Stop Complaining, Part 2
Philippians 2:15-16
50-23

Let's open our Bibles then this morning to Philippians chapter 2 verses 14 through 16 and the second and final message in our little series entitled "Stop Complaining." Moving through this wonderful Philippian epistle, we have arrived at verses 14 to 16 and we have heard a very simple command by the apostle Paul in verse 14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." And that, of course, is the substance and basis of the exhortation for our text. We looked at that last time and today I want to give you the reasons for obeying that, they are given in verses 15 and 16. So, the command is in verse 14, the reasons are in verses 15 and 16. Before we look at them, however, let me go back and just touch a little bit on this matter of complaining.

Social critic Christopher Lasch wrote and I quote, "Every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure." End quote. And I would suppose that he would agree that the pathology of our age is narcissistic self-indulgence. We are a culture who conduct ourselves like that legendary Greek youth Narcissus who was looking in a pond one day and saw himself, and fell furiously in love with himself. And so, much in love with himself that he kept staring in the pond pining over this shadow of himself which he loved. Rapturous was his self-love. And it seems as though we have found ourselves in the pathology of narcissism in our society, and as we continue to love ourselves, as we continue to indulge ourselves, we continue to breed within ourselves a very great discontent and we add the fantasy world that is around us, the fantasy world that demonstrates to us that there should be out there some plastic perfection. We see it on television. We never seem to attain it. And so, our Narcissism only casts us into deeper shadows of despair. We feed on self-indulgence. Having everything, we still brood over what we don't have. We complain to the degree that we are rarely, if ever, satisfied.

I think there's another factor in our complaining. At MIT there is a psychologist by the name of Kenneth Kingston. He made an interesting statement, listen to what he said, "If you live in a society where you believe the public institutions are deeply flawed and not easily improved, that leaves the pursuit of individual happiness in a private way as the main challenge to your energies." End quote. And I really believe that we are living in that time today. I think we are a more than ever complaining society, not only because we are more indulgent than ever, because we are more exposed to a fantasy world which we can't attain than ever, but also because we have become disillusioned about the social things that once gripped our hearts, and we have left only the pursuit of personal happiness.

The best illustration of that would be a comparison between the '60s and the people of the '70s and '80s. The students in the '60s were protesters. They were so much protesters that I remember reading about a group of Harvard students who came to their professor and said, "We have a group that would like to protest. Do you know of a good cause?" It was as almost as if the protesting mentality came before the issue to be protested. But what happened? In the '60s we had all of the

protesting students, they tried and they failed to change the flawed institutions of our society. And when they realized that all of their efforts and all of their work could not change the flaws of the social institutions, they then became the materialistic money-hungry success oriented Yuppies of the '70s and '80's who said, "We can't change the social institution. We will pour all of our energies into our own personal pursuit of happiness."

And that's where our society is, madly pursuing things and fulfillment and happiness, narcissistically looking at itself wanting to indulge itself, realizing it can do very little to change social institutions, it begs the issue of self-indulgence by constantly focusing on that. And built into it is terrible, terrible potential disillusionment. So, you have a mood of complaint.

And I see it everyplace. You see it all over. You are part of it. Let me give you some things that people complain about. Now, you have to think about this, and think about how frivolous they are and see if you identify. Here are typical things that cause people to have increased blood pressure, that make them angry, hostile. Even in some times make them violent. Things like, for example, traffic jams bring incredible hostility, anger, complaint. Slow drivers in front of you can be enough to cause you to lose your sanctification. Freeway cutters who cut in front of you, talkative people irritate you, long lines, short lines, any lines, having one person in front of you makes you complain. You want it your way and now. Crying babies, if you don't think there is a terrible frightening brooding discontent over crying babies, then ask yourself why there is such an increase of frightening child abuse, precipitated by crying babies. Once held to the breast of a mother, now hit with an iron or a frying pan, or who knows what. Phone calls at inappropriate times, misplaced keys, would you believe, great trauma caused by that, non-housebroken puppies, I mean we really get distressed by the biggies, don't we?

