

Philippians 2:14-15 — Why Is Grumbling Worse Than COVID-19?

April 5, 2020

Good morning CrossWinds family. If you are new, my name is Kurt, and I am thankful you can join us for online worship today. Let me address a few items of business before we pray and get into our study.

1. We are going to celebrate communion this morning after the message. Make sure you have some crackers and juice ready. Communion is only for believers, so if you are not a Christian, we ask that you do not celebrate the Lord's Supper with us. If you are a Christian, you are welcome to celebrate the Lord's Supper with us.
2. Next week is Easter. As a staff, we put a lot of effort into researching drive-in services. After looking into the idea and discussing that type of event with emergency management in our community, we decided against a drive-in service to keep the risk of spreading COVID-19 to a minimum. We look forward to seeing you next week for our Easter services online at the regular broadcast times.
3. While Easter is a celebration of the resurrection, one of the other fun parts of Easter is being together as a church family to celebrate. Since we can't be together, we are putting together a church video so we can at least see everyone on screen. This week I need you to take a simple photo of you and your family stuck at home. Send the photo to spiritlake@crosswinds.tv no later than Friday. We will put together a CrossWinds Easter video and send everyone the link Easter afternoon. This way we can see what everyone is up to while we are at home.

4. Our denomination called for a Day of Prayer and Fasting on April 10, which is Good Friday. We will send you more information in an e-mail on what that will look like later this week.
5. Lastly, I want to remind you of the special COVID-19 page on our website at crosswinds.tv. That has all things COVID-19 at CrossWinds Church. We update it during the week so be sure to check the website each week for updates.

Let's pray and get to our study.

Heavenly Father, we come before you in this time of need. We are desperate for your mercy on our nation. We ask for our President and the rest of our government leaders. Give them great wisdom from you. Give them supernatural strength and endurance as they work long hours. We ask you would use them to provide wisdom, mercy, and protection for our nation in these challenging times. We pray for Governor Reynolds as she works long hours and makes difficult decisions. Give her wisdom and good leadership.

While our thoughts begin with the over a million people on the planet that have contracted this virus, we are particularly mindful of those in our nation that are suffering. Many have lost fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. We pray for those who are still sick. Bring them healing. Use this plague to bring humility to our nation. Use this plague to open hard hearts to hear the gospel message. As many lose their lives in this time, use that to open hearts so many would gain spiritual life and be born again.

We thank you for many in our nation have have stepped forward to love their neighbors in this time of need. We thank you for the many business leaders who have retooled their industries to build everything from ventilators to face masks. We ask that you would help us to know how to love our neighbors in this time as well. We are so grateful Heavenly Father to not just have our hope in this life but to have confidence beyond this life because of our Jesus. Now help us as we study your Word. Amen.

This morning, we are continuing in our series, "Peace in a Pandemic." For the last two weeks, we looked at the topic of worry and anxiety when facing an uncertain future. First, we looked at Jesus' words on anxiety and why Christians don't need to worry about the future because we have a heavenly father that

loves us and promises to provide for our needs. Last week, we looked at Paul's words about anxiety in Philippians 4. We learned about God's exchange program. When we give God our worries in prayer, he gives us supernatural peace so we can face the future.

Today, we are going back to the book of Philippians. Instead of discussing anxiety in a crisis, we are going to look at our attitude in a crisis. When we are stuck at home and fearful of a virus, it is easy to start grumbling, whining, and complaining about life and loneliness.

If you are a teenager stuck at home with your parents and you can only see your friends through video chat, I am sure you find yourself grumbling and whining and complaining.

Grumbling isn't limited to teenagers. Adults are some of the best grumblers. While it seems understandable to grumble about our current crisis, the honest truth is if we weren't grumbling about the pandemic, we would find something else to grumble about. In good times we grumble about working too much. Right now we are grumbling about working too little. We grumble about being single, then we get married and grumble about our spouses. We grumble when we can't find our car keys. When we find our car keys, we grumble about our cars, thinking we need better ones. We whine about big things. We whine about little things. In short, grumbling is the sinful response of the heart because we grumble in every situation we find ourselves.

Our key text this morning is all about grumbling. It is short. Let me read it to you.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, Philippians 2:14–15 (ESV)

The outline for this morning is as follows:

1. What does the Old Testament teach us about grumbling?
2. Why is it wrong to grumble when life gets difficult?
3. Why must Christians repent of grumbling?
4. How can I change the sinful pattern of grumbling in my life?

What does the Old Testament say about grumbling?

Without a doubt, the No. 1 grumblers in the Bible were ancient Israelites. They provide the most pointed example of where grumbling can lead. If we turn to Numbers 13, we see grumbling is more contagious than the coronavirus, and it kills more people than coronavirus.

