

Live as Content Children

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Philippians 2, we're going to continue marching through this wonderful letter verse by verse. I'm going to begin reading in verse 14.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 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.

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, 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.

Likewise, you also should rejoice. That is the word of God, the only authoritative word you'll hear this morning.

[1 : 28] In his book, *Adopted for Life*, author Russ Moore tells a moving story of adopting two children from Russia. He writes, and I quote, When Maria and I first walked into the orphanage, where we were led to the boys the Russian courts had picked out for us to adopt, we almost vomited in reaction to the stench and squalor of the place.

The boys were in cribs in the dark, lying in their own waste. Leaving them at the end of the day was painful, but leaving them the final day before going home to wait for the paperwork to go through was the hardest thing either of us had ever done.

Walking out of the room to prepare for the plane ride home, Maria and I could hear Maxim crying out for us and falling down in his crib, convulsing in tears. When Maria and I at long last received the call that the legal process was over, we returned to Russia to pick up our kids.

We found that their transition from the orphanage to family was much more difficult than we had supposed. We dressed the boys in outfits that their parents had bought. My mother-in-law gathered some wildflowers growing in the cracks of the pavement outside the orphanage.

We nodded in thanks for the personnel there and walked into the sunlight to the terror of the boys. They had never seen the sun. And they'd never felt the wind.

[2 : 56] They'd never heard the sound of a car door slamming or had the sensation of being carried along at 100 miles an hour down a Roman or Russian road. I noticed they were shaking and reaching back to the orphanage in the distance.

I whispered to Sergi now, Timothy, it's not a good start to the message to start crying now, but I whispered to Sergi now, Timothy, Timothy, that place is a pit. If only you knew what was waiting for you.

A home with a mommy and daddy who love you. Grandparents and great grandparents. Cousins and playmates. And McDonald's Happy Meal. But all they knew was that orphanage. It was squalid.

But they had no other reference point. And it was home. We knew the boys had acclimated to home, that they trusted us when they stopped hiding foods in their high chairs.

They knew that another meal would be coming and they wouldn't have to fight for scraps. This was the new normal. He continues, they're now thoroughly Americanized.

[4 : 04] Perhaps too much so. Able to recognize the sound of a microwave ding from 40 yards away. I still remember, though, those little hands reaching back to the orphanage and I see myself there.

Yeah, I have deep respect for those who adopt kids. It is a radical selfless act by parents that makes all the difference in a child's life. Just this week, our friends back in Knoxville gave birth to a child through embryo adoption, which is an incredibly fascinating form of adoption.

And as wonderful and powerful as human adoption is, as wonderful and moving as that account of adoption is, it is a picture of an even greater reality.

God's adoption of us as sons and daughters. J.I. Packer writes it like this, which we have for you. He says, What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as father.

He continues, If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child. Now, not surprisingly, as we continue in our passage this morning and continue marching through the exhortations of Philippians 2, and Paul calls us to live a life worthy of the gospel, Paul reminds us and positions us to remember that we are children of God.

[5 : 33] And he wants it to be more than a truth we know. He wants it to be a reality we live from. He wants us to find out how much we think of the thought of being a child of God, that we have become.

See what kind of love this is, that we have become children of God. And he wants it to shape our lives. And the word where we're going is, Live as content children of God in our self-focused dying world.

Live as content children of God in our self-focused dying world. I'm going to break this out in three points. First one is, We are no longer of the world. We're no longer of the world.

You know, our text begins abruptly, and it begins with a command, Do all things without grumbling or disputing. You know, just kind of, one of those that just gets you by the coattails right immediately.

You know, the command though, is similar to what Paul's been saying all throughout this chapter. You know, be humble. Count others more significant than yourselves. Look to others. Be united.

[6 : 35] All these type things. But the difference comes with the backdrop. The reference to grumbling here is meant to draw our attention to some well-known grumblers in the Bible.

