

Philippians 2:14-18  
The Fruit of Our Words  
Sunday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025  
By Ryan Perry

## Scripture

*[14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing, [15] 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, [16] holding 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. [17] Even 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. [18] Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

## Pray

## Introduction

Listen to this story about a community garden movement that is beginning to flourish in the urban heart of Los Angeles, California.

*In the bustling urban landscape of Los Angeles, community gardens have emerged as green oases that not only beautify neighborhoods but also foster community spirit. Residents in underserved or marginalized areas have come together to transform vacant lots into vibrant gardens. These communal spaces serve as both a source of fresh produce and a gathering place for local families. **The initiative began with a small group of neighbors who wanted to combat food deserts in their area.** As word spread, more families joined, each bringing their own unique gardening skills and cultural traditions.*

*One of the most heartwarming aspects of these gardens is the intergenerational bonds that form. Elderly resident Maria often shares traditional growing techniques with local children, teaching them how to plant tomatoes and herbs. This transfer of knowledge not only preserves cultural heritage but also empowers young people to take a proactive role in their health and environment. With sustainability at the core, the gardens also implement composting and rainwater harvesting to minimize waste and maximize resources.*

*As a result of these efforts, many community gardens have begun to host workshops, offering classes on everything from composting to organic farming. **These programs educate members on the importance of sustainable practices, thus creating a ripple effect within the community.***

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As we jump back into the book of Philippians this week it is important to remember that Paul is writing to a fairly small and marginalized church that is located within the pagan culture of the Roman empire in Philippi

I am using the word marginalized because they are seen as outcasts in this city. They proclaim that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar, and their allegiance, above all else, is to Yahweh and not to the empire.

Therefore, they are not well regarded or liked in Philippi and are being opposed and persecuted by the hands of these Roman citizens. **They are suffering for the sake and cause of Christ.**

This has led to things like fear, disunity, selfishness, grumbling, and false teaching within this little community of faith.

Paul then, being informed of their situation by Epaphroditus, writes this letter to encourage them to remain faithful to Christ, even though it's hard.

He reminds them that they are partners with him in the work of the gospel and that God is going to complete his work in them (Phil. 1:5-6). That their partnership with Paul and his imprisonment has served to advance the gospel (Phil. 1:12-18).

And he even gives himself as an example of how they should view life and death. **To live means fruitful labor for Christ (even in suffering) and to die means being with Christ (Phil. 1:18-26).**

All of this then becomes the basis for the commands that he gives to them in 1:27-2:18.

He calls them to live as citizens of heaven who reflect Christ, to be unified in advancing the gospel in Philippi, and to not be frightened but to expect suffering as part of God's plan (Phil. 1:27-30).

Then in chapter 2, he goes from focusing on how they should conduct themselves within the pagan culture around them, to how they should conduct themselves in their common life together within the church.

They are to reflect the very nature of our triune God through a joy-filled unity with one another, and they are to pursue this unity through humility and service (Phil. 2:3-4).

Then he gives them this grand picture of Christ as the ultimate example of humble obedience and servanthood (Phil 2:5-11).

An example which is to be emulated in their own humble obedience and servanthood. All of which, Paul says, is empowered by God, and is supposed to be worked out or lived out within their church community. (Phil. 2:5, 12-13).

Which brings us to our text for this morning, where Paul is going to give the Philippians a very practical and concrete way to live out the humble obedience and servanthood of Christ within their common and communal life together as a church.

But instead of focusing on particular acts of service, he instead focuses his attention on their words.

Because the things we say, reveal the condition of our hearts, and will have a profound effect on the growth and fruitfulness of the church. **Like the garden initiative in our opening story, it will have ripple effects in our community and beyond.**

With that said, I have four main points for you this morning. The first one comes from Paul's main command in verse 14 and the other three focus on the fruit or the ripple effects that Paul says will flow from living it out in verses 15-18.

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So let's begin by looking at Paul's command.

## **The Command**

**We must live together without grumbling or complaining (Phil. 2:14).**

### **Philippians 2:14**

***[14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing,***

Like he did earlier in chapter 2, Paul is again trying to correct a sin issue that has crept up in the church.

