

THANKSGIVING
BEWARE OF A COMPLAINING SPIRIT!
NUMBERS 11:1ff; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-11

Introduction

Sadly, we live in a largely *ungrateful* society! When I was being raised by my parents, we were taught both how to be *thankful* and to express that *thanksgiving*.

By-and-large I think that kind of upbringing has been cast aside and children are being taught that the world owes them something! (i.e. “*entitled*”)

When we take time to observe the parents of *unthankful* children and teens, we can understand that many of the children probably got it from their parents showing them a pattern of *ungratefulness* and displayed a *complaining* spirit in their lives !

What I’m saying is that *ungratefulness* and those with a *complaining* spirit seem to be abounding more and more in our day! I see it in the many who call our Church or come by our Church looking for help!

Many who come looking for help have never been inside our Church or any other Church! They don’t know our Church or anyone in our Church, but they believe that is what our Church is here for—to give them a handout! But in my 35+ years of ministry of helping folks out, there have been only a very few who were truly *grateful*. There have been a few, but only a few!

Let me give you a few examples of the spirit I’m talking about:

1. *Samuel Leibowitz, criminal lawyer and judge, saved 78 men from the electric chair. Not one ever did bother to thank him.*
2. *A few years ago, a ship sank in Lake Michigan. One young man swam from the sinking ship to shore, bringing someone with him over 19 times. He actually saved 19 lives! He later reported that **not one of these came to him later to even say, “Thank You!”***
3. *Andrew Carnegie, the multimillionaire, left \$1 million for one of his relatives, who in return cursed Carnegie thoroughly because he had left \$365 million to public charities and had cut him off with just one measly million.*

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4. *Remember Jesus and the ten lepers that were cleansed? Only one returned to give Jesus thanks and that one was a Samaritan. (Luke 17)*
5. *There is a story told of two old friends who bumped into one another on the street one day. One of them looked forlorn, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked, "What has the world done to you, my old friend?"*

The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me forty thousand dollars."

His friend said, "That’s a lot of money!"

"But, two weeks ago, a cousin I never even knew died, and left me eighty-five thousand free and clear."

His friend replied, "Sounds like you’ve been blessed...."

"You don’t understand!" he interrupted. "Last week my great-aunt passed away. I inherited almost a quarter of a million."

Now his friend was really confused. "Then, why do you look so glum?"

"This week... nothing!"

Unfortunately, this “*entitlement mindset*” has permeated our American society at almost every level. I believe it is what is fueling the push toward socialism in our country! Much of the younger crowd coming along thinks they are *entitled* to everything without having to give anything!

They want the “*rich*” to be made to share their money with them! (a/k/a *redistribution of wealth*) It doesn’t matter to them that hard-working people have worked for years to get what they have and where they are!

But we who name the name of the LORD should be different and guard against having attitudes of *entitlement, unthankfulness, and ungratefulness!*

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We have been blessed to live in a land of plenty! God has been so good to us! May the LORD help us beware of developing ungodly attitudes such as these!

Psalms 103:2 – “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

Sadly, some forget all God’s benefits and must come across to Him like, **“what have you done for me lately?”**

Thanksgiving or **complaining**—These words express two contrasting attitudes found in God's children in regard to His dealings with them.

Understand that the soul that gives thanks can find comfort in most anything and everything, but the soul that complains can find comfort in nothing!

Now there are different terms used to describe what we are talking about today—**gripping, grumbling, whining, and bellyaching** are a just a few.

Regardless of the word we use to describe it, **complaining** always has the same symptoms. The dictionary defines it as **“an expression of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, or discontent.”** **Complaining** is the outward expression of **discontent** from within. It begins in the heart!

e.g. A certain man who was well-known for his constant complaining, inherited a large sum of money. When he got it, he complained about how it was not as much as he thought it should be. He bought a farm and asked his wife what she thought they should name it. She replied, "Why don't you call it Belly Acres."

