

January 26, 2014 by Steve Brandon



Don't Whine; But Shine!

Philippians 2:14-16a

1. Don't Whine (verse 14)

2. But Shine! (verses 15-16a)

One of the most distinguishing marks of Christians is their love. God has loved us with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). We love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

In other words, our love for one another in this church ought to serve as a demonstration to those outside this church of the fact that we are indeed disciples of Jesus Christ. Such was obvious in the early church, when, "all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need" (Acts 2:44-45). A hundred and fifty years later, Tertullian, the church historian, spoke of how the Romans took notice of the Christians. "'See,' they say, 'how they love one another,' for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; 'how they are ready even to die for one another,' for they themselves will sooner be put to death." ^[1] And when the outside world looks at Rock Valley Bible Church, our love for one another should tell them that we are followers of Christ.

This is well-known to those who know their Bibles. But, did you know that there is another characteristic of Christians that ought to be just as obvious to the watching world that we are followers of Christ? It's found in our text this morning.

Turn in your Bibles to Philippians, chapter 2, beginning at verse 14. As I read these verses for you, I want for you to look first for the distinguishing mark of Christians, and, second, how it communicates to the world that we are followers of Christ.

Philippians 2:14-16a

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.

Do you see it? Verse 14 calls us to "do all things without grumbling or disputing." The New King James says to "Do all things without complaining and disputing." The NIV says, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing."

It's a clear command. Paul is calling those in Philippi not to complain or gripe or moan or bellyache or argue or dispute with one another. And Paul gives a reason for his command. In comes in verse 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," (Phil 2:15).

In other words, as you don't complain, you will demonstrate how different you are than the world, who loves to complain and argue and dispute about everything that doesn't go their way. And thus, you will shine as lights in the world.

Last Sunday evening we were talking about this in our small group. We were going through our five questions. What's the big idea of the text? How would the original recipients hear it? Where is Christ? What is surprising about the text? How can we apply the text?

And as we were talking about the first question, Michelle S. brought up two words that form the basis of my title and outline this morning. She pulled out of verse 14 the word, "whine." She pulled out of verse 15 the word, "shine." She said something like this: "We aren't supposed to whine. But, we are supposed to shine." And so, I give her full credit for the title of my message this morning: "Don't Whine; But Shine!" These are the two points of my message as well.

1. Don't Whine (verse 14)

2. But Shine! (verses 15-16a)

So, let's look at our first point, ...

1. Don't Whine (verse 14)

Notice how exhaustive this command is. Verse 14 reads, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." There is no wiggle room in these words. It doesn't say, "Do many things without grumbling." It doesn't say, "Do most things without grumbling." It doesn't say, "Have a reputation of one who rarely grumbles." No, it says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." That's a pretty high call. Because, quite frankly, we live in a world full of complaints. It is easy to find fault.

This week, I went to the Belvidere Oasis on I-90 to swap out my iPass for a new one. My old one had reached the end of its life. And as I approached the front counter, I noticed a little sign on the back counter, which read, "Yesterday was the deadline for all complaints." I said to the guy helping me, "Hey, I like your sign." Quickly he responded back, "It doesn't work."

It's so true. Complaining is prevalent in our world. You don't have to think, but for a moment and you can find some things to complain about. You can complain about the weather. You can complain about the government. You can complain about the music on the radio. You can complain about the noise of your neighbor's snow blower. You can complain about the food that is served you at a restaurant. You can complain about the hair that your daughter leaves in the sink each morning. You can complain about the advertisements on television. You can complain about color of the carpet. You can complain about the lousy service at the library. You can complain about the high prices of gasoline. You can complain about how your body hurts. You can complain about the hot. You can complain about the cold. You can complain about the sun. You can complain about the clouds. You can complain about the humidity. You can complain about the dryness.

