

- Rev. Grant Mangold, Riverside Evangelical Free Church, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

NO GRUMBLING

Ever had to be around a complainer, a grumbler? Maybe you're married to one. Maybe you are one. Maybe your kids complain. One of the best tools we ever used with our kids was this: "So you don't want to eat that or do thus or so? That's ok, because you don't have to WANT to, you just HAVE to."

Remember the Apostle reminded us in verse 1:6 that in the PAST God has begun a good work in you, and in the FUTURE He will bring it to completion. And at the PRESENT, verse 2:13, God pursues His purpose with great passion and vigor -- working IN you, as you work it OUT.

So in humility, you submit to God's greater plan and purpose for your life. You "work out" what God is "working in" you. Because God began it and promises to bring it to completion. So trust Him, and live by His power.

Now in verses 14-16 he spells out what this attitude will look like. ***"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God."***

Paul has said a lot of good things about the Philippians. But he knows them well. Here his language echoes the Old Testament narrative about the children of Israel during the Exodus from Egypt. Just six weeks into the wilderness they began to grumble and question their leaders, Moses and Aaron.

Why was this unacceptable behavior in the Old Testament, and for the Philippians, and for you and me today? Grumbling shows a deep ingratitude for God's providence. It says you know better than God. It demonstrates that you are not loving God with your whole heart and mind and soul and strength. Nor are you loving your neighbor as yourself. Would you want to tolerate such disrespectful behavior against yourself? Why should God? Why would God allow His children to behave that way?

Remember in 2:1-11 Paul had just painted a masterpiece portrait of Christ, that great "U-shape" as the highest of the high became the lowest of the low to die on the cross to be your redeemer, and then was re-exalted to reign in heaven. Why? All for U -- because He put YOUR interests ahead of His own.

And if you have become His child by putting your personal trust in Him as Lord and Savior, being born again in Christ, then you too have His mind. You have both the "want to" and the "how to" to follow Him and work out what He works in you, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So Paul as a master teacher doesn't dwell on the negatives and the don'ts, he shows the dos and the positives as he writes ***"children of God, without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."***

God's children are to be like Him. They are not to grumble and complain, because they've been saved from sin and self. They've been cleansed from the penalty and power of sin. The contrast could hardly be more stark. Compare "without blemish" to "crooked and twisted" -- the very words God uses in Deuteronomy 32:5 to indict the disobedient Israelites.

Children of God don't have to act like worldly children who have not experienced God's light and truth and grace and power in their lives. Paul said similar things in 2 Corinthians 4, "for God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The minds of God's children are no longer blinded by sin and self -- they've been rescued from the darkness. And if Jesus has given you His light, His life, His spirit, His mind -- then by the power of His Spirit you can and will shine HIS light through your life, to everyone around you ! With no grumbling !