The Israelites going through the wilderness. And I'm sure you remember this story. The Israelites were stuck in Egypt. They were stuck under Pharaoh's harsh rule, making bricks out of straw.

And you remember the drama. I mean, it's like the greatest kids, maybe not the greatest, but it's one of the greatest kids' stories in the Bible. This drama that unfolds between Pharaoh, I mean, between Moses and Pharaoh's hard heart.

You know, Pharaoh's like, I'll let them go. I won't let them go. And so there's 10 plagues that come down. And then the last plague, right? They take the blood and put it on the doorpost. And the angel of death comes through and strikes down every child, every firstborn son in Egypt, except for those that were covered by the blood.

And then Pharaoh says, just get out of here. And they're on the run, right? And they take off. They're on the run. The Lord brings them right up to the Red Sea. And he says, make camp there.

[7 : 44] And then Pharaoh and his men come again. So Pharaoh's fickle heart comes up again. He lets them go, but then he comes after them. And the Lord says, I got a lot of glory bringing them out of Egypt, but I'm going to get more glory right here.

And the Lord does it. Just when they thought there was no way out, the Lord split the Red Sea and they walked through on dry land. But in seemingly no time at all, they start to complain.

When things start not going according to plans, they start to complain. They want water, and so they complain. They want bread, and so they complain. Like a three-year-old who doesn't want to eat those green beans, they want meat, so they complain.

And you know, the point is, or the reason we should be shocked, is that they just came through the Red Sea. If the Lord brought them through the Red Sea, then he's going to give them everything else they need.

That's the point. The shock of it is not so much, man, wouldn't the Lord be nice if he gave us some food, or gave us this, or that, is that they just came through the Red Sea, and they can trust him for everything else.

[8 : 49] And it gets so bad, that much like those orphans reaching back to that dirty orphanage, they begin to say, wouldn't it be better to be in Egypt?

Wouldn't it be better to be under Pharaoh? Wouldn't it be better to eat there, and drink there, and live there?

You see, they grumbled and complained because they forgot whose people they were. And we can be just like them. When we forget whose children we are, just like the Israelites, we've been delivered.

Out of bondage, out of darkness, out of death, out of the world. We're no longer of the world. We're children of God. As the way he says in verse 15, without blemish.

We've become children of God, of the King of kings. We've been born of God, what John 1 says, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, and born of the Spirit.

[9 : 54] And if children, then heirs. And at a minimum, this means God loves us without hesitation, or scrutinizing, or holding back. I love the way Romans 8, 32 puts it strikingly.

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? And that's just an argument from the lesser to the greater. What he's saying is, if God did X, then surely he'll do Y and Z.

If he did this great thing, X, then surely he'll do Y and Z. So he who spared his own son, crushed and condemned him in our place, is not going to nickel and dime us now as his children, as all this for guilty, hell-deserving children.

And so he essentially says, in this verse, knowing all that, don't slip where the Israelites did. Don't slip where they did.

He says, knowing all that, knowing who is your father and who is in heaven, do all things without grumbling or complaining. Do everything. He's saying, in order to live worthy of the gospel, two things must go.

[11 : 04] Grumbling and complaining. Grumbling is one of those words that sounds like what it is. You know, you grumble, mumble, mumble, mumble. That's the idea.

It's kind of a, I can't remember what the English grammar thing is for it, but, you know, it's complaining, murmuring, bellyaching, griping.

You know, we got so many different words for complaining. It's great. It is, it says, I deserve better. It overflows in that often low level, constant whining we all tend to do.

It's like a squeaking wheel of a shopping cart. No matter which way you turn it or how fast you go, it still squeaks. No matter who you are, where you live, what you do, you have an amazing ability to complain.

I do too. Can you imagine it? What if you just have one day without complaining? Like, one day with the parents not complaining about their kids, employees not muttering about their bosses, kids not whining about their parents, just one person not complaining about the government?

