

Without Grumbling

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Well, we gladly come to the preaching of God's word this morning. I was thinking earlier as we were preparing for the baptisms, that the word of God is never preached in vain. God always accomplishes what he intends through the opening of his word, and so it's with a sense of expectation and confidence that we come to God's word knowing that the Spirit of God will use it in each of our lives here this morning in one way or another.

The text for this morning comes from Philippians 2 and I invite you to turn there. For those of you that are visiting, maybe tuning in recently on the live stream, we're going verse by verse through the book of Philippians in our Sunday morning service and we've come to this text, verses 14 through 18 of chapter 2. Let me read it to set it in your minds as we begin.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 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, 16 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. 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. 18 You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

I can't help but think this morning of my friend, my dear friend, my elderly friend back in California, Frances Gregg, who sat under my preaching for a period of time, and when a message convicted her, she would come up and in a playful protest against me say, "Pastor, you're meddling in my life." She had kind of that Southern back home drawl about her life and that demeanor, just one of the sweetest women you could ever hope to meet, and it was her way of saying that, "Your word convicted me about things that needed to change in my life." And I loved her for it. Today we're going to have a message where I'm going to be meddling with probably each one of you because we're coming to a text that addresses a common shortcoming in the Christian life, and dealing with the reality of our grumbling and complaining spirits.

Now it's important for you to understand that we are coming to this text in the normal course, the normal flow of exposition. This is not a text that I specifically chose for this day on this occasion, it's just the text that providentially comes to us today as we go through God's word consistently together, and it's important for us to understand the context in which this admonition comes to the Christian church and comes to us in our individual lives. The sin of a grumbling and complaining spirit is far more serious than what you might think at first glance; because it's so common to us, it's easy for us to excuse it as something that's not that significant. However, if you understand and see the flow of the context, you'll see how important a priority the Apostle Paul places on it in the context of what he is saying to this Philippian church.

Let me just remind you, we've gone over this a number of times, but today it becomes especially important for us to grasp. I am admittedly concerned that it would be easy to kind of brush off our carnality, it would be easy to brush off our shortcomings in these ways and say, "Well, it's really not all that important after all because everybody does it," as if everybody somehow makes sinning okay in the eyes of God. That's not a good way for us to think, and so we need the word of God to help clarify and to see the priority that this has in the mind of God, the priority that this has in Scripture, the priority this has in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So if you go back to chapter 1, verse 27, you will see and remember that the Apostle Paul calls us to a certain kind of life. He says, "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." That text is like passing through a great entryway into a magnificent realm. You pass through and you go by these magnificent pillars that give you a sense of the grandeur of what you are doing, and you walk through and you find yourself having left a former realm behind and entered into a new one, and that new realm that we have entered into is the nobility of the Christian life, and what the Christian life should look like in light of the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the overarching theme that he has introduced and then he goes on to expound upon it and tells us exactly what it is that he's concerned about. If you think about it this way, he started in the very broadest way and he just gradually narrows down until he gets to the point that he's wanting to make specifically in our text here today. Broadly speaking, live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now let me tell you what that means, let me tell you exactly what I have in mind here, Paul says. He's going to illustrate it for us and then he's going to get specific with his command.

So what does he mean when he says conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ? Well, he says it here in verse 3 of chapter 2. A noble life, a life worthy of the Gospel says,

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

He had said in chapter 1, verse 27, he said stand firm in one spirit, one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. It's a call to church unity. It's a call to a particular kind of Christian life. And then he gets more specific as he goes into chapter 2. He says how are you going to develop that kind of unity? It's going to come from the way that you view yourself, that you commit in your heart not to be a man or a woman of selfishness or empty conceit but you're looking out for the interests of others in what you do.

Then having said that, so broadly speaking, I'm going to repeat myself a number of times here today. Why? Because repetition is the key to learning. Broadly speaking he says conduct yourselves in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. That is an obligation that is on every true Christian. We are all to live in a manner, we are never to forget the significance of the Gospel that saved us, and live therefore in response to it. We leave behind the old life that we were living in sin, and now we live a new life in Christ that has been graciously given to us by the Holy Spirit. Okay?

