

1 **Advice from my Dad**

- "When you speak to people, just focus on where the Lord wants to deal with you. At least that way, one person gets something out of the sermon."
- Since it is a holiday, I'm letting you take a break while I address something that might only affect me. But at least I will get something out of the sermon.

2 **Thanksgiving, Part 1**

The problem with complaining

3 **A departure from normal**

- I started this week with two Scripture passages from which I wanted to develop a Thanksgiving sermon.
- I struggle a bit with preaching a holiday sermon because I have always felt my calling was to preach three books of the Bible to get people the whole counsel of God's word.
- But sometimes it is appropriate to focus on a specific topic as I have recently been focusing on marriage.

4 **A departure from normal**

- The pastor told me something interesting yesterday about the great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
 - He typically found just one verse from which he would develop his whole sermon.
- So in the spirit of Mr. Spurgeon, I am going to focus on just one verse of Scripture today that might seem a bit odd for a Thanksgiving sermon.
- It is especially odd because it focuses on the one problem that prevents our ability to give thanks to the Lord.

5 **Is complaining really a problem?**

And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. (Numbers 11:1, ESV)

6 **How often do you click this button?**

... and does it really help?

7 **A.W. Tozer**

Among those sins most exquisitely fitted to injure the soul and destroy the testimony, few can equal the sin of complaining.

8 **The good news**

- God loves us enough that He listens to our problems and complaints
 - *I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him. (Psalm 142:2, ESV)*
 - *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, And will watch to see what he will say unto me, And what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. (Habakkuk 2:1, KJV 1900)*
 - A good earthly father listens patiently to the problems that plague the lives of their children. But the children must bring those concerns to the attention of the father.
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9 **The bad news**

- But God hates it when we whine and complain and leave Him out of our minds while we complain

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to others.

- When we just complain and whine, but do not bring our burdens to God, He is not pleased.
- Why? Because our complaining and whining does not bring God glory.
- Why are we on earth? ANSWER: To bring God glory.
- The Israelites in Numbers 11:1 where groaning and complaining to one another, but failing to bring their burdens to God in prayer.

10 **The constant complainer**

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- She quickly answered, "Why don't you call it 'Belly Acres'?"

13 **City limits sign**

- "Welcome to Florence. Home of 37,000 friendly people and a few sore-heads."
- The truth is that we all have a tendency from time to time to be sore-heads. We call that attitude by different names:
 - Gripping
 - Grumbling
 - Whining
 - Belly-aching
 - KJV = "murmuring" = "an expression of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, or discontent"

14 **Surely, none of you have this problem**

- After a sermon about the problem of negativity, one church pessimist said to the pastor, *"Preacher, you told it like it was today and if the negative people had been here you sure would have told them a thing or two."*
- People gripe about everything.
 - Employees gripe about their companies
 - Students gripe about teachers and homework
 - Church members gripe about the pastor
 - We all gripe about the government

15 **Complaining is not new**

- The first complainer was Adam.
 - When he got his hand caught in the fruit basket, he said, "The woman YOU gave to be with me is the one to blame for this mess."
 -

16 **The vital difference**

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- There is a difference between complaining in pouring out our complaints before the Lord.
- When we "pour out our complaints before the Lord," we are actually bringing our problems before the Lord and seeking his glory in resolving the problem or changing our character through the problem.
- When we are complaining, we are not even talking to the Lord. We are just whining and griping to others about the things that bother us.

17 **Put another way...**

- Bringing our problems to the Lord is something that He always wants us to do. He wants us to come to Him as a loving Father and share our burdens and seek His mercy and grace.
- But complaining to others instead of bringing things to the Lord is a serious sin. In the Numbers 11:1, when the people complained, it displeased the Lord and His anger was kindled. In fact, the Lord's anger blazed against them and the fire raged among them and destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.

18 **3 reasons why God hates complaining**19 **1. Complaining DENIES God's supreme authority and power**

- *And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go. (Exodus 5:2, KJV 1900)*
 - Pharaoh thought he was a god.
 - The all-powerful God of the universe showed His power.
 - The Israelites leave Egypt wealthy.
 - They go through the Red Sea on dry land, and God destroys their enemies.
- Their success in entering the promise land depended on God, so when they complained against Moses and Aaron, they were questioning God's ability to do what He said He would do.
- Complaining is the evidence that we are dissatisfied with the way God is doing things.

