THE SIN OF COMPLAINING
Philippians 2:14

“Do everything without complaining or arguing.”

Read Scripture Text

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

George had it all. He was a successful businessman. He was independently wealthy. He drove the finest automobiles and wore the finest of clothes. But in spite of his luxurious lifestyle, George felt empty inside.

One day George totally surprised everyone by walking away from his successful career and his luxurious lifestyle to become a MONK in a MONASTERY.

On the day George arrived at the monastery, the head MONK told him he would have to take the customary vow of silence, which meant George would not be allowed to say anything for one year. But each year on the anniversary date of his coming to the monastery, George would be permitted to say TWO WORDS.

Well the FIRST YEAR went by. The head monk called George into his office and said, “George, you have been with us one year now. You are now permitted to say two words.”

GEORGE SAID, “Room dark.”

At the end of THE SECOND YEAR, the head monk once again called George to his office and said, “Do you have two words you would like to say?”

GEORGE SAID, “Bed hard”
Well THE THIRD YEAR passed and once again George was permitted to speak two words.

This time GEORGE said, “Food lousy!”

Well at the end of the FOURTH YEAR, George didn’t even wait for the head Monk to summons him to his office. George barged right through door and boldly announced to the head MONK……

“GOING HOME!”

The Monk said, “George, this really doesn’t come as any great surprise, after all, you have done nothing but COMPLAIN ever since you got here!”

**************************************************

Perhaps when I read my scripture text from Philippians 2:14 while ago, some of you started squirming a little bit.

“Do everything……DO EVERYTHING, without complaining or arguing.”

Have you COMPLAINED about anything this past week?

……..How about those high gas prices?

……..How about those high grocery prices?

……..How about that guy who pulled right out in front of you the other day and drove 10 miles an hour under the speed limit?

……..Or how about that LOUSY MEAL or LOUSY SERVICE you got in a restaurant the other day?
Oh how we love to COMPLAIN! Why, we’ve even come up with some cute little sayings to justify our complaining.

How about this one, “Well remember the wheel that squeaks the loudest is the one that gets the grease.”

Or “The crying baby is the one that gets the milk!”

Do you know it’s a scientific fact that complainers live longer? Or at least it seems like they live longer to those who have to be around them all the time.

.........Have you ever gone on a trip with a chronic complainer? After about the first hour you were probably slapping yourself on the forehead and asking yourself, “What in the world was I thinking when I invited them to come along?”

.........Have you ever sat beside a chronic complainer at ball game? Or in a restaurant?

.........Have you ever gone to Church with a chronic complainer?

We have all heard the old saying, “One bad apple spoils the whole bunch.” That is especially true in a Church. I have seen the sweet spirit and fellowship of a Church ruined by one or two chronic complainers.

I know preachers who have left churches or even left the ministry because they grew weary of dealing with chronic complainers in the Church.

ILLUSTRATION: One of the finest preachers in our brotherhood is Bro. Ben Merold. When Ben Merold was preaching in Fullerton, California he had a man in the congregation who complained about everything. Nothing ever suited this man! Ben said “Every Sunday I could count on him to find something wrong with the sermon I preached.”
Well one Sunday, Ben had preached “A Five-Star Sermon” as he puts it. Everyone who went through the line afterwards just heaped all kinds of praise on Ben for his message that morning.

Well sure enough, ol’ COMPLAININ’ CHARLIE came through the line and complained about some little “nit picky” thing he didn’t like about Ben’s sermon.

Without saying a word, Ben reached inside his suit coat pocket and pulled out a slip of paper and handed it to “COMPLAININ’ CHARLIE.” The man said, “What’s this?” Ben said, “It’s a list of Churches where I think you would be happier.”

Ben said, “The man huffed out and never came back and the Church has been growing ever since!”

***************************************

While we may pass complaining off as a harmless, annoying habit, GOD takes complaining much more seriously! In the eyes of GOD, COMPLAINING IS A SIN!

In the Old Testament we see a classic example of what happens when GOD’S PEOPLE turn into a COMPLAINING PEOPLE.

I would like for you to open your Bibles to NUMBERS chapter 11 and just hold that scripture for just a moment.