Now one aspect of that worthy life, that worthy walk is this spirit of unity that is fed by an attitude that puts the interests of others ahead of my own. Now having established that principle, Paul gives an illustration of what it is that he has in mind, and he illustrates it with the highest possible example, he illustrates it with the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 5. He says,

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Now look, when you read, you can read a lot of commentaries and a lot of theological writings that isolate that particular text, 5-8, out of its context and go into a lot of technical discussion about what it means that Christ emptied himself. There's a time and a place for that kind of theological reflection and I'm grateful for the men who have done it, but for us today what you and I want to see is that Christ is being used as an illustration of this greater principle that Paul is making about the importance of humility in the Christian life. And so Christ is an illustration. His humiliation exemplified what obedience looks like to this principle that he is speaking about.

As you know in verses 9 and 11, he goes on and from that humiliation of Christ speaks about the exaltation of Christ, his resurrection, his ascension, his session at the right hand of God the Father, the fact that he is going to come again in great power and glory into this world. Christ was humbled greatly. He humbled himself greatly, more accurately, he humbled himself greatly and now he has been exalted forevermore, throughout all of eternity we will be bearing the consequences of the exaltation of Christ. So here's what you need to see. How important is this text about doing all things without grumbling or

disputing? It comes in the context, it comes in the context of a worthy walk that has been illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. This could not be more important in the mind of God given the place that it is placed in the text before us. Paul is working out a very intricate train of thought that we can trace but that we need to see.

So brothers and sisters, as we consider this life without grumbling and without disputing, what I want you to see is that we are not talking in human moralistic terms, we're not simply saying you need to put on a good attitude and not be such a grouch. That would probably be good advice for some of us, notice first person plural there, it would be good advice for some of us but that's not the force of this text. The force of this text is that this command comes to us in the context of the Gospel and in the context of the Lord Jesus Christ so that in verse 12, which we looked at last week, Paul says,

12 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;

Apply yourself to what has been said about your salvation. Think about these things and work out repentance in your life that is consistent with the glory of the Gospel and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ because, verse 13,

13 ... it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

So I think that when we contemplate these things with any measure of a sanctified mind, with any measure of the help of the Holy Spirit as we look at them, we see that this is a matter of great priority. If something is attached to the Gospel, something is attached to the Lord Jesus Christ, something is attached to obedience and attached to the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, then this must be something of high priority in the kingdom of God. You and I are responsible to pursue obedience in our Christian life and the promise of verse 13 is that as we do that, God is the one who is working it out in our lives to his own praise and glory. Alright, that's the context of everything that we've seen here. It's an impressive context that has led us up to this point. It is in that broad context that we find today's text.

Now let me just make a couple of general statements before we go into our four points for this morning. Worthy living, worthy Gospel living has a central component to it that we dare not neglect. To live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel is to be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, who is content with the providence of God. You are content with the providence of God. You accept the life that God has given you and you find contentment in Christ in the midst of it, as we'll see how that broad statement cannot be evaded. We see that, worthy Gospel living is content with the providence of God, and secondly, we'll find that contentment makes a powerful witness to a dark, sinful and dying world. And I can't imagine a time, a year in my lifetime anyway, like 2020 has been where Christians living contentedly would have a more sharp contrast with the dark

world around us. It's a challenge that Scripture brings to us today. Contentment is part of a godly life and contentment is part of a godly witness to an unbelieving world.

So let's look at these four principles that we find in this text that undergird the primary command to live a life, here's the title of the sermon, without grumbling. Without grumbling. What does that look like? Well, first of all, we want to look at the command against discontentment. The command against discontentment. Paul opens this text with a negative command, a prohibition. He tells us not to do something and we see that in verse 14. A brief text, to be sure. He says,

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

Now right away I want you to see that the command is comprehensive. All things. Every aspect of life is brought under the umbrella of this command. Do all things, he says, without grumbling or disputing.

Well, what are these principles of grumbling and disputing? We're going to go through things, I think, rather quickly here today, but in grumbling you find an attitude that finds fault, that is discontented with life or with people or with circumstances, and mutters against it. Whether it's in your heart or verbalized to others, there is this bubbling, simmering discontentment against the life that God has given to you. "I don't like this. I don't like that. I don't like him. I don't like her. I don't like this situation and I'm going to make sure that everyone else knows about it in the process." This is the idea of grumbling, finding fault with the things and the people around you.

