



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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Welcome to Part 3 of our 4 part series called "City On A Hill". This weeks sermon is called "Shining When It's Hard".

Our scripture lesson comes from Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 to 18.

Starting at verse 12:

So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose.

Do everything without grumbling and arguing,

so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.

Hold firmly to the message of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.

But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word!

Church, let me ask you something: When life gets hard—when the money runs out, when the diagnosis comes back, when the marriage is strained, when the job is thankless, what does the world see? It's easy to smile on Sunday. It's easy to raise our hands when the band is loud and the lights are low. But what happens on Tuesday morning, when the kids are fighting, the bills are due, and you're exhausted?

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians from a prison cell. He wasn't in a nice place. He wasn't comfortable. And yet, he's not writing to complain. He's telling the Philippians, who themselves

were facing persecution and hardship, how they should live in the middle of their own difficult circumstances.

Here is the Big Idea of this message: ****The way we respond to difficult situations will determine how others view our faith.****

Your response is not just about you. It's not just about your mood. It is your loudest sermon. It is the clearest evangelistic message you will ever preach—or the greatest hindrance to the Gospel.

Look at verse 15. Paul says, "so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." He calls the world "warped and crooked." We live in a dark world. But what does he say we will be? "Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky."

Stars shine most brilliantly in the darkest night. Not in the middle of the day. In the dark.

Point 1: The Motivation for Our Response — God Is At Work

****Philippians 2:12-13****

> "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

We often read "work out your salvation" and we get worried. "Oh no, do I have to earn my salvation?" No! He didn't say "work FOR your salvation." He said "work OUT" your salvation. It's like your faith is a muscle—it's already there, but you need to exercise it. What you are going through right now is the gym. God has placed you in the weight room of difficulty. And it's not the weight of condemnation or punishment; it's the weight that builds spiritual muscle.

And here is the beautiful truth: ****God is doing the heavy lifting.**** Look at verse 13: "For it is God who works in you." The word "works" here means "energizes." God is energizing you. He is giving you the will and the power to do what pleases Him.

So, when you are in a difficult situation and you find the strength to keep going, that's God. When you want to snap back at someone and you hold your tongue, that's God. When you feel empty and you choose to worship anyway, that's God.

You can't respond like a Christian in your own strength. You're not strong enough. But here's the thing—God isn't just **near** you; He's **in** you. And He's working. That should change the way we face the hard stuff.

Point 2: The Evidence of Our Response — No Grumbling

****Philippians 2:14****

> "Do everything without grumbling or arguing."

Now, this is where the rubber meets the road. Paul zeroes in on two specific sins: grumbling and arguing.

****Grumbling**** is the low-level, chronic disbelief. It's the murmuring. It's that constant drip, drip, drip of discontent. It's the sighing. It's the rolling of the eyes. It's saying, "God, why is this happening to me again?" It's like the children of Israel in the wilderness. They grumbled against Moses, and ultimately, they were grumbling against God.

****Arguing**** is the louder version. It's the angry word. It's the bitter debate. It's one-upmanship. It's "who is right" vs. "what is right." It's the division that happens when the pressure is on.

Here is the key: Paul didn't say "Do ***most*** things without grumbling." He didn't say "Do ***the church things*** without grumbling." He said, "Do ****everything****."

That means your job. That means your home. That means your traffic. That means your health struggles. That means your waiting room. That means your old age.

Why is this so critical? Because the world is watching. They don't read your Bible, but they read your attitude. They are looking for something different. If you are just a grumbler like everyone else in the world, you have no Gospel. You're no different. The only time your faith becomes attractive is when you can suffer, and not grumble.

Remember Jesus. He didn't open His mouth to complain on the cross. He didn't say, "I don't deserve this." He didn't argue with the soldiers. He said, "Father, forgive them." That silence, that surrender, that trust—it breaks hearts. It opens eyes.

