

JOY - Gospel Maturity, part 2: The Essential Absence in Obedience.

Philippians 2:14-30

MPS Christians guard the essential absence to shine His light in the world and invite others to rejoice in Jesus.

OBJ Every person can understand how gospel maturity is cultivated by a three-part pattern.

INTRO Let's go to the Word to see how the process of Christian maturity in real time is learned by repeated practice.

READ Philippians 2:14-18

*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that 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, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. **Philippians 2:14-18***

Once Paul clarifies the work of the joined relationship in Christian maturity, he provides practical counsel for the Christian to be careful not to short-circuit the process. It is of great importance that we note; Paul's command does not create nor add to our Christian "To Do List-for-God". Just the opposite. Paul's command warns of what we must be careful NOT to do, what I call "The Essential Absence in our Obedience". But these verses must be held together as one to understand their real value.

Christians guard the essential absence to shine His light in the world and invite others to rejoice in Jesus.

ILLUS Muscle memory training consists in the regular repetition of an action or movement that trains the body to avoid a wrong act as it replaces with the correct one, and to train the mind and body to perform this specific function by natural response. Muscle memory training is critical in almost every field. Recently while watching the World Series, a commentator told how the Houston Astros slugger, Yordan Alvarez (I believe), was in a hitting slump, and how Dusty Baker coached him in his batting motion. He was moving his foot, which caused him to drop his shoulders and lose his power. **How did he fix it?** Repeated practice to stop the wrong action and hold a correct posture to begin his swing, and to such an extent so that when he got into the stress of the game, he would stay focused and not forget is what helped him correct his swing.

TRANS Today's passage presents us with a similar pattern for Christian maturity.

OBJ Gospel maturity is cultivated by a three-part pattern.

The first part of the Christian maturity pattern is...

Refuse to practice anything that opposes our true identity in Jesus. .14

Paul begins "*Do all things without grumbling or disputing,*".¹⁴ He doesn't begin by telling them to uphold the Ten Commandments or some other directive. Rather, Paul warns them against what NOT to do; "*grumbling or disputing.*" Grumbling is that general disposition of dissatisfaction, what is most often referred to as complaining. I call this "the conversation of our sinful nature"; no matter what it speaks of, it is never positive, good, helpful, or beneficial. Paul includes *disputing*. This word denotes the idea of arguing and speaks more to the reasoning of sin that creates doubt and disbelief and is most often aimed at others to create division. Paul's point here is simple; **everything is to be done with the essential absence of rejecting sinful actions that oppose our true identity in Jesus because they add no benefit to anything.**

Exodus 16 records that the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron and rebelled against God. Their grumbling caused them to forsake God's blessing and provision. Complaining and arguing always disrupts God's work among a people because it deters His work in His people. And this is Paul's point. **When Christian's complain and argue, all we do is give voice to our sin; we skew an accurate depiction of any situation, create tension and division with other people, and bear false witness about God in denying our gospel hope by silencing our joy.**



Complaining and arguing is the quickest way to short-circuit God's work of maturity in your life, forms the easiest expression of disbelief and disobedience, and is always ultimately directed toward God even when aimed at or shared with other people. It damages everyone in its path. But the greatest damage is done in the one who persists in it, multiplying its misery with every 'seed' spoken.

ILLUS I was once told, in explaining why they complained about and accused me to someone else, "But I have to tell someone." No, Paul says there is never a reason for a Christian to complain and argue without hope and joy.

We are all prone to complain because it's the 'voice' of sin within us. Complaining is as innate to the natural self as blaming because of sin; no one has to be taught to blame, complain, or argue, because it all flows naturally from the sin's seed within. And the only way to stop complaining and arguing is to de-throne self(2:1-11), and worship the Lord in fear and trembling. The more we complain, the more we reorient our perspective of all things away from Jesus-centered to self-centered. [One problem continually complained over distorts one's view of the whole world.](#)

ILLUS When skateboards first became popular, they were small boards with small wheels. And when you rode them on concrete they would fly. But there was always one small fault; the smallest pebble would stop them immediately, leaving the rider fully victimized by inertia. [Groaning and complaining are the pebbles that throw a Christian fully into sin's deception.](#)

Refusing to complain and argue **MUST** be practiced to conquer and replace it with a correct action. [Grumbling and arguing among the church is always sin against God, and destructive to the one doing it.](#)

[*Refuse to practice anything that opposes our true identity.](#)

TRANS [What are we to do instead?](#) The second part of the Christian maturity pattern is...