And here's what I find amazing about our complaining. It doesn't matter how good we have it. We will still be prone to complain. The richest billionaire will complain that his private helicopter was 5 minutes late in arriving for his meeting. The richest billionaire will complain about the scratch on his Rolls Royce. These things may be inconceivable to us. You have a helicopter! You have a Rolls Royce!

But, it's just a matter of degrees. Do you think that the woman working in the tea gardens in India (making a dollar a day) is complaining about the lack of playing time that the coach of your child's little league team is giving her child? Do you think that the guy living in the slums of Nairobi is complaining about the mess left around the house? Do you think that the hungry child in Sudan is complaining about not wanting to eat his vegetables? It's all about perspective.

Again, I want to read for you a little lesson out of the book that I'm working on getting into final form for all of you to read. The lesson that I want to read for you is entitled, "Lessons from a Little Girl" (on page 4).

My sister and her husband have been foster parents to several children. One of them was a five-year-old girl. One day, this little girl was hungry and approached my sister as she was preparing dinner. She asked my sister for something to eat. My sister told her, "No, you can't have anything now, because it's almost dinner time."

Being hungry, this little girl blurted out, "You don't care for me!" and began to pout and cry.

Immediately, my sister began to think of all the ways that this simply wasn't true. "What do you mean? We have taken you into our home. We have clothed you and fed you and provided medical care for you. We have included you in our family, taken you on vacation, and extended our love toward you. If that's not love, then what is?"

As the words left my sister's mouth, they echoed right back into her own heart.

She said to me, "At that moment I realized that I so often respond this way to God. He has done so much for me, and yet I often complain of His lack of care for me." May we all learn this lesson from this little girl and be aware of all the great blessings of God in our lives. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). [\[2\]](#)

And as Christians, God's call upon our lives is to live a complaint-free, grumbling-free, disputing-free, arguing-free, whining-free life.

If your family is anything like my family, you know that whining is a problem. In fact, many years ago, we heard a radio program that gave us hope for a whine-free home. The radio show began with a silly song about whining, "Say Goodbye To Whining."

Intrigued by the song, we listened to the program, and we ordered the book, "Whining Will." It tells the story of a little boy who has a problem with whining. I pick up the story in the middle of the book.

Will was really thirsty. "Mooommyyyy, I want some juuuuuuuuuuice!" Will whined.

"Sweetheart," said Mom, bending down to meet Will's eyes. "Are you asking for juice with self-control?"

Will folded his arms. "But I'm really thirrstyyyyyyy!"

"Will, honey, God wants you to have self-control, even with your voice," Mom explained. "I will never give you what you want when you whine."

Mom lifted Will into her arms. "Will, I love you too much to allow you to speak foolishly. I'm going to help you learn to speak the right way."

You may wear the No Whine Watch," Mom said, as she helped Will fasten it on his wrist. "When the buzzer goes off in three minutes, you may come back and ask for juice with your self-controlled voice," Mom explained. [\[3\]](#)

And so, off Will went and sat on the couch for the three long minutes to pass. When the alarm sounded on his watch, he returned as asked for a drink of water. And his mother gave him one to quench his thirst. Will had learned self-control, and Mom was happy.

What a great model of how to deal with whining! We were so impressed with the radio show that day, that we went ahead and ordered a No

Whine Watch. In fact, you can still purchase one. [\[4\]](#)

If this is where your family is today, I would encourage you to purchase a watch and start along the path of teaching your children not to whine. Don't ever respond to a whining voice, but make them wait. And make them ask with a regular voice. When we did this with our children, it truly helped.

But, alas, it hasn't solved the problem of whining and complaining in our home. Last night at the dinner table, my question to the family was this: "What are some things that you complain about?" And the list was long! Each and every one of us had things that we complained about.

And I trust that you all have a similar experience in your home as well. And this is not something that we should take lightly. Do you remember our text last week? Verses 12 and 13?