The word "disputing" has the idea of bickering, arguing over ideas and statements that have been made and just this tense argumentative tension in relationships and in a heart attitude being expressed and showing displeasure and discontent with the circumstances of life that are around you.

Now let's step back, it's easy for me to say step back, right, because you're all sitting down, but I can step back. Let's step back and remember something really crucial about this text. In an even broader context is this, is that Paul is writing to Christians. He is writing to the church at Philippi. He is writing chapter 1, verse 1, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi. He's writing to believers as he says this thing. Now immediately I find that very humbling. I find it humbling to think that we as believers, and I'm including myself in the circle of what I'm saying here, I find it humbling to realize that those of us that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, those of us that have been blessed with grace and our sins have been forgiven and we have been accepted as righteous in the presence of God, I find it humbling to realize that having such great eternal blessings that we need a command like this, that somehow we consistently, persistently lose sight of the big picture of the great kindness and mercy and patience that God has shown to us and we grumble against the life that we have and against our circumstances.

Christians were grumbling here in Philippi. Christians were disputing with one another. How, I ask you, how do professing believers ever get to that dark place? A heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells belching out this kind of venom in life, how does it ever get to that place? Well, beloved, it's a symptom, like a fever is a symptom of a disease, an underlying infection, it's not the fever per se that's the big problem, it's the infection that gives rise to it. The grumbling and disputing is a symptom of a heart that has lost sight of Christ. A grumbling heart especially, my friends, a consistently persistently grumbling, fault-finding heart is a heart that has lost sight of the Gospel and has lost sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. These attitudes fester when we stray from unity and humility.

Look back again at chapter 2, the beginning of chapter 2 with me. Chapter 2, verse 1.

1 ... if there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

The love and the compassion and the fellowship of the Spirit, these vertical aspects of our salvation fuel a heart into this kind of contentment and humility of which he is speaking. It's not possible to have a heart filled with those things and simultaneously be a grumbling, complaining believer. That's why Paul prefaces this section with these extended commands and with this extended illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is reminding us of what we have in Christ and saying, "Understand the implications of that as you live."

And so what we find is this. Now let me show you something. We'll get to this in due course probably in a month or two. There were specific individuals, specific women in the church who were a major aspect of the problem at the church in Philippi. Look at chapter 4, verse 2, Paul says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." You see, Paul isn't just writing these things in a general sense and just writing an abstract discourse about Christian living when he wrote to the church at Philippi, he was writing to them because this was a very real problem in the midst of a very real church, in the midst of time and space in the history of the first century. This was a problem that was bringing division and dissension into the entire church. And so, you know, I told you that he goes from broader to more narrow, to more narrow, to more narrow. Finally he gets in chapter 4 and he just lays it out and says, "It's you two ladies that specifically need to hear this and heed it." And he brings it down to a personal level calling for personal repentance. And so we must see that he follows this all the way through until it's been personally applied to the heart of the believer, and these were probably prominent women in the church, and so you can only imagine the effect that it has on others not as prominent saying, "Wow, Paul called out them. I'm not going to escape either."

Here's what I want you to see, my friends, two things. Let me emphasize this. Paul here as he writes these things is writing in a spirit of love. This is not a sharp harsh rebuke that he is giving to the church. You can see this by the way that he addresses them even in

verse 12 when he says, "So then, my beloved," he addresses them with affection, "just as you've always obeyed, keep doing it," in other words. God is at work in you. So he's expressing this love and appreciation for him. He's recognizing their overall life of obedience. They've stumbled here but he's addressing them with affection. This is a gentle word of correction that comes to believers in the midst of this discontentment, but understand, beloved, it is a word of correction, and it is a word that is calling us out of this kind of mindset and lifestyle. God who was gracious to save us and who is now our Father and our King, God calls us out of that lifestyle, calls us out of those attitudes with the phrase "all things, do all things without grumbling and disputing." And so we come, as it were, we come to the text in whatever circumstances life has brought us to that inform our gathering here today, the Scripture comes to us and calls us out of the complaining mindset and says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing."

