

**Righteous Complaining**  
*Wednesday Online Bible Study*  
7/22/20

**Introduction:**

- Text from Sunday: Philippians 2:14 – Do all things without grumbling or disputing.
- I failed to nuance this in the sermon. Does this verse mean that it is always wrong to complain? Is there ever a time that we can righteously complain?
- The Greek word translated as “grumbling” in Philippians 2:14 is γογγυσμός (*gongysmos*). It is a noun.

**Uses of the Greek Noun in the Septuagint:**

- Exodus 16:7-9,11-12 – <sup>7</sup> and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling (γογγυσμός) against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” <sup>8</sup> And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling (γογγυσμός) that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling (γογγυσμός) is not against us but against the LORD.” <sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling (γογγυσμός).’ ”...<sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> “I have heard the grumbling (γογγυσμός) of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’ ”
  - This probably should be viewed as negative grumbling because the wording “because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD” and “for what are we, that you grumble against us” are strikingly similar to an obvious passage where grumbling was sinful in Numbers 16:11 concerning Korah’s rebellion.
  - Numbers 16:11 states, “Therefore it is against the LORD that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him?”
- Numbers 17:5,10 – <sup>5</sup> And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Thus I will make to cease from me the grumbings (γογγυσμός) of the people of Israel, which they grumble against you.” <sup>6</sup> Moses spoke to the people of Israel. And all their chiefs gave him staffs, one for each chief, according to their fathers’ houses, twelve staffs. And the staff of Aaron was among their staffs. <sup>7</sup> And Moses deposited the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the testimony. <sup>8</sup> On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. <sup>9</sup> Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel. And they looked, and each man took his staff. <sup>10</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumbings (γογγυσμός) against me, lest they die.”

- God sprouted the staff of Aaron to confirm that Aaron and Moses were in the right in Korah's rebellion the chapter before.
- Therefore the grumbings mentioned are negative and God sought to silence them lest there be further death and plagues in the Israelite camp.
- Isaiah 58:9 – Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness (γογγυσμός)...
  - This passage calls Judah to repent and return to the Lord. One of the things they must repent of is "speaking wickedness."
  - The word often translated "grumbings" is referred to as "wickedness." Grumbings are obviously sinful in this context.

### Uses of the Greek Noun in the New Testament:

- John 7:12 – And there was much muttering (γογγυσμός) about him among the people. While some said, "he is a good man," others said, "no, he is leading the people astray."
  - It is here a positive and negative action.
  - There is positive "muttering" that Jesus is a good man and negative "muttering" that Jesus "is leading the people astray."
- Acts 6:1 – Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint (γογγυσμός) by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.
  - Greek speaking widows are complaining in the Jerusalem church that they are being overlooked and that the Hebrew widows are being favored.
  - The text is not explicit, but seems to indicate that the complaining by the Hellenists is justified because of the response. The church establishes prototype deacons because of this incident. The apostles do not condemn the complaint by saying, "You should just trust God to change people's hearts." The widows filed a justified complaint that has led to a pattern for all of the church throughout the ages with the office of deacon.
  - Also notice they complained to the right people. They didn't complain to the courts which would unnecessarily bring shame to the church. Remember Paul said for Christians to not take up lawsuits against one another (1 Corinthians 6).
- 1 Peter 4:9 – Show hospitality to one another without grumbling (γογγυσμός).
  - The point here is that we should never complain about doing good.
  - Therefore this is a negative type of grumbling.

### Other Examples of the Greek Verb Form:

- There many related verb forms of the noun used in Philippians 2 for grumbling. Below are the verses listed for two of them.
- γογγύζω (gongyzo):
  - Exodus 17:3 – Negative
  - Numbers 11:1 – Negative; the Lord sent fire and consumed part of the camp

- Numbers 14:27 – Negative
- Numbers 14:29 – Negative; 40 years in desert because of grumbling
- Numbers 16:41 – Negative; grumbles against God for killing Korah after his rebellion; 14,700 killed by a plague
- Numbers 17:5 – Negative
- Judges 1:14 – translated “dismounted” from a donkey
- Psalm 59:15 – Negative
- Psalm 105:25 – Negative
- Lamentations 3:39 – Negative; people should not complain about punishment of sin
- Isaiah 29:24 – Negative
- Isaiah 30:12 – Negative
- Matthew 20:11 – Negative
- Luke 5:30 – Negative
- John 6:41 – Negative; the Israelites grumbled about the manna; the Jews grumbled about Jesus claiming to be the bread from heaven
- John 6:43 – Negative
- John 6:61 – Negative
- John 7:32 – Positive; positive murmurings/whispers from the crowd about Jesus
- 1 Corinthians 10:10 – Negative; refers back to the Israelites grumbling in OT
- διαγογγύζω (diagongyzo):
  - Exodus 15:24 – Probably negative
  - Exodus 16:2 – Probably negative
  - Exodus 16:7 – Probably negative
  - Exodus 16:8 – Probably negative; same language as Numbers 16:11
  - Numbers 14:2 – Negative
  - Numbers 14:36 – Negative
  - Numbers 16:11 – Negative; Korah’s rebellion; notice the same language as Exodus 16:8
  - Deuteronomy 1:27 – Negative
  - Joshua 9:18 – Negative
  - Luke 15:2 – Negative
  - Luke 19:7 – Negative

### **Conclusion:**

- We could have expanded the study to other Greek words that translators have translated into English translations such as “complain” or “complaint.”
- There are cases where complaining/grumbling is a justifiable action.
  - When the grumbling is referring to a buzz of the crowd per se that is in favor of God (John 7:12, 32). Sometimes growls are purring not predatory sounds.
  - When the complaining is drawing attention to an injustice (Acts 6:1).
- But most cases in the Bible are unjustifiable actions.

- It may be possible to complain to God about injustice, but do not ever complain against God such as the Israelites (Example: Exodus 16; 1 Corinthians 10:10). Their complaints showed their lack of belief in the promises he had already made to them to lead them to the Promised Land. Numbers 14:11 says, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?” Christians are in sin if our complaints come from a lack of trust in God’s promises to us, when our complaints attack the character of God. “
- Do not grumble about doing good. We should be delighted to do good deeds (1 Peter 4:9).
- Do not grumble against God’s good design (Numbers 16 & 17). God called for Moses and Aaron to lead Israel through the wilderness. Do not despise that. How do we despise God’s designs today? Do we despise the authorities he has placed over us? Do we despise how he has created us male and female?
- Do not grumble against the claims and teachings of Jesus (Example: John 6:43,61). Jesus is the exact imprint of God. He is God. We should delightfully obey his commands. We should never complain about his teachings.
- Even if God gives an answer or solution for your complaint, it does not necessarily mean that the complaint is without sin. God provided manna for the Israelites even though they were unjustifiably grumbling against the LORD (Exodus 16).
- I believe God has listed most cases of grumblings and complaining in the Bible as negative examples to teach us that fallen humanity is prone to rebel against God. It is very rare and difficult to righteously complain. Before you complain, ask yourself if it is righteous or unrighteous.