20 **Complaining shows a lack of perspective**

- One big problem for the people in Numbers 11 was that they kept on complaining about their wilderness diet. They talked about what great food they had in Egypt.
 - BUT, they seem to forget that they were SLAVES in Egypt!
 - They seem to forget that they left Egypt with bags of wealth given to them by the Egyptians!
- When we complain, we lose the perspective of how greatly the Lord has blessed us. We complain about our problems and fail to thank the Lord for His gifts.

21 **Exodus 12:35-36**

- *And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:35–36, KJV 1900)*

22 **Do you ever complain?**

Think about it for a minute.

- What do you say about your spouse?
- What kinds of things do you say about your job?
- Do you complain when some cashier or salesclerk treats you disrespectfully?
- Do you share all the things that are wrong in the church with others?

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– Have you ever told someone that the weather "ruined" your plans?"

23 **Or do you just complain TO your spouse?**24 **Snake in the grass**

- A missionary was walking along the trail with natives to whom he was ministering.
- Suddenly one of the natives shot his gun near the missionary and killed a huge snake in the path.
- The missionary never saw it and would have stepped on it.
- He asked, "How come I didn't see that?"

25 **Leopard in the bushes**

- They walked on. Soon the native grabbed his arm and said, "Look! Do you see the leopard?" The missionary could not see it until it moved.
- He said, "Wait a minute. Why couldn't I see it? We're walking on the same path.
- You see the snake. I see only the path. You point to what looks, to me, like shadows and stone and it becomes a leopard.
- Why couldn't I see them?"

26 **Bush eyes**

- The native replied. "You have to get your BUSH EYES."
- You see if you stay in the jungle long enough, you develop what they call "bush eyes."

27 **We need "God-eyes"**

- If we walk through life blind to God. All we will see are reasons to complain but when the Holy Spirit is allowed to open our eyes we get "GOD EYES,"
- We can SEE GOD when no one else can.
- We see God where others just see leaves.
- We need to be able to see God in all things in order to stop our complaining.

28 **2. Complaining DISRUPTS Christian unity.**

- Complainers are always complaining TO someone
- They spread discontentment, bitterness, and disunity.

29 **Numbers 13:30-33**

- A spy with God-eyes: *And Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "Surely, let us go up and let us take possession of it because surely we will be able to prevail over it."*
- 10 spies with problem-eyes -- *And the men who went up with him said, "We are not able to go up to the people because they are stronger than us." And they presented the report of the land that they explored to the Israelites, saying, "The land that we went through to explore is a land that eats its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in its midst are men of great size. There we saw the Nephilim (the descendants of Anak came from the Nephilim), and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their eyes." (Numbers 13:30–33, LEB)*

30 **10 negative spies**

- The negative spies were saying, "We can't do what God has told us to do, it's too hard and the people are too big."
- Have you ever done that, exaggerated your problems? Someone shares an illness and suddenly there's someone in far worse shape...
- The ten, negative, spies poisoned the whole nation of Israel. These ten spies started the complaining, and the whole congregation was infected with the dreaded "we can't" fever.

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- . What happened to this generation of bellyachers?

31 **All the dogs barking**

- Here's a scary truth the sin of complaining is so contagious that it spreads like wildfire.
- When one of our neighbor's dog's starts to bark, all the other dogs soon begin barking.
- You get one disgruntled complainer, and it's not long before it spreads to others.

32 **What complaining accomplishes**

- What I have found is that complaining doesn't change anything or make any situation better.
- Here's what it does.
 - It amplifies frustration
 - It spreads discontent
 - It brings about discord

33 **Some precautionary balance**

- I want to make sure that you do not misunderstand me
- There is a difference between complaining to others and sharing your burdens with them so that they can pray with you and for you about those burdens
- *Carry the burdens of one another, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* (Galatians 6:2, LEB)
 - We are to pray for one another and love one another
 - We are to aid one another
 - So, it is right and proper for us to share the things that bother us so that we can pray with our fellow believers in order that God might get the glory when He answers our petitions

34 **3. Complaining DISCREDITS my testimony**

- *Do all things without grumbling and disputing, in order that you may become blameless and innocent, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as stars in the world,* (Philippians 2:14–15, LEB)
 - KJV = "without murmurings and disputings"

35 **What is our impact on others?**

- You/I are called to be everything that a child of God should be
- How you live has a dramatic impact on whether or not your witness reveals the truth of God's ability to save and sustain those around you who are searching for answers
- A Christian who is always grumbling and complaining is harmful to the cause of Christ and nobody likes to be around people who are always grumbling and complaining

36 **An illustration of IMPACT**

- A young girl surprised her mother with a very beautiful and unexpected gift that she had purchased with her allowance. The little girl said, "Mom, this is for you because you work so hard, and nobody seems to appreciate it around here."

