

Bible Class**Philippians 2:14****11th July 2024****Do all things without murmuring...**

Dear brothers, sisters and friends.

Please see some additional comments on this subject, following from Bro Ken's introduction:

The full verse is *Do all things without murmurings and disputings*. Or in everyday modern English:

Do everything without grumbling or arguing.

Why did the Apostle find it needful to state such an instruction to people who were supposed to be the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ? Why did he find it necessary to state in such clear terms- in words in how you would talk to children – when he has already said as much in the previous verses, explaining the right sort of character that is required of those who say they are followers of Jesus.

He goes on in the following verse to show what calm and peaceful interactions achieve. But wouldn't such a command be rather obvious and basic? Surely the servants of the Lord do not strive, what is there for them to grumble and argue about?

Because the Apostle knew exactly how human nature works, and the tendencies and weaknesses of the flesh. He went through very tough times, and had every reason to complain. Yet it is not something we read of. Perhaps when he admitted he had a "thorn in the flesh" a difficulty a challenge – something which was of discomfort and a distraction, in 2 Corinthians 12:7 he describes how he asked God three times for whatever it was to be taken away, but it seems he had to learn to live with it. This is the only occasion we can find anything which might possibly be described as grumbling, but even that is understandable and not really complaining.

In this letter to the believers in the city of Philippi, he shows much gentleness and kindness in the tone of his letter. This chapter 2 for example he speaks about negativity in verse 3 where he identifies selfish ambition and egotistic pride being a motivating factor instead of humility, and regarding others as being more important than self. Put simply if this was the case, how could there ever be a need to argue, instead it would case of continually deferring to one another... But knowing human nature even that would end up being a competition – who can be the humblest, the most self-effacing, the most polite!!!

But Paul heads this off by defining exactly what he meant – that the followers of Jesus should also have the same attitude towards one another that Jesus had, which was genuine care, and authentic interest towards others. There was no selfishness with him, but that(v7) he emptied himself out of human lust and made himself in the form of a slave – not to sin, but to the needs and requirements of God, and of other people, (v8) he humbled himself even to the point of death, and only after that was he exalted.

Yet human nature is such that the default position of the human outlook, is that we deserve to be exalted, or regarded as special, or loved, we deserve to be thought well of. The default setting is to crave recognition, acceptance, and a rightful place in society, or the family. Yet at the same time, the same energy is not put into earning that respect. Competitiveness, petty jealousies and envy arises when people think they have been overlooked or bypassed, or given a raw deal, one-upmanship is such a common feature in human relationships, seen everywhere. Of course, it is because of pride. It is because of this that when differences of opinion arise, arguments then follow, and disputes break the harmony and unity of an ecclesia.

This is not the behaviour expected in disciples of Christ as Paul explains , that where there is an absence of moaning, complaining and arguing, (v15) *you may be blameless and pure, children of God without blemish though you live in a crooked and perverse society, in which you shine as lights in the world.* Arguing and complaining,

moaning, and disputing belongs to the crooked and perverse nation and society, not the blameless and pure Ecclesia.

But sadly the Ecclesia is not always pure and blameless. The Ecclesia in the wilderness was described as evil! Numbers 14:27

How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. The nation always seemed to return to their default position of negativity, arguing, disputes, and complaining. But Paul says that this is an example that we must learn from:

1 Corinthians 10: 10,11 *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, ...*

Just because Jesus was in their midst, it did not stop the disciples from grumbling and murmuring – Mark 14:5 *...For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.* Mark 9:33: *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?* And just because the Apostles had divine inspiration, and the power of the Holy Spirit did not stop the early Ecclesias from being guilty of grumbling and disputes. Acts 6:1 *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* See also the major disputes in the Ecclesia described in Acts 15: 2,7,39. Paul knew first-hand the damage of a dispute which got out of hand when he had to part ways with Barnabus a fellow Apostle.

So, he advised: Romans 12:18 *If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.* This means to be very careful around argumentative people, and to take care not to react back: Romans 14:1 *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.* Those who persist in being negative and cause strife

Paul says to avoid: Romans 16:17 *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

The key to neutralising arguments, and to calm down disputes is what the Apostle said in the previous verse Philippians 2:13: *For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

James the Apostle exhorted 4:15: For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. In other words, it is the realisation that the outcome of any decision is in the hand of God. If it is just a matter of human opinion, and not a matter of doctrine, it is better to submit, and not allow pride to get in the way, and that it is best to resign our own opinion on matters which are of little import, and accept that it is the will of God which will be done. If this spirit of submission, and mutual respect was adopted, then there would be little space for disputes and murmuring.

Brother Terry