



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Answer to Grumbling & Complaining in the Capitol

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

MAY 17, 2011

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In 2007, the chandelier in the capitol rotunda was removed for repair and cleaning. You may recall this made an amazing difference in how bright the light shown over the well after the job was completed. All who come to our statehouse admire the grand fixture that serves as the centerpiece of our beautiful capitol building. To assure the light continues to shine brightly, the state now contracts with the same company to do a regular cleaning using a new ultrasound process to clean the crystals in order to keep the chandelier in prime condition.

The chandelier had grown dull and dim through years of neglect and abuse. After the renovation, it shown brightly as its designers intended. The Bible describes believers as lights that are to shine in a dark world. In our ongoing study of Philippians, we come to this passage:

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵so 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, ¹⁶holding 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.

As believers and followers of Christ serving in the capitol, it is important to consider this passage and the changes we should make in our attitudes and actions so that we might let our lives shine brighter as a testimony for Him.

We should remember Paul's exhortation in our previous study for the Philippian believers to "**work out your salvation with fear and trembling...**" In verse 14 Paul gives a specific example of how believers should work out their salvation: by "**doing all things without grumbling or disputing**".

We live in a world full of people who grumble, complain, and dispute about many of the circumstances of life, and all of us have the tendency to do so. **Grumbling** is the negative response we have when we face circumstances that are disappointing,

unpleasant, or inconvenient. It may also be our response to the actions or words of others towards us. Grumbling usually comes about because we believe the bad circumstances we face or the poor treatment from others we endure is unfair and undeserved. **Disputing**, refers to questioning, doubting, and arguing, whether in our own minds and hearts or out loud. We may grumble and dispute to or about other people, but our grumbling and disputing is primarily against God. In grumbling, complaining, and disputing we question God's goodness, His love, or His ability to care for us when we face challenges and tough times. Paul has warned the believers in Philippi that they were going to face persecution and tough times (1:29-30). He now encourages them that when they do so, they should work out their salvation by making sure they do not grumble and complain.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SIN OF GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING

Paul's challenge to refrain from grumbling and disputing immediately brings to mind the experience of the people of Israel in the wilderness after they were delivered from Egypt. God miraculously delivered them from bondage and slavery, yet what was their almost immediate response to the challenges they faced when God led them into the wilderness? After God rescued them by destroying the army of Egypt in the Red Sea, Israel sang a great song of praise to God (Exodus 15:1-18). Only three days later, when they had difficulty finding water, they grumbled against Moses (Ex. 15:24). God providing them water, then they grumbled about food (Ex. 16:2-8). This became an unfortunate pattern for the Children of Israel. When it was time to enter into the Promise Land they murmured against Moses and against God because of the difficulties they would face in taking the land. We read, "All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?'" (Numbers 14:2-3) This is the classic example of the grumbling and disputing of which Paul is speaking. We see the seriousness of this sin in the fact that the whole adult generation was not permitted to enter the Promise Land and died in the wilderness.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERIM BIBLE STUDIES TUESDAY, MAY 17
8:00 AM – HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM (M 252 NEAR MINORITY OFFICES)
12:00 NOON – TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 IN BASEMENT OF EAST WING)

The Answer to Grumbling & Complaining in the Capitol (Philippians 2:14-16)

Why is grumbling and complaining such a serious sin? First it demonstrates we have forgotten God's past deliverance, care, and blessings in our lives. The people of Israel were delivered from slavery and God miraculously provided for their needs in the wilderness. Yet with each new challenge or difficulty, they murmured, complained, and questioned God. As children of God He has delivered us from the slavery and judgment of sin through the sinless life and the death of Christ on the cross. Through faith in Christ God has given us eternal life. If we remember such blessings, how can we ever grumble and complain? Grumbling and complaining also demonstrate that we question God's love and care for us or His ability to care for us in the midst of difficult times. In reality it means we either do not believe He loves and cares for us or that He is able to deal with the circumstances that come into our lives.

OUR TESTIMONY TO OTHERS WHEN WE ARE FREE FROM GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING

Paul informs us that if we as believers do not grumble and dispute, then we will stand out, that we will appear as lights in the middle of a crooked and perverse world. The world without Christ and His truth is often described in scripture as a dark place. People who do not know and follow Jesus are described as lost in darkness. Here in our passage the world is described as "a crooked and perverse generation". Paul likely borrowed this phrase from Deuteronomy 32:5 where it was used to describe the people of Israel who had turned their backs on God. "Crooked and perverse" simply refers to anything that deviates from the truth and standards of God and His Word. Like stars shining in the darkness of night, those who demonstrate they love and trust God by refusing to grumble and complain will have a great testimony before those who do not have such faith.

Perhaps Paul is recalling Jesus' own description of His followers in the Sermon on the Mount:

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Paul shares that the believer who does all things without grumbling and disputing will be **blameless, innocent, and above reproach**. Conversely, a Christian who grumbles and disputes has

reason for blame and is guilty of a serious offence which brings reproach upon themselves and upon the testimony of Christ.

If anyone had reason to grumble or complain, it was Paul. He was writing this letter while imprisoned in Rome. When the church at Philippi was established (Acts 16) and throughout his ministry Paul endured great trials and persecution. He had friends and coworkers desert him. He had fellow believers malign him and impugn his character. He faced great physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges. Yet he demonstrated in his own life and challenged others to "**do all things without grumbling and disputing**". Certainly Paul was great testimony for Christ, even to those soldiers to whom he was chained while in custody. By his own example as well as his teaching he encourages us to be a good testimony, to appear as lights in a dark world.

HOW WE CAN BE FREE FROM GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING?

We can be people who do not grumble and complain by getting to know God better and trust Him more. As we study the Bible we learn more of His power and sovereignty. We understand He is able to care for us in the midst of all our circumstances and is sovereignly working in all things for our good and His glory. We get a better grasp of His great love for us as His children, and that He will be with us through all the trials we might face.

We will not grumble and complain if we remember God's great blessings and provisions for us, especially our salvation in Christ. How can we ever grumble and complain when we look at the cross? As Paul reminds us, ***He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*** (Romans 8:32) If God provided our greatest need of salvation of sin through giving His own Son, will He not care for us in all the lesser things of our daily lives?

We will not grumble and complain if we strive to pursue the very opposite of grumbling and complaining – ***rejoicing***. You might recall this is a major theme throughout Paul's letter to the Philippians. It is impossible for us to grumble and complain and rejoice at the same time. We might see Paul's exhortation to "**Do all things without murmuring and disputing**" as the negative command. "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice**" (Phil. 4:4) is the positive.

- **IS YOUR LIFE SHINING AS LIGHT FOR CHRIST IN THE OFT TIMES DARK ENVIRONMENT AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CAPITOL?**