Complaining is so common these days it seems to have become the great American popular past time. People **gripe** about everything— teachers, traffic, taxes, and troubles of all kinds!

Even when it comes to CHURCH some love to complain! It’s too hot, it’s too cold, the preacher preaches too long, he uses too many Scriptures, I’m not appreciated...and on and on we could go, at least I could! Because it usually gets back to me in the end!

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Maybe we need a big sign up here that says, *“You came in here without knocking, please leave the same way!”*

The pastor of a local church met a parishioner while walking along the street. He stopped the man and asked why he did not attend church regularly. The man replied that the sermons were okay, but he said, "Every time I go to church you sing the same songs!" The pastor, who was quite proud of the diversity in the church's music, asked the man which songs was he referring to. Then the man said, " Silent Night and O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Complaining is part of our culture, but it sure isn't anything new. Who was the first **complainer** against God and for what God had given Him? Adam—in *Genesis 3:12* **“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.”**

Complaining is one of the most prevalent sins among Believers. Those who would never think of committing adultery or murder are guilty of the sin of **complaining** and make no mistake, it is a sin!

Complaining is a symptom of a deep seated spiritual problem—A failure to trust God and a failure to be submissive to His providential provision in your life.

1Corinthians 10:10-12 “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, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The key to **Thanksgiving** is NOT the turKEY...the key to **Thanksgiving** is a thoughtful heart that thinks to remember just how good God has been to us!

Thoughtfulness leads to **thankfulness!** **Pondering** leads to **praise!** And **remembering** leads to **rejoicing!**

That’s my introduction to the message, now the message!

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I. THE CAUSE OF A COMPLAINING SPIRIT!

As it is with disease, often what is hidden on the inside is far more destructive than what's on the outside!

A. **Rebellion!** (Vs. 20)

They *despised* the LORD among them and cried out for their lusts to be fulfilled!

The bottom line cause of the children of Israel's *complaining* here was a *rebellious heart!* They didn't want what the LORD gave them! Perhaps they were hoping that if they *complained* long enough, the LORD would change His plans!

One big problem with our *complaining* is that it focuses on what's *frustrating us* and it forgets about "*the big picture.*" "*The big picture*" being the Will of God—His purposes and plans for our life!

When we get all nearsighted and just **looking at the irritations and the frustrations** in front of us, we lose our perspective, we blow today's problems way out of proportion, and we *forget* the larger picture of the great things that God is doing in our lives and wants to do in our lives!

The big picture includes **God's providence and His sovereignty!**

Who are we to put the Almighty God under cross-examination? Are we in a better position than He to judge what is and is not good for us? How far can we see into the future? Who are we to strike out against God with *complaining*?
(e.g. *Ask Job!*)

In *Acts 16*, Paul and Silas were in a Philippian jail and we don't see them *complaining* but *rejoicing!* They trusted God's purpose and God's sovereignty. Paul believed and lived what he wrote in *Romans 8:28!*

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THE CAUSE OF A COMPLAINING SPIRIT

Rebellion

B. **Reaction!** (Vs. 1)

This was the children of Israel's reaction to having made a three day journey after leaving Mt. Sinai. (*10:33ff*)

Can't you just hear them?

"*Are we there yet?*" "*How much farther do we have to go?*" "*I'm tired of this!*" "*I'm bored!*" "*There is nothing but wilderness!*"

Complaining is often a *reaction* to tough *circumstances*.

We look at our *circumstances*...and we *complain*. We take our eyes off of God and His provision! (e.g. *The Ark, the cloud*)

We forget Who is in control and that He has our best interest at heart, and we began to *murmur, grumble, and gripe!*

And before long....we're not just *complaining* about what originally set us off....but we're *complaining* about everything!