Well, it probably does us good to slow down for a moment and give us that time to filter through our hearts and to contemplate the ways that our lives have fallen short of this and to recognize that there is a call in Scripture to the Christian to put grumbling to death, to mortify it, to kill it, to repent and pursue a different course of mind about the nature of life. "But you don't know how hard it is. But you don't know this or that. You don't know who I'm living with." None of that matters for what we're talking about here because it says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." And you say, "But that's not fair." No, we're not going there. Just stop and don't let your mind and don't let your heart go there, and the reason that you can't go there is because Paul has put us on a different course in what he said earlier. When he pointed to the humiliation of Jesus Christ, God in human flesh bore great injustice as Christ went to the cross to die an atoning death for our sins, Christ humbled himself under all kinds of earthly adversity, poverty, and betrayal, and he did it all with this humble spirit of which Paul speaks.

So we look back at our Savior, we remember his humiliation in his earthly life and we say there can be no other way of life for me than to respond to this text with an obedient spirit that says, "Yes, that's what I want. I want to have a life, I want to live a life that is free from the grumbling and disputing manner of life that I've known in my past." The priority is stunning to me as I stand here. It is stunning to me that this is the command that Paul deems necessary after this exalted look at our Lord Jesus. He took us into the inner veil, so to speak, he took us beyond the inner veil and let us see the glory of Christ in such magnificence, in his humiliation and his exaltation, and the walls reverberated with the glory of God and the glory of Christ as we considered these things. And where Paul leads us, having shown us that glory, he says, "Now what you need to recognize is it has implications for your attitude toward life." It's very specific. It's very direct. It's very human and earthly in its application but it's important to our Lord Jesus.

So that's the command against discontentment. We see it there in verse 14. Well, let's move on, secondly, then and consider the consequences of discontentment. The consequences of discontentment. This command is necessary because the consequences are significant. The consequences of disobedience against this command are great and Paul points this out in verse 15. Notice he continues his sentence and expresses a purpose

clause, he explains his purpose in calling us away from that grumbling and disputing spirit.

Verse 14, let's keep the context in mind.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that [there's a purpose to be achieved here] so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent,

He says, "I want you to show yourself to be acquitted of the charge of living this kind of grumbling life. I want you to prove that your salvation is real in the fruit that you bring forth in leaving behind grumbling and discontentment in your life. Prove it. Show it. You're in Christ, I affirm that," he says to them, "but I'm telling you that now you need to manifest that with obedience to this command." And so we set aside – oh, watch this, beloved, watch this, beloved. I'm stunned by the magnificence of this entire book and this entire text. Paul takes your grumbling spirit and places it in such a lofty and exalted context, the context of the Gospel, the context of Christ, the context of proving forth the reality of your salvation, the context of the effect that this has on the world around us. Look at it there in verse 15, show yourselves,

15 ... to be blameless and innocent, children of God [show forth that God has really saved you] above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

We set aside our complaints not simply to be a more pleasant person to live with in the home, that's important, that's good to do, but there's more than that. There's a cosmic significance to the things that we're talking about here. Paul says that contented Christians have a light-bearing impact on the dark, sinful, condemned world in which they live. We set aside our complaints because we have a role to play in this crooked world that we live in, and we play the part of a Christian in this dirty world not by fighting over the politics of the day, certainly not by fighting with each other inside the walls of the church, we set aside this grumbling and disputing because we realize that it is an aspect of a Christian witness individually and corporately to the lost world. Friends, remember something: God saved you for his own purposes. We are no longer our own and God saved us so that his people would have this light-bearing witness in the midst of a world that he has condemned but still graciously calls to salvation in Christ. We have a role to play in it.

Now we might not see the effect of it but that doesn't matter. The effect of it is real, and what Paul is saying here, if I can paraphrase him, is that Christians who are living in unified godliness with each other, they shine like stars in the nighttime sky. I've gotten a little bit interested in astronomy over the past few months and going out and identifying the planets and looking for them. It's kind of cool. But one of the reasons that you can see the light of the planets and the light of the stars is because the backdrop is so black that makes them shine out. Well look, we're living in a really dark time in the world and in our country these days and it's discouraging and it's heavy and it's oppressive at times. I

feel it. You feel it. What you and I have to understand is that we have a responsibility and a role to play in response to that. You and I, this is our opportunity to stand out and part of the way that we stand out is by being content in the life that we have. Paul says let that light be undiminished by division and by protest, and to understand that our attitudes influence the witness for Christ to the lost. Somehow grumbling Christians diminish, tarnish, obscure the testimony of the Gospel. It's a bad testimony for us to be grumbling complaining Christians and marked by those things.