[12 : 16] Be nice to have just one day. You know, what strikes me in this passage is, Paul doesn't just say, stop it. Yeah, I don't know if you've ever seen that video of a counselor.

It's not a literal counselor, but it's kind of a play on this counselor. You come in and sit before me. He just says, I got two words for you, stop it. Stop it. You know, what's the big deal? And Paul could just say that with the authority of an apostle.

He could just say, stop it. Quit. You're a child of God. Quit. But he doesn't say that. He wants to win us. He wants to help us. He underlines how completely silly it looks to complain in light of what we deserve and what we've received as children of God.

John Newton says it like this with this vivid picture. Look, he says, suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate and his carriage should break down a mile before he got to the city, which obliged him to walk the rest of the way.

What a fool. We should think if we saw him wringing his hands and blubbering out all the remaining mile, my carriage is broken. My carriage is broken.

[13 : 26] I love that picture because that's exactly what's true of us. As children of God, we have this massive inheritance and not one moment or every moment of complaining will look completely silly when we get to heaven and realize what we possess.

We'll think, what a dope. I was such a dope. Such an idiot. Now, I don't want to do name calling here, but I can do it to myself.

And that's the way we can look when we complain. We complain because we forget what we deserve and look past what we've received. So when do you complain?

Is it when you stand before the fridge and say, we have nothing to eat? Or ladies, when you stand before the closet and say, I have nothing to wear? Or is it when the kids are too fussy?

The math problems are too hard? When you feel overlooked? When you feel too busy? When do you say, I'm busy? The nice mental inventory.

[14 : 32] When do you say, I'm busy? And why do you say that? When you can't just do it. Does it lead you to whine? Does it lead you to lick your wounds in self-pity, to simmer in annoyance?

Complaining must go. That's what scripture said. For a child of God, complaining's out. Or disputing, he continues.

Disputing takes complaining a step further. If complaining says, I deserve better, disputing says, I know better. Complaining begins to argue.

It says, I know better. It disagrees. It asserts. It insists. It demands. It demands. One of the parenting principles in my house is never negotiate with terrorists.

So when I'm, you know, the kids are pushing me and asking me and arguing with me, I just say, I don't negotiate with terrorists. Which means I don't negotiate with you.

[15 : 40] You know, I mean that somewhat humorously, but it's true. I'm called to lead my family. And I want my kids, I do want my kids to ask for help.

I want them to ask questions. I want them to get clarity, but I cannot do what God wants me to do and allow them to argue with me. And it's the same way with the Lord. With us.

You know, Ted Tripp, who we just mentioned during this marriage seminar, and ditto everything Tim said. I completely agree. No one's taught me more about parenting than Ted Tripp.

He said one time, complaining and arguing doesn't appear when they're teenagers. Complaining and arguing starts when they're toddlers.

He's like, to conquer, complaining and arguing in a teenager is to start at three years old. And that's where we want to start. That's where we want to help them. If they're in our house, we're trying to train them in the way they should go.

[16 : 36] We want to train them not to complain because it's not right ever for a child of God to complain. Just so you know, I do love my kids a lot. But I still tell them they're terrorists.

You know, these verses are directed at life and the community, but they're also reminding us what it means to be a child of God. And complaining and disputing must go because they're ultimately against Him.

And so in their place is contentment. You are a child of God. He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you. He knows what is good, so live content. That's the truth of God's Word.

Point two, we're still in the world. Still in the world. Throughout much of the book, Paul's been reminding us about how to live in the community and how he tells us now we're people called out of the world, but he reminds us here that a watching world is looking on.

Look at verse 15. He writes that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

[17 : 47] We're no longer of the world, but we're still in it. Remember, Jesus prayed, I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from temptation.

So it wouldn't please the Lord for us to act like we're not in the world, to build a big bunker and pull away. And couched within this verse, Paul tells us how to live differently in the world.

And I love this again. Paul doesn't just list out ways to be different. He powerfully reminds us who we already are. Without deep diving too much into this, this verse contains an explicit reference to Deuteronomy 32.