Hold fast to the Word to Live as His light in the world. .15-16

Paul calls on the Philippians to "set their own house in order so that God's purpose for them as a witnessing community may be fulfilled."¹ Verse 15 states, "*that you might be*". This reminds us of God's blessing placed on us as our new creation. These "words provide an apt commentary on what it means to let our conduct be 'worthy of the gospel of Christ' (1:27)."² When we choose to speak the language of our sin, sing the song of our unrighteousness, echo the praise of our self-righteousness, to bellow the brokenness of our heart's hard stubbornness, we act contrary to the truth of God's salvation on us, His righteousness, glory, and favor on us. But when we stop complaining and arguing and hold fast to His Word, we are released to live as we've been made new because Christians live by faith in obedience to Jesus commands. [Refusing to complain and argue releases us to live as children of God, o-BE-dience by faith as God has redeemed us.](#)

Holding fast to Jesus' Word by obedience shines the light of the One who has shone His light of life in us. We live in a crooked and twisted generation where we are called to shine as God's light. We are not told that we are the light, and we are not told to create light, but we "*shine as lights in the world*" by "*holding fast to the word of life*". The only way we shine as God's light is by obedience to His Word. We don't polish God's truth to make it look better, accessorize it to make it more appealing, alter it to accommodate people's preferences, diminish it to coddle sin's guilt, twist it to align with people's perversions, or sugar-coat to strip it's value to try and make it more palatable. The Word does not need our adornment; we are called to adorn our lives by the Word of God! The Word of God is sufficient to perform this pattern in your life by, teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.^{2Tim3:16-17} [Christians fix the attention of our mind, the affection of our heart, and the volition of our will on God's Word to walk by faith in obedience, and shine as God's light in the world.](#)

APPL Imagine IF...every time you wanted to complain you caught that thought before it dripped into your heart and slipped out over your tongue. And instead, you measured it against God's Word to know His truth, confessed and repented of sin, cast your care and anxiety on Him, exalted Christ, received His peace, embraced His hope to know His joy. This is exactly

¹ Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 122.

² Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, TNTC, 122.



what Paul instructs in 2 Corinthians 10:5 when he says, “*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*” Complaining and grumbling never shine God’s light. Holding fast to God’s Word always pierces the darkness with His light. because there is no complaint to utter but only rejoicing and inviting others to join in!

APPL Christian, your growth and maturity depends AS MUCH on what you determine to STOP and NOT practice, so to not oppose your new identity of Christ’s righteousness placed on you, nor prevent or impede the reality of your sanctification in His image, AS what you commit and discipline your life to participate in, be influenced by, and to embrace so to be shaped by, knowing that what you take in determines not only what will come from you but, ultimately, what will be made of you. *Christians shine as God’s light in the world when we fix our attention on Jesus through His Word so that all our mind and heart are consumed by our obedience to Him. *Christians live as His light in the world by holding fast to His Word.*

ILLUS In explaining how he corrected his batting stance, the Astros slugger shared how his foot movement was something that had developed without him noticing. And to make sure he broke the pattern, especially in high pressure games like the World Series, he had to be very focused every time he went to the plate to not allow the movement to creep back in.

TRANS There is no rationale that legitimizes complaining and arguing. “But what about...” you argue. No. Look with me. The third part of the Christian maturity pattern is...

Rejoice in Jesus Christ and invite others to join us. .17-18

Paul says, “*Even if...*” We often speak of the potency of two words to change everything, like “*But God...*”. But—“*Even if...*” is equally as potent for the one who trusts “*But God*” to rejoice. Paul confronts the mental games of “*What if...*” and “*What about...*” that sin makes us play, telling us that in the most stressful and crucial times, when sin is most appealing and temptation strongest, when times are hardest and burdens heaviest, nothing justifies complaining because Jesus is always worthy and faithful when we look to Him. “*Even if...*” turns **EVEN the worst-case scenario to rejoicing over complaining because nothing can steal our hope or joy.**

Paul gives two examples to encourage them in remaining faithful and rejoicing. Timothy.¹⁹⁻²⁴ is a faithful servant who holds a genuine concern for the church, even ABOVE his own self interests and preferences. To do this always creates more challenge in the work, and results in personal difficulties and suffering. **Even when** others tap out, a “Timothy” steps up to rejoice even at personal sacrifice. Epaphroditus²⁵⁻³⁰ holds such a genuine love and concern for the church that he was not deterred by the threat of his own well-being and risk of life. **Even when** near death, an “Epaphroditus” doesn’t defer to take a ‘time-out’, but stays faithful to rejoice, press in and continue serving the church. *Epaphroditus and Timothy are men who model for us what it means to rejoice ‘even if’ and ‘especially when’ everything gets more difficult and threatening, because no matter what, Jesus will prove sufficient and worthy through it all.*

The Christian who is rejoicing in Jesus has neither the time nor thought to grumble or complain. “*Even if...*” reminds us that because of the gospel, there is NEVER a moment, time, circumstance, situation or otherwise, when Jesus will not prove faithful and true. Therefore we rejoice and invite others to join us! Rejoicing is the song of obedience, that sets our mind on the glory of Christ, consumes our heart with the hope and joy of Christ, to pour forth from our tongues in praise and adoration for Christ. **Christians REJOICE and invite others to rejoice because you know that Jesus is sufficient and faithful at all times.*

Christians guards against practicing anything that opposes our true identity to shine His light in the world and invite others to rejoice in Jesus.

CLOSE There is much to be applied from today’s message, but I encourage you to start here. Ask yourself, “**where is Holy Spirit convicting me to begin?**” **Is there an action that I need to stop? How do I need to trust God’s Word by “Even if...”? What command / teaching of God’s Word do I need to hold fast to? What is keeping me from rejoicing in Jesus?**