But you see, it's a mood, stuck zippers, especially if you're already in the car half way there. Cold food, we not only want it we want it the temperature we want it. Somebody interrupting your conversation, noisy neighbors, being rushed by your husband, late airplanes, tight clothes, unsuccessful diets, peeling onions, squeaking doors, incompetent people around you, flat tires when you're in a hurry. Some people complain constantly over the fact they have to balance a checkbook. I'm not going to ask those of you who have never balanced your checkbook to raise your hand. I don't want to know. Doing the dishes, your mother-in-law, weeds, high prices, these are the things that, imagine it, these are the things that generate hostility in people, cause tremendous conflict in marriage. We complain about all these things. How ridiculous.

Now, if you're in Hiroshima and it's 1945, you have a problem worthy of considerable concern. But just because you lost out on a promotion or a business deal, just because your child announced last week that she hates her room, just because the bank notified you this morning that you're overdrawn, I'm sure you can find a way to survive. Calm down, review the situation, think it through. I hear all about mid-life crisis, do you know that there are nations in the world that don't ever have mid-life crisis because they don't live that long? Some people aren't bothered by such things at all, there are parts of the world where the average lifespan is 37 years and men and women are spared the distressing reality of a 40th birthday. Some people complain about grocery bills. More than 10,000 people die of starvation every day and you're complaining about grocery bills? Millions more suffer from malnutrition. Some people say they complain about the high cost of rent. Well, maybe you'd rather be a pavement dweller in Calcutta, they don't pay rent. They're born, live, and die on the pavement. They only thing they have to worry about is to find a rag they can put under their head when they go to sleep.

You see, while these kind of horrors go on around the world in sort of normal accepted pace, we throw tantrums because we got seated at a poorly located table in a fancy restaurant. Or we're frustrated because we can't lose ten pounds. Or we gripe about our monthly debts. You've got problems relative to what? But you see, it's the mood of the mob to complain. And then, the idealistic fantasy oriented consumptive culture feeds the sin of discontent. How can we be discontent? Remember Lamentations 3:39, "Why should any mortal being or anyone offer complaint in view of his sins?" What do we have to complain about? So, Paul gives us a general principle in verse 14. And it really speaks to us at a time when we live in a culture of complaint. "Do all things without grumbling or disputing. Do all things without grumbling or disputing." What do the "all things" refer to? The living out of your inward salvation, the working out of your salvation. Here is the pervasive attitude for the Christians' experience. As we work out our salvation, as we live our godly life, we are to do it without ever complaining about the circumstances which God has put around us. We are to live a life without complaint. We are to rejoice always, to use Paul's later terminology, and again I say rejoice. We are to be content whether we are based or whether we abound, whether we have much or whether we have little, whether we like the circumstances or don't like them. There is no place for complaining.

And I only submit to you that it's much more difficult it seems in this culture than in some because we are breeding a culture of complainers, absolute culture of complainers. And Paul then gives us a general principle that does speak to us very directly.

Now, note as I pointed out last time, that this matter of doing all things without grumbling or disputing has reference to God. Not so much grumbling disputing among others, that too is a sin, but the idea here is to accept that providential plan which God has ordained for your life, live out your salvation without any complaints directed at Him. A joyful heart, a thankful heart, no emotional grumbling, that's the grumbling word, and no intellectual disputing or arguing with God. But rather, without complaint, gratefully we live out our salvation. That is what he calls for Christians to maintain in terms of an attitude that pervades all their living.

Now, he gives us three reasons why. Okay? And I'll just lay these before you. They're not new, they're just a brief review, a summary, and I know you will be familiar with them. But nonetheless, they are the word of the Spirit of God for us today. Reason number one, in verse 15, "That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach." Let's say, first of all, then we are to stop complaining for our own sake, for our own sake, that we might be the kind of children that God has saved us to be. It starts with us. And this is, by the way, clearly a purpose result clause, a little particle *hina* with a subjunctive always indicates purpose result. And so, it could be translated "in order that," or "with the result that," or "given the purpose that." In other words, this is the very reason why you are to do this, so that you will be a blameless, harmless, above-reproach child of God. You are called to be all that a child of God should be. In Ephesians 5:1 that very, very important injunction of Paul where he says, "Be imitators of God as beloved children, be imitators of God as beloved children." If God is your Father, then imitate God, then pattern your life after Him. If you are a child of God then live the way a child of God should live, manifesting the character of God. As it says in Titus 2, adorning the doctrine of God in the manner in which you live.

