

Respectable Sins

Complaining: What's It Look Like?

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, February 27, 2011

I. What Does Complaining Look Like?

If you read your whole Bible from start to finish, you'll see that God doesn't promise to keep us from getting cancer, or losing our jobs, or losing our kids, or losing our financial security!

No! He promises to do something even better; to give us Himself and the Gospel in the very midst of those trials. And to put on display for this world what it looks like to be living for something greater, and what it looks like to have a hope that's rooted in something bigger than the year-end statement of your retirement investments.

A. Complaining is a Sin

Philippians 2:12-16 "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, 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 as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing."

Jude 14-16 "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.' These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage."

God hates complaining... not just because of how it offends **HIM...** but because of how it **INFECTS** us.

B. Complainers Distort the Truth

Numbers 16:13 “Isn’t it enough that you have brought us up out of the land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it over us?”

A complaining spirit had settled down in them to such an extent that they were distorting the truth. They had lost touch with reality. That’s what complaining can do to you. You don’t even see things clearly anymore; your thinking is twisted.

Numbers 11:4- 6 “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? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’”

Numbers 11:18–20 “... Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?’”

- What is it in your life that you keep looking back on and remembering as better than it was?
- Where have you turned ‘Egypt’ into a buffet?
- Where are you guilty of distorting the truth to justify your present complaining?

C. Complainers Forget Who's Really Listening!

Numbers 11:1 "... the people became like those who complain of adversity in the HEARING of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled..."

- What's the worst kind of complaining there is?

Complaining about adversity! That's the worst because God tells us exactly how we're supposed to respond to adversity and complaining's nowhere on the list.

James 1:2-4 "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

D. Complainers Don't Really Trust God

They're willing to give God a little time, and they'll trust God to resolve this. But if the trial or the suffering or the problem goes on month after month, year after year, and they don't see God acting on their timetable... all bets are off! I can do what I want now whether it's right or wrong, sinful or godly. It doesn't matter because God's taken too long now.

"A long obedience in the same direction." –Eugene Peterson

Job 2:10 "In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."

In fact, he fell to the ground and worshipped. There was no hint of complaining or bitter self-pity in Job's initial response to suffering and tragedy; but as the suffering drug on and started to pile up, Job started to slip into a complaining spirit.

“In the immediate aftermath of difficult times, we manage to mobilize our resources and cling to God as we press on. But I wonder if the strength to deal with tough times is sometimes supported by a quiet but strong hope that a good response from us will bring a quicker end to our trials and a return to better times... It seems to be true that the longer we must wait for hoped-for relief, the greater the struggle becomes to trust God’s goodness. Much of what looks like trust may reflect little more than the confident expectation of restored blessing.” Larry Crabb, *Inside Out*, p. 138

E. Complainers are at Greater Risk for Slipping into Moral Compromise

Job 19:7 “Though I cry, ‘I’ve been wronged!’ I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.”

“Unremitting struggle tends to blur our lines of moral distinctions. Things that are clearly wrong become less offensive to our conscience when they provide our only hope for relief. Again, notice the central problem: It is neither the hurt in our soul (it’s okay to hurt) nor our desire for relief and satisfaction (it’s okay to thirst); it is the *demand*. When we demand relief of our thirst now, we’re in danger of slipping from a biblical ethic into a morality of pragmatism: whatever eases our pain is justified. The result is often blatant moral compromise and a ruined life.” Larry Crabb, *Inside Out*, p. 142-143

Complaining is so hard to see in yourself, especially when it's reached the habit stage. But it's easy to see in others!

Complaining is always serious when a Christian does it, and that means the time to stop complaining is always the same – right now!