

Series: Side by Side
Message Title: ***Resist the Temptation to Complain***
Date: Sunday, April 15, 2018
Scripture: Philippians 2:14-17
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

I sound somewhat like “Captain Obvious” to say, “We live in a culture that cultivates conversations of complaint.”

We complain about so many things: people, parking, money, service, environments, chores, FOOD (hot food, cold food, spicy food, bland food), fashion, roads, accommodations, WiFi, e-mail, junk mail, text msgs, drive-throughs, early mornings, late nights, hair, TV, commercials, bosses, friends, mates, teams, weather, traffic, schools, jobs, messiness, politics, government, business, kids, in-laws, parents, pets, etc.

I think we can all agree, it is much easier to complain about the way things are, as they are, than to make a commitment to change the way things are.

Don't you find it strange that while we live in one of the most indulged societies in history, we are among the most discontented people on the planet?

But this is not something new to our modern era. There are some recorded complaints in history. Go back to Genesis. Who is the first complainer that we meet? Adam: "The woman whom You gave to be with me" (Genesis 2:12a ESV).

Cain: "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Genesis 4:13 ESV).

Moses: "Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, 'O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did You ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all'" (Exodus 5:22-23 ESV).

Jonah: "But God said to Jonah, 'Do you do well to be angry for the plant?' And he said, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.' And the LORD said, 'You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make

it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night'" (Jonah 4:9-10 ESV).

Israel (nation of complainers): "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4a).

So right here, right now, in the midst of this, God calls us to be change agents. To commit to change ourselves and to change the world around us.

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:14-17 ESV).

In Philippians, Paul interrupts a nice train of thought about how God works out salvation in us by commanding us to stop complaining:

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation” (Philippians 2:24 ESV).

“Do all things.” This is to be a lifestyle issue for you.

One of the things I admire most in the military is the respect shown for the office and for others.

Grumbling is an inward attitude of emotional disarray regarding life. The word, murmur, is an onomatopoeia—the name is associated with or sounds like what it means. There is a unique word in the New Testament, *goggusmos*. It is a word used to describe the attitude and actions of Israel in the wilderness. God was not pleased with them:

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the

cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Corinthians 10:1-5 ESV).

Questioning. Arguing. This is the idea of verbal and mental wrestling with God (*dialogismos*)—talking back to God. This is what kids do when they don't accept their parents' decision or authority. They push, they question, they berate, and they ignore the wisdom of experience and motive of love.

"Most people want to serve God in an advisory capacity."

These two words are the contrasts to what was directed in 2:12—"fear and trembling." "Fear" (not cringing) is the awareness and acknowledgement of our own weakness and vulnerability. "Trembling" is the concern or horror of grieving God.

“When we love a person, we are not afraid of what they may do to us, but rather, what we may do to them... The Christian’s greatest fear is crucifying Christ again.” —William Barclay

Yet, we live in a critical, cynical and complaining world. And it doesn’t take much for us to become part and parcel to the culture of complaint.

“Every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure.”

—Christopher Lasch, Social Critic

And sadly, so much of what we gripe about are not things of consequence when we look at the rest of the world.

Why do we complain?

- *Disillusionment With Institutional Failures*

There is a sense that representative government does not represent us. They use our monies to fund things we abhor. For example, the latest budget = 1.3M per day to Planned Parenthood!

- *Disappointment With People We've Trusted*
- *Dissatisfaction With Life as We Experience It*
Example: I stood in a township in South Africa "shanties"—underdeveloped, segregated urban areas.
- *Discouragement in Things We Attempted*
Life is full of disappointments. In fact, I have lived long enough to think we probably have more disappointments than opportunities.

In our passage today, Paul gives us several reasons, questions, to help us get our spirit rightly aligned with God's Holy Spirit and to discover the joy of surrender.

Why surrender? ... "and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11 ESV). Jesus is Lord and I learn what the joy of surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ looks like.

The command is clear and succinct: Don't grumble or question!

Why? What am I to focus on when I am tempted to complain?



Remember Who You Are as God's Possession

...“that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation” (Philippians 2:15a ESV).

You are a child of God! You are heir of a King, and nothing and no one can undermine what is yours in Christ. So living without complaint is a way of showing, proving and demonstrating that you are a child of God.

Sadly, many of us are children of God, but act like brats!