So, note again then, we'll look at the verse specifically, you are to stop complaining, doing all things without grumbling or disputing, in order that you may prove yourselves to be. Now the Greek literally says, in order that you may become, in order that you may become. And I believe here is a process,

you are to be in the process of becoming a blameless innocent above-reproach child of God. So, you are not to complain in order that process may work, that you may be in the process at the end of which you become a harmless, blameless, above-reproach child of God.

Now, those two words, blameless and harmless, or some of your translations will say blameless and innocent, really are not a great deal apart in terms of meaning. They both speak of moral purity. Blameless simply means a life that can't be criticized, a life that can't be criticized. There's nothing for which you can be held responsible by way of sin, evil, wickedness. It's a life without blame, it's a life that has no blemish, no blot on it, no sinful stain which people can discern and see.

And then, the word "innocent" could be translated "harmless." It is so translated in Matthew 10:16 where Jesus says, "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." It is also translated "simple" in Romans 16:19, I think it is, Paul says that we are to be simple concerning evil. It has to do with being pure. It has to do with being unmixed, unadulterated, undefiled; it is used, for example, to refer to unmixed wine and unalloyed metal. So, he's simply using two somewhat basic terms, saying that your life is to be a life which cannot be criticized for sin, and which is pure and undefiled and unadulterated and unmixed with evil. So, really two ways to say, essentially, a pure life, a life without fault and a life without flaw. That's God's desire for His people, that their character and their conduct should be so pure that they cannot justly be accused, that they are above criticism that is legitimate, there is no foreign element which contaminates their life. We are to be, in the terms of 2 Corinthians 11, a chaste virgin, a pure virgin, in terms of Ephesians 5, the church is to be a blameless without spot, without blemish bride. Same concept.

Then, you'll note also in verse 15 he uses the term "above reproach." That too is one word in the Greek, you have *amemptos, akeraios*, and then you have *amōmos*, all of them have an alpha-privative which means they're negative terms, and this means above reproach: faultless, flawless, spotless, blemishless. This word, by the way, is used in the Greek Old Testament in Numbers, I think it's several times, Numbers 6:14, Numbers 19:2, I found in both places, and it's there referring to a sacrifice, without blemish, without spot, the kind of sacrifice to be brought to the Lord. So, really three ways he's saying the same thing: harmless, blameless, flawless, faultless, sinless, pure. That's what he wants. Why? And the key is this, children of God. You are to be becoming the proper kind of child of God. In other words, the kind that would rightly represent God, that would be believable if you said I belong to God, He's my Father, I'm His son, I'm His child. We are to be truly God's children not only by divine decree, but by testimony as well. In Romans 12 we are to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. So, we are like a sacrifice, to be without spot, without blemish, without stain, undefiled, pure. We're children of God.

We have to get in touch with that. Who do you belong to? Whose are you? Who owns you? Whose name do you bear? Whose identity do you share? Whose life do you share? The very life of God. And so, every believer needs to live in consistency with who He is.

Peter gives us a good motivation, I think, in 2 Peter 3. He's talking about the Second Coming of Christ when He comes, the day of the Lord. And he says in verse 14, "Therefore beloved, since you look for these things," in other words, since you look for the coming day of the Lord, the intervention of Christ in the world, the Second Coming, since you look for these things, "Be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." In other words, if you know Christ is coming, that ought to clean up your life. If you know His coming is imminent, that ought to clean up your life. You live in the light of the coming of Christ. You're His child, and Jesus is coming for you, you want to behave as a

child of God should behave. Because we are children, we bear the Father's name, and we need to be sure that we are consistent in living a life that will speak well of the name we bear. That means no complaining in this context.

No complaining. If you are a complainer, a grumbler, a griper, a bellyacher, if you are a disputer with God, or if you are a grumbler, and if you are discontent, and if every little thing in life from stuck zippers to slow drivers and all of the other stuff causes you to blow your fuses in discontent and complain and so forth, then you have distorted the picture that some are seeing with regard to the child of God. You have sinned, you are not without blemish and that's a tragedy.

