

WE ARE TO BE SHINING LIGHTS

"Attitude Series"

Philippians 2: 14-16

Philippians 2: 14-16 - *14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 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, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

[Prayer]

Introduction: There is an old tale about a woman whose name was Anna Kebbitch. She was a complainer. All day long she complained. "I have so little money, my clothes are like old rags." "My health is so bad, my back feels like the walls of Jericho." "I must walk so far to draw water, my feet are like watermelons." My house is so small, I can barely move in it." "My children visit me so little that they hardly know me." One day, Anna Kebbitch woke up with an itch on her nose. All day long her nose itched. She went into town to visit the rabbi. When the rabbi saw Anna, he asked her, "How are you Anna?" Anna replied, "I have so little money, my clothes are like old rags. My health is so bad, my back feels like the walls of Jericho. I must walk so far to draw water, my feet are like watermelons. My house is so small, I can barely move in it. My children visit me so little that they hardly know me. And now I have this itch on my nose and it plagues me so. Tell me Rabbi, what does it mean?"

The rabbi said, "Anna, your itch is the Kebbitch Itch – "the complainers itch." Its meaning is this: However you consider yourself, so shall you be. The next morning Anna woke up and her nose was still itching. She could barely move. Her back had turned to stone like the walls of Jericho. When she looked about her, she noticed that her house had shrunk until her arms stuck out the windows and her legs hung out the front door. She could not move in it. On the end of her legs were two huge watermelons. Her clothes had turned to old rags. When her son and daughter came walking by, Anna called out to them, but they continued walking on, wagging their heads – they didn't know her. And her nose continued to itch. In despair, Anna remembered the meaning of the Kebbitch Itch: However you consider yourself, so shall you be. What does this mean? Anna began to think: You know I do have money enough to live on and more. Henceforth, I will give out of my abundance to those who are not so well off. My health is not so bad. Actually for someone my age, I feel quite well. I'm glad I have such a nice house to live in. It's not large, but it's comfortable and quite warm. I really don't mind my walk to draw water. I love to smell the flowers along the path. And my children – I'm so proud that they have become independent and are now able to take care of themselves. Miraculously, while Anna was saying these things, her situation returned to normal – and her outlook on life changed forever. When the rabbis tell Anna's story, they end with this statement: May your noses itch forever.

You may not have the Kebbitch itch, but we all need to be reminded of a few things tonight about complaining. I intend to give you three reasons to stop complaining. Now, there are plenty of reasons not to complain, and you may be thinking, I know the first reason, "Because God said so." Well, God did say so, and that should be enough, I'm going to go a bit further and show you the consequences of complaining.

I. COMPLAINING TURNS YOUR LIGHT OUT!

Philippians 2: 14-15 - *Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 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,*

Essentially, if you complain and argue, someone can "speak a word of blame against you." What does that mean? It pretty much means that if you complain, the person who hears you can tattle tell on you. No....if you complain, you're not being a very good example. The scripture says to live clean, innocent lives in a dark world and to let your lives shine brightly before them. Brightly before who? Who are they? The people living in the dark. How can you shine like a star when your conversations are full of complaining? How can you be a night-light for someone living in a dark room when you complain every ten seconds? You can't. You can't show somebody good news when all the news you speak about is bad.

Nobody likes a complainer. Nobody wants to be like a complainer. Why not? Because a complainer is always negative. What does the word complain mean? Complain means to grumble, whine, whimper, protest, object to, disapprove of, criticize, or make a fuss. That's not a very positive definition.

How many of you have ever had bad service at a restaurant? How easy is it to complain about it? It's pretty easy. I mean, we've all been there. But suppose your waiter has had a horrible day and can't seem to get anything right. His world is so dark, he can't see his hand in front of his face. What kind of attitude is going to light up his world? An encouraging one, or a complaining one? Well, quit whining and start shining, because complaining turns out your light.

II. COMPLAINING GETS YOU NOWHERE!

Do you remember when you were around six years old and you probably hated turnip greens? How many of ya'll still hate turnip greens? Yeah, me too. Well, when we were six and we had turnip greens on our plates as part of our supper, did we have to eat it? Oh yeah. We had to clean our plates or no dessert. And we wanted those brownies. Did it make any difference that we said, "Mom, I hate turnip greens, it's gross? Did mom say, "Oh, I'm sorry honey, I forgot; Have a brownie instead of your turnip greens"? No way. So you're telling me that your complaining about the greens didn't get you anywhere. That's right.

Well, just like complaining about the greens when your six didn't get you anywhere, complaining about something today won't get you anywhere, either. So really, complaining is pointless, a waste of breath, a corruption of words.

In Matthew 20, Jesus told the parable about the 5 o'clock people. Let me break it down for you. Early one morning around 6 am, a land owner went out trying to find people to work at his farm. He found some and told them he would pay them a hundred dollars for the day's work. At around 9 o'clock, the land owner went out again and saw other people standing around doing nothing, so he said, "Come and work for me and I'll pay you whatever's right." So they went.

The owner went out again around noon and three o'clock and did the same thing. Then at 5 o'clock, he went out again and found still more people standing around doing nothing. He asked them why they had been standing there all day doing nothing. They told him it was because no one had hired them. So he hired them and they went out to work his land.

At quitting time, around 6 p.m., the owner sent for all the workers to come get their pay. The five o'clock people came up and he paid them 100 dollars, so the people who worked from 6 a.m. expected to get more than that. But they, too were paid 100 dollars. When they got their pay, they started complaining. They said, "Wait just a minute here, buddy! These guys were here only worked one hour and you paid them as much as us and we worked for twelve hours! This just ain't fair and we ain't taking this garbage!"

