

## **You Can't Shine if You Whine.**

**Series: J.O.Y. Jesus, Others, and You - #4  
A Study of the Book of Philippians**

**Text: Philippians 2:12-18**

**Introduction:** If you learn anything from the book of Philippians ... you learn the difference between happiness and joy. You can have joy without happiness, and you can have happiness without joy. Happiness comes from what happens to you! That's why sometimes you're happy and sometimes you're not. When circumstances are pleasant, you're happy. When circumstances are not enjoyable, you're unhappy and up and down we go – the rollercoaster ride of feelings.

But not so with joy, because joy is an inside job. And Paul wanted the church at Philippi to learn **the secret to continual joy!**

Let's continue today with Philippians 2, verses 12 – 18 for message #4 in our J.O.Y. series, a study on Philippians.

***“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13for it is God who works in you to will and to act to fulfill His good purpose.***

***14Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.”***  
***(Philippians 2:12-18, NIV)***

**Let's PRAY**

**Title of today's message is: YOU CAN'T SHINE IF YOU WHINE.**

Verse 14 says, ***"Do everything without grumbling or arguing..."***

How is that going for everybody? That's an amazing request... ***Do everything without grumbling.***

King James version says, ***“Do all things without murmurings and disputings.”***

That's an interesting word: murmuring! In the Greek it's ***“goggusmos.”*** It doesn't describe a loud noise ... but rather a quiet noise. Murmuring takes place privately for just a few to hear. This word was used to describe the cooing of a dove. That noise can only be heard when you're close in!

The children of Israel were known for their murmuring. In 1 Corinthians 10.10, Paul says, ***“nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”*** Verse 11 goes on to say, ***“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”***

"Murmuring Christian" is an oxymoron...a contradiction of terms! To say, "murmuring Christian" is like saying "clean dirt" or "dry water."

Just so you know, murmurings don't begin in the mouth, they begin in the heart! The murmurer has a heart murmur that comes out through his mouth! And if the murmuring continues, it results in disputing! What starts out quietly soon becomes public complaining and it results in breaking fellowship with God and with each other!

**STORY:** A monk entered a monastery in which he agreed to take a vow of silence. He could only speak two words every year. After the first year he was brought before the leader. He said, ***“bed hard”***. A year later he was brought before the leader again. He said, ***“food bad”***. The next year his two words to the leader were, ***“I quit”***. The leader said, "Well it doesn't surprise me. You haven't done anything but complain for the last 3 years."

One of the most unbecoming things a Christian can be is a chronic complainer, always finding fault, never contented, never happy.

## **A. COMMON TYPES OF COMPLAINERS** – (adapted from Muriel Solomon's book: *Working with Difficult People*)

- **Whiners** - This person starts every day with negative complaints. Morning is their time to rise and whine. They love to wallow in feelings of self-pity because of the perception that everyone else gets breaks in life.
- **Martyrs** - These individuals let everyone know how much they are suffering, stressed out or struggling.
- **Cynics** - Sarcasm is their favorite way to communicate. Often, they complain that nothing will ever change so they enjoy telling others, "Why should we even try?"
- **Perfectionists** - These individuals are extremely hard to please. No matter what other people do to try to make them happy, they are never satisfied. Perfectionistic parents usually say to their children, "Can't you do it any better than that?"
- **Arguers** - These individuals love to verbally joust with those around them.
- **Dominators** - By positioning themselves in places of authority, dominators are obsessed with controlling the affairs of peoples' lives.
- **Apathetic** - Apathetic people are often lazy, complacent, and led more by fear than by faith in God, His word, or the promises of scripture.
- **Over-Reactors** - These people tend to exaggerate their difficulties or their successes. Seldom are these individuals willing to face up to the fact that hardships are not as bad as they seem or as difficult as they might appear.
- **Legalists** - These people try to find their security in close attention to the finest aspects of rules, regulations, and policies.
- **Spiritualists** - Many well-meaning people find themselves failing to own up to their own responsibilities because they over-spiritualize situations.