Point 3: The Consequence of Our Response — A Radiant Testimony

****Philippians 2:15 to 18****

> "...Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."

Notice the sequence. ****No grumbling**** (v. 14) + ****Hold to the Word**** (v. 16) = ****Shining like stars**** (v. 15).

Stars are passive of themselves. They don't try to shine. The light is ***in*** them. The sun feeds them. In the same way, your light is Christ in you. When you hold fast to the Gospel, when you let His peace rule, the light comes out—not because you're trying, but because you're trusting.

And look at Paul. He says, "Even if I am being poured out..." He's in jail. He's facing death. He's like a drink offering being spilled. And what is his attitude? "I am glad and rejoice." He's not using a grumble to preach the Gospel; he is using a hymn.

Paul knew his hard circumstance was actually a pulpit. His chains were his platform. His suffering was his sermon. And look at verse 16: He says, "so that I didn't labor in vain." He's saying, "If you grumble,

then my ministry is for nothing." Can you imagine being the reason the Gospel is mocked? Or can you imagine being the reason someone's ministry is fruitful?

Your response to difficulty is the proof that the Gospel is real. People don't argue with someone's breakthrough when they see patience in the pain.

Church, let's bring this home. We need to adjust our mindset.

****First, see your difficult situation as your mission field.****

You are exactly where God has placed you. That difficult coworker? That's your mission. That difficult family member? That's your mission. That chronic illness? That is your pulpit. The world is watching how you handle it.

****Second, audit your words for 24 hours.****

The old hymn says, "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise." But I tell you, the world would be much more impressed if we had one tongue that didn't grumble. Tonight, spend a few minutes and listen to yourself. Count how many times you complain. Every complaint is a vote of no confidence in your God.

****Third, practice gratitude as a weapon.****

When you feel the grumble rising, fight back with thanks. Thank God for what He's teaching you. Thank God that He's with you. Thank God that this trial is not forever. Gratitude is the antidote to grumbling.

****Fourth, remember the glory.****

The wait is only temporary. The dark is only for a season. But the shining... the shining is forever. Everyone who watches you suffer with grace is collecting evidence for the Gospel.

Now, if you're here today and you realize that your grumbling is not just a personal problem—it's becoming a stumbling block for others—you need to deal with it. You may be in a difficult situation today, and you haven't been responding well. You've been complaining. You've been arguing. And you've quietly damaged your witness.

Maybe you came in here with a heavy heart, and you need to hand it over to the Lord. You've been trying to be a Christian in your own strength, and you're failing. You need to be filled with the Spirit.

And maybe you've never trusted Jesus at all. You've been watching Christians, and they've turned you off because they complain like the world. But maybe you see a difference now. Maybe you want the "peace that passes understanding." That peace comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. He suffered without sin. He died for your grumbling. He rose again. If you don't know Him as your Lord and Savior, I want you to come.

But all of us need to get right with God, right now. I'm going to invite you to a time of prayer—the altar is open. Whether you need to confess your complaining, or you need to surrender your difficult situation to Him, or you need to receive Christ today—this is your moment. Respond to God now.

Please bow your heads and pray with me...

Heavenly Father, we come to You, we confess that our mouths have often betrayed our hearts. We have grumbled in the wilderness of our circumstances. We have argued in the chaos of our schedules. Lord, forgive us.

We thank You, Father, that You are the God who works in us—that we don't have to muster up strength; we just have to surrender. *Help us, Holy Spirit, to hold firmly to the Word of Life so that we can shine like stars in this dark, crooked, and warped generation.*

For those facing difficult circumstances today, we declare You are the God who sees them and is working their trials for their good and Your glory. Help us to suffer in such a way that others see Jesus, not our complaints.

Lord, even when we feel poured out like a drink offering, let us rejoice. Let our joy be our testimony. May our response to difficulty draw others to the foot of the cross. And we ask for the courage to live out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that You are the One who brings it to completion.

We pray this all in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! For the more that you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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