Grumbling is contagious and deadly.

When ancient Israel came to the Promised Land, the Israelites sent 12 spies to check out the land. Two spies, Caleb and Joshua, were confident the Israelites could conquer the land. In spite of immense challenges, they were confident God would give them the victory. The problem is the other 10 spies felt the opposite way. They discouraged the people. They grumbled.

And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land... Numbers 14:36 (ESV)

The grumbling and whining of those 10 spies was contagious. It spread to the rest of the nation and kicked off a nationwide time of complaining about what God had asked the Israelites to do, conquering the Promised Land. The spies'

grumpy attitude, instead of faith and confidence in God, led to nationwide discouragement. Let's see how God felt about their grumbling.

...the men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the Lord. Numbers 14:37 (ESV)

God was so angry at them for spreading their deadly virus of disbelief. God was so angry at them he struck those 10 spies with a plague so they died right in front of God. Does this give you an idea what God thinks about grumbling and how contagious it is around other people? As a result of the grumbling of these 10 men, an entire generation was kept out of the Promised Land. Exodus 12:37 tells us 600,000 men came out of Egypt in the Exodus, plus there were women and children. If you assume just one woman for every man, that is 1.2 million people. All of them died outside the Promised Land in the wilderness as a result of the 10 spies spreading their grumbling disbelief. Do you see why grumbling is even more contagious and deadly than COVID-19?

God tests us to see if we will trust him or if we will grumble against him.

God repeatedly put ancient Israel in tough situations where things looked hopeless. He did that intentionally. He did that to test the Israelites. He wanted to see if they would turn to him and trust him in those hard times or if they would grumble against him. Unfortunately, the Israelites failed every test God gave them.

After God took Israel out of Egypt by unleashing mighty plagues against Egypt, which supernaturally brought an entire nation to its knees, Israel left Egypt triumphantly. The people came to the Red Sea. With the sea in front of them,

Pharaoh and his chariots showed up behind them. When they saw Pharaoh's army, they had a meltdown. They forgot all the good things God had done to care for and provide for them in the past. In that crisis, they failed the test. They didn't trust God. They whined and grumbled against God and Moses.

They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?" Exodus 14:11 (ESV)

God graciously saved them. He split the Red Sea and brought them across on dry ground. We know the rest of the story. When the Egyptian army tried to follow them, God brought the waters back together and the Egyptian army drowned. Can you imagine watching that happen? Only three days later, they ran into another crisis. They were out of water in their canteens. This would have been a good time to call out to the God who saved them in the past with confidence that he would save them in the future. But no, we don't find that happening. Instead we find them freaking out thinking they were going to dehydrate. Remember this was only three days after God brought them across the Red Sea.

And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Exodus 15:24 (ESV)

God gave Moses a stick that he put into the waters of Marah and that made the bitter waters sweet. It made the water drinkable. Again, we see the pattern. God put them in a difficult situation to test them. Instead of turning to God and trusting God, the Israelites whined and grumbled against him.

Right after God miraculously provided water, they started grumbling again. Instead of being out of water in their canteens, they were out of food in their

lunchboxes. Why did God let them get hungry? To test them. To see where they would turn in hard times. Would they turn to grumbling or would they turn to God and ask for him to provide their needs? They failed the test again.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and 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 (ESV)

God had not forgotten them like they thought. God was testing them. After this situation, God began giving them manna from heaven to provide their daily food. The consistent pattern was God put his people in a tough situation to see if they would turn to him, pray to him, and trust him. If they turned to him, he would provide for them and grow their faith. If they whined and grumbled, he still provided for them but their faith did not grow. God still works the same way. God allows a crisis in our lives. He brings an enemy. He brings hunger. He brings lack of water. He brings a virus. He brings financial challenges. Will we call out to God realizing he knows our needs, asking that he will provide for them, or will we be just like the Israelites and express no confidence in God? Instead, will we whine and complain?

Grumbling about our circumstances is ultimately grumbling against God.

...but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" Exodus 17:1–2 (ESV)

There is great insight for us in this little verse. The people were without water once again. They started grumbling against Moses, but Moses told them they weren't ultimately grumbling against him, they were grumbling against God.

It was God who put them in their tough circumstances, not Moses. We often think it is OK to complain and grumble because we are just complaining about our circumstances. We must realize that when we complain about our circumstances, we are complaining against the God who put us in those circumstances. The reason God put ancient Israel in tough circumstances was always to grow the people's faith and show them he would provide for them. Nothing has changed. The reason God puts us in tough circumstances is always to grow our faith and show us he will provide for us.