So, for your own sake, because of who you are, it is mandatory that you obey the injunction of verse 14 in order that you might properly represent the children of God. I remember as a boy, I mentioned this to you some years ago, getting caught in a very compromising situation, and having a deacon of my father's church say to me, "Don't you know who your father is? How can you act like that?" That has stuck in my mind as a spiritual truth. I do not want to behave in any way or conduct myself in any matter of conduct which will cause someone to say, "Don't you know who your Father is? How can you act like that?"

Second point, when we talk about the reason for obedience, not only for our own sake but for the sake of the unsaved. Here's a very basic principle here, for the sake of the unsaved. He says in verse 15, "You are to become 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 forth the word of life." Now, here he is saying this matter of how you live has a dramatic impact not only on whether or not you're consistent as a child of God, but how you affect the world in which you appear as lights. Now, we're talking about the unsaved, now we're talking about our witnessing, now we're talking about our evangelistic mandate. And this is the heart of the appeal, by the way. The first part just led into this; the last part just leads out of it. This is the main issue. Evangelism is primarily a matter of God's children shining as lights in a dark world. But doing that effectively comes down to two things: character and content, character and content, or personality and proclamation. It's not just what you say; it's also what you are. And we know that. This is good reminder.

Now, would you notice verse 15, just to get you in touch with the specifics, he says, "In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," and he there borrows a phrase from the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 and verse 5. There, Moses was speaking to apostate Israel and saying you are no more the children of God for you are a crooked and perverse nation. So, he borrows that same phrase, only this time he's not defining an apostate Israel; the writer of Scripture is now defining the society of the world in which the church exists. In Deuteronomy 32, Moses characterized apostate Israel as a crooked and perverse nation, and here Paul borrows that phrase to characterize the whole world in which the church exists. And we are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And that is something we need to be very careful to understand.

I thought, you know, well maybe I could just take some time and talk about the perversity of our nation. And then, I thought, "No, everybody knows how perverse it is, anybody need any information on that?" I don't think so. We live in a crooked and perverse generation. Please note: we are in the midst of it. Jesus said in John 17 when He prayed to the Father, I'm not going to ask you take them out of the world, I'm going to ask You to keep them in the world. There we are as lights in the world. It is a world of God-rejecters. It is a world of Christ-haters. It is a tragic world, morally warped, spiritually perverted. It rejects God's message as Israel of old did. Would you notice those two words,

“crooked and perverse?” The word generation is *genea,* could translate nation as well. But the words “crooked and perverse” are interesting. Crooked is a Greek word, *skolios*. Have you ever heard of an illness called scoliosis of the spine? It’s a curvature of the spine. It comes from this word because the word means curved, bent out of shape. It describes something that is out of proper alignment, that is off and deviated from the standard. Proverbs 2:15 describes the society of this world in these terms. It says, “Their paths are crooked, and they are devious in their ways.” Isaiah 53 puts it this way in verse 6, “All we like sheep have gone,” what? “Astray.” And so, man has a spiritual disease, scoliosis of the heart, in which he is deviated from God, in which he has left the standard, moved away from the straight plumb line of righteousness.

And then, an even stronger word is the word perverse. This word means to be severely twisted or severely distorted. So, man has deviated from the path, and in the deviation become severely twisted and severely distorted. It is an abnormal condition. By the way, our Lord also used this basic same expression in Luke 9. Jesus said, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you?” So, this is a good characterization, one used in the Old Testament, one used in the gospels, one used by the writer of the epistle to describe someone who has deviated from the path of righteousness, deviated from the plan of God, become twisted, perverted.

Now, you’ll notice here that it says “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,” and then it says, “Among whom you appear as lights in the world.” So, in a sense, generation and world go together. Generation speaks basically of the populous; world speaks of the moral, ethical, sinful system in which they think and by which they operate their lives and conduct their behavior. So, we face a twisted distorted world. This is continuously brought home to me. It’s a twisted perverted world. Fornication is right, adultery is right, homosexuality is right, lying is right, cheating is right, and all the rest of it. Not the Word of God. So, the whole culture has deviated from the standard of righteousness, and in the deviation become distorted and twisted, and their thinking is so convoluted that we would never expect the natural man to understand the things of God. They are to him what? Foolishness.

