

Respectable Sins

Complaining: What's Really Going On in the Heart?

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, March 6, 2011

Matthew 12:34 "... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

I. What's Really Going on in the Heart of a Complainer?

A. Complainers Have Soured and Slipped into the Wrong Kind of Sorrow

There's a difference between a broken, sorrowful heart and a bitter, demanding heart.

There's no sin in sorrow. But our sinful human nature can so easily turn sorrow into a bitter, demanding spirit if we lose sight of the big picture of WHO God is... and WHAT He's promised to do in and through us... for His glory and our good.

- Do you have the solid, sturdy framework of who God is and what He's doing in your life holding the canvas of your suffering tightly in place... or is your life starting to buckle... and sag... and shrivel?
- Is there any place for complaining in the life of a Christian?

The Bible is filled with examples of what Bible scholars call lamentations or cries of lament. This is where a child of God honestly pours out their heart to God and expresses how much they hurt and how it looks like God has abandoned them, BUT they always come back to affirming again their choice to trust God in the dark, even when it makes no sense to them and they can't see anything good happening in the situation.

Personal Lament: Psalms 3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 69, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142

Corporate Lament: Psalms 12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129

- Did you know it's OK to complain?

To complain (1) in faith (2) to God (3) about the calamities He sends into our lives. Job did it... Jeremiah did it... Habakkuk did it... and the sweet Psalmist of Israel – David himself did it.

Psalm 13:1-3 “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my God...”

Psalm 77:1-4, 7-10

Psalm 142:1-7

That's what biblical complaining looks like... and notice it's all directed to God Himself... not other people. When you complain to God about God you're OK... but when you complain to other people about God... you've crossed the line.

There's a fine line between the humble heart-felt cries of a child of God who's just honestly expressing the sense of being shattered and filled with sorrow over what's going on AS OPPOSED to that of a bitter, self-righteous Christian who's tears are no longer humble and sorrowful, but are willing to slander God to others.

So watch out! It happened to Job... and it can happen to us, if we're not careful.

Job 23:2-7 “Even today my complaint is bitter... I would state my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what He would answer me, and consider what He would say. Would He oppose me with great power? No, He would not press charges against me. There an upright man could present His case before Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge.”

The Message “I’m not letting up—I’m standing my ground. My complaint is legitimate. God has no right to treat me like this— it isn’t fair! I’d find out exactly what he’s thinking, discover what’s going on in his head... my Judge would acquit me for good of all charges.”

Job 38:1 “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind...”

Job 38:2–3 “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.”

When a suffering Christian pours out the sorrow of his soul in a humble, honest lamentation, our God reveals Himself as a gentle, compassionate Savior who draws near to the brokenhearted. But when that sorrow goes sour and gets twisted into a bitter spirit of demanding, look out! That cry gets met by the steely glare of a Surgeon who’s ready to cut out that bitter heart with a glistening scalpel.

B. Complainers Almost Always Have a Proud Heart Dressed Up in Self-Pity!

In this entire universe, who is it that’s really in the best position to decide and legislate what is right and wrong?

Job 10:1 “I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.”

Job 13:3 “I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God”

Job 13:15 “... I will surely defend my ways to His face”

Job 23:4 “I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments”

Suffering can be intense, confusing, and overwhelming; but there’s no level of suffering that justifies YOU taking charge and demanding from God how you should be treated.

The goal still has to be ‘Pleasing God’... and the spirit still has to be submissive and humble. Because when you cross that line and take over... it’s pride that’s driving your actions... and God hates pride!

Job 41:34 “He beholds every high thing; He is king over all the children of pride.”

Desire all you want... pray all you want... lament all you want... but demand nothing.

Job 42:3, 5-6 “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.... My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes”

It’s one thing to cry out and pray for relief... but it’s another thing altogether to pridefully demand that God’s will become your will... right now!

C. Complainers Have an Accusing Heart that Doubts God’s Love

Most of us tend to measure somebody else’s love for us by their degree of cooperation with our plans. And if you haven’t noticed yet, God rarely ever cooperates with our plans!

But that doesn’t mean He doesn’t love us.

1 John 4:10, 19 “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins... We love Him because He first loved us.”

- And where do we see that love? At the cross!

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

If you know Christ, your biggest problem’s been taken care of! You don’t ever need to doubt God’s love for you again!