



Without Grumbling

Sometimes a passage of Scripture may hit us right between the eyes, and when it does we must humbly accept what the Spirit is telling us. For me, this is one of those passages because it's something I often struggle with.

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. [Philippians 2:14-16](#) NASB

The apostle Paul had just finished a beautiful dissertation on Christ's humility and obedience to the Father ([Phil 2:5-11](#)) and followed this with several appeals to believers. He began with the call to fully obey God and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling ([Phil 2:12-13](#)). And now he demands that believers ***do all things without grumbling or disputing***. We find a couple of important takeaways in this passage.

The first is to ***do all things***. Yep, *all things*. Paul didn't leave any wiggle room for excuses (Scripture never does). No matter how much we might want to justify that darn-good reason for grumbling, murmuring, or quarreling, we really have none as far as God's word is concerned. Everything we say must be filtered through a prayerfully-tuned spiritual filter.

As I allow this reality to settle into my spirit, I'm personally convicted. It is far too easy to gripe and complain about things I don't like or to criticize the actions of others I disagree with. The truth is that as Christians we need to be very careful here and beg the Lord to help us catch ourselves before we allow our tongue to get away from us. The apostle James, Jesus's half-brother, spoke at length about the danger of misplaced words in his epistle (see [James 1:26](#) and [3:1-12](#)).

Why? Paul goes on to say, ***“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.”*** As believers, we are children of God, adopted into His family through the saving work and propitiation of Christ our Savior (cf: [Eph 2:11-22](#)). We are now held to a high standard of behavior and must walk in a manner worthy of our calling (cf: [Phil 1:27](#), [Eph 4:1-6](#)). We represent Christ and the Father as ambassadors to the world, therefore our actions must always speak louder than our words, and our words must match our testimony, especially as we interact with the unsaved in a ***crooked and perverse generation***.



Paul reminds us that we ***appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life***. This echoes what our Lord said in [Matthew 5:14-16](#): ***“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor 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. 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.”*** As we have seen time and time again in our studies, our purpose on earth is to glorify God. When we walk and talk in such a way that we shine as bright lights in the world, others see that and ultimately give glory to the Father. If nothing else, this should be enough motivation to double-check our tongue before complaining or grumbling about our circumstances. We must ask ourselves, “is what I’m about to say going to bring the Father glory or take it away from Him?”

Finally, Paul reminds the Philippian believers of his personal investment in them (and in a way all who read and hear his epistle) by saying, ***“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 a minister of God’s Word, an apostle of Christ called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and as one who suffered greatly for ministry work, Paul wanted his work to bear fruit for the kingdom of God. The apostle deeply cared for and loved the church in Philippi and it is apparent they loved him just as much (cf: [Phil 1:3-8](#), [4:1](#), [4:16](#)). This reminder was an exhortation to keep up the active, thriving faith he instructed them in, not only for their own sake, but for his own.

As we consider our role and responsibility as Christians, let’s take a few quiet minutes with the Lord today to reflect on this passage with a humble and penitent heart. Do we need a little (or a lot) of work in controlling our grumbling or quarreling? Maybe we need to be more intentional in considering how our words and actions outwardly reflect the work of the Spirit in our lives. Or maybe it’s just making a more concerted and purposeful effort to use every moment to shine as a light into the world and bring God the glory He deserves. I’m sure if we submit our minds and hearts to the Spirit’s leading, the Lord will make it clear.

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