Now, that leaves us then with two very important things. We are to reach this perverse world, we are to reach this crooked world and there are two ways: one, what we are; two, what we say. Let’s look, first of all, at what we are. Verse 15, “You are children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” Now, this is what we are. This is what we are. Among whom you appear, *phainomai*, probably could be translated “you are shining,” could be, “you must shine.” But he is saying you have to shine, and this is talking about now what we say but what we are, what we are. You shine, and here’s his analogy, as lights, *phōstēr*, that word in a metaphorical sense can refer to a lot of different lights. But whenever it’s used in a specific non-metaphorical sense it always refers to the sun, moon, or stars. And I take it here that that is probably what Paul is saying.

We find, for example, such a use of this term in the Septuagint in Genesis 1:14 and Genesis 1:16, we find some non-biblical sources where this word is used to refer to the sun, moon and the stars. And what he is simply saying is you live in a dark universe, and you are the stars and the sun and the moon; you’re the only light the world has. As the sun and the moon and the stars shine in the heavens, and as they illuminate an otherwise dark sky, so you shine in the world, illuminating an otherwise totally dark society. We shine.

Now, what do you mean by shine? We demonstrate the light of God. What is that? It’s the life of God.

I'm not going to go into a whole study, but light and life are one. Life, the life of God in us emphasizes the character of that life. The life of God in us as light emphasizes the impact of that life. And you find John jumping back and forth to those concepts, light and life, as well as Paul on some occasions. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "You are the light of the world." You are a vessel in whom the light of God has been poured with the life of God and now you have life as to its quality and light as to its impact. It is a shining life. It is a living light. And so, we are called to be what Israel failed to be. You remember in Romans 2:19, Paul says, "You're confident that you're a guide to the blind and a light to those who are in darkness, but you're not." Israel, the Jew as the Jewish leaders of Paul's time thought they were the lights but they weren't, and thus they are called the blind leading the blind, and both will fall in the ditch. But we are the light of the world. Why? Because the light of life shines in us and the light of His life in us shines from us. We are vessels.

In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul says God who first ordered the light to shine in the darkness has flooded our hearts with His light. We can now enlighten men by giving them the knowledge of God's glory that comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are lights. We are children of light. In Ephesians 5:8, there's a good reminder of that and you know it very well. "You were formerly darkness now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light." Then, he even talks about the fruit of light and what is it? The fruit of light is goodness, and righteousness, and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord and not participating in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. Our light shines in our deeds: goodness, righteousness, truth, what we are, that's how the light shines.

You actually light people one way or another. You send out an impulsive light, you as a child of God. You cannot come in contact with other people in this crooked and perverse generation without impacting them in some way. And if you are a godly, holy, obedient Christian, you will have an almost startling impact on most people. And they will feel the light and they may even shy away from the light because it is so obvious that you possess something they don't possess. They may feel the vibrations, to put it in another analogy, of your own holiness; they may feel a yearning to be something better than they are. They may even sense the appetite, the hunger, the thirst for the unseen and the eternal which they know they don't have. It's also true that if you're a bad person, you'll bring dark vibrations, and your life will touch someone else and it will put out a corresponding current that you've induced. So, you affect people for good or for bad, everybody does.

In a sense it's a terrible thing to think about. FB Meyer wrote, "These thoughts press on one's heart that one can never speak a word, never transact a piece of business that one's face is never seen lighted up with the radiance of God or clouded and despondent without it being made harder or easier for other men to live a good life. Every one of us every day resembles Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made other men sin, or we are lifting other men into the light and the peace and the joy of God. No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, but the life of everyone is telling upon an increasing number of mankind what a solemn responsibility it is to live." And we have that responsibility. You are light. You have been called to light the dark world. And the quality of your life is the platform of your personal testimony. You have to understand that. By the kind of life you live, you build a platform on which what you say is made believable. If you have no platform because of your life, your message isn't believable. And a murmuring discontent, grumbling, griping, complaining Christian is never going to have a positive influence on others. You can't be talking about the gospel, forgiveness, joy, peace, gladness, comfort, and be moaning and grumbling and complaining all the time. People are not going to believe the gospel will do what you're trying to say it will do. That's why the philosopher Heine in Germany said, "Show me your redeemed lives and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer."

