

Covid Complaints

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as we all know, by now, there have been some major changes from the government when it comes to COVID in these past weeks.

So this morning, we're going to hit the pause button on the Gospel of John. We'll come back to it next Sunday. We're just going to take a few minutes to consider our response to some of these changes. Of course, we all know by now what these changes are.

We're all wearing masks this morning. All indoor public places across the province, we have to do this. And up until this Sunday, we enjoyed being mask-free for everything but the singing part of our worship.

In addition to this, we've also seen private gatherings limited to five people in homes. And all of this for a whole month leading up to Christmas.

I wonder how you first responded to hearing this news. I wonder what your reaction was. I'll tell you mine. Disappointment.

[1 : 0 9] Frustration. Inward grumbling and complaining. And for me, it's not so much the masks. It's the thought of being prohibited by law from getting together with family for Christmas if these measures are extended beyond the 17th of December.

I love Christmas. And I love to gather with family. It's what we have done year after year. We have already had some plans in the works.

And, of course, now that all these changes have arisen, I don't know if we're going to get to do those things. Disappointment. Frustration. Inward grumbling and complaining.

And probably, if I'm honest, some out loud grumbling and complaining too, at least to my wife. In the midst of all this, I remembered these words.

But before I put them on screen and read them, I want to just remind us of whose words these are.

Yes, they are the words of the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi.

[2 : 1 9] But they're more than that. These are the words of Jesus himself. Speaking through his spirit. Through his Apostle.

To the followers that he has in Philippi. About how he wants them to live. And this is what Jesus says. Do everything.

Without grumbling. Or arguing. As I remembered these words, I realized very quickly that I am guilty of both.

Not just in the past week. But in the past months. This is such a simple and straightforward word of instruction, isn't it? Do everything.

Without grumbling. Or arguing. The word grumbling here means pretty much what it sounds like it means. The original word refers to any utterance made in a low tone of voice to express your discontent.

[3 : 2 7] It means basically to grumble. Or to complain. And the second word is arguing. Do everything without arguing.

At first we might think Paul is just using another word for grumbling or complaining. And that's kind of what I was assuming until I took some time to study this a little closer. But actually arguing is a good translation.

The original word in this context refers to an actual verbal exchange that takes place when conflicting ideas are expressed. Like in a dispute.

Or an argument with another person. Have you had any arguments in the past months about COVID things? I know I have.

Do everything. Do everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. Is what the Lord Jesus commands his people to do.

[4 : 28] And I got thinking about the wording of this. I think if I was going to say something like this to my children. I'd probably say stop grumbling.

Stop complaining. Or don't argue with your sister anymore. But it's interesting the words Paul chose here. He says do everything without grumbling or complaining.

And the emphasis here is really on the word everything. In the original language you could actually change the word order around to show emphasis.

And it seems that's what Paul has done here. Where he took the word everything or literally all things. And put it right to the front to give it that special emphasis. Literally it reads all things do without grumbling or arguing.

He's not simply telling us to stop or don't do that. It's a little bit more. He's saying in all things. In everything that you do. Do it without grumbling.

[5 : 40] Or arguing. And I got thinking this week. What's included in all things that I do?

Where I'm tempted to grumble. Or to complain. I got thinking about when I get out of bed in the morning.

And my body feels tired or my brain is foggy. I got thinking about when I look in the mirror. And realize that I have to shave again.

I got thinking about when I sit down at the breakfast table. And realize that it's my least favorite breakfast food to eat. I got thinking about when I look out the window.

And it's dark outside. At 8.30 in the morning. And then I look at the driveway. And there's another foot of snow. That needs to be shoveled. I got thinking about the moment I go out the front door.

[6 : 40] And feel the bitter cold of winter. On my face. I got thinking about when I. Sit down to check my to-do list for the day. And see just how long it is.

I got thinking about. Some of the less interesting work routines of my day. And week. I got thinking about that moment. At the end of the day.

When I reflect back. And realize. That I didn't accomplish as much today. As I had hoped. I got thinking about that moment. When I walk through the front door.

After work. To see that there are toys. Strewn everywhere. Across the floor. From my kids. I got thinking about that moment.

Just this past week. When I came home. And found out. That my son just cracked the lid. On our toilet tank. All moments in which.

[7 : 41] I have felt tempted to grumble. To complain. All things. Includes a lot. Do everything. That you do.

Without. Or apart from. Grumbling. Or complaining. Do everything. That you do. Without. Or apart from.

Grumbling. Or complaining. Are you feeling convicted yet? Then we come to these COVID changes.

And they affect the things that we do. In all kinds of ways. We now have to add some new things. That we have to do. That are now included. In the everything. That we must do.

Without complaining. Or grumbling. Wear a mask at church. Without grumbling. Or complaining. Cancel that dinner you were invited to.

[8 : 36] With more than five people. Without grumbling. Or complaining. Is the COVID stuff. That we have to do. Included. By this word. Everything.

Of course it is. Everything means everything. All things that we do. Means all things that we do. Do it all. Without. Or apart from.