Now look, I told you in advance, I said I'm going to be meddling here today. I feel my own feet stepping on my own feet. Imagine what that must be like. But we need to embrace this. We need to humble ourselves before the word of God. And if you have seriously fallen short here, you need to come humbly before your Savior and say, "Lord, I'm sorry. I repent. I have been discontent. I've made sure that everyone around me knew how unhappy and discontented I was. I have not reflected Your humility in my life. I have not lived a life that is worthy of the Gospel in this way. And so I come and I humbly bow down before You. I see that You have called me out to live differently. I see that my attitudes have an influence about the testimony of the Gospel and I confess it and I repent." We can't just lightly let this, you know, we can't be standing like it were on the bank of a river and just watch something float by on the current of the river and just stand there as if nothing has happened that affects us as we see this text. This text is going to the very heart of what we say we believe about Christ, the very heart of how we respond to him. It's great to come in and sing praises to Christ corporately. We need to do that. We're commanded to do that. But that's only one aspect of living a godly life. This is part of it also, finding contentment in Christ and being satisfied in him even if circumstances are arrayed against us.

Now you might say, "How do I do that?" Oh, I'm glad you asked. I'm glad you asked because, you see, it is the pattern of Scripture not only to tell us stop doing something, which is what's happened here, stop being a grumbling discontented Christian, it not only tells us to stop, it shows us how to replace it with that which will feed our joy, feed our contentment and give us something that helps us to put those things to death and put something new on ourselves, and we find that in our third point here as we look at the cure for discontentment. The cure for discontentment. There is an answer to your discontented life, my Christian friend. There is an answer that helps you rise above the physical, the spiritual, the relational, the marital, the familial difficulties in life that let's you rise above all of that and manifest on a consistent way this kind of life that Paul is calling us to.

We see it in verse 16. Look at it with me. He said, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing," verse 14. "Instead of that, do this," he says in verse 16, "holding fast the word of life,

16 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.

Oh, this is sweet. This is really really good stuff from God's word, as if there was any part of God's word that wasn't good.

This verbal form that he uses, holding fast the word of life, it's from a verb that means this: maintain your hold on; keep holding onto something; keep your grip on something important. And so he says, "You can do all things without grumbling or disputing by holding onto what I'm about to tell you about. You keep your mind here. You wrap your mind around it and you stand firm and you go back and you repeat it again and again and again. You hold fast to the word of life. You hold fast to the Gospel," in other words. Remember we said in chapter 1, verse 27, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, he's talking about the Christian consequences of truth. Now he comes back and he tells them to hold fast to the word of life. What's Paul saying here? What is he saying? Well, remember everything that we've said about the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ, the spiritual consequences of what it means to be redeemed and what Christ has done for us, shedding his blood at the cross to wash away our sins, the holy Son of God voluntarily coming down to earth in order to give his life a ransom for many, the holy Son of God looking on you in your sin and guilt and saying, "It would please Me to forgive that one. Let Me fulfill justice on their behalf, fulfill righteousness on their behalf so that the justice of God falls down on Me and passes by them." That's what Christ has done for us and that's what we're to hold fast to. Paul is telling us to hold firmly to his teaching on Christ so that it will produce the spiritual fruit that he seeks in us. "Hold fast to what you've heard about Christ so that it will produce this result in your heart."