Philippians 2:12-13

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

I spoke last week of how we need to labor long and hard in our sanctification. We should work "with fear and trembling," knowing that ultimately, it is a work of the Lord. And this week comes with some very practical sins to overcome -- the sin of complaining and the sin of disputing. And as I thought about verse 14 in light of verses 12 and 13, I was surprised. Why, of anything that Paul could say, why would he mention whining?

As I think about ways to counsel you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, I think about things like this: seek the Lord; seek His ways; read His word; pray and obey. Grumbling and complaining doesn't readily come to my mind. So, why would Paul mention whining as one of the first practical ways to pursue our sanctification?

Well, in some measure, I believe that it has to do with the context. These verses all have their origin back in chapter 1 and verse 27.

Philippians 1:27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of 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;

This continued right until chapter 2 and verse 2, ...

Philippians 2:2

make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

The great context of Philippians is all about unity in the church. And nothing destroys the unity of the church like grumbling and disputing.

Let's talk about what these words mean. The word for "grumbling" comes from the Greek Word, *gogguzw* (*gonguzo*) which is an onomatopoeic word. That is, it sound like its meaning. "*Gonguzo*" sounds like a guttural muttering and murmuring. Indeed, in fact, that's what it means. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses a form of this word to describe the murmuring of the people of Israel after they came out of the land of Egypt.

You remember how the Lord rescued them with a mighty hand, pouring out the plagues upon the Egyptians. And when they passed through the Red Sea and the Egyptians were swallowed up, they sang this great song of rejoicing! "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and rider He has hurled into the sea" (Exodus 15:1).

From the best I can tell, within the week (in Exodus 22), they were in the wilderness and found no water. All they found were the bitter waters of Marah. And we read in Exodus 15:24, "So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" And so God sweetened the water for them to drink. Soon afterwards, they found themselves hungry. In Exodus 16, we read, "The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:2-3).

And so God provided them Manna to eat -- a fine flake-like substance (Exodus 16:14). Soon afterwards, the Israelites find themselves in a similar circumstance. They were without water. Rather than trusting in the LORD to provide, as He had done time and time and time again, "they grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'" (Exodus 17:3). And so, God provided water from the rock.

But, rather than continuing to rejoice in the LORD, the people of Israel, they murmured and grumbled and complained. Not only was this dishonoring to the LORD, but it also created a disunity and a discontentment within Israel. You can see and feel the disunity that was created when others began to murmur and complain against the leadership of Moses.

That's the first word, grumbling, murmuring, complaining, expressing discontent. The second word, "disputing," is the Greek word, *dialogismoV* (*dialogismos*). The main idea of this word is a "thinking or reasoning." Depending upon the context, this can be a good thing. When Mary was greeted by the angel, she "kept pondering what kind of salutation this was" (Luke 1:29). She kept thinking about it. When

John the Baptist came on the scene, the people were "wondering in their hearts about John as to whether he was the Christ" (Luke 3:15). They were thinking and pondering and trying to figure him out. So, this word isn't always describing a sin.

However, most of its usages describe it as a bad thing. Jesus said, out of the heart come "evil thoughts" (Matthew 15:19). Romans 1:21 says, "Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations--their thinking."

And here in Philippians 2:14, "thinking or reasoning" has to do with the critical thinking of people that doubts in the minds of others. That's why the ESV originally translated this word, "Questioning" (in 2001 and 2005 editions).

Here's how this works in the congregation. There's something that's being done, or there's something that's not being done. And someone disagrees with it. And so, they ponder it over in their mind. And then, they begin to share it with some others who hadn't really thought about it very much. But this mention puts some questions into their minds. And they too, begin thinking about it. And yeah, something doesn't seem quite right to them either. And so, this questioning and doubting begins to spread throughout the entire congregation. Pretty soon, disunity develops. And God hates it.

Now, that's not to say that you ought to follow the leaders of the church blindly so that we all drink the Kool-Aid together. And there is certainly room for asking questions about what's going on. But, often those who are involved in these sorts of thoughts, spread them, and have no interest in being a part of the solution. I have seen it many times as a pastor. People have come and spoken with me about some concern in the church. I welcome the discussion. Many times they are right. But, then, when I try to engage them in the solution, they want nothing of it. They are merely interested in pointing out the trouble.