And in this particular instance, the sins that he has in view here are grumbling and disputing.

As the Philippians have continually dealt with hardships, persecution, and suffering, they're beginning to get tired and frustrated. And the overflow of this tiredness and frustration is beginning to manifest itself within the church through grumbling and disputing.

Now, the word grumbling points to the idea that they are **"whispering complaints."**

**They are airing out their grievances in secret and they're talking behind people's backs.**

Disputing on the other hand means that they are arguing, **which in this context is quarreling and debating in ways that are causing division and raising doubts.**

But who are they grumbling about and arguing with?

Although this letter doesn't give us an exact answer, Paul's call for unity (Phil. 1:27; 2:2), his instruction to honor one of their leaders, Epaphroditus, and people like him (2:29), his mention of overseer and deacons (1:1), and even Paul's own defense of his suffering for the gospel point to the real possibility that complaints and arguments are being leveled against the leaders of the church.

This idea becomes even clearer when we see that Paul's words actually echo descriptions of the Israelites in the wilderness. As it says in Numbers 14:2, 26-27:

***[2] And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!"***

***[26] And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, [27] "How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me.***

The people of Israel were also dealing with hardships. They had been wandering in the desert for a long time and finally, God had brought them to the land that he said he would give them.

**But instead of trusting God, they became afraid because the people in the land seemed too powerful to conquer.**

So they got frustrated with Moses and Aaron and said, **"Why didn't we just stay in Egypt or in the wilderness to die? If we go try to take this land we will fall by the sword and our wives and children will become prey for these evil nations. No, let's choose a different leader and go back to Egypt."**

**The people of Israel and the believers in Philippi were afraid, upset, and ultimately were not putting their hope and trust in God. Therefore, they complained, grumbled, and argued against their leaders.**

Application

Now look, Paul isn't saying that you can never ask questions in the church. It doesn't mean that you can't be frustrated at times. And it doesn't mean that you shouldn't give healthy feedback or pushback when appropriate.

**In fact, we, as your leaders, welcome it.**

But it does mean that you shouldn't be having back-door or private conversations that paint your leaders or others in a bad light.

It means that selfishly arguing or quarreling for your own position is wrong, and it will likely divide the body.

It also means that if you are going to be a healthy church member, it is your job, if you have issues, to bring it to us, **or to others that you may be struggling with.**

And, you should do it with a humble heart and the mindset of a servant that desires to build up and encourage rather than tear down. As it says in Romans 14:19:

***[19] So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.***

### **Galatians 6:1**

**[1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.**

Personal Note:

One of the saddest experiences for me, as a pastor, is when people get angry and leave without talking to us.

Instead of pursuing peace, mutual building up, or bringing their issues, they instead choose to whisper complaints to others, they tear their leaders or others down behind closed doors, and then leave without a word.

**They make it clear, by their actions and their words, that selfishness and anger are ruling their hearts instead of the love of Christ.**

And in so doing, whether they realize it or not, they damage the unity of the body, they tarnish the display of Christ's fullness in the church, and they hinder the ministry and witness of the gospel through the body of Christ.

So the call for all of us this morning, including myself, is to be a people who live together and do all things without grumbling, arguing, or complaining.

Rather, in your words and in your heart, seek to love and serve one another, build one another up, and bring your issues to the leaders or others with gentleness and humility.

Because when we love and serve one another with our words and with humble hearts, Paul tells us that there will be tangible, Christ-exalting, and joy-filled ripple effects that flow from it.

And in verse 15-18 he gives us three main ripple effects or fruits that will flow from living out his command to live together without grumbling or disputing. The first one is this:

## The Fruit

**Our life together will produce a gospel witness. (Phil 2:14-16a)**

***[14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing, [15] 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, [16] holding fast to the word of life,***

Right away in verse 15, we see the words blameless, innocent, and without blemish. Words that in other places are used to refer to our status before Christ, **but here are referring to our life together as a community of faith.**

The word **blameless** means that “people can’t convict you of wrongdoing.” The word **innocent** means “unmixed” and that there is “no evil or harm” in a person. And the phrase **without blemish** means “without fault.”