The owner said, "He fella, I'm not being unfair to you. Didn't you say you would work for 100 dollars? Take your pay and leave. If you want to give the guy who was hired last the same amount I gave you, you can't I do whatever I want with my own money? Or are you upset because I was generous?"

Well, let me ask each of you something tonight. When the 6 a.m. workers complained to their owner, did they get more money? When the 6 a.m. workers complained to the owner, were they treated better? Did their complaining get them anywhere? No, it didn't, because complaining get you nowhere.

III. COMPLAINING HOLDS YOU BACK!

Go with me in the theater of your mind to way back before Christ. Here we are with the Israelites. We've just crossed the Red Sea, now we're in this huge forest, and we've been out here for three days without water. All of a sudden, we come upon a pool of water, but the water's bitter and tastes nasty, so what do we do? We complain. Let's voice our complaint. Everybody say, "This water's nasty. Yuck!" Well, Moses takes a piece of wood and throws it in the water and water becomes sweet, so we drink up. Now, fast forward a day or so. Now we've moved on and were hungry but there's no food. What do we do? We complain. Let's voice our complaint. Everybody say, "We're hungry! Give us some food! We should have stayed in Egypt because you brought us out here to starve to death!" So, the Lord rains down bread from heaven in the morning time and sends quails to eat at night. And so we come up on this bread laying on the ground, and I look at you and I'm like, "What the heck is this?" That's why we call it manna, manna means "What is it?" So we eat this manna and we're satisfied for a while. But when we find out we have to eat it every day, what do we do? We complain. We say, "In Egypt we had fish and steak. We had everything we wanted, but now we have to eat manna loaf, manna burgers, manna pizza and even bamanna splits! We hate this stinking manna pizza and even bamanna splits! We hate this stinking manna."

Ok, fast forward some more and now we're moving through another forest and we're getting thirsty and there's no water. So what do we do? We complain. Let's voice our complaint. Everybody say, "Why did you bring us out here to make us thirst to death?" Well, we're complaining and then Moses goes up to this huge rock and hits it with his staff and water comes rushing out. So we all get in line for the rock water fountain and quench our thirst. Well, it looks like our complaining got our needs met, doesn't it? But that's not what happened. The Israelites' needs were met in spite of their complaining, not because of it. God didn't give in to their orders he was merciful and he remembered that he had a covenant with his people. His whole intention was to take them to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey----not just manna and quail. God's idea wasn't for the Israelites to be circling the desert for 40 years, but it was their complaining that kept them out of the Promise Land. Their complaining held them back.

IV. THE ALTERNATIVE: WATCH YOUR WORDS

Let's go back to being six again. You just called your Uncle Jimmy a poopoo head. And mom heard you. And her comment is, "If you can't say anything good, don't say anything at all." That's the truth, because anything bad that comes out of your mouth can come back to haunt you. For instance, when you complain about mom's cooking by saying "Man, I hate asparagus, I'd rather have nothing to eat than this nasty junk." Well, did you notice what you said? You'd rather have nothing rather than what was given to you. You keep going in this direction and you will have nothing to eat. It's better to say nothing at all, than to keep talking negative.

Illustration: Two young guys joined a construction crew commissioned to build a multistory office complex/building. At lunch they sat themselves on an iron girder high enough above the ground and opened their lunch boxes.

"I Can't believe it", groaned Joe. "Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I don't like peanut butter and jelly!" With that he crumpled his sandwiches and hurled them to the ground seventeen stories below. Lunch on the second day was a repeat of the first – Joe became visibly upset with the sandwiches in his lunch. Once again, he hurled the sandwiches seventeen stories below. Joe's buddy dreaded lunch on the following day. Sure enough rather, than enjoying a well-deserved rest, he was stuck listening to his new coworker complain. Day after day he silently watched Joe sort through his lunch, exclaim over the offending sandwich, and send it hurtling to the ground. "I've had it with peanut butter and jelly!" screamed Joe once again. Angrily smashing the sandwiches in his hand, he thrust them to the ground below. Unable to restrain himself any longer, Joe's buddy blurted out, "Look if you don't like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, then tell your wife not to make them anymore."

"Hey buddy, wait a minute," snapped Joe. "Don't bring my wife into this. I make my own sandwiches!" Sometimes we complain about the way things are when we have nobody to blame but ourselves. We are not mere victims of circumstances. We have the power to control what happens to us. But we need to do more than complain; we need to take action.

How do we take action? James 3:4-5 -*Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!*

The words that come out of your mouth steer the course of your life just like the rudder on a ship. When you complain, you are heading in the wrong direction, down the wrong path to Nowheresville. You've seen the consequences, complaining turns out your light, gets you nowhere and holds you back. You won't get to where God wants you to go with a mouth that complins.

Complaining is so much more than just a way of talking, it's an attitude thing. Instead of scrutinizing every situation, instead of searching for the worst, instead of finding something wrong, why don't you change your attitude and find your cloud's silver lining, find the light at the end of your tunnel, search for the best in your situation and thank God that you have nothing to complain about. Change your attitude and change your words, and you'll change the course of your life. You'll be heading in the right direction down the

path of Somewheresville and you'll get to where God wants you to go at the time he want you to get there.

PRAYER

C-O-M-P-L-A-I-N-I-N-G – PowerPoint Sheet
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“Attitude Series” – Bro. Shane, Minister to Students
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I. COMPLAINING _____ YOUR _____ OUT!

II. COMPLAINING _____ YOU _____!
(Scripture Reference: Matthew 20)

III. COMPLAINING _____ YOU _____!

IV. THE ALTERNATIVE: _____ YOUR _____!
(Scripture Reference: James 3: 4-5)

NOTES: _____

PRAYER REQUEST: _____