- **Traditionalists** - are not happy with the present because they prefer the way things were done in “the good ol’ days.”
- **Immature** - These individuals refuse to grow up in faith, love, wisdom, knowledge, emotionally, socially, spiritually, or financially, and often refuse to take responsibility for their present predicaments.
- **Simpletons** - These individuals tend to see things merely in black and white, instead of considering all the complexities of every situation.
- **Cliquish** - These individuals prefer the company, opinions, and interactions only of their clique, and refuse to look beyond the boundaries of their prejudices.
- **Tyrants** These people treat others in a high-handed, arrogant, and condescending manner. Often, they are harsh, dictatorial and demanding.
- **Bullies** These folks are habitually cruel and enjoy making others fear them. By threatening others, they feel a sense of power.
- **Time Bombs** These individuals have a difficult time keeping control of their anger. They often erupt with temper tantrums that scare people.
- **Rumor Mongers** These folks tend to spread rumors in ways that give them the delight of sharing special information about others.
- **Condescenders** These individuals patronize and talk down to people.
- **Left-handed complementors** These individuals start by praising others but end up qualifying their kind remarks with subtle put-downs.
- **Yakitty-Yakkers** These folks make a habit out of troubling others with idle, excessive chatter that usually interferes with their responsibilities.
- **One-Uppers** These individuals feel a need to top whatever others say and do by saying out something better.

- **Super-Sensitives** These individuals are extremely touchy and take every comment as a personal insult.
- **Wet Blankets** These people are very negative and make a habit of throwing cold water on every idea.
- **Blame-Shifters** These people blame others for their own blunders, misperceptions, and selfish desires.

**(complaints go up – Saving Private Ryan, the Psalms)**

Let's start with the word **EVERYTHING**. Do you think Paul really meant that, "Do *everything* without grumbling"? Could he have been serious? Is this a suggestion or a command. Is it even possible to do that?

What would it be like for you to take obeying that seriously? What would it be like to have a *grumble-free* day? What if tomorrow was *no-complaint* day?

Are y'all getting excited about this so far? Tomorrow, when the alarm goes off, no grumbling. When you look at the first person you see tomorrow, no grumbling. When you look in the mirror tomorrow, no grumbling.

**STORY:** One man asked his friend one day at breakfast, do you ever wake up grumpy? He said, "No, I let her sleep."

When you get in the car and drive, no matter what your car is like, or what the traffic is like, or if you get on the bus, or you walk, or when you go to work, all day, if you're at your desk at school, or when you're at home, or when you eat, whatever it is you eat, when you get on a scale, whatever numbers you are looking at, when you face a cranky person tomorrow, when difficult trials come (and they will), when your computer takes forever to boot up, God forbid you wait 15 or 20 seconds until a universe of knowledge is at your fingertips, no grumbling.

When your cell phone coverage is spotty for a few seconds, oh what a burden that is to bear. No grumbling. When you can't find the remote control, probably because the kids lost it, or your wife hid it, and you must walk all the way over to the television set like people used to in the old days and turn it on manually and

then walk all the way back over to the recliner to watch again. What if tomorrow, you just had one day without grumbling? Paul says, "***Do everything...***"

**B. What is grumbling?** It doesn't mean you never confront or admonish. That can be done out of love.

**Grumbling is the reflection of a spirit of ingratitude.** Grumbling is a way to rationalize my disobedience to God. Grumbling chokes the heart, clouds my vision, cuts me off from joy, and then in a community (in a marriage, a friendship, a family, a workplace, or a church), grumbling is toxic.

It's relational cancer. It's contagious. In fact, in the Old Testament book of Numbers, 11 different times, it tells us that the people of Israel who had been delivered from slavery by God were guilty of grumbling. Instead of being grateful to God because he freed them after 400 years, of oppression, injustice, and slavery, they grumble about not getting the food they want or not getting the comfort they want.

Ingratitude, in the Bible, is sin, and God takes it quite seriously. Paul says about humanity apart from God, "***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***" (Romans 1:21, NIV)

**Where thinking is futile and foolish hearts are darkened, ingratitude is the result.**

When Paul says, "Do everything without grumbling," he does not mean...go through life with a negative, complaining, grumbling spirit, **but just don't talk about it.** He's not saying that.

