

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about this incredible command: **“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe” (Phil. 2:14-15).**

One amazing aspect of this command is that it was written from prison by the Apostle Paul who suffered throughout the entirety of his Christian life without complaining. Jesus warned him at the time of his conversion how much he would have to suffer (Acts 9:16). His suffering began in Damascus, the city of his conversion, and continued until, as an old man, he was imprisoned and beheaded by Nero. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11:24-28).** Yet Paul endured all of this suffering without complaining or arguing!

As we have said, at the time Paul wrote this letter to Philippi he was again in prison, but still not complaining. In fact, Paul was filled with joy because he believed his imprisonment actually advanced the gospel (Phil. 1:12). His letter to Philippi is about “joy”, not complaining. The noun for joy is “kara” and is found 5 times in Philippians. The verb is “karein” and it occurs 11 times. The Philippians knew that Paul had suffered in their city. It was in Philippi, as you know, that he and Silas were publicly humiliated, stripped,, beaten, and imprisoned. Remember that at midnight, in the inner prison with their feet in stocks, Paul and Silas were not complaining, they were singing hymns to God. This radical display of faith set the stage for the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his whole family. It also sets a good example for everyone (Acts 16:22-34). Paul obviously practiced what he preached. He believed that regardless of how bad things may seem, in the end everything is working together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). Murmuring and complaining reflects a lack of confidence in God! When Israel grumbled, Moses correctly accused them of grumbling against God (Ex. 16:8). No wonder people who don't complain shine like stars in the universe!

But let us focus on another suffering hero of the faith much closer to home. The optimism of the late Dr. George Washington Carver has been an inspiration to me and to millions. He was born a slave a few miles from where we live in Carthage, Missouri. When he was an infant his family was kidnapped by bushwhackers and sold in Kentucky, but George was too weak and sickly to be sold. A neighbor brought him back to Missouri and Moses Carver and his wife Susan raised George like their own. Even though slavery ended with the Civil War, every step of Carver's life was still made more difficult by the color of his skin. If he ever complained about these hardship, his complaints have been lost in history.

- Since George was too weak and sickly to work in the fields, he didn't complain but devoted himself to doing house work and making house plants well for the neighbors.

- His success in experimenting with plants helped build a foundation for his future in agriculture.
- He was interested in art but had no money for art supplies. Instead of complaining he made his own brushes and paints from plants and berries that were free.
- George often spoke of his conversion at the age of 10 and faithfully attended church all of his life. He also taught Bible studies for 30 years. George emphasized Christian morality in his teaching and practiced it in his life. Serving Christ was the focus of his life!
- When he was not allowed to go to school with whites, he didn't complain but bravely walked 9 miles to Neosho where there was a school for colored children.
- He stayed in Neosho for three years with Andrew and Aunt Mariah Watkins. George payed for his own room and board by hard work and learned everything he could from that small school.
- When he left, Aunt Mariah gave him her own personal Bible. It was his most treasured possession. He read it every day and as a scientist even took it with him into his laboratory.
- From Neosho George went to Ft. Scott, Kansas hoping to further his education. After witnessing a black man being lynched, however, he left town in the middle of the night.
- By the grace of God he graduated from high school in Minneapolis, Kansas and received a letter of acceptance to attend Highland College. Only when George arrived did the college realize he was black and rejected him as a student. It was hard not to complain about that!
- Befriended by a wealthy couple named Milholland, he was accepted at Simpson College. Sadly, however, he had to eat in the basement with the kitchen help. When the Milhollands found this out they insisted that the college change their rules and allow George to eat with the white folks. As the Millhollands contributed generously to the college their advice was taken.
- Overcoming a life time of obstacles, in 1894 Carver became the first black man to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Science, and in 1896 the first to earn a Master of Agriculture Degree.
- Declining lucrative offers to teach in the north, Carver felt led of God to move to southern Alabama and he spent the rest of his life teaching at the Tuskegee Institute.
- His experiments and discoveries with the peanut made him famous as the "Father of Synthetics" and his agricultural insights transformed farming in the South.
- Carver lived frugally. He survived on a very small salary, never accepted a raise, never charged for any of his inventions and discoveries, and gave away his life's savings before he died.
- He was not only the Father of Synthetics but one of the greatest scientists who ever lived. More importantly, he was also a spiritual giant and pillar in the Temple of God. He suffered discrimination without becoming bitter and is a sterling example for every follower of Christ.
- If you are interested in learning more about Dr. Carver click on this link!
<https://vimeo.com/431107624>

When going through tough times please remember the Apostle Paul and Dr. Carver. Remember also that we enter into heaven through gates made of pearls. Please consider that God may be allowing your temporary suffering for your eternal good. Remember, when God allowed Satan to give Paul a "thorn in the flesh", Paul didn't complain about it, but learned to **"delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties."** (2 Cor. 12:7-10). WITH THE HELP OF GOD WE CAN DO THE SAME!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce