

“CONQUERING COMPLAINING”
Philippians 2:14-16

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to the Book of Philippians, chapter 2, beginning at verse 14. Hear now the Word of God from the NKJV:

“14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

*Once upon a time, there was a man who wanted to become a monk. So he went to a monastery. He was told that part of his training involved learning the virtue of SILENCE. He would be allowed to say just 2 words for every 7 YEARS! So after the first 7 years, the man was called in and allowed to say, his two words. So he said, ‘**Food Bad!**’ Seven years later, his two words were: ‘**Bed Hard!**’ Finally, after a total of TWENTY-ONE YEARS, the man said, ‘**I Quit!**’ The bishop who was in charge, then responded, ‘**Well, I’m certainly NOT SURPRISED— You’ve just been COMPLAINING ever since you got here!**’*

Chronic complaining will not only make you, miserable, but it will also make everybody else around you...miserable as well! The problem w/complaining is that can be a hard habit to break. Moreover, some folks are naturally negative.

They always tend to look at what's bad/wrong, instead of what's good/right; and of course, ALL of us are influenced to some extent by our negative society. Bad news always makes the headlines. So we're constantly bombarded w/what's wrong w/everything. So for some of us...by our own nature, & by our upbringing, as well as by all the negativity/ our world, we develop the habit of complaining.

But, God tells us this morning that He wants us to be different from the cynicism of the world! Our text today from Phil. 2:14-15, reads like this in the NLT: ***“Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.”***

In this message, I want us to look at 4 common types of Complainers; then I want to share some Steps we can take to conquer the habit of Complaining; and lastly, I want us to look at the result of being a NON-COMPLAINER!

The 1st type/Complainer is: **THE ‘WHINER.’** These folks just seem to wake up negative. They rise/whine. At times, K. David was a whiner. In Ps. 73, for ex., in vv. 13-14 he says: ***“Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments” (NIV).*** Here's the tell-tale sign of a whiner: ***“This is NOT FAIR! I don't deserve this! Everybody else gets ALL the breaks.”***

In Matt.'s Gosp., chap. 20, Jesus tells the story of the Parable / the Laborers: Jesus said that a landowner went out early one morning @ 6:00 AM, and he hired some laborers / his vineyard. He then agreed to pay them the normal daily wage.

At nine o'clock in the morning, the landowner hired some more workers. He also did the same thing at both three o'clock, and five o'clock in the afternoon. But, at the end of the day, the landowner paid each / the workers the same amount of money. Vvs. 10-11 tell us: ***“So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.”***

V. 13 then says: ***“But he (the landowner) answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’”***

The laborers in this story basically said what so many of us, have often said: “Life’s not fair! I didn’t get what I deserved!” Of course, complaining about the fact that life is not fair, will only make you more miserable. It’s a vicious cycle!

Here’s the 2nd type of Complainer: **THE ‘MARTYR’**—The favorite phrase of the Martyr is: *“No one appreciates me.”* In the Bible, there’s a passage from the Bk. of Num., chap. 11, where the great Moses lapses into this role: The people of Israel have been complaining and complaining about the wafer-like ‘manna’ that God has provided for them to eat, while they’ve been wandering around in the desert...until finally, Moses says to God in v. 11:

“Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me?”

And in vv 14-15, Moses adds: *“I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me.”* Martyr-type people are pros at having pity parties.

When they’re sick or under pressure, they want everybody else to know about it. So how do you react under pressure? Do you mount a complaining campaign?

The 3rd type of Complainer is: **THE ‘CYNIC’**—The favorite phrase of the Cynic is: *“We’re doomed...We’ll never make it...Nothing will ever change!”* The Biblical ex., here, is found in K. Solomon. In Eccls., chap. 1, he says, & I’m paraphrasing: *“Everything is meaningless...Life is pointless...you spend your whole life working/ what do you have to show for it?...so why even bother?”*

The 4th type of Complainer is: **THE ‘PERFECTIONIST’**—Nothing is ever quite right for this person. Nothing is ever good enough. Pro. 27:15 tells us: *“A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rainstorm.”* But, let’s be fair: it’s not just wives who nags/argues all the time. Husbands do it too. Nagging perfectionists. These folks just seem to look for something to be wrong! They’re always contentious / argumentative! This is not good, because nothing destroys the love/harmony / a marriage faster than constant arguing/complaining!