But in addition to our character is our content, it's what we say. Look at verse 16. Also he adds, in the process of shining as lights in the world you are "holding forth the word of life." Now, some would translate it "holding fast." Now, my own feeling is that if Paul wanted to say "holding fast" he probably would have used *katechō*, instead he uses *epechō*, holding forth or holding out. That same verb used here is used in Homer's "Odyssey" to refer to holding out a gift of wine for someone to take and drink, so it's kind of an offer. It can mean holding firmly, holding tightly, but the context here is one of shining in a dark world. It's one of sending light into a dark world. So, both the word, its uses, its comparison to other terms and its context seems to me to favor holding forth, holding out. We are shining as stars in terms of character. We are holding out the Word of life. What is that? The Word that gives life. What Word gives life? The gospel, the gospel, the message which gives life, the gospel of salvation that gives life, the life of God to the soul, the soul of man. Men are dead in trespasses and sin, Ephesians 2:1 says, they need life. We hold out that life. We hold forth that life. That's proclamation. So, on the one hand it's personality; on the other, it's proclamation, it's character, and it's content. It's what we are, it's what we say.

So, stop grumbling, Paul says, stop complaining, stop arguing with God, obey God joyfully, work out your salvation without complaining. And in the process of shining as lights in the world, hold out the gospel that saves and you will find there will be a ready reception, because a transformed life is the greatest advertisement for the gospel. Not a negative, griping, complaining spirit. So, it's your joyful, thankful, positive, enthusiastic trust in and love for and obedience to God that makes your witnessing effective.

Third and last point, and I saved this for the last, and I only want to say a brief comment or two on it because I don't want you to think that it's self-serving. But this is a most interesting point. Point number three: stop complaining for your own sake, stop complaining for the sake of the lost or the unsaved in the world; thirdly, stop complaining for the sake of your pastor. Did you get that? You say, "Wait a minute, is that in the Bible?" It is, it is. Look at verse 16, "So that in the day of Christ I may have cause to rejoice because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." He says, "Look, if you'll obey this command, I'll be happy in the day of Christ, and I'll look back on my life and I'll say it wasn't in vain, it wasn't in vain." So, he says do it for my sake. And his pastoral heart is showing here. He says, "Be pure, be godly, without complaint, for the sake of the one who has given his life in service to you, for the sake of the one who has been called by God, for the sake of the one who has been commissioned by God, for the sake of the one who has extended himself that he might minister to you. Please do this for my sake, and not for my temporal sake but for my eternal sake," he says. Not to make me like my ministry better. No, but to give me a greater joy in eternity. Why? I believe it's very simple. This isn't proud, this isn't self-serving. Paul's saying this, look, "I love God. I love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. I live in this life to serve God. And I look forward to heaven for one great reason: I want to glorify God. And the more effective my service has been in this world, the greater my capacity to glorify Him will be in the world to come. So, don't limit my capacity to glorify Him in the world to come by rendering my labors here in vain because you have not followed through."

And so, here's his third and compelling motivation: do it for your sake that you might be a proper child of God. Do it for the lost's sake that you might shine as a light in the world holding forth the Word of life. And do it for my sake that out of love for me and esteem for me and desire to see me fully able to glorify God in eternity, do it. Marvelous point, isn't it? He had given his life for them. He was the human instrument of their salvation. It's recorded in Acts 16 how the Philippian church was