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- The little girl replied, "I know, but he doesn't complain about it."

39 **When we fall apart**

- When we fall apart during trials, the world says, "Where is your God when you need Him?"
- Paul and Silas were a tremendous testimony in the Philippian jail.
 - BUT what if they had been complaining and griping about their situation?
 - What if Silas would have said, "Paul, you big shot dummy, you just had to show off and cast the demon out of that girl. Now look at the mess you've got us in. Why couldn't you just have left that demon possessed girl alone?"

40 **What if...**

- If that dialogue had been going on between Paul and Silas do you think the jailor would have asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Would he be saying "I want some of what we they have!"
- He probably would have said, "What must I do to avoid this Christianity thing?"

41 **Our most important tool**

- Listen, our testimony is THE most important tool we have. God uses our lives to influence others.
- Did you know that most of the time when we grumble, we don't have any reason for doing so?

42 **Returning the chainsaw to the store**

- Most of the people who grumble are like the man who was never happy with anything.
- One day when he walked into a hardware store to buy a chain saw that was advertised to cut 6 trees in an hour.
- He came back the next day fussing and complaining, "This chainsaw is about as useless as a screen door on a submarine!"
- The salesman said "What's wrong with it?" I only cut 1 tree and it took ALL DAY to do it!"

43 **Returning the chainsaw to the store**

- The salesman said, "Let me look at it."
- He reached down, pulled the cord, and started the chainsaw.
- The man looked shocked and exclaimed, "What's that noise?"
- There was nothing wrong with the saw.
 - The problem was the man's understanding of how it worked.
 - Without the POWER of God, we all take too long to accomplish our tasks!

44 **A.W. Tozer**

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45 **How have you been blessed?**

- I want us to stop and think about how much we have been blessed.
- Each of us has been blessed in many ways.
- The more we think about how we have been blessed the more we will be thankful the less we'll complain.

46 **Complaining is no small thing**

- The Bible is clear that complaining is repulsive to our Heavenly Father and a serious sin.

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- Most of us tend to blow it off as a small thing, if we notice it at all.
- BUT...If we see a drunk OR a person who has a filthy mouth, we tell them that it's a sin, and they need to stop.
- But somehow when it comes to the sin of complaining, we rationalize and excuse it.

47 **How is your perception?**

- Two boys were eating some grapes. One said, "Aren't they sweet!"
- "I guess so," the other replied, "but they're full of seeds."

48 **How is your perception?**

- Walking through a garden, the first boy said, "Look at those big, beautiful red roses!"
- The other commented, "They're full of thorns!"

49

- Many believers are like the negative-thinking boy in this story.
- They always look at life through dark glasses.
- Like the children of Israel in today's Scripture, they complain and grumble when they should be praising the Lord for His gracious provision.
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50 **My Mother's advice**

- "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything."
 - My mother masterfully found was to get better instead of bitter.
- What ruins a meal at a restaurant for me is if someone starts complaining about the food, the service, or something else.
 - Maybe it is because my mother's counsel is so firmly planted in my soul. It just seems bad manners to complain about a meal when you are spending time with loved ones.
 - Here's an idea: Be thankful for your company instead of mad that the steak is not cooked to your idea of perfection or that your iced tea glass has been empty for 5 minutes.
 - (But I won't complain about this irritating propensity of others....)

51

The next time you feel like complaining, think about this:

1. Complaining denies God's supreme authority and power
2. Complaining disrupts Christian unity.
3. Complaining discredits our Christian testimony.

52 **For those who want a short summary...**

Maybe we can all remember this advice when next we open our mouths

53 **Great wisdom in old song**

- "Count your many blessings" written by Johnson Oatman, JR. in 1897
*When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
 When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
 Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
 And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*
 Refrain:

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*Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*
[Alternate last line: *And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*]

54 **Great wisdom in old song (2)**

*Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.*

*When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings—*money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.*

55 **Great wisdom in old song (3)**

*So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.*

56 **The best remedy**

- Praise is the best remedy there is for complaining.
- Keep praising the Lord so you can win the victory over complaining.
- (More on that next week...)