**BACKGROUND**

If you are familiar with the Old Testament you know the Israelites spent over 400 years in captivity in Egypt. The longer they stayed in Egypt the more difficult life became for them.

They began crying for God to send a deliverer. Well God heard their cries and sent MOSES to lead God’s people out of Egypt to the Promised Land.
One would think after the EXODUS from Egypt the Israelites would be shouting and singing praises all the way to the Promised Land. But this wasn’t the case.

Their CELEBRATION quickly turned to COMPLAINING.

Here in NUMBERS 11 we are going to learn FOUR VALUABLE TRUTHS about THE SIN OF COMPLAINING.

Truth #1: Complaining Is A Condemned Sin vs. 1-3

1. GOD HATES COMPLAINING! *(Everyone say that with me!)*

2. GOD doesn’t enjoy listening to someone whine and complain any more than you or I do.

3. Notice in *verse 1* when God heard the people complaining *His anger was aroused.*

    Let’s not miss a valuable truth here. GOD ALWAYS HEARS OUR COMPLAINTS……even if no one else does!

    …..The next time you’re sitting at that stop light complaining about how long its taking to turn green, REMEMBER GOD HEARS YOU!

    …..The next time you mutter something under your breath about how much you hate your job, REMEMBER GOD HEARS YOU!

    …..The next time you’re “blowing off” about everything that’s wrong with your Church, REMEMBER GOD HEARS YOU!
4. *Verse 1* tells us that when God heard this the Israelites complaining, HE SENT DOWN FIRE AND BURNED UP THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ISRAELITE CAMP.

Now I don’t know about you, but if GOD sent down FIRE FROM HEAVEN every time I complained, it probably wouldn’t take me too long to stop complaining.

“What meat loaf again? We just had meat loaf last week!”

*poooooooooooffffffff*

“Of all weekends for it to rain, why did it have to rain this weekend. I was supposed to the beach!”

*poooooooooooffffffff*

“I didn’t like the preacher’s sermon this morning, for one thing it was too long, and for another he stepped on my toes!”

*poooooooooooffffffff*

5. So the first valuable truth we need to learn about COMPLAINING is…..COMPLAINING IS A CONDEMNED SIN!

*************************************************

Now here’s the second truth………. 

**Truth #2: Complaining Is A Counter-Productive Sin**

*verses 4-6*

1. Now get the picture here. The Israelites are way out in the middle of the Sinai desert……..a land that is so barren, so dry, and so scarce with food, it can’t possibly sustain life.

   But GOD has graciously supplied all their physical needs by supplying them with a daily supply of a sweet, honey wafer-like substance called MANNA.
2. From everything I’ve studied about MANNA, scientists and nutritionists would deem it a MIRACLE FOOD if it were available to you and me today. Because MANNA consisted of all the vitamins and nutrients the human body needs to be strong and healthy.

3. But rather than PRAISING GOD for the FOOD He had provided, the Israelites chose instead to COMPLAIN ABOUT THE FOODS THEY DIDN’T HAVE. (Kind of like many of us probably do when we stand in front of the opened kitchen cabinets and complain about not having anything to eat when the cabinets are full.)

Rather than being grateful to God for the manna He provided, the Israelites actually started craving the foods they had eaten while in Egyptian captivity.

They yearned for Egyptian fish.....Egyptian cucumbers.... Egyptian melons.....Egyptian leeks, onions and garlic!

4. These are the same people who probably said on the day they left EGYPT, “Shewww, I hope I don’t ever have to eat another Egyptian cucumber or Egyptian onion again as long as I live!”

5. You see how COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE COMPLAINING is?

......Complaining steals our joy!
......Complaining weighs us down with ingratitude.
......Complaining consumes our thinking with negative thoughts.
......Complaining poisons our spirit.
......Complaining alienates others from us because who enjoys being around someone who complains all the time?

6. If you are a chronic complainer I want you to think about something for a minute. What has all your complaining ever accomplished?
Oh you may have gotten your way on a few things from time to time just to shut you up. But if you will be totally honest with yourself, you would have to admit your complaining has brought you more HEADACHES than HAPPINESS……and more MISERY than SATISFACTION.