Grumbling. Or complaining. Then we come to the arguing. Part of this command as well.

Do everything. He says. All things. Without arguing. Or another word for that. Might be disputing. If there is one surprising thing.

That COVID has brought to the surface. In all of us. It is the desire to argue. And dispute with other people. It doesn't really matter. What you believe about COVID. Or what you believe about the government's role.

[9 : 34] In all of this. Somebody somewhere. Is doing something. Or saying something. That you. Do not agree with. And that desire to. Set them straight.

And tell them what you believe. And tell them how it should be done. Is right there. In all of us. Just ready to come out. Do everything. Do everything.

That you do. Without arguing. Scroll through Facebook. Or other social media. And see. That post. From that person.

That just bothers you. Do that. Without arguing. Maybe don't even comment on their post at all. Or maybe you get into a conversation with someone.

As you're out and about. And something about COVID. Or politics. Or some minor point of theology. Comes up. And they obviously don't agree with you.

[10:33] Or believe the same as you. Have that conversation. Do everything you do. Yet without arguing.

Or disputing. It doesn't mean that you. Pretend to agree with them. It means. That we don't fight with them. We don't have that verbal exchange.

In which we try at all costs. To win the argument. To win the debate. Or sometimes even. To make them feel. Shamed. Or stupid. For believing differently. Or seeing things differently.

Than we do. Do everything. Without arguing. Or disputing. Go to the post office. The grocery store. The arena. To church. Without looking. To let everyone know. How you feel. About having to wear a mask. And all the reasons. That it's wrong. One of these days.

[11:30] I got thinking. That one of us. In this room. At least. If not. Many of us. Will test positive. For COVID. My wife's sister. Just tested positive.

The other day. Some of you. Are starting to know. People who have. And when it does happen. It is going to change. Our lives drastically. For a minimum. Of two weeks.

You or I. Will have to do things. Differently. Yet even in this. Do everything. Without.

Grumbling. Or disputing. Don't make our. Dear. Public health nurse. Who is just. Doing her job. Feel bad.

On the phone. When she tells you. That you must. Self-isolate. For two weeks. By grumbling at her. Or. Complaining. To her. By now.

[12:26] We're probably. Wondering. If this. Simple. Six word. Statement. Is even possible. And we'll get to that. In a minute. But first. Let's listen to what.

What the Lord Jesus says next. Through Paul. Do everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. So that. You may become.

Blameless. And pure. Children of God. Without fault. In a warped. And crooked. Generation. 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. So we're given. This incredibly. Difficult. And far-reaching. Command. Do not.

[13:21] Do everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. But. But then. The Lord Jesus. Through Paul. Gives us a reason. To do that. He says. We are to do.

Everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. So that. You may become. Blameless. And pure. What does that mean?

Well. I'll tell you. What it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean. That we can somehow. Attain perfection. Before we die. And we all know that. The rest of the New Testament.

Is pretty clear about that. We're not going to be done. With sin. Until we either die. Or Christ returns. So in what sense then. Can we become.

Blameless. And pure. Here. And now. In this life. In this case. I think the words. Blameless and pure. Referred to a person.

[14:15] Of exceptional. Character. And merit. A person who stands out. Among the rest. And appears to most. As so good.

That other people. Just can't. Fault them. And Paul gives us. A bit of a picture here. He says that. We should.

Do this. So that. We may become. Blameless and pure. Children of God. Without fault. Or blemish. In the midst of a warped. And crooked.

Generation. So there's a major. Contrast. That he paints for us here. There are the children of God. Who should. Really stand out. As exceptional. Without blemish.

Pure. Good. Straight. And then there is this generation. In which we are in the midst of. Which Paul describes as crooked.

[15:12] Twisted. Warped. Those are pretty strong words. Warped. And crooked. They speak of moral corruption. They speak of lack of integrity.

And in the context. Here especially. It suggests that these people. Are people who grumble. And argue a lot. About it.

All kinds of things. Do we hear the logic of God here? Grumbling. Complaining. Arguing. Disputing. Those are the chief characteristics. Of people. In our generation. Who are warped. And crooked. And they should not be.

The characteristics of God's children. Anymore. Paul gives another contrasting word picture here. I'm going to read the whole sentence again.

[16:11] Just so that we can. Hear it. Do everything without grumbling or arguing. So that you may become blameless and pure. Children of God.

Without fault. In a warped and crooked generation. In which you shine among them. Like stars in the sky. Like stars in the sky.

Are we supposed to look and act and speak differently. As children of God than the people of the world that we live in.

Absolutely. Absolutely. God wants us to stand out like stars. Stand out in the night sky. This past week. I made a trip down to the city.

And got my prescription updated. I got my new glasses. And I noticed this week. As I was looking up. At night. Man. Those stars look much clearer.

[17:08] And they're beautiful. They're radiant. Hundreds of little pinpoints of light. Scattered across the darkness and blackness of the night sky. Anyway. The Lord Jesus wants his followers.

And his people to stand out. Like that. To stand out in a beautiful way. And how we do that. Here in this context.

Is by doing everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. In other words. The last person to be found on earth.

