A Message To Whiners, Complainers and Belly-achers

Numbers 11:1-6 (NKJV)

Our scripture text comes to us this morning from the Old Testament Book of Numbers, chapter 11. And let’s read verses 1-6.

Number 11:1-6 (NKJV)

1  Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.

2  Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched.

3  So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.

4  Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?

5  We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

6  but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

P R A Y E R

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I'm sure at some time or another over the course of your life time, you have probably met “a belly-acher.”

The dictionary defines a “belly-acher” as “a whiner,” “a chronic complainer,” “a grouch,” “a grumbler.”

Unlike the leatherback turtle... or the snow leopard, “belly achers” aren’t on the endangered species list. In fact, if anything, the world is over-populated with belly-achers.

You are likely to find “belly-achers” almost anywhere you go: At work.....at your kid's ball games.....at School PTO meetings.....at Wal-Mart.....at your favorite restaurant. But perhaps the one place you will spot more “belly-achers” than anywhere else is in every local Church.

(P A U S E )

Can I ask you something? Are you “a belly-acher?”

*Are you pleasant to live with? (pause)

*Are you pleasant to work with? (pause)

*Are you pleasant to go to Church with?

Ideally, as every Christian grows and matures in Christ, he or she should grow sweeter, kinder, and more gentle. And with that spiritual maturity there should be less whining, less complaining, and less belly-aching.

There are three key thoughts I would like for us to focus on in this message.
First of all, let's consider.....

I. The **SIN** of Complaining

1. If I were to give you a slip of paper and a pencil and ask you to list twenty sins, I dare say that few, if any of you would have complaining on your list.

2. Complaining is one of those things we easily dismiss as “a fault,” or “a short-coming,” or at the very worst, “a bad habit.”

   But as we see in our scripture text, **GOD VIEWS COMPLAINING AS A SIN.**

3. Let me set the stage here. Remember when the Israelites were back in Egypt, God sent a plague of death upon the land of Egypt. But He spared the lives of all the Israelites who had the blood sprinkled upon their door posts and mantle.

   When Pharaoh released the Israelites from their bondage and they came to the Red Sea, God opened up the sea so they could cross on dry ground.

   Then as they journeyed from the Red Sea towards the Promised Land God provided them with the Pillar of Cloud to guide them in the day light hours; and a Pillar of Fire to warm them and protect them at night.

   When the people started complaining about not having anything to eat, **GOD provided them with “daily bread” in the form of a honey wafer called “manna” or “the food of angels.”**

4. You would think the Israelites would be humbly grateful for all God had done, but they weren't.

   *verse 1 says, “Now when the people complained.”*
5. GOD had provided for their needs every step of the way. What in the world did they have to complain about?

We find our answer in verses 4-6......

4. Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?

5. We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

6. but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

6. Now how did GOD respond to all their whining and complaining? Did He say, “You little bagel eaters, what am I going to do with you?” NO! Verse 1 says, “Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.”

7. Now I don’t know about you, but if GOD started a fire around me every time I complain, I’d think twice before I ever did it again, how about you?

8. Brothers and sisters, the word of GOD clearly tells us NOT TO COMPLAIN. I want you to follow along with me as we look at some of those scriptures. (turn to each of these)

   **EPHESIANS 4:29 (NKJV)** Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

   **PHILIPPIANS 2:14,15 (NKJV)** Do all things without complaining and disputing, 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......

   **JAMES 5:9 (NKJV)** Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold the Judge is standing at the door!

   **I PETER 4:9 (NKJV)** Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.
9. GOD has clearly told you and me **DO NOT COMPLAIN**. Now, if I willfully do something GOD has told me not to do, what does that make me? **IT MAKES ME A SINNER**, doesn’t it?

10. **Complaining isn’t a weakness or a short-coming or a fault or a bad habit. COMPLAINING IS A SIN!**

Secondly, let’s consider....... 

**II. The **SIDE-EFFECTS** of Complaining**

1. If you are a chronic complainer, or a serial complainer as people in the psychiatric field call it, you need to understand the negative side-effects chronic complaining has upon you, and upon the people around you.

   **(A) The Negative Side-Effects Chronic Complaining Has Upon You.**

   1. Chronic complaining has negative **PHYSICAL** side-effects.

   Chronic complainers are notorious negative thinkers. They look for the very worst in people and in every situation. Researchers at STANFORD’S SCHOOL OF MEDICINE have revealed that exposure to 30 minutes of negative thinking every day, including watching negative news, can physically damage the brain. Critical or negative thinking damages the neurons in the regions of the brain that are used for problem solving and cognitive functions like one's memory and speech.

   Other physical side-effects associated with chronic complaining includes: tension or migraine headaches, panic attacks, insomnia, and difficulty breathing.

   2. Chronic complaining has negative **SOCIAL** side-effects.

   Chronic complainers tend to alienate people. I mean stop and think about it! How many of you wake up each morning and think to yourself, **“I think I'd like to go hang out with a chronic complainer today.”** Let me see the hands!

   Chronic complainers are like “porcupines.” They are curious to watch, but no one wants to get near one.
3. Chronic complaining has a negative SPIRITUAL side-effect too.