Most scholars agree that Paul is drawing a correlation in these verses between Israel and the Church. Israel was redeemed by God to be a "***light unto the nations***". The church was redeemed and called to be the "***light of the world***".

Israel's greatest downfall was that of constant complaining. "We're tired of manna; we want meat. We're thirsty. God has brought us out here to die." Finally, one day God sent fire from heaven to consume the complainers.

**C. What Causes Complaining?**

1. **Rebellion-Disobedience...** Israel didn't want to do what God told them to do...so they began to complain...perhaps they were hoping that if they complained long enough, God would change his plans.
2. **Complaining is often a reaction to tough circumstances.** We look at the circumstances...and we complain. We take our eyes off God. We forget who is in control, and we begin to murmur, grumble, gripe if you will. And before long....we're not just complaining about what originally set us off...but we're complaining about everything.
3. **Complaining often has as its root cause...UNBELIEF.** Let's face it, murmuring, and complaining shows ingratitude, and forgetfulness for all that God has done for us in the past and promises us in the future.

**When we constantly complain, we are saying, "God your provision is not good enough. Your plan is not working. Your grace is not sufficient."**

## **D. What are the Results of Complaining?**

1. **Complaining is Contagious.**
2. **Complaining is often Contentious.** In Deut. 1 the murmuring, and complaining led to division, and dissension among the children of Israel.
3. **Complaining is Costly.** Israel became discouraged and defeated...and they missed out on the Promised Land. How many blessings do we miss out on because we gripe and complain?

**There are three kinds of people in life: accusers, excusers, and choosers.**

**Accusers** are always going around saying "It's your fault." When Adam sinned, he took it like a man and blamed his wife, "Eve did it," and then he blamed God, "You gave me that woman."

**Excusers** say "I'm a product of my environment. It's not really my fault."

The people that are successful in life are neither accusers nor excusers. They are **choosers**. They accept responsibility for their own decisions.

## **Whenever we are complaining, we are usually being ungrateful, and challenging God on three things:**

1. I'm questioning ***God's wisdom***. "Do You really know what You're doing? Do You see what's going on? My life seems to be worse, not better"
2. I'm doubting ***God's care***. "Do You really love me? Really care for me?"
3. I'm forgetting ***God's goodness***. I'm focusing on what I don't have rather than focusing on what I do have. I'm being ungrateful.

### **E. Complaining isn't just a bad habit; it's a sin.**

#### **So how do we overcome it?**

**Illustration:** A Kentucky family took a vacation to New York City. The family arrived at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, there the father took his son into hotel in hopes of securing a room; they were amazed by everything they saw, from the rich interior to the bright chandeliers. At the far end of the lobby, they noticed beautiful doors, that opened sideways, this really piqued their curiosity. The boy asked, "Paw what is that?" The father responded, "Son I have never seen anything like this in my life, I don't know what it is!"

While the boy and his father were watching in wide-eyed astonishment, an old lady in a wheelchair rolled up to the doors and pressed a button. The doors opened and the lady rolled between them into a small room. The doors closed and the boy and his father watched small circles of lights above the walls light up. They continued to watch the circles light up and then down in the reverse direction. The doors opened again, and a beautiful 24-year-old woman stepped out. The father turned to his son and said, "Boy, go get your Maw!"

If only change was that easy – just step in a room, close the door and in a few minutes, you are transformed. **How do we overcome it:**



**1. The way to do everything without grumbling is by having a grateful heart.**

To overcome complaining we must begin to trust God, whose intentions are always good, whose grace is always sufficient, and whose promises never fail.

Nobody just drifts into gratitude. We all tend to think, "I'll be grateful to the extent that I receive things in my life to be grateful about. The better things I have, the more grateful I'll become."

If I get my wishes gratified and my desires fulfilled, then I will be grateful." Now, if you're a parent, did you ever try to raise a child by that formula? "Honey, I want you to be grateful, so I will gratify every desire you have. What do we call a child raised that way? *Spoiled.*

**2. Increased gratitude does not come from increased gratification.**

Paul goes on to say, "*Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God...without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life...*"

In other words, gratitude is not a matter of the circumstances I inhabit; it's a matter of the person I become. It's not about the stuff I get; it's about the character I develop. This brings us to one of the great paradoxes of gratitude.