**And Paul is using these words because he is trying to connect for them the reality that how they live will affect how they are viewed.**

Meaning, that they need to love and serve one another with their words (without complaining or arguing) **so that they can’t be convicted of wrongdoing, and no evil or fault will be found in the church.**

But who is going to convict this church of wrongdoing and who is going to be looking for evil and fault within the Philippians?

And the answer is the **“crooked and twisted generation”** among whom they live.

Now, before we go any farther, we need to realize that these words from Paul are another reference to the Old Testament. They are from the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:5 which says:

***[5] They have dealt corruptly with him;  
they are no longer his children because they are blemished;  
they are a crooked and twisted generation.***

In Deuteronomy 32, Moses is reminding the people of Israel about their history in the desert.

He is telling them that the previous generation of Israelites were corrupt in their dealings with God and therefore he rejected them as his children.

They were **blemished** and so he considered them **a crooked and twisted generation.**

But in Paul’s letter, the “crooked and twisted generation” that he has in mind isn’t the church, rather it is the pagan culture that surrounds them in Philippi.

It's the Roman citizens who have rejected God, have called Caesar Lord, and are now persecuting these believers.

**However, Paul believes that better things are in store for the Philippian church.**

Because they aren't rejected by God, **like the faithless Israelites**, rather they are God's children who are supposed to shine as lights in the crooked and twisted world in which they live.

This means that they are supposed to shine forth, the brilliance, beauty, and majesty of Christ to the world around them. This is another way of saying what he said in 1:27 which is "let your manner of life (your heavenly citizenship) be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ (or be a reflection of Jesus).

Their life together is supposed to be a witness to the world around them that Jesus is Lord.

But this witness is only possible if they put away grumbling and arguing and instead seek to love and humbly serve each other with their words and heart attitudes.

It will be a sign that their belief in Jesus is real as they cling to God's words and seek to live them out with one another.

As a result, their manner of life will altogether seem different and attractive in a world where evil and negativity reign, and the genuineness of their love for one another, will draw others to Christ.

Like the community garden initiative in Los Angeles, their life together will transform lives and the community of Philippi.

Application:

Back in the fall of 1999, I had recently graduated from high school but unfortunately, because of my grades, didn't get into college. So I ended up working at a Super America gas station because I needed to do something, but I was feeling altogether lost.

I didn't know where I was going or what I was doing, and was plagued by this continual feeling that I was missing something.

So one night a friend of mine called me and asked if I wanted to go to a Christian meeting at the University of Minnesota. Of course, I had nothing better to do, so even though I didn't believe in God, I said yes.

And I will tell you, that to this day, I will never forget what I experienced in that meeting. **I saw a group of Christians who clearly loved each other, were connected with one another, and had a joy in their gathering that I had never experienced before in my life.**

Now, that wasn't the night that I came to faith in Christ, but that meeting was what set me on the path of looking into the claims of Christ.

I saw Jesus in that gathering, which made me want to learn about Jesus, and eventually led me to put my faith in Jesus.

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Right now, we live in a world that is so full of fear, anger, and anxiety. Everywhere we look people are negative and it can feel like complaining, arguing, tearing others down, and dividing over issues are simply a normal and expected part of the American experience.

But we as a Christian community are called to live out and shine something different into this American culture. Instead of fighting and dividing, we are to be working toward reconciliation and unity.

Instead of complaining and arguing we are supposed to be at peace and speak words of encouragement to one another. Instead of tearing others down, we are called to build one another up in love.

Like the Christian meeting I was at, our life together should paint a picture of Jesus that is enticing and attractive to a world that is so lost and full of darkness. And when we live this way, scripture tells us that our crooked and twisted world will take notice, and people will come to faith. As Peter says in 1 Peter 2:12:

***[12] Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.***

So let's put away complaining and arguing, and instead, encourage and build each other up so that the gospel will be seen in and through us, and the world will taste and see that Jesus is Lord and that he is good.

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And when our life together begins to bear this kind of fruit it will also give us confidence that God is working within us.

**Our life together will give us confidence that God is working. (Phil. 2:14-16)**

***[14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing, [15] 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, [16] holding 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.***



If we just read the last part of verse 16 it kind of feels like Paul is being a little selfish and prideful, doesn't it?