Complaining or arguing. With someone. About wearing a mask. Or about COVID. Or about the government's laws. Should be the true follower of Jesus. And our social.

Media profiles. And participation. Should reflect that as well. There should be a sharp contrast. Like when we look up into the night sky.

[18:11] Between the way the world around us. Is acting. And talking. And how we as God's children. Are acting and talking. In these days. Now we come to that final question.

Which we raised earlier. Is this even possible? Well first. Let's acknowledge. That. Jesus asks us to do things.

That are impossible. impossible. He commands us to make disciples. Yet we can't change people's hearts. Or save anyone. He commands us to be holy.

As he is holy. He commands us to be perfect. As our heavenly father is perfect. In the sermon on the mount. He commands us to love the Lord. Our God. With all our heart.

Soul. Mind. And strength. He commands us to do lots of things. That are impossible. Things that are impossible.

[19:13] Without. God's help. And I believe that's the key. It's obvious that we need to put in an effort ourselves.

Not to. Grumble. Or argue. There's no autopilot here. There's no just let go. And let God. If you. If you don't make a real.

And. Intentional effort. To do everything. Without grumbling or arguing. You will. End up. Just going with the default. Pattern of our world. You'll find yourself.

Grumbling. And arguing. So real. Intentional effort. And attention. Is required. But what's easy to forget. Is that we were meant.

All along. To do this. With. God's help. Where do we see that. In this passage. Well. We just need to go back up. To what Paul said.

[20:08] Just before this. Therefore. My dear friends. He writes. 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. The subject here. Is obedience. Paul's encouraging them. To continue. Obeying the Lord Jesus. Whether Paul is present.

With them or not. He refers to them. As having salvation. Work out. The salvation. That you have. Work. Put effort.

[21 : 02] Into. Living. According to your new status. As a child of God. But then he tells them. This truly amazing. Thing. He says.

For it is God. Who works. In. You. To will. And to act. In order to fulfill. His good purpose. So yes. We must put in effort. To obey. We must put in. Effort. To do everything. Without grumbling. Or arguing. But we do it.

Independence. Upon this. Wonderful reality. That God. Himself. Is actually. At work. Underneath that. Within us. Giving us power.

Giving us the ability. To will. To desire. To act. To behave. Differently. Than we otherwise would.

[21 : 59] There is reason to fear here. Paul says. Fear and trembling. Fear and trembling. But there is also. Comfort. Because we're not left up to ourselves.

To do it all on our own. We have the very creator of the universe. Working. Powerfully. In us. So that we can will and act.

In order to fulfill his good purpose. It may seem. At times. Like grumbling and complaining. Maybe even arguing. Is at the very core of our being.

It's just part of who we are. We might even be tempted to say. That it's part of our personality. And the truth is. It is. Paul tells us that elsewhere.

We too were once numbered among. Those who were dead in their transgressions. And we lived like they did. In this crooked and warped generation.

[23 : 01] And so of course. It's natural for us to grumble. And to complain about things. And argue and dispute. But now that we have been saved. Now that we have been made children of God.

We now have God himself. His Holy Spirit. Living in us. At work in us. So that we can live differently. We can will differently.

We can act differently. Than we otherwise could before. What this means is that with God's help. The impossible of doing everything.

Without grumbling or arguing. Is now possible. So finally. How do we change our bad habits of grumbling. And arguing about all kinds of things.

As I was reflecting on that this week. And I'm by no means an expert in it. I'm still learning. I got thinking.

[23 : 58] I got thinking. This is not going to be an overnight thing. For some of us. It's just so deeply ingrained. It's just habit. For all of us. It'll be a lifelong process.

Of growing more and more. Towards. What Christ wants us to live like. We will fail. We will blow it. Along the way. At times. And thankfully.

God's grace is there for those moments. And we can come to him. We can ask for his forgiveness. But all too often. I think we assume instead.

That we cannot change. And so we're just going to keep grumbling. We're just going to keep doing it. How we've been doing it. But the truth is.

That we can change. With God's help. With his power. With his work in us. We can live differently. We can look blameless and pure.

[24 : 52] And stand out in this world. So what does this process look like? Well I think first it starts with us. Being convicted.

By these words. And recognizing. Our behavior for what it is. Our attitude for what it is. To be convicted means more than just understanding.

It's a wrong behavior. It means recognizing in the moment. When we've actually done this. Yes. I did just complain. Outwardly or inwardly.

About the porridge on the table. For breakfast this morning. And in case we're wondering. Jesus tells us that it's the Holy Spirit.

That does this work of convicting in us. So first we need to be convicted. Of grumbling or arguing. Then we need to admit. Or confess.

[25 : 51] That. That grumbling. That arguing. That we've blown it again. To God. We need to ask for his forgiveness. We need to.

Pray. And ask that God would help us. Not to complain. Or to. Argue. Any more about that particular thing. And in that moment. We probably would do well.

To. To take. Take a minute. Just to stop and think. What's at the root of my. Complaint. My grumbling. Why is it wrong? Is it that I'm ungrateful?