God's children should be pure—not full of mixed motives and manipulations. You have heard it said, “Hurting people, hurt people.” Anger comes out in ways that are strange when repressed.

To be blameless = to be without condemnation.

There are no handles to hold on to and no sticks for others to hit you with. The word has an “a” prefix, meaning it negates the quality of being blamed!

innocent = to be clear, not blurred.

Glasses/Windshield. These qualities in us are the be the contrast and contradiction to the world around us—“crooked and twisted.”

So Who Am I?

- I have been set free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2
- I am a fellow heir with Christ. Romans 8:17
- I have been called to be a saint. Eph. 1:1
- My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in me. 1 Corinthians 6:19
- I am a new creature in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17
- I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Eph. 1:3
- I am chosen, holy, and blameless before God. Ephesians 1:4
- I have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians 1:13

Recognize Where You Are by God's Providence

Why are you here? Paul gives context to our life and faith: "in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15 ESV).

"These thoughts press on one's heart that one can never speak a word, never transact a piece of business that one's face is never seen lighted up with the radiance of God or clouded and despondent without it being made harder or easier for other men to live a good life... No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, but the life of everyone is telling upon an increasing number of mankind what a solemn responsibility it is to live." —F.B. Meyer

You are in this world with a mission—to light the night! Paul is very concerned about the witness of God's people in a world that is desperate to receive and believe the truth of God.

It is God's plan that we are here:

“I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (John 17:15-18 ESV).

Let's examine the vivid language here: It is a world of God-rejecters. It is a world of Christ-haters. It is a tragic world, morally warped, spiritually perverted. This world rejects God's message as Israel of old did. Notice the two words, *crooked* and *perverse*. The word, *generation*, is *genea*. It could also be translated, *nation*. But the words, *crooked* and *perverse*, are interesting.

Crooked is the Greek word, *skolios*. Have you ever heard of an illness of the spine called, *scoliosis*? It is a curvature of the spine. It comes from this word because the word means *curved, bent out of shape*. It describes something that is out of proper alignment, that is off and deviated from the standard. Proverbs 2:15 describes the society of this world in these terms. It says, “Whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways” (Proverbs 2:15 ESV).

Isaiah puts it this way: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6 ESV).

And so, man has a spiritual disease, a scoliosis of the heart in which he is deviated from God, in which he has left the standard, moved away from the straight plumb line of righteousness.

And then, an even stronger word is the word, *perverse*. This word means to be severely twisted or severely distorted. So man has deviated from the path, and in the deviation, has become severely twisted and severely distorted. It is an abnormal condition. By the way, our Lord also used this basic same expression in Luke. Jesus said, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?" (Luke 9:41 ESV).

So this is a good characterization (one used in the Old Testament, one used in the gospels, one used by the writer of the epistle) to describe someone who has deviated from the path of righteousness and from the plan of God—become twisted, perverted.

John MacArthur explains it like this:

... "the idea here is to accept that providential plan which God has ordained for your life, live out your salvation without any complaints directed at Him. A joyful heart, a thankful heart, no emotional grumbling, and no intellectual disputing or arguing with God. But rather, without complaint, gratefully we live out our salvation. That is what he calls for Christians to maintain in terms of an attitude that pervades all their living."

—John MacArthur

Why are we here? To reach this twisted and perverse world. We are here to shine! But we are not doing this alone or of our own authority. God shines through us.

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light

shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us... Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence" (2 Corinthians 4:3-7, 13-14 ESV).

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16 ESV).

But let's be clear. It's not just the bright light of my good behavior that wins the lost; it is "holding fast to the Word of life." This is my confidence and strength—God's Word!

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16 ESV).

“Paul makes it clear he wants the Philippian church to be a proclaiming church, not a complaining church.”

Reflect What You’ve Been Taught by Your Pastor

Don’t frustrate, exasperate and deflate your pastor!

Paul goes personal:

... “holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:16 ESV).

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:24-27 ESV).

The idea of running in vain is that of training and then not competing—being benched or disqualified. The greatest joy any pastor has is seeing and hearing of joyful submission to the Word of God in the lives of those he teaches and serves. Paul's fear was to labor in vain—that his efforts didn't matter!

I pray there will be great joy in serving our city and community in the days ahead through CityServe and mobilization of our church on mission in this place. I don't just want them to know *where* we are; I want them to know *who* we are and *what* we do!