I received an email recently from a pastor, who was talking about problems in the church. His email sheds some light on the effects of questioning in the church. He said, ...

I think one of the most traumatic injuries to the Body of Christ has been the infusion of democratic ideals into the local church. Few people see it as a congregation of believers that are to function as a body that reflects the Larger Body. Consequently, leaders are often suspected even if they have the purest of motives. Though we are blessed [at our church] with a relatively good health regarding an understanding of the church, there are always those who cannot help but think that the leadership has something up its sleeve. I think this is the innate knee-jerk reaction of a society that has sold its soul to individualism and takes great pride in resisting authority "on principle."

Do you see how it spreads? The leadership makes some sort of decision in the church, and there are some who want to resist the authority. And so, they poke holes in their actions. They attach some ulterior motives to the decisions of the church. And pretty soon, there's this cancer in the church, all started with a little grumbling and disputing.

But Paul says that none of this should happen in the church. And his argument goes like this:

Philippians 2:15
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,

In other words, if you have come to trust in Christ, then you are a child of God by faith in Him. He has removed your sin and transformed you. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). And children should act like their father. And your actions should shine forth in this world.

Or, as we are saying this morning, Don't Whine (verse 14);

2. But Shine! (verses 15-16a)

If you don't utter grumbings and disputes, you will stand out in our world today.

A few weeks ago, my daughter was playing in a volleyball tournament at Sportscore Two. Yvonne and I took her in the morning to the game. We promptly sat down in the bleachers to watch the game. And then, some small talk took place between us and a few parents from the team that Hanna was playing against. One was a father of one of the players. Another was a mother to another one of the players. They asked us about our experience with our daughter playing volleyball at Sportscore Two. How was the coach? How was the team?

And I began to give my typical response. "We are so thankful for an opportunity like this for Hanna, that we are nothing but supportive of her coach. I know how hard leadership is. I know how hard it is to please everyone, I trust that her coach is doing her best. And she is going to receive nothing but my help and support."

Well, it very quickly came to be known that this was not their perspective. They were extremely dissatisfied with their coach. And they began to list problem after problem with their coach. And throughout the entire game, they were nagging on all of the things that the coach was doing wrong. "Look at how your coach is standing up encouraging the girls. Look at our coach. She's just sitting there. Look, your coach is huddled around the team. Do you even see our coach? Where did she go? Does your coach communicate with you? We don't hear anything from our coach. "I went and watched their practice the other day. It looked really disorganized. Have you seen a practice with your team? How much has your team won? Our team is terrible. We consider it a moral victory if we get 10 points. (First to 25 points wins)."

It went on and on and on and on and on. After the match, we were relieved to leave the atmosphere.

I came back in the afternoon to see Hanna's last games before taking her home. And the same people were sitting in their same places. I made the mistake of sitting next to them. And off they went, complaining and complaining about their coach. Having thought about it all day at home, I was prepared to face them a bit. So, I said things like, "Have you spoken with Pat (who is in charge of everything)? Are there any good qualities about your coach? Look, do you see? She's over there talking with her team. That's a good sign to me. If things are so bad, why don't you volunteer to coach?"

But, my comments didn't really stop them too much. Here's what's interesting. Throughout the entire time I'm talking with these two parents (both in the morning and in the afternoon), there was a third guy. He was sitting down a row and a bit further away from us. He was obviously with them. One of his daughters was on the team. And he didn't say a word of complaint. He heard every word that my complaining friends were saying. And he didn't say anything derogatory about the team or the coach or anything.

Now, I never had an opportunity to speak with him. But, he stood out, because he refused to complain about the situation. I would not be surprised if he was a believer in Christ. Because, not complaining when surrounded by a world of complainers is a sure sign that something is different about you.