Ok. So how can we conquer the habit complaining? What steps can we take to avoid/ to break the habit of grumbling/bickering all the time?” Once again, the Bible says: ***“Do all things without complaining and disputing.”*** How do you do that? Here’s the 1st step: **ADMIT THERE’S A PROBLEM!** Admit that it’s a problem for YOU—NOT just for other people...but for you. Pro. 28:13 says: ***“He who conceals his sins does NOT prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds MERCY!”*** Oftentimes, the most difficult part in learning how to overcome something (in this case complaining) is to recognize it in yourself.

Here’s a good question. If someone recorded your speech for a solid week, what would it reveal about you? More specifically, would it show that you spend a lot of time griping, grumbling, complaining, & saying, *“Life Stinks!”* If so, then you’ve got to admit that it’s a problem. Circle the words ‘confesses’/‘renounces.’ Like it or not, complaining is more than a bad habit—it’s a SIN! So we need to confess it to God / ask for His forgiveness! We also need to ask God to deliver us, and to set us free from having a negative, murmuring, ungrateful spirit.

Complaining was one / the chief sins / many / the ancient Israelites. In fact, their constant grumbling/whining...along w/their fear/doubt, kept them out of the Promised Land for 40 years. Moreover, God condemned those particular Israelites to die in the Sinai desert because of their rebellious, murmuring spirit!

The 2nd step is: **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN LIFE.**

Complaining is often an attempt to blame other people for problems that we ourselves have created. I.e., I may have brought the problem into my life, and I may be the cause of it...but, if I complain enough, maybe I can shift the focus onto somebody else and it will make me feel just a little bit better. It's human nature to pass the buck. Pro. 19:3 says: ***“A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord.”*** I.e., there are people who continue to commit sin, and yet when they begin reaping the consequences of their sinful choices/actions, they quickly want to blame others, & even God for their situation!

Someone once said, *“Don't complain how the ball bounces...if YOU are the one who dropped the ball!”* If I myself am the one who brings certain problems into my life, then I really don't have a legitimate right to complain. But, we all do this at times. Therefore, complaining can become an excuse for us to be irresponsible, or to try to deny the fact that we ourselves caused the situation.

Of course, as the Bible tells us—Whatever we sow, we will eventually reap. So on the hand, YES...we're all FREE to choose whatever we want to do in life. God has given each one of us that kind of freedom. But on the other hand... there's a catch. We're all free to make our own choices...BUT we're NOT free from the consequences of our choices.

Here's the 3rd step: **DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!**

I Thes. 5:18 tells us: ***“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will***

for you in Christ Jesus.” Circle the word, ‘ALL.’ God says, *“I want you to be thankful in all circumstances.”* Notice that this verse DOES NOT SAY:

“Be thankful FOR all circumstances.” You and I CANNOT always be thankful

FOR the circumstances, but WE CAN be thankful IN the circumstances. For ex.,

‘Thank You, God, for your Sustaining Grace in this really difficult time in my life.

I also rejoice, God, in knowing that in ALL things—You’re working for my good!”

As Americans, we live in the greatest country in the world! We’ve been given rights/freedoms/opportunities that other countries can only dream about! So then, not only as Americans, but as children of God, especially, we need to develop an ‘Attitude of Gratitude. Learning how to be grateful is a tremendous ANTIDOTE for complaining. Indeed, when you really think @ it, whenever you find yourself complaining, you’re usually being ungrateful! So every single day you and I have the choice to focus on either the negative things in life, or on all the positive things! Is the cup half empty or half full?

It all depends on how you look at it, doesn’t it? One of the great paradoxes in life...and sometimes one of the great tragedies in life, is the fact that we don’t always value what we have in life, until it’s gone! We take so much for granted.