born. Now, he's in prison. He doesn't know how long he has. For all he knows at this point he may lose his life. It turned out he didn't lose it until later in a second imprisonment. But at the time he faced that prospect. He looks forward to meeting the Lord and he says, "When I meet the Lord," verse 16, "in the day of Christ," and that, by the way, is different than the day of the Lord. It's a different emphasis. Day of the Lord emphasizes judgment; day of Christ emphasizes rewards. Day of the Lord focuses on the unbeliever; day of Christ focuses on the believer. So, he says, "As I look at the day of Christ," and by the way, we did detailed study on that in our message on chapter 1 verses 6 and 10, "As I look forward to the day when I see Christ and I receive my reward," he says, I will have cause to glory," or better, "cause to rejoice, cause to rejoice." And why will I rejoice? "Because I will know that I didn't run in vain," and that's a word that's used to speak of runners in a stadium, making a maximum effort to win a great event, "and I didn't toil in vain," that's *kopiaō*, work to the point of sweat and exhaustion. In other words, I want to get to the end, I want to see Christ and know that none of the tremendous effort that I made was for nothing.

Will you encourage my heart throughout all eternity by being faithful? I don't think anybody ever has that kind of thought. Do you ever have that kind of thought? Boy, I want to be a faithful Christian in order that John MacArthur might get a full reward. Yeah. I mean, that's so bizarre you never thought of it. Well, now you know, right? It's right here. I don't say that selfishly. I mean, some people think the best thing you can do for the preacher, you know, is take him to dinner or send him a card and write him a nice letter. And those are wonderfully encouraging. The best thing you could ever do for the pastor, and the pastors, and all of those who lead you here and whatever other churches you've been in, the best thing you could ever do is to live out everything they ever taught you so that when they get to glory, they will have the fullest capacity to praise and glorify the God they've served all through eternity. I don't want anything in this life. Neither did Paul. Interesting. You are to esteem them very highly in love sake, it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, for their works. You are to follow their faith, it says in Hebrews 13:17. You know what John said in 3 John 4? Listen to this, he said, "I have no greater joy than to hear of my children walking in love." The greatest joy of any servant of God is the obedience of his flock, that's the greatest joy. Then, you're going to get to the day of Christ and know you didn't run in vain, and you didn't labor in vain. You didn't work to the point of sweat and exhaustion, and you didn't run to the max in the race for nothing because the people were faithful.

It's not egotistical. It's that you so cherish the responsibility of ministry that you want God to know you have rendered the very best effort possible. Paul, if he's going to boast, Romans 15 says, in Christ Jesus, I have found reason for boasting, but I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me. He knows. Whatever we rejoice in Christ has done, whatever good happens in your life Christ has done. But be faithful for the sake of those who have poured their life into you. Be faithful for the sake of those who planted the seed and those who watered the seed.

Contrast this, just as we close, with a verse back in the 49th chapter of Isaiah. Listen to Isaiah. Listen to what he said. Way back in chapter 6 he was called to ministry, now he's looking back. Verse 4, "But I said, I have toiled in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing in vanity." Isn't that sad? "I've toiled in vain. I've spent my strength for nothing in vanity." Heartbroken prophet. Oh, Paul knew it wouldn't all end bad. So did Isaiah. There was a reward for Isaiah. And Paul knew that it wouldn't totally be for nothing, because he said in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that he knew that his toil in the Lord was not in vain. But what he is saying is, "I want a full response, I want a full reward so I can have a full rejoicing and a full capacity to glorify God."

And so, I say to you, dearly beloved, be faithful to this command for your sake, for the sake of the unsaved and for the sake of those who have given their service to you as your shepherds. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we needed this reminder again because we are so prone to a complaining spirit. We remember the words of Isaiah 45:9, "Woe to the one who quarrels with his maker, an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth, will the clay say to the potter, what are you doing? Or the thing you are making say, he has no hands?" Are we going to complain against You? Are we going to answer back to You for the way You've made us? For the design of our life? Help us, Lord, to do all things in working out our salvation, all things, without complaining, with joy and thankfulness that we might be children that bring honor to their father, that we might be shining lights in a dark world, that we might bring eternal joy and rejoicing to the heart of those who have labored in our behalf. And we all, Father, have precious shepherds who have given portions of their life for us, may we be faithful that they may come in the day of Christ to see that their labor was not in vain. Thank You, Lord, for all that You're doing in our congregation. Thank You for the continually faithful way in which You manifest Your grace to us. Forgive us for our complaints and set our feet on the path of obedience, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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