And that's the idea of verse 15, ...

Philippians 2:15

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,

Against the background of darkness, the light shines forth. The blackness in this verse is clear: a crooked and perverse generation. If that was true in Paul's day, certainly it is true in our day. Love for God in our society is all but lost. Sensuality rules the media. Our passions are for the rich and famous, rather than the poor and mistreated.

This means that we have great opportunity to shine in our world today. The darker the background, the brighter the light will appear. Isn't this, in some measure, what won the Philippian jailer? Paul brought the light of the gospel of Christ to Philippi. He freed a slave-girl from her demon (Acts 16:16-18). Her owners were irate. They seized Paul and Silas. They dragged them into the market place before the authorities (Acts 16:19). They brought false accusations to the chief magistrates (Acts 16:20). They stirred the crowd against them. It all led to Paul and Silas being beaten with rods and cast into prison (Acts 16:22-24).

They had every right to complain. They had been treated unjustly. They had done a good deed and were punished for it. They helped this slave-girl. They were beaten without a cause.

And yet, how did they respond? Not with complaints, but with rejoicing. In the prison they were "praying and singing hymns of praise to God" (Acts 16:25). Against the dark circumstances of their life, their light shined. The prisoners took notice. When the earthquake took place, the prisoners didn't flee. The jailer took notice. When the earthquake took place, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Isn't it interesting that Paul directed his attention to the Lord, Jesus Christ, whose light shined in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Jesus called the society that He lived in, "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matthew 16:4). Indeed, it proved that to be true when Jesus was betrayed by a friend when Jesus was arrested without warrant when Jesus faced the proceedings of an illegal trial by night; when Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin; when Jesus was mocked, insulted and beaten by the Roman soldiers; when Jesus was denied justice by Pontius Pilate; when Jesus was crucified; when Jesus was mocked upon the cross by those who passed by and by the religious leaders and even by the criminals who were crucified with Him. This was proven true when Jesus took God's wrath for us!

This was all in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7, "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." Peter puts it far more eloquently than I ever could:

1 Peter 2:21-23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

Jesus had all the reason in the world to expose the injustice that was taking place against Him and all around Him. Jesus had all the reason to argue His case at His trial. With His wisdom, surely He could have persuaded many to His side. And yet, through it all Jesus never complained or grumbled or murmured. Instead, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

And ultimately, this is our hope -- that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross. This is the gospel in which we are called to rejoice. This is the very means by which we are forgiven of our sins, like the sins of complaining. and like the sins of disputing.

This is the word of life that Paul speaks about in verse 16, "holding fast the word of life." How can we obey verse 15? By doing what verse 16 says. That's the only way that we can be "blameless and innocent" in this "crooked and perverse generation," shining as lights in this world (verse 15). When you hold fast to the gospel. When you cling to everything that Jesus did for your soul at Calvary. It is only there that you will find the strength not to whine.

Paul says, Don't Whine (verse 14); But Shine! (verses 15-16a). After our small group last week in which we discussed this passage, Jeff M.

went home and spent some time writing up a script for a movie trailer that he wanted SR to make Now, SR was too busy to do this. But, let me read the script for you. I think that you can envision it in your mind.

(All black slides. No voice just words for 5 seconds.)

"RVBC, in association with Paul's letter to the Philippians, present a message coming to a congregation near you.

(Show "bad slides" timed to about 3 seconds each slide.)

"In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, there come a people who do all things without grumbling or disputing. They are held blameless and innocent children of God, without blemish."

(Start "beam of light" slides, one light followed by another each showing a different part of the cross until the entire Cross is lit.)

"They shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life. Are you among them?"

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 26, 2014 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] This quote can be found many places. Here's one: <http://www.logoslibrary.org/tertullian/apology/39.html>.

[2] Steve Brandon, "Passing by the Field," p. 4.

[3] Ginger Plowman, "Whining Will."

[4] <http://www.nomorewhining.org>.