   **Proverbs 23:7** says, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.”

   **Matthew 12:34** Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

CHRONIC COMPLAINERS don’t just have a mouth problem, they have a HEART problem. Chronic complaining reveals that the heart is poisoned with anger and resentment and bitterness and even hatred. How can one have a close relationship with GOD if his or her heart is filled with such poison? How can one properly worship if his or her heart is filled with such poison?

If you happen to be a chronic complainer, you need to be soberly aware of the negative physical, social and spiritual side-effects it is having upon you.

**(B) The Negative Side-Effects Chronic Complaining Has Upon Those Around You.**

1. **The Negative Side Effects your chronic complaining has upon your FAMILY.**

   Chronic complaining is just like “second hand smoke.” It effects the lives of everyone around you. Kids who live with a chronically complaining parent tend to grow up to become chronic complainers. Mates who live with a chronically complaining spouse often turn into chronic complainers too.

   If you are a chronic complainer, chances are your family “walks on egg shells” because they don’t want to do anything to set you off.

   If you are a chronic complainer, chances are it has had a negative effect on your family’s social life, and you don’t even realize it. Have you noticed that your MATE or YOUR KIDS rarely invite friends or even extended family members over? Could that be because they are afraid you might go off on one of your tangents?
ILLUSTRATION: My brother, Rick, is one year younger than me. He is one of the hardest working, most fun-loving and generous guys you would ever want to meet. Linda and I would love for RICK to come visit us in North Carolina, but you see there is a BIG PROBLEM. Rick is married to one of the most critical, most negative whiners and complainers either of us has ever known. If Rick comes, his wife is sure to come too. My relationship with my own brother has been poisoned by a wife who is a serial complainer.

If you are a chronic complainer there is something else you need to consider and that is:

2. **The negative side-effects your complaining has upon your CHURCH FAMILY.**

In *Ephesians 4:26,27 (NKJV)* the apostle Paul warns us to “Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”

Chronic complainers tend to be angry people. Even when they don’t outwardly appear angry there is anger stewing beneath the surface.

Satan can use chronic complainers to do great harm in a Church. This is why Paul warns us “Not to give the devil a foothold!”

Many Christians today have the attitude that “the Church is all about me and my preferences, and if I don't get my way, I'll either gripe and complain until I do.

*Why can't we sing more of the songs I like?*  
*Why can't the preacher preach out of the Bible Version I like?*  
*Why can't the Church offer the kind of programs I like?*  
*Why can't we have the style of worship I like?*  
*Why can't they set the thermostat at the temperature I like?*  
*Why can't they dim the lights to the brightness I like?*  
*Why can't they set the volume on the sound system at the level I like.*
If that's the attitude you have, I hate to break the news, but **ITS NOT ABOUT YOU.....AND ITS NOT ABOUT ME.......ITS ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

Church isn't about doing what makes you or me “happy,” Church is about doing what pleases Jesus Christ........P-E-R-I-O-D!

If there is something **un-scriptural or un-ethical or immoral** going on in the Church we have a responsibility to complain. But more times than not, the chronic complaining that goes on in a Church has nothing to do with scriptural matters, it has to do with one's selfish desires to put his or her needs and wants above those of everyone else. **Satan can use someone like that to do a lot of harm to the spirit and ministry of a Church.**

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Well we have looked at THE SIN OF COMPLAINING. And we have looked at THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF COMPLAINING.

Finally, let's consider.....

**III. The SOLUTION For Overcoming Complaining**

1. One might think the solution to overcome complaining is to just **STOP COMPLAINING.** But it doesn't work that way.

2. The solution is to replace **COMPLAINING** with **THANKSGIVING** and **PRAISE**.

*I Thessalonians 5:18* (NKJV) **In everything give thanks for this is the WILL OF GOD in Christ Jesus for you.**

It is GOD’S WILL that we speak words of thanksgiving. It is NOT GOD’S WILL that we speak words of complaining.

*Ephesians 4:29* (NKJV) **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”**

What Paul is saying there is we should replace words that discourage with words that encourage. We should replace words that tear down with words that build up.
3. Doesn’t it make sense that WORDS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING and WORDS OF COMPLAINT can’t be on your lips at the same time? What does that tell us? It tells us the more we speak words of praise and thanksgiving, the less we will complain.

C O N C L U S I O N

CHALLENGE: “The Complaint Cup”

As we close, I want to lay down a challenge for all of us this week, myself included. Get a cup or a jar and label it “Complaint Cup.” And this week every time you complain put a $1.00 in your “Complaint Cup.” And next Sunday, bring the amount that is in your “Complaint Cup” and put it in the offering plate.

I dare say our offering next week will be higher than today’s offering. And chances are, some of you might actually have to take out a loan at the bank.

Boy, if we knew it was going to cost us every time we complained, we would probably think twice before we did it wouldn’t we? Brothers and sisters, the truth is, IT DOES COST US WHEN WE COMPLAIN.

WHEN WE CHRONICALLY COMPLAIN WE ARE SINNING AGAINST ALMIGHTY GOD. GOD HATES WHINING, COMPLAINING AND BELLY-ACHING!

AND WHEN WE CHRONICALLY COMPLAIN, not only are we poisoning our own spirit, we poison the spirit of our family, our Church family, the people we work with and anyone else who gets near us.

I want to leave you with that admonition of the apostle Paul we read earlier from PHILIPPIANS 2:14, 15 (NKJV)

PHILIPPIANS 2:14,15 (NKJV) Do all things without complaining and disputing, 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.