

Complaining:

The Mark of an Immature Christian

Introduction

If I were to ask you what you thought was a key indicator of a person who was a mature Christian, you all would be able to think of something that people either do or don't do that would mark them as one who is spiritually mature. For some of us it's someone who knows the Bible well; to some of us it's someone who loves a lot. For some of us it's someone with character; for some it's one who is in a good relationship with the people they're around...people like being around them.

For me, one of the key indicators of a spiritually mature person is one who you seldom find complaining about circumstances or people. This is one who keeps a healthy Biblical perspective (God's perspective—3rd message) about circumstances and people at the forefront of their reflective thinking. Complaining is a mark of an immature Christian. There are two subtopics I would like to explore over the next two days: Complaining and Contentment.

I. Complaining

A. What Is it? Examples of Complaining

1. Non-Biblical

- a) Siblings
- b) Workers/Co-Workers
- c) People Who Are Sick
- d) The Wealthy/Privileged
- e) Married Couples

2. Biblical

- a) Adam—Genesis 3:12
- b) Israel in the Wilderness—Numbers 14:2, 36
- c) Job—7:11; 23:2
- d) Pharisees—Luke 15:2, 19:7

B. Why Does God Say Not to Complain? Examples of God's Imperative to Avoid Complaining

The Emphasis and Influence of Present Imperatives

Continuous Action → Becomes → What Characterizes You

Present Imperatives are verbs that have a continuous kind of action. Greek Grammars often label this as durative. These imperatives describe behavior that happens continuously, thus it can be said that they characterize an individual. A translation of these particular verbs could start by saying, “*Keep on* (insert definition) ...” or better yet, “*Be characterized by* (insert definition) ...” The following is a cursory examination of the force and emphasis of present imperatives.

- **Matthew 9:5 (Mark 2:9)**
- **Romans 13:3, 14**
- **I Corinthians 7:17, 10:31, 11:24-25**
- **Ephesians 5:1-2, 15, 6:9**
- **Colossians 2:6, 4:5**
- **I Thessalonians 5:11 (2x)**

1. Philippians 2:12-14

Work Out (κατεργάζεσθε) *literally* “**Be characterized by or Keep on allowing God to work out or accomplish through you**”:

Present middle/passive imperative. Compound word. Durative. Present imperatives characterize; in other words, they describe a continuous action. **Defined as:** I produce, achieve, work, accomplish; to do that from which something results. From *katá*, “down, exactly according to,” intensifying *ergázomai*, “work, accomplish” – literally, “work *down* to the *end-point*,”. 22x—Examples Rom. 2:9, 5:3, 7:8, 15, 20.

Salvation (τὴν σωτηρίαν) *context says* “**Present-tense salvation**”:

Acc. fem. sing. **Defined as:** Deliverance or salvation; from *sōzō*, “to save, rescue” – *salvation*, i.e. God's rescue which delivers believers out of destruction *and into* His safety. Used of physical but **mainly spiritual salvation**. 46x—Examples Acts 27:34; Eph. 1:13; II Tim. 2:10, 3:15.

All of the elements of your present-tense salvation, allow God to accomplish them through you!

With (μετὰ):

Preposition. **Defined as:** Loosely associated with, in company with or among; After (when followed by an accusative). Properly, *with* (“*after with*”), implying “change afterward” i.e. what results *after* the activity. As an *active* “with,” looks towards the *after-effect* (change, result) which is only defined by the context.

Fear and Trembling (φόβου καὶ τρόμου):

Fear—Gen. Mas. Sing. **Defined as:** to panic, fear or withdraw; the cause of fear. Often to respect or reverence with a fear of displeasing.

Trembling—Gen. Mas. Sing. **Defined as:** a trembling (shaking) or quaking; subsequently, appears often metaphoric and a result of the fear. It is in accompany with fear (i. e. fear and trembling) 4 out of its 5 occurrences.

Do you have a healthy fear of displeasing God?

For God is (γάρ Θεός ἐστίν):

Conjunction. Explanatory “gar”; Pres. Act. Indicative. **Defined as:** for, indeed or because; used to express cause, explanation, inference or continuation. Its sense is shaped by the *preceding* statement.

The One Working In You All (ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν) literally “the One energizing in you all”: Pres. Act. Part. **Defined as:** To be operative and at work; *energize*, working *in* a situation which brings it from one stage (point) to the next, like an electrical current *energizing* a wire, bringing it to a *shining light bulb*.

Both to Will and to Work (καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν):

To Will—Pres. Act. Infinitive. **Defined as:** to desire (wish, will), to desirously will or want something. Wanting what is *best (optimal)* because someone is *ready* and *willing* to act. 209x

To Work—Pres. Act. Infinitive. **Defined as:** See the definition in the previous clause.

Do All Things Without (ποιεῖτε πάντα χωρὶς) literally “be characterized by doing all things without”:

Do—Pres. Act. Imp. Durative. **Defined as:** I make, manufacture, construct. I do, act, or cause. Present imperatives characterize; in other words, they describe a continuous action.

Complaining and Disputing (γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν):

Complaining—**Defined as:** Murmuring, grumbling, griping, complaint or displeasure. An expression of discontent. Always negative. 4x in the NT. Used in the LXX in Exodus and Numbers of Israel grumbling in the wilderness. A rejection of the circumstances that God has allowed in your life. An emotional belly-aching.

