobody see my service and applaud me? Why is my work so hard? Why is life full of temptations, making it so hard for me to kill my sin? In other words, why doesn't God just put me in the best environment according to what I see as the best, so I'll have no difficulty doing the work of sanctification?

- "grumbling": Onomatopoeia, a deep guttural sound, expressing one's dissatisfaction. The problem of complaining is not about the tongue, but the heart. Jesus said, "for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." Complaining is because your heart is full of murmurings, and that in turn is because you don't trust God. You don't believe God is good, that He is wiser than you in the things He does, and that He can provide you with everything you need so you can endure trials.
- "disputing": Quarrels and debates out of a complaining attitude. The original word emphasizes the deliberate thinking and reasoning in an argument. Complaining is mainly to express emotional displeasure, and disputing is mainly a rational argument, trying to prove your dissatisfaction is justified. - It's a great enemy of church unity!
- The opposite of complaining is gratitude, and it is God's will that we "give thanks in everything" (1 Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:17). For every complaint, at least two biblical commands are violated—the command not to complain, and the command to give thanks in everything.

Why We Do Not Complain (vv 15-16)

For Your Sanctification

- "so that you...": The implication is that you are not there yet, and this is the direction you're going. You can only get there through working out sanctification without complaining.
- "blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach ": Synonyms describing the future state of complete sanctification, pure and perfect in moral conduct, without any blemish. This is God's purpose in saving sinners, sanctifying us (Eph 1:4; Col 1:21-22), "the sanctification

without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14). Being "children of God" is the basis of sanctification - Like father, like son. A child inevitably grows to become like his parents.

1 Peter 1:14-15 “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; “

1 John 3:9-10 “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

For Your Testimony

- "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation": Two words describe the characteristics of this generation: "Crooked" is the opposite of straight. It's a metaphor for conduct, not taking the straight path of God, but going the crooked way of sin. "Perverse" is also a metaphor that literally means "distorted". This generation not only doesn't go the straight path, and worse, it twists the path, causing others to go astray. It emphasizes the harmful nature of this generation.

Proverbs 2:13-15 “From those who leave the paths of uprightness; To walk in the ways of darkness; Who delight in doing evil; And rejoice in the perversity of evil; Whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways;”

Acts 20:30 “and from among your own selves’ men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

A crooked and perverse generation will tempt disciples to go astray - Beware: Complaining is especially contagious! In Numbers 13, twelve spies came back to report, two faithful, ten complainers—and the whole congregation complained with those ten men! Paul is probably thinking of these complaining Israelites here, because Moses described them in a similar way:

Deuteronomy 32:5 “They have acted corruptly toward Him, they are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.”

This generation as a whole is hopelessly crooked and perverse; but as to individuals, God will save some of them "from this present evil age" (Gal 1:4). How can people living in this generation come out of it? Answer: life witness of those who have come out of it!

"among whom you appear as lights in the world": The original text corresponds to the lights in Genesis that God created on the fourth day, when "God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth" (Gen 1:16-17). It also reminds us of Jesus' teaching that Christians are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16). Complaining will darken your light!

- "holding fast the word of life": Jesus is the word of life. 1 John 1:1 "What was from the beginning, what *we have heard*, what we have *seen with our eyes*, what we have *looked at and touched with our hands*, concerning the Word of Life" - emphasizing the vital importance of the manifestation of the life of Christ. Not only to the apostles, but also to the world through Christians indwelt by Christ.

"Holding fast" can also be translated "holding forth", and the two senses can be combined here. Think of a torch. You hold it fast in order to hold it forth so that it can shine forth. When we hold fast to biblical teachings, we're holding forth the Word of Life for the world to see.

For Your Pastor

- "I will have reason to glory": "Glory" means to boast. Is Paul being selfish here? Quite the contrary! It is the most selfless expression - you are my reason to boast before the Lord, you are my glory, my joy is closely connected to your soul, and so when you prosper spiritually, I will have reason to glory.

3 John 4 "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."

"I did not run in vain nor toil in vain": Paul compares his toil in ministry to a race. The goal of a race is to receive a crown as reward (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). The Philippians were Paul's "crown" (Phil 4:1). All Paul's labor for them would be in vain if they couldn't fight the sin of complaining by the Spirit and live out the life of light. But Paul knew it wouldn't turn out that way, because he knew—

1 Corinthians 15:5 "... that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."