Truth #1: Complaining Is A Condemned Sin
Truth #2: Complaining Is A Counter-Productive Sin

Now here’s our third truth……

III. Complaining Is A Contagious Sin vs. 10-15

1. What started out as the complaints of a few quickly spread like wild-fire throughout the whole Israelite camp. And now in VERSES 10-15 we see the “complaining bug” has now bit MOSES.

2. How many of you get the WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS?

On page 3 of the Washington Daily News each day there is a section called SOUND OFF. This column provides readers the opportunity to call in and sound off or complain about anything they want to get off their chest. And the best part is, the caller doesn’t have to identify themselves.

If you’re a regular reader of SOUND OFF you notice someone may SOUND OFF on a particular subject and for several days after that OTHER READERS SOUND OFF on that same subject.

COMPLAINING IS CONTAGIOUS!
3. Are there times when complaining might be warranted? Absolutely! When the issue involves immorality or criminal activity or a terrible injustice or it is an issue that threatens the well-being of our children or the community at large, we shouldn’t just COMPLAIN……we should take POSITIVE ACTION to resolve the problem.

e.g. If the citizens of this area hadn’t voiced their complaints and taken a strong stand against the Navy’s proposed Outlying Landing Field in Washington County, our Church services here at Christian Hope would be disrupted by the sound of fighter jets going over about every 22 seconds.

4. But let’s be honest. Most of the kind of complaining is selfish complaining about things we personally don’t like. And a lot of times its over “piddly……nitpicky things that don’t really matter.”

5. As Christians we must exercise extreme caution when we complain because COMPLAINING IS A VERY CONTAGIOUS SIN that can spread throughout the whole Church and ruin the sweet spirit and fellowship.

Complaining Is A Condemned Sin.
Complaining Is A Counter-Productive Sin.
Complaining Is A Contagious Sin.

Now here’s our fourth truth……..

Truth #4: Complaining Is A Cureable Sin

1. One might think the way to CURE ourselves of complaining would be to simply STOP complaining. Oh that it were that simple.
2. To get rid of a negative you have to replace it with a positive.

The Sin of Complaining involves TWO NEGATIVES……
One is NEGATIVE THINKING, the other is NEGATIVE TALKING.

As far as the NEGATIVE THINKING, Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8 “Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable----if anything is excellent or praiseworthy ----THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

If you have a serious problem with complaining, let me ask you something, “What do you think about?” “What do you feed your mind on?” I would say chances are you spend a great deal of time brooding over everything that’s wrong in your life, everything that’s wrong with your job, everything that’s wrong with your Church, and everything that’s wrong with the world.

If that is the case, you need to PRAY THIS PRAYER…..

“Dear Lord, I confess to you my sin of chronic complaining. Please transform my mind. Help me Lord not to dwell on the negative, but on the positive.

And as far as the NEGATIVE TALKING element of complaining, Paul tells us what to do in PHILIPPIANS 4:4

*Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice!*

Our MIND and our MOUTH go hand in hand. Our MOUTH speaks what our MIND thinks. If you are constantly dwelling on negative, pessimistic, critical thoughts……it will manifest itself through your TALK.

Ask the Lord to help you replace your CHRONIC COMPLAINING with CONTINUOUS PRAISE, and see if you aren’t much happier and much more pleasant for others to be around.
CONCLUSION

COMPLAINING IS A CONDEMNED SIN
COMPLAINING IS A COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE SIN
COMPLAINING IS A CONTAGEOUS SIN
AND COMPLAINING IS A CUREABLE SIN.

ILLUSTRATION: One day this cowboy was talking to this buffalo. (go along with me on this). The cowboy said to the buffalo, “You have got to be the ugliest creature God ever put on the face of this green earth. Your head is way too big for your body……….your hair is all knotted up ….and your legs are too short.”

The dejected buffalo walked away. A short time later the buffalo ran into another buffalo. The other buffalo said, “Hey man, why the long face?”

The buffalo said, “I just heard a discouraging word.”

My hope and my prayer is that Christian Hope Church of Christ will be a Church where “SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD!”

May we all work together to cultivate a positive, loving, encouraging environment that is inviting to others.

Let’s leave our complaints at the door!

Do Everything without complaining or arguing!