God's will is for us to *give thanks in everything*...and **too often we do the exact OPPOSITE!**

C. **Rejection!** (Vs 5-6, 18-20)

The Children of Israel wanted what was back in Egypt! Or at least that's what they were implying in *Vs. 5!* They missed their old way of life! (*i.e. food*)

All they had to eat was this MANNA! (Vs 6)

Sadly, many Believers miss their old manner of life and some of them will return to them and make excuses for having done so! (*i.e. Think fleshly appetites here.*)

They get entangled back in the bondage of sin!

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Understand that they conveniently forgot the bondage that the LORD delivered them from—The WHIPS and SLAVERY!!!!

The bottom line here though is this—they were rejecting the LORD!

THE CAUSE OF A COMPLAINING SPIRIT...

II. THE CURSE OF A COMPLAINING SPIRIT!

Only a few pages back, the LORD promised and provided water and Manna, and their clothes and shoes never wore out!!!

Let's examine this curse of a complaining spirit:

A. A Complaining Spirit Is Contagious!

Complainers are "*missionaries of misery.*"

We are not told, but don't you imagine that the *complaining* probably started out with just a few individuals.

These individuals then infected those closest to them with their *complaining* first. (*i.e. Family, friends, neighbors*)

And then the *complaining* spread to more and more around them as those infected with it spread it within their circles of influence! Then before long the whole congregation was *moaning, groaning, and complaining!*

When you hang around a negative person, before long you'll be negative too!

Call it a "chain of complaint." Just let one person start *complaining* to others about what's wrong with their Church or their preacher, and pretty soon others will link up with the *complainers*.

If someone has a *complaining* Spirit with regard to their Pastor or Church, they need to get their heart right! Because if they don't, before long they will begin to affect others.

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Instead of getting right though, many just choose to move on down the road and take their *complaining* spirit with them and before long they are affecting and infecting another ministry!

When one dog begins to bark, a number of dogs begin to bark. When one frog begins to croak in a pond, others begin to croak.

A Complaining Spirit Is Contagious...

B. A Complaining Spirit Is Contentious!

Deuteronomy 1 tells how the *murmuring*, and *complaining* led to *division*, and *dissension* among the children of Israel.

1. **Complaining Is Critical** – It most always strikes out against someone—even if that someone is the LORD!
2. **Complaining Is Corrupt** — It ALWAYS sins against the Lord's commands!
Even Moses began to *complain* to the LORD about the complications. *Numbers 11:10-13*

Moses was now *complaining* about the people's *complaining*.

C. A Complaining Spirit Is Costly!

Complaining raises your blood pressure and can affect your health in a bad way!

Complaining affects your reputation because it makes you look bad in front of other people (and the LORD)!

Mark Twain once said, "*Don't complain and talk about all your problems—80 percent of people don't care; the other 20 percent will think you deserve them*"

We may not take our *complaining* seriously, but the LORD does!

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Numbers 11:1 gives us a good idea of just how serious is the sin of **complaining**. The LORD killed many of them for their **complaining**!

If not dealt with, **complaining** can become a spiritual toxin in the life of a Believer. One of the adversary's most useful schemes is to keep the Believer focusing on their problems rather than on God's provision!

The LORD said "*Okay....Manna's not good enough for you? You want meat? I'll give you meat*" **Vss. 18-20, 31-32**

In **Numbers 14**, just a few chapters later...Their **continual complaining** cost them the Promised Land! They lived in defeat until their death and never got the victory!!!

Let's not allow ourselves, our homes, and our Church to be **discouraged** nor **defeated** by the **inability to contain the desire to complain**.

III. The Cure Of A Complaining Spirit! (*Philippians 2:14-15*)

*1 Timothy 6:6, 8 – "6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.
8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."*

We're going to drive a stake right here and then, LORD willing, we'll come back next week and look at this in detail!

Conclusion

Are you afflicted with a spiritual "**heart murmur**"?

Is it from a heart that has NOT been made whole by the LORD?

Or maybe it is from a heart focused on you and your circumstances rather than the sufficient provision of the LORD! God's grace is ALWAYS sufficient!

***"When thou hast thanked thy God for every blessing sent,
What time will then remain for murmurs or lament!"***