Disputing—Compound word. **Defined as:** Questionings, opinions, reasoning through, disputing, or arguing's. Where we get our word *dialogue*. It was used of judges who hand down corrupt decisions. It is an intellectual debate with God.

Illustration:

Too often we complain about the people in our lives, our spouses, jobs, friends, co-workers, and children even though either we have chosen them or God has allowed them for a particular purpose. We then go further and try to rationalize or dispute with God about why it is that we should have different circumstances; it's like, "God I have a much better idea about how to plot my situation than you do, move aside!" Complaining, when it boils down to it, for a Christian is against God. It's saying, "God I don't like what you've given me; I'm not content. I deserve better!"

We are to live out our present-tense salvation without complaining about the people in our lives or our circumstances. A spiritually mature person keeps a healthy Biblical perspective, that is God's perspective, about circumstances and people at the forefront of their reflective thinking.

RECAP:

This was a general look at how God expects us to live while we're hear on the earth...characterized as one allowing Him to work out through us. Next we will be in I Peter 4:9 exploring a more specific

situation that God will allow all of us to be in and we'll see how we should be hospitable without complaining.

2. I Peter 4:9 (vss. 7-9)

Being Hospitable (φιλόξενοι):

Adjective. Composed of *xenos* (“stranger”) and *phileo* (“to show affection”). **Defined as:** Strictly stranger-loving; hence hospitable, kind to strangers and generous to guests. Examples: 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:9. One of the qualifications of a bishop in 2 of its 3 occurrences. This is specifically to Christians in need for whatever reason, for necessities like food and shelter. When Peter wrote this a mass dispersion of Christians was happening as a result of persecution. Many of them needed help with relocating, finding work, conducting business; many of them were strangers other than being co-workers in Christ.

Toward One Another (εἰς ἀλλήλους):

Toward—Preposition.

One Another—Personal Reciprocal Pronoun. **Defined as:** each other, mutual, one another. Here is a cursory survey of the *one another's* in the New Testament. We are suggested (imperatives) to: Build up one another (Romans 14:19); serve one another (Galatians 5:13); bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2); be subject to one another (Ephesians 5:21); forgive one another (Colossians 3:13); teach one another (Colossians 3:16); comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18); rebuke one another (Titus 1:13); encourage one another to do good (Hebrews 10:24-25); and be hospitable toward one another (1 Peter 4:9-10). Agape love (I Pet.4:7) is God's quality of love. It is centered in the well-being of others, self-giving, unselfish and unfailing. The *one another* in this context is an authenticating demonstration of this.

Without Complaint (ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ):

Without—Preposition/Gen. Mas. Sing. **Defined as:** Without knowledge or consent. 3x—Examples: Matt. 10:29; I Pet. 3:1, 4:9.

Complaint—**Defined as:** Murmuring, grumbling, griping, complaint or displeasure. An expression of discontent. Always negative. 4x in the NT. John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Ph. 2:14; I Pet. 4:9. Used in the LXX in Exodus (16:2,7-8) and Numbers (14:2,36) of Israel grumbling in the wilderness. A rejection of the circumstances that God has allowed in your life. An emotional belly-aching.

C. Where Is It? Examples of Greek Words for Complaining

1. **Γογγυσμός (noun)**—John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Philippians 2:14; I Peter 4:9
2. **Γογγύζω (verb)**—John 6:41-44; I Corinthians 10:10 (2x)
3. **Διαγογγύζω (compound verb)**—Luke 15:2, 19:7; Num. 14:2, 36
Simple grumbling goes from under the breath to complaining (a) out loud to your face and (b) throughout a crowd
4. **Μομφή (verb)**—Colossians 3:13

II. Contentment (Present Imperatives)

One of the indicators of a mature Christian is contentment. How content are you with the people God has allowed or provided in your life and how content are with the circumstances that God has allowed in your life? We crumble and lose our sense of satisfaction and peace when we allow our circumstances to victimize us. No doubt Paul was human and suffered that way too but then he learned a different way: remaining content no matter what his circumstances were. “I have learned to be content,” he said, “in whatever circumstances I am” (Philippians 4:11, emphasis added). He really meant whatever, for in the next verse he ran the gamut of extremes

from great poverty to great wealth. It's possible for us as Christians to learn to be content in facing any situation in life. And we don't have to wait for the next life to be able to do this. We do need to be characterized by being thankful and be characterized by having our minds on things above. Paul said it this way: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2).

**A. Be Characterized by Giving Thanks IN everything—I
Thess. 5:18**

1. For ALL Things and at ALL Times—Eph. 5:20

- **It is a characteristic of a spirit-filled believer**

2. For ALL People—I Tim.2:1

- **This counters complaining about the people in our lives**

**B. Be Characterized by Setting Your Reflective Thinking on
Things Above—Col. 3:1-2 (God's Perspective). The
Following Are Examples of Things to Reflect/Think On:**

1. My Provision of Grace is Enough—2 Cor. 12:9-10

2. My Provision of Food and Covering is Enough—I Tim. 6:8

3. My Provision of Godliness is Enough—I Tim. 6:6

**4. My Provision of Being Wealthy and Poor is Enough—
Philippians 4:11 (Detached from Circumstances)**

III. Conclusion