The problem is Israel never learned the lesson. Every time God brought a challenge into the Israelites' lives so they could turn to him and trust in him, they ended up whining against him. They failed the test. We must not do the same. Grumbling against our circumstances is grumbling against the God who put us in those circumstances for his glory and our growth.

God judged the sin of grumbling.

...and the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Numbers 11:1 (ESV)

After all God had done for Israel, and all God had provided for Israel, what were people doing? Complaining and whining about their misfortunes. Life hadn't turned out exactly the way they wanted. It was not always easy. God was so angry at their ingratitude. They completely forgot about all the grace God had shown to them and the many times God miraculously provided for them. It burned him up, so he literally burned people up. That shows you how God feels about whining and grumbling.

Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.” Numbers 11:4–6 (ESV)

So the people complained all they had was manna to eat. They couldn't get the fancy food they were used to in Egypt. Rather than being grateful for how God saved them, they grumbled against God. As a result, God gave them quail to eat but he also struck them with a plague.

Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp,... While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague... Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. Numbers 11:31, 33, 49 (ESV)

Apparently these quail blew in from Wuhan, China. Maybe they had an animal virus that crossed over to human beings. I don't know. The message is God does not have much tolerance for grumbling. When he puts us in a tough spot, it is to teach us to turn to him and trust him; he will care for us, just like he did for his people in the Old Testament. Tough times are not to teach us to grumble. They are to get us to grow. They are to build our faith in God, not destroy our faith in God. Grumbling and whining ruins what God is trying to accomplish.

The New Testament tells us we should learn from the sins of God's people in the past so we don't repeat them.

We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:9–11 (ESV)

The reason I went through this little history lesson on the grumbling of the Israelites is because the Bible tells us we need to remember their mistakes and learn from their mistakes so we don't end up grumbling like they did. When times are tough, as Christians, we must not be people that complain but instead put our trust in God.

That is the background behind this simple verse in Philippians that we are studying. Let's return to our key verse.

Why is it wrong to grumble when life gets difficult?

Do all things without grumbling or disputing... Philippians 2:14 (ESV)

Now that we understand the Old Testament background about grumbling, let's learn from the context of this verse about grumbling. Let's look before this verse and after this verse. First, let's look before this verse.

We know God is still working his good plan in our lives.

Just prior to this sections of Philippians, at the beginning of chapter 2, Paul told us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We are to be humble like Jesus and count others as more significant than ourselves. After Paul talked about following Jesus' humility, he said these words:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV)

Paul said we are not just saved by our faith in Christ but we need to work out the implications of our salvation in our everyday lives. He reminds us that God is at work in us. He has a good reason for what he is doing in our lives. He is maturing us.

Just as God the Father had a plan for Jesus' life that involved suffering, he has a plan for your life and mine, and expect it to involve some suffering. Just as God the Father's plan was for his son to suffer to save us and bring God glory, we should expect that God the Father's plan for our lives will also involve suffering and difficulties as part of God's plan to bring us to glory. Let's just face it, trials in life are not a mistake in God's plan, they are part of God's good plan. Trials were part of God the Father's plan for Jesus's life. They will be part of God the Father's plan for our lives.

What kind of good does God do in hard times? It is always in the hard times of life that we grow the most in our love for Christ. It is in hard times we learn to pray. It is in hard times we call out to God and learn to trust. God the Father has a good reason for hard times in our lives. They are not fun, but God the Father is always using them as part of his good plan.

As Jesus didn't grumble about the hard parts of God's plan for his life, we should not grumble about the hard parts of God's plan for our lives.

Here is the kicker. When Jesus faced hard times, do we see him grumbling? Do we see him arguing with his heavenly Father and telling him to change his plans? Absolutely not. We see Jesus turning in faith and trust to his heavenly father, not grumbling and disputing with him. The way Jesus dealt with trials in his life is the way God calls us to deal with the trials in our lives.

There are two patterns we can follow. We can follow the pattern of the ancient Israelites, who even though God miraculously cared for them and saved

them many times grumbled in every trial they faced. The result was God's judgment.

The other pattern we have to follow is Jesus. He went through trials far worse than the Israelites faced. Rather than grumbling, he turned to his father and trusted his father's good purpose in those trials. He had the right response of not grumbling but trusting. The result was not judgment but glory.

When we face our trials, how will we respond? Will we trust God's good purposes like Jesus or will we grumble like the Israelites?

Let me take a moment to define exactly what grumbling and disputing looks like.

Grumbling — Emotionally expressing dissatisfaction with our lives or our circumstances, either under our breath or out loud to other people. It is also called murmuring or muttering.