**3. People who have the least, who have been in circumstances of great want or need, experience gratitude the most.**

**Illustration:** A guy named Shawn Achor is a leading researcher in this whole field of happiness studies. He was invited to present some of his findings in South Africa, in the township of Soweto.

He was at a school in the area. No electricity, virtually no running water, dire poverty. It occurred to him that telling students about privileged American students would not connect with these impoverished students in Soweto.

He decided he would try to bond with them over something universal, the dislike students have of homework. He started with a rhetorical question. "How many of you like to do schoolwork." Immediately 95 percent of them raised their hands and said; "Yeah, it's cool that we get to do that?"

These poor students experience homework as an incredible gift. "I get to learn. I get to read. I get to discover. I get to find out. I get to write papers. I get to be tested on all this stuff to find out what I've learned. I'm so glad." "How do you feel about schoolwork?" Privileged kids grumble, poor kids are grateful."

There is a correlation between how old you are and how grateful you are. The older you are, the more grateful you are. That's kind of weird, isn't it?

The more wrinkled your skin, the more gray hairs you have, the worse your vision, the flabbier you're getting, the more body parts that don't work anymore, the more your heart is filled with gratitude.

People who make less money many times experience more gratitude than people who make more money. That doesn't make any sense. It ought to be for every dollar that comes in, the more grateful you become.

I just want to say to those of you who struggle with disability or illness or pain or care for people who do, you are so often those Paul talked about, those who shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life by what you do and by how you care. You teach us about gratitude.

Why can two people sit in the same circumstances...same job, same school, same line, same worship...one of them is filled with gratitude and the other one filled with grumbling? Why?

#### **4. What some people perceive as a right, other people see as a gift.**

For me to be grateful, I must see what I'm getting as a gift I did not deserve. If I think I'm entitled to something, I don't usually experience gratitude for it.

Gratitude means I perceive something good coming into my life, and I'm grateful to the person who gave it to me; it's a gift I did not deserve.

When I'm grateful, I recognize that I have received something to which I was not entitled. When I get it the first time, I'm grateful. When I get it the second time, I take it for granted. When I get it the third time, I feel like I am entitled to it, and I get mad and feel like my rights have been violated if I don't get it.

**STORY:** One of the amazing stories about gratitude in the New Testament is in the gospel of Luke. Ten lepers see Jesus. They cry out from a distance. They have no

life. They're in quarantine. "Jesus have mercy." "When Jesus saw them, He said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'"

Now, I'll tell you what. I'll guarantee you. If you stopped any of those other nine guys after they were given their life back and were cleansed of their leprosy, they could rejoin their families and would have a future, if you stopped them and asked them, "Are you grateful for what just happened to you?" they would all say, "Are you kidding, YES!" But only one of them thanked Jesus.

There is an enormous difference between ***feeling gratitude*** and ***expressing gratitude***. Nobody thinks they're guilty of ingratitude, but the truth is **that people in your life interpret unexpressed gratitude as ingratitude.**"

Ten guys get healed; one guy comes back. He's a Samaritan. That's not a coincidence. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. This guy knows, "I didn't deserve this." "By all rights, Jesus should have passed me by, but He didn't. He healed me as if I was one of His own. I can't keep going on with my life. I must stop. I can't let another moment go by. Thank you, Jesus!"

**We're not supposed to whine, we're supposed to shine.**

Listen to this great description by Jeff Manion: "The heart drifts toward complaint as if by gravitational pull--after all, complaint seems a reasonable response to a sequence of disappointing events. Generally, you don't have to extend an invitation for complaint to show up. It arrives as an uninvited guest. You return home from yet another frustrating day to discover that complaint has moved into your guest room, unpacked its luggage, started a load of laundry, and is rooting through your fridge. Even as you seek to dislodge complaint--as you move its bags to the curb and change the locks--it crawls back through the guest room window. Complaint resists eviction. Before we know it, complaint feels right because it is familiar. With every struggle, we become the Israelites murmuring in the desert.' When a church is grateful and gracious, it glows for the gospel. When you're grateful and gracious, instead of complaining or squabbling, you shine like stars

holding out the word of life. When you live in harmony and humility, you glow for the gospel like bright stars on a dark night.