It seems like he is saying to the Philippians, ***“Hey, when Jesus returns (Day of Christ), I want to take pride in what I have accomplished. I don't want to look bad in front of Jesus, so you better stop grumbling and arguing so I can get the accolades that are coming to me.”***

But if that's what Paul is saying, then he is working for his own selfish ambitions and vain glory which is exactly what he was speaking against in Philippians 2:3.

So this can't be what he is saying. But then what do these words mean?

To answer this we must look for the context clues in this book and elsewhere in scripture. Look with me at the following verses:

### **Philippians 3:3**

***[3] For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory (boast) in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—***

Paul is emphasizing boasting in Jesus not his works.

### **Philippians 2:13**

***[13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.***

God is the one at work in the Philippians, not Paul.

### **Philippians 1:6**

***[6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.***

God is the one who will complete his work in the Philippians when Jesus returns.

### **1 Corinthians 15:10**

***[10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.***

Paul has done a lot of hard work and has gone through a lot of suffering for the gospel, and yet he is saying that it was God working in and through him.

So when he says in verse 16, “so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” he is talking about God's work through him.

He wants to be able to glory in the reality that God's power and grace were at work in him and through him to accomplish his kingdom's purposes. And that everything he went through was a part of God's plan to build his kingdom people.

Therefore, he wants the Philippians to put away grumbling and arguing and to shine forth Christ in how they live so that he can boast in God, who is accomplishing his work through Paul.

Application:

As a church, we should want our work and fellowship together to produce tangible and life-changing results in our gathering and in the world. We should long for it and pray for it.

And the good news for us, from Paul, is that if we cling to the word of God, if we obey his commands, and we humbly love and serve one another in our interactions and with our words, it will be a visible sign that God is at work in our midst.

**We will be able to be confident that God is working in us to will and work according to his good pleasure. The fruit of which will result in our mutual joy.**

This is our last point for this morning.

**Our life together will produce mutual joy. (Phil 2:17-18)**

***[17] Even 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. [18] Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.***

Paul, in verse 17, is making a reference to the common practice of pouring out drink offerings to the Lord that were both present in the OT (Num. 28:7), and in Roman culture.

He is taking the drink offering analogy and he's applying it to his ministry and the possible death that may result from it.

Likewise, he's also using offering language when he refers to the sacrificial offering of their faith. Which in this context, more than likely points to the Philippian's service in the cause of Christ.

**Paul is trying to paint a picture where his ministry and possible death are a part of fulfilling the ministry that God has given to the Philippians.**

That even if he dies, it's okay because he sees his death as part of living out and completing the Philippians gospel partnership with him that we talked about in chapter 1.

Which means that he sees his possible death as something that will be for the flourishing of the gospel both in Rome, where he is in prison, and in Philippi.

**Therefore, the only right response for Paul and for the Philippians in this situation is to rejoice with one another, in their sacrificial service, as God bears fruit through their gospel partnership.**

Application/Conclusion:

I hope this mutual rejoicing and joy excites you this morning. Because this is exactly what God wants for us at LEFC.

But we need to realize that it begins with what we are believing in our hearts.

We need to remember that we are people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. That the grace of God has been applied to us when he took our sins upon himself.

And we need to remember that we are children of God, heavenly citizens, who have been given a new life and a new home as free gifts, through Christ.

And when these truths permeate our hearts, we will be able to lay aside selfish ambition and vain glory. We will stop complaining and talking against others. And we will stop sinfully fighting for our own position.

Rather, we will humbly come together as a church family for the purpose of loving one another, serving one another, and building one another up in Christ.

**We will love one another as Christ has loved us.**

And the fruit that will flow from that love will be a robust gospel witness within our communities. The tangible fruit and growth from God in our life together.

And finally, we will experience mutual joy as we wait for the day when Christ returns.

So my final encouragement to us is to put away complaining and arguing. Keep short accounts with each other. Talk through your issues, either with us as leaders, or with each other. And in your hearts, humbly and patiently serve one another as you have been served by Christ, so that we all can rejoice together as we watch God work in this family to fulfill his heavenly purposes.

**Let's pray.**