Disputings — Intellectually arguing with God or with other people, usually because we think we deserve something better.

God judges grumbling.

One other verse we should touch on since we found this same theme in the Old Testament is that God judges constant grumbling.

[Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. James 5:9 \(ESV\)](#)

When we grumble, we forget God is listening. Just as there were consequences for the Israel's constant grumbling, God may discipline us for our constant grumbling.

Whenever I read this verse, it reminds me of a time when I was young, I was not getting along with my parents. This was in the days before cell phones. I was arguing with my parents about something and a friend called. My father picked up the phone and told me about his phone call. I ran upstairs to take the call in another room. I immediately launched into a tirade to my friend about what bad parents I had and how much I didn't like them. The problem was that after my father answered the phone, he never hung up. He listened to all of my conversation as I was verbally throwing him under the bus. When I came downstairs, my father repeated to me the insults I had spoken about him.

I hurt my father deeply. I felt terrible for the things I said. Instead of grumbling, I should have kept my mouth shut. I regretted my words.

In a similar way, we must remember that when we grumble, God is on the line. He is listening to everything we say. It hurts him deeply to hear us speaking against him.

Before this verse, we learned there is no reason to grumble because every difficult situation God lets into our lives is part of his good plan to mature us to be like Christ. We are to respond to hard times like Jesus did. Now let's look after this verse and see what else we can learn about grumbling.

Why must Christians repent of grumbling?

Grumbling stunts spiritual growth.

...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world... Philippians 2:15 (ESV)

The Greek literally says we are to stop complaining and grumbling *so that we may become* blameless, innocent and without blemish as children of God.

The idea is that God is working in our lives and is seeking to develop our character so we become more like Jesus. God is developing us into blameless and innocent children of God in this world. Grumbling and complaining about the difficult circumstances God has allowed to develop our Christ-like maturity puts a stop to the process of spiritual maturity.

If we want to be spiritually mature and spiritually useful, we cannot get there as a grumbler, whiner, and complainer. Think about this. The spiritually mature people that you respect in your life, are they grumblers and whiners? Absolutely not.

We cannot grumble about little things or about big things. If you are constantly grumbling about the zipper that is stuck on your jacket, your children spilling milk, the weather being too cold, the Internet being too slow, the meal being overcooked or your coffee being too cold, don't expect to mature into the Christ-like person God wants you to be. It is impossible. We must admit that grumbling is a sin. It is a sin against God. We must repent of it.

Grumbling diminishes our ability to share Christ in this world.

...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world... Philippians 2:15 (ESV)

Our character is a huge part of our witness. Evangelism is not just telling people the good news of Jesus but it is also letting people see your character and how Jesus has changed it. Look at the evening news. Everyone is grumbling, complaining, and whining about something. As Christians, that should not be our lives. We are to be different. At work, everyone grumbles and complains. We can tell people about Jesus with our words but evangelism also

happens through our lives with our character. When we don't grumble, when we don't tear people down, when we don't whine about our circumstances and instead turn to God and trust in God, people realize Christians are different.

Paul said the world we live in crooked and twisted.

Crooked is the Greek word scoliosis. Maybe you have heard of that as a medical term. It is curvature of the spine. That is our world. It is bent out of shape. People have spiritual scoliosis.

Twisted is a stronger word. It means severely twisted and distorted.

We live in a world that is severely out of alignment with God.

We are to be like lights shining in our dark world. Our character is to be notably different because we don't grumble and whine in a world full of grumblers and whiners who love to complain. As a result, we stand out like a light in a dark room.

How can I change the sinful pattern of grumbling in my life?

The obvious application for us is to trust God's good plan for our lives and repent of whining and grumbling when we find ourselves doing it. Let me share three brief practical steps to help us do that.

1. **Repent of my grumbling and pray for grace to change.** Grumbling is a spiritual problem. We need to repent of it and ask God to help us change it.
2. **Keep a grumbling journal.** This week, every time you find yourself starting to grumble, get out your small journal or piece of paper and write it down.

Writing down every time we grumble will help us identify how much grumbling is part of our lives.

3. **Allow your loved ones to gently tell you when you grumble.** This must be done so gently. Sometimes we start to grumble and don't even realize we are doing it. Let your loved ones gently tell you when you are grumbling. That is a hard thing to hear, but it is a good thing to hear so we can repent and be more like Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you and confess the sin of grumbling in our hearts. So often we take our cue about how to respond to disappointing circumstances in this world from the twisted and dark culture around us, rather than from your Word and your son. May we not be like the Israelites of the Old Testament and grumble every time you test us. May we be like your son and trust your good purposes in tough times. Amen.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address

(www.Christ2RCulture.com)

on the

