

## Gar and Grumbling

All who know me well know I like to fish; both *for men* with the gospel, and *for fish* (mostly bass these days) with a kayak, rods, reels, and lots of tackle and related equipment. When I'm not *fishing for men*, I'm often *fishing for fish*... especially on Mondays when I try to stay away from computers, books, and the office.

Since we've moved to NW Louisiana, I've spent several recent Mondays exploring new waters, and was doing so yesterday. I paddled way up the reservoir to the "skinny" waters where kayaks can go but bigger boats typically can't. There were several fish in these vegetation thick, shallow waters that were hungry and eager to bite. Unfortunately they were mostly gar rather than bass!

After several hours of fishing and torn up baits (for those who don't know, gar have a mouthful of very sharp teeth!), I paused for a snack and to reevaluate my options. Grumbling to myself, because there was certainly no one else around, I reviewed my fishing fortunes for the day: "Only a couple of 'dink' bass and several gar!"

Then it hit me: I was well-equipped, outdoors, and doing something I really enjoy (fishing), on December 5<sup>th</sup>, in my shirt-sleeves! That last part really got me since a friend from Indianapolis had messaged me earlier to check on us, and in the course of conversation relayed that the temp there was in the 20's! I was on the water (which wasn't frozen!), in shirtsleeves, and at least catching "fish"... and yet here I was, pursuing my favorite hobby, and GRUMBLING.

With this realization, my attitude immediately changed about the day and its activity. What did I have about which to complain? I was fortunate enough to be out of the water, healthy enough to be able to participate in my favorite hobby, and catching fish... and wasting all of that by grumbling and complaining.

Admittedly, neither the Holy Spirit nor Paul had catching gar instead of bass in mind when writing Philippians 2:14, "*Do all things without grumbling and disputing...*" but how often do we ignore rather than count our "blessings" to "grumble/complain" about what we don't have or isn't going to suit us?

Think about it: when we buy or build a house, we want it to have a:

- Large pantry to store all the food we have;
- Lots of cabinet space for all our pots, pans, and cooking equipment;
- Spacious living room to entertain all of our friends;
- Big walk-in closet for all our clothes;
- Bathroom that rivals a waterpark, or at least a spa;
- Spacious yard for the kids/grandkids to have room to romp and play; and,
- Garage for our cars and "stuff" plus a shop/outbuilding for all of our "toys."

And yet we still, and perhaps even often, find something about which to complain. Perhaps a careful and contemplative reading of 1Timothy 6:6-8 is in order, "*But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*" Content or complaining: Which are you? May God forgive us when we should be content and happy counting our blessings, but are instead discontent, greedy, covetous, grumbling and complaining!

Oh yeah, one more thing before we wrap this up. Note that Phil.2:14 is just the beginning of the sentence which continues and concludes its thought in vv.14-15, *“Do all things without grumbling and disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among who you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”* According to these verses, we are only *“blameless and innocent children of God above reproach”* and *“lights in world”* who *“hold fast the word of life”* **IF** we *“Do all things without grumbling and disputing”!* Now please excuse me- I’ve got some repenting to do about “gar” and a lot of other things. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at [vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com](http://vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))