So I have that for you. Look there with me. He says, they have dealt corruptly with him. And he's talking about the Israelites. The Israelites had dealt corruptly with him.

They are no longer his children because they're blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation. So you see lots of word similarities right there.

[18 : 48] They have dealt corruptly with him. They're no longer his children. They are blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation. The idea is that when God is speaking this over his people that when they left and they went into the wilderness, they dealt corruptly with him.

They did not obey him. They did not love him. And so they were blemished. And he said, you're no longer my children. You are a crooked and twisted generation.

But do you see what Paul does to it? So in Deuteronomy, they are corrupt and blemished so they're no longer his children. But here in these verses, though we were corrupt and blemished and flawed, we were called out of this crooked and twisted generation to be made children of God.

Do you see what he's doing there? He's flipping that text on his head such to say that we're not made children of God because we make ourselves without blemish. He declares us to be children of God and therefore without blemish.

Does that make sense? Does that layer in there? The idea is that before he tells us to get to work, he tells us our work is not to make ourselves unblemished. Our work is to display in our work how unblemished we already are as a child of God.

[20 : 05] You know, so much of the Christian life when it begins to talk about what you do or how to be godly, it says, be as you already are. Live out what he's already done.

But then you work out your salvation. Right? So he says, be blameless and innocent. I think these are flip sides to the same coin just telling us to be different.

So he says, be blameless. As translated in other places, be without reproach. The idea is that it's focused on outward behavior. Let no legitimate fault be found with your conduct or outward way of life.

Now, does this mean we have to be perfect? Does this mean no dirt can be dug up on us? You know, our culture loves to dig up dirt on anyone and everyone and gather around it and throw a party or something.

You know, is that what it means? No, I don't think so at all. But I do think the idea is that our lives are to be different. They will be flawed, but they'll be free of the griping, bickering, and backbiting so prevalent in our culture.

[21 : 20] Our lives are to be free of secrets, deceit, and hidden sins. There could be nothing crooked, nothing out of line, nothing twisted, no sudden surprises in our life.

You know, I read a story recently about a church in Texas that the fire department was called. I guess a fire alarm was pulled or something like that.

And when they, the police and the fire department got close, they found a surprise. There were over a hundred illegal slot machines in the basement.

Now, that's a mess. I think, I think the church actually did say, those aren't our slot machines. Good luck with that one. The idea is that the heart of that church was not love for God, love for money.

And in our lives, as people get closer, they ought not find anything there when they get close that's not there from a far away.

[22 : 33] They ought not find that we're more drawn to money. You know, when people are close, they should find our hearts and lives free of the things the world applauds.

What do people think when they get close to you? You know, our culture says familiarity breeds contempt. It just means if you get close to somebody, they don't like you.

But when people get close to us, they may know us as a Christian, because we go to church, but when they get close, do they find things out of line? They find fits of anger.

They find crudeness. Maybe your buddies look over it, but do they find crudeness? They find love of money. They find worldly ambition or just rudeness. They find impatience.

Those things ought not be there is what he's saying, blameless. He continues positively, so that's negatively. Be blameless. Be innocent. Be innocent.

[23 : 37] Be pure. The word here is a similar word used for undiluted wine and unalloyed metal. The idea is it's not mixed. It's pure.

You know, it's the good stuff. You know, it's not watered down. It's not lukewarm. It's pure. It's quality. It's simple in that respect. You know, we're not to be one thing in one setting and one thing and another.

One way with the girls and one way with our church friends. We should be the same everywhere and obvious to everyone what we're all about. As always, one of the best parts of the Super Bowl are the commercials.

I have no doubt tonight we'll see some good commercials. Keep your hand on the remote, though. Especially since it'll be so boring to watch the Patriots win another Super Bowl.

I mean, surely we can find something else to do with our time. You know, one of the best commercials, though, I've enjoyed seeing lately is the AT&T; one with the tattoo artist that looks like Josh Brolin.

[24 : 42] And y'all know what I'm talking about. The jumpy guy hops into the chair and he says, you know, he says, is this your first tattoo? No, what does he say first?

I forget what the question the jumpy guy asked and he says, he says, relax, amigo. It's gonna look okay.

Yeah. Then he says, only okay? I said, no worry, boss. I'm one of the tattoo artists in the city. He's like, you mean, you're one of the best tattoo artists in the city, right?

And he says, something like that. Yeah. And then he starts, he says, aren't you supposed to draw that first? Just stay in your lane, bro. Stay in your lane.

You know, it's not okay to be okay. And we all said, amen, when you're at the tattoo parlor. But it's as if Paul is saying to us, stay in your lane. Did it work?

[25 : 41] I don't know. Stay in your lane. Know your lane. Stay there. Keep it simple. The world is watching.

If you're supposed to be all about Christ, then when we get close, you should be all about Christ. I love the way Paul says it in several different places. Live peaceful and quiet.

Paul begins to talk about evangelism. Oftentimes, he begins there. Live a peaceful and quiet life. Mind your own affairs. Be simple. Mind your own affairs. Be faithful. The world is watching.

Be blameless and pure. Live as content children in our self-focused, dying world. Thirdly, we must win some from the world to Christ.

We must win some from the world to Christ. Look at verse 15. He continues the thought here. After that comma, he says, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

[26 : 45] holding fast to the word of life. Now, we see the same emphasis that you're in the world there in the midst of this generation, but also among whom.

Among the world. Among whom. So, on the one hand, it seems like he's just continuing to say what he's already been saying. Shine as lights. Light shines and shows that it is different than darkness, right?

Light contains no darkness or shadows. No blemishes. Light is pure, excellent, perfect, and so God is called light. And this is very similar to what he's already been saying.

Be blameless. Be innocent. You're different. Live that way and the world shine as light. But, I think there's a double meaning here where he's reminding us that light does not just show it's different than darkness.

Light shines into the darkness. You ever thought about this? Light does not shine for itself. Light shines into the darkness and calls into the darkness.

[27 : 56] You know, think about a lighthouse. They're so pretty to snap into our picture and they're so pretty as a shape but perched on the top of our coastlines. They don't just shine for themselves or shine to look pretty.

They call out into the darkness. Those ships have been pounded by the waves and pounded by the storms. There's land here is what it's saying.

There's land here. There's safety here. Home is here. And so we shine as lights. As little lights placed in a dark world to scream.

Scream sounds a little intense. to call into that dark world a better word.

The word of the gospel. You know, this is what God has promised all along. You know, he said to Abraham, your people will be as numerous as a star but he also promised that your people will be a light to the nations.

[28 : 59] walking barefoot through my house in the dark is like walking through a minefield.

And when I get up early in the morning, I tiptoe because I don't want anybody hearing that I'm awake and getting any fancy ideas of coming out and playing with me.

I remember one night I was, or one morning, I'm a nice guy. It's just that you've got to get some things done in the morning. But I remember one morning I fixed a cup of coffee and I was trying to go down, this is our old house, go down a few stairs to my little place where I sit in the morning and all the lights were off, you know.

It just seems like a great idea to keep quiet but I was walking with this full cup of coffee just kind of bobbing along and literally walked straight into the wall and dropped the cup of coffee.

You don't know how many coffee cups I broke at five in the morning. That's another story. You know, and walking through the dark, through that minefield, one little Lego can make a grown man cry.

[30 : 03] I can tell you that. Double over in pain. But you know what? It doesn't take much light to make all the difference. At five in the morning when the house is dark, it doesn't take much light to make all the difference.

I don't need 100 watts. I don't need 40. A three watt night light would do just the job and I think that's what's going on here. What Paul is saying.