But again, as Christians, we're called by God to be different from the world! We are to do everything w/out complaining/arguing so that we may be the sons/daughters of God, blameless and harmless, in the midst of a crooked and perverse world, in which we are to shine as lights of the world. As God's people, we are to be as salt/light, and, we are to be different from the rest of the world!

Here's 4th step: **LOOK FOR GOD'S HAND/THE CIRCUMSTANCES.**

In II Cor. 4:17-18, Paul writes: *"For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!"*

"So we do not LOOK at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look FORWARD to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last FOREVER!"

Paul acknowledges that there are problems that come into our lives...YES! But the way you/I look at them will determine our attitude. Therefore, since God is always working for our good—we need to develop an eternal perspective about this life. I.e., we need to remind ourselves, daily, that God is in control/ everything that happens to us...and, that all the wonderful benefits we're going to gain for ALL Eternity, will far outweigh all of the negative problems/ or temporary troubles we may have to go through!

Paul said it best: *“I consider that our present sufferings are NOT worthy to be compared with the GLORY that will be revealed in us!”*

Here’s a good question: Why does the Bible tell us over and over again, not to complain? Whenever I start complaining, I’m really questioning 3 things:

1. I’m challenging God’s Wisdom. *Does God really know what He’s doing here? And/or, ‘How can this situation possibly be beneficial to me, or to my family?’*

2. I’m doubting God’s Care. *‘Does God really love me? Does He really care what happens to me?’* **3.** I’m forgetting @ God’s goodness. I’m focusing on what I don’t have, rather than focusing on what I do have. I’m being ungrateful!

Here’s a 5th step we can take to CONQUER the sin of COMPLAINING: **PRACTICE SPEAKING POSITIVELY!** Complaining can quickly become a habit..and habits are only broken, when they’re replaced with something else. So then, we must work to eliminate any negative complaining, and replace it with positive speaking.

Ephesians 4:29 tells us: ***“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but ONLY what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”***

Paul is saying, *“Watch what you say...Don’t let any JUNK come out of your mouths...speak only words that will encourage and help other people.”*

So then, work to replace your complaints, w/compliments. This is very important for parenting. Affirmation always gets better results than nagging. Parents...Do your words help your children? Or, do they hinder your children? Are you building your children up, or just tearing them down all the time? Be positive in your speaking. Jesus said: ***“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”***

Now lastly, what is the result of **BEING A NON-COMPLAINER?** Paul says, *“Do everything w/out complaining or arguing.”* Then, Paul gives us the result of being a Non-Complainer: He says, *“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.”*

Paul is not talking @ Sinless Perfection, here! We all sin, and as long as we're on this side of Heaven, we're still in the process of being Perfected by God! What Paul has in mind here, is the corporate witness or testimony, of the church! As believers, we are called on to LIVE OUT the salvation God has worked in us, so that those OUTSIDE the CHURCH, cannot point an accusing finger at us! Think about it. If all that people know about a church is that its members constantly argue, complain, and gossip, they get a FALSE IMPRESSION of Christ and the Good News.

So then, each and every one of us must do all that we can to AVOID arguing with other Christians, as well as complaining about fellow members and conditions w/in the church. We must do all we can to protect/preserve Unity!

As followers of Christ, we are called by God to be people of the highest integrity and we are admonished to live lives that are above reproach...and when you encounter people who are genuinely positive and righteous, they stick out like a sore thumb. Godly people who are positive, loving, and encouraging to other people around them, just shine like stars in the middle of a dark night.

We as individual Christians can be stars for God. Moreover, our Church can be a star for God. Our church is known for being a church that takes missions, seriously. Our church actively shows forth God's Love to people in need! That's wonderful. But in addition, I want our church to be known far and wide as *"A Church where there's love, peace, unity & harmony...A church where we all love God, we love each other, & we love and invite other people to come and to join our family of Faith!"* I'll close now. How do you Conquer Complaining? Only through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us as Christians! He's the only antidote / our sinful nature. He's the One who makes us new people on the inside. Phil. 2:13 offers this promise: ***"For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him."*** AMEN!