A grateful and gracious church not only glows for the gospel, but it also guarantees gladness, and produces joy all around. The absence of complaining and squabbling, the awareness that we are God's children, and the evidence of God's life bring joy to everyone.

The good news is that God himself is working in us, in order that we can work it out among ourselves. He's puts in us the desire and ability to live in harmony and humility, without grumbling and complaining.

### **Key Take-away - Work out what God is working in.**

How Paul begins this section of his letter in verses 12–13, is how I want to end. He starts off by saying: Translate into reality what God is already doing in your heart. Work out what God is working in. Notice his words: he doesn't tell them to ***work for*** their salvation. He doesn't say: ***Work on*** your salvation. He says, "***Work out the salvation that is in you.***"

That verb "work out" was used in Paul's day to describe a miner who would work in the ore mine getting all the valuable ore out that was in it! The verb "work out" literally means "to work to full completion."

We don't work for our salvation. You don't do something to please God so that He will save you. Your salvation is a gift that comes to you freely when you trust in Jesus' death and resurrection. The only way you could ever be saved is for Jesus to step in with his sinless life and pay the penalty for your sin.

But once you have your salvation, you must live it out. You work out the salvation that is inside you. God will help you do everything he wants you to do. You'll find you have a desire to do it; God gave you that desire. And you'll sense you can do it; God put that ability there. That's what Paul means when he says in verse 13, "***it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.***" God works in us to will and to act toward the good purpose He has for us.

As we continue working out what he's working in, as we do all things without complaining and squabbling, we'll continue to shine like stars in a dark world, showing His life to others and bringing joy to ourselves. A grateful and gracious church glows for the gospel and guarantees gladness.

**Illustration:** Arthur Brooks tells about how Beethoven lost his hearing in the latter part of his life. But what many people don't know is that after he lost his hearing completely, is when he composed his best music, including the Ninth Symphony, which many regard as the greatest piece of orchestral music ever written. So how could that be?

Well, in the article, Brooks says that Beethoven's early work was like the work of other composers, he would hear them, and maybe subconsciously imitate their sound. But then he couldn't hear them anymore. And I love this quote:

**"Deafness freed Beethoven as a composer because he no longer had society's soundtrack in his ears."**

Think about this: maybe one of the reasons Paul could write so powerfully from prison was that he no longer had society's soundtrack in his ears. He was all alone with the word of God, and the Spirit of God. And that freed him to write with such clarity and such timelessness that we're still reading today.

So, whatever it takes for you to get society's soundtrack out of your ears, so you can hold firmly to the Word of Life, do it.

You can pray these words to God right now. "God, thank you for waking me up this morning because you didn't have to. Thank you that the four walls of my room were not the four walls of my casket. Thank you that when I got out of bed, there was food in the kitchen, clothes in the closet, water when I turned on the faucet.

Thank you that my body still mostly works. Thank you that outside, the sun came up yet again, and the birds were still singing, and the trees were still growing, and the mountains still look magnificent."

"Thank you, God, for doctors and nurses and medicine. Thank you for teachers who taught me and farmers who grow stuff and people who fix things and write things and clean things. Thank you for this church, for the Bible I can learn from,

for the Spirit who guides me, for the cross that blesses me with mercy, for the work I get to do that has meaning.

Thank you that when my last day comes and I step into eternity, Jesus will be there, and my real life will be just beginning.”

**Listen church:** Do everything without grumbling. It's the great command we've all violated, and offended God. Say "Thank you," for gifts we don't deserve.

Don't just express gratitude to God. Remember, Paul starts this letter, "I thank my God every time I remember you." Thank God and the people around you.

When this service is done, when you get in the car, guys, look her in the eye, touch her on the arm, and tell her, "Thank you." Fill that sentence however you want. I know you're thinking, "If I do it today, she'll say, 'You're only doing it because it was in the sermon, but if I wait, she will think it was my idea.'" No, she'll know. Don't wait.