Now beloved, look, the Incarnation, the death, the resurrection of Christ, these things all have consequences for the way that we think about life. We see that the love of Christ for our souls, we see that the work that he has done for us is primary and supersedes everything else that could ever happen to us. He is good and he has been good to me. He has loved me and he gave himself up for me. "Well, hallelujah!" which simply means, "Praise the Lord, praise God for His goodness to an unworthy sinner like me. This fills my heart with joy. I have undeserved forgiveness. I have a home in heaven waiting for me. This world is passing away, it is temporary and Christ has secured my eternal good with His own life and blood and He's done that for me, unworthy, guilty, sinful me. He did that for me." What Paul is saying is hold onto that. In other words, never forget that. Remind yourself of that consistently day after day after day. Hold it fast in the midst of your difficult circumstances. Go back to that and drink from that fountain and let the fresh waters of the glory of Christ refresh your soul.

Now look at it again there in verse 16. There's a little phrase there that I want to emphasize for you. Verse 16, he says, "holding fast the word of life, so that," there's another purpose clause, "in the day of Christ." Paul is looking forward to the day of Christ, that day when Christ will return for his church and reward his disciples. He's saying, "Hold fast now so that in that future day there will be a good outcome for you, that Christ will reward you fully because you followed the command that I'm giving you here today," Paul says.

He's mentioned this day of Christ twice before already in this letter. Go back to chapter 1, verse 6. It's an important aspect, an important theme for him apparently. He says in chapter 1, verse 6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Verse 10, "I pray, that your love may abound so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."

Friends, look, this unlocks an awfully lot about the Christian life for you. We grumble and dispute with one another and grumble and dispute in our hearts because we're focused on today, and when we're focused on today, we've lost sight of the past work of Christ, and we've lost sight of the future reward that is going to be ours in him. We lose the context of everything that defines who we are. Christ saved us in keeping with the eternal plan of God. Christ is going to come again for us and receive us so that where he is we may be with him also, John 14. And this is to inform the way that we think about everything else.

You see, my friends, as you wrestle through and struggle through your difficult Christian life and the difficult circumstances of this world, understand this, remember this: God is preparing you for a purpose. God is fashioning you for something to come and you need to remember that. In the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, it's been a while since I've quoted the good doctor. Shame on me. In the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones he says this, "When Christ returns, you will stand before Him and receive your reward. You will enter into your inheritance, into that magnificent and amazing consummation, the day of Christ." Now look, if you weigh out the troubles of today that make you grumble and you compare them with the eternal unshakable kingdom that we are headed toward, that we will one day soon enough enter into, you realize that the weight of glory that is about to be revealed to us far outweighs the difficulties of today. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4 that today momentary light affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

Now I ask you, if you have those things properly balanced in your mind, how could you be anything other than a joyful Christian? Viewing this life in proper perspective, you know what, it stinks here today, but that's okay. Today is going to be gone. Eternity is going to be forever and I'm in Christ and I'm going to be with him and he's going to love me and reward me and I'm going to see him face-to-face, and so I'm just exploding with joy. Oh, these things are bad, so what? Joy, peace, glory is coming in the day of Christ for every true believer and that redefines the way that you think about life here today and that's how you put to death the grumbling and complaining spirit.

Paul says, look at it there in verse 16, "in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." Paul was the planter of the Philippian church. He was its apostolic seal. They were the fruit of his ministry and he tells them and he says, "I want to see you. I want to see you in that day crowned, rewarded, victorious in Christ. Christ affirming you. Christ blessing you and welcoming you into His kingdom." It's like, I'm not saying this is exactly what he's saying but Paul suggests a picture where he is somehow watching it happen. As Christ rewards the church, he sees

them being reward and he's full of joy in that coming day and he says, "My ministry wasn't in vain. God actually used me in them. I didn't run in vain. I didn't do all that toil, I didn't do all the suffering, it wasn't in vain. Look at the outcome." Paul says, "Do all things without grumbling and disputing. Hold fast the word of life so that you're blessed in that coming day, and that the joy of that day spills over to me as I see the fruit of my ministry being affirmed by the Lord Himself."

The context of these things is spectacular. Paul wants to see them at the judgment seat victorious but understand this, beloved, for that to happen they need to hold onto Christ. For it to happen with you, you need to hold onto Christ. We have a responsibility to talk to ourselves, to preach to ourselves, to remind ourselves of these truths again and again and again until our heart starts to settle in and respond to life like this rather than with grumbling or disputing. Let me remind you, chapter 2, verse 12, this doesn't happen passively. You have to actively work this into your mind. Verse 12, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." And so for that to happen, for that good result to come, you need to hold onto Christ. For that to happen, you need to remember the reward for which you're living.