The point is not be the brightest light you can be. The point is be a light. The gospel announces that light shines in the darkness. The darkness is not overcome it. The gospel calls us out of the world so that we might walk in the light and shine into the darkness and win some of the world to Christ.

So he says, shine. Let your little light shine. Don't put it under a bowl. Don't put it on a stand. Put it out so that it gives light to all in the house. Shine.

Win some of the world to Christ. But I think the point here is not that the power comes from us and from how bright we shine but that the power comes from the word we hold forth.

[31 : 09] And so he continues. He says, holding fast to the word of life. Now in one sense it seems like he's saying this is how we shine. We hold fast to the word of life and so that makes us shine.

I think it does mean that but it also means as we hold fast the word of life we hold forth the word of life to others. Holding fast to the word of life we're not to be a complaining church we're to be a proclaiming church.

When we complain when we're complaining church the world joins the chorus. They sing along. They know those verses. They know those keys. But when we are a proclaiming church the world listens bows its ears and is called to life.

Do you see what I'm saying here? What we hold forth is not ourselves. We have this treasure in jars of clay. What we hold forth is the word of life. It's this word that calls people and causes them to come from death to life.

It's this word that is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It's this word that does the work. It's the word that does the heavy lifting because of this word is the word of life.

[32 : 19] This word tells us the story of life because it tells us that the prince of life who emptied himself became a man and was obedient to the point of death losing his life but death could not hold him.

He rose defeating sin and death alive. He rose promising that all who trust in him would never die but have eternal life. And so when we hold it forth it summons men from death to life.

When we hold it forth it carries us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his son. It delivers us from this world and all the empty promises and promises us with an eternal life that will never perish.

It assures us of our future inheritance through the Holy Spirit that's been given to us and frees us to live this life without fear. It is this word that the light shines about and it's this word we hold for.

It's this word I offered you this morning. If this has been your thousandth time in church or your first every other religion says life is attained through good works whatever you want to call it godliness nirvana paradise blessedness by offering sacrifices by reforming your life by ridding your heart of the evil of this world but Christianity says life is found by the word the word of the gospel it calls men and women to life it's this word I call you to hear it's this word that when proclaimed Christ promises to draw all men to himself live as content children in our self focused dying world our text concludes in a bit of an odd way look down in verse 16

[34 : 20] B another comma there he says so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain even if I am being poured out as a drink offering from the sacrificial offering of your faith I am glad and rejoice with you all likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me now he's saying your faith and your obedience your continued contentment is an offering he's saying he's saying as your father in the faith if you press on to the end all that I am suffering and all that I am doing for the gospel will be complemented and completed by your contented sacrificial life and I'll be proud I'll rejoice I'll pour out my drink offering on your offering just a way of saying what you offer with your life and your obedience I'll give the amen to it with my offering without going into a lot of sacrificial explanation that's the idea so Paul is proud and knowing that he would be proud if they pressed on would have spurred them on more and more right but more importantly it would be good for us to remember that in all our faithfulness obedience and continued contentment

God is pleased because the offering he's not talking about is not an offering for sin it's an offering only to bring pleasure to God because an offering for sin has already been done in Christ much like a father who rescued his children from a Russian orphanage rejoiced over his newly adopted children our father rejoices over every step of obedience to him receives it in the offering he delights over it he anticipates the day when we'll finally see all that he's prepared for us and lay our burden down until then let's live content let's let all grumbling and disputing cease let's be thankful let me pray for us father in heaven thank you for your mercy towards us in Jesus Christ

Lord we have been treated far better than we deserve we are not in hell rather our eyes have been opened to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and God we pray that you would I pray that you would push this word into our hearts and lives we want the message as people get closer and closer to us to be amazed at our gratefulness at our perseverance through tough season at our thankfulness at our humility at our contentment at how we're not striving after the things the world strives Lord seal this word in our hearts anything that was unhelpful Lord let it be forgotten everything that was God calls it to help us walk forward in faithfulness and obedience and in joy we pray in Jesus name

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