This teaching is deeply humbling to me, and I imagine to most of you. Are we grumblers? Are we disputers? Well, if so let's just ask a couple of more questions that follow up obviously in response to that. So are we saying, then, that we've lost sight of Christ and we're not holding onto him as we should? Have we lost sight of our witness to the world? You know, if we're grumbling and complaining about the political process just like everybody else, I don't see what's distinct about us. I really don't. If that's what informs all of our conversation and consumes us, something's really really wrong. Have we lost sight of our eternal reward? How could we be, you know, in the language of the song that we sometimes sing, "Why should I be discouraged when Jesus is my portion? His eye is on the sparrow, I know He watches me." So where does this grumbling come back from?

So my friends, I want to call you, I want to ask you, I want to encourage you, in the authority of God's word I call you to this: come back from the brink of that, come back from the brink of that grumbling complaining life and renew your contentment in Christ. If you don't say it to anybody else, say it vertically to the Lord today repeatedly, "Lord, I am satisfied with Christ. I believe in His redemptive work for me. I believe that I am in Him. I know the Spirit indwells me. That's enough. Lord, I know that You've prepared a place for me and soon enough I'll be with You in glory. That's enough. That's enough for me to be content even as I walk through a dark and discouraging world. I'm going to keep holding onto that, Lord, and I ask You to forgive me for having lost sight of such glorious truths and being preoccupied with the life that's in front of my face."

Well, fourth of all, finally here let's look at the champion of contentment. The champion of contentment and time is not our friend any longer. Paul having laid those things out for them, Paul realistically looks back at his own life, looks at his own circumstances and he models contentment. Remember, he's in prison as he writes this. At the time that he's saying these things, he doesn't know if he might be executed really soon for his testimony

to Christ. So he's in prison, he does not have freedom, he's got a Roman soldier chained to him. He can't be out circulating the Gospel like he wants to. His life is threatened. He's in real danger as he writes these things and look at what he says. He's content. Verse 17 he says,

17 ... 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.

The drink offering was wine that was poured out to God in connection with the ceremony of an animal sacrifice. It was part of an act of worship, in other words. These Philippians had sacrifice for Paul in his ministry. He wrote in part to thank them for their support and he's saying this, he says, "Even if I'm going to be martyred soon, even if my own blood is spilled, I want you to know that I'm rejoicing. My martyrdom would simply be an addition to the sacrifice of worship that you yourselves have made and we'll just all join together and offer this one collective act of worship to God. If I am martyred," and he says, "even if that's what's going to happen, I'm not sure, even if that's what happens, I rejoice. I'm content. I'm satisfied. I'm filled with gladness. My life is of no account in comparison to those other things." Paul says, "If you will serve Christ well in the way that I'm speaking of here, I can die happy. I can die content. I can lose my life and I'll just have joy as I do because I'll see you walking in the spirit and in the truth." That would be the climax of his ministry if they responded in obedience to what he's saying now.

And so to clench his call for humble service, he asks for mutuality. Verse 18, he says,

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

Paul says, "I'm in adversity but I'm rejoicing. You're in adversity, you rejoice too. Just like I am, you do the same and it will spill over and we'll be a mutual joy and encouragement to one another."

And so, my friends, I ask you this: do these words come to a frustrated, unhappy Christian today? We weep with those who weep and we feel the sorrow of those who sorrow but what this text tells us is that the present sorrow does not have to be what defines your life now. You can hold fast to the Gospel. Christ is transcendent over the sorrow you feel. The future reward will swallow up in glory the things that seem to diminish it now. Christ and future glory give us what we need to change course and to do all things without grumbling or disputing. Will you do that? Will you remember Christ that way?

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how wonderfully practical the word of God is. Help us all. Help these brothers and sisters in Christ to do all things without grumbling or disputing. Help them to hold fast to Christ and to future glory knowing that that transcends anything in this passing world. Father, I pray for those that are unsaved apart from Christ here today.

Father, their whole heart is oriented against You. I pray that Your Spirit would be gracious to them. Give them life and bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ that they might be saved. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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