BIG PROBLEMS? BIGGER GOD!
Part 11: The PROBLEM of COMPLAINING

INTRO: Modern Western society is history's most prosperous culture. Except for the very poor, most people have what they need, and some all they want. Yet, few are seldom satisfied. Many live with a sense of expectation and entitlement ("I deserve it"). Consequently, ours is also arguably the most discontented society ever. The world is full of complainers, whiners, gripers and grumblers. Too many "Rise & Whine!"

ILLUS: I heard about a man who constantly complained about his flushed face, bulging eyes, and ringing ears…. Whining is the national pastime of some, including many Christians. Nothing is easier than complaining. It takes no talent, no character, and no brains. Almost everyone voices complaints: unions, lobbyists, spouses, kids, comment cards at restaurants, etc. Whining is a hard habit to break. God wants Christians to be different. Paul states in Phil. 2:14-15 . . . Are you whining or shining? Offer 3 observations about complaining.

I. THE *COMMAND (v.14 Do all things without grumbling…")*

A. Explanation:The NT word (*gogusmos*) used is an onomatopoetic word sounding like it describes. Term means displeasure expressed through murmurs and grumbles. We hear it everyday at work, home and church. Many gogusmos their way through life. The OT word (loon) is stronger. Used almost exclusively in reference to the Israel nation, it means to show oneself to be stubborn or obstinate.

B. Example: What CAUSES people to complain? Look at Hebrew history for answer. God had called and rescued His people, yet they were never content with His care and provision. Numbers records pilgrimage from Sinai to edge of Promised Land. Theirs was a journey of God's provision and their complaints. Seven times Scripture records their complaining attitude (Num. 11:1,4; 14:1-4; 16:3,41; 20:2-3; 21:5). Essentially, their complaints were the result of failing to trust God's goodness, care and wisdom. Complaining is essentially rebellion against God (Ex. 16:4 –8; Num. 16:11; Deut. 1:26-27). In Matt. 11:6 Jesus indicates that when we complain we are telling God He's not running our life to suit us. Someone said, "The person with a discontented heart has the attitude that everything he does for God is too much, and everything God does for him is too little."

C. Description: How does it happen? Here is the progression: starts with *internal dissatisfaction* over what we don't have or what's happening to us. Attention shifts from what we do have to what we don't have. Next comes the *grumblings* about the difficulties. Next, is a *bitter or resentful attitude.* Finally, if ignored, moves to *rebellion and anger* towards God, maybe open hostility. All began with discontent and complaints.

D. Reaction: How does God feel and respond to complainers? 1Cor. 10:10-11. This is a sin not taken lightly by God. What resulted from their complaints?… It kept Israelites out of the land of promise. God destroyed them (14,700) in the desert for complaining. Only immorality caused more to perish. It is one of the ugliest sins. Mac wrote…

II. THE *CONSEQUENCES:* "What happens when we stop whining?" (v.15). Paul tells us in vv. 15-16 there are 3 positive consequences. We stop whining "so that" we'll be:

A. "Blameless" – No one will be able to find fault with you. You'll be a person of character without defect before others.

B. "Innocent" – You'll be a person of integrity and not an ungrateful hypocrite.

C. "Without blemish … shine like lights…" (v. 15b) – You'll shine and stick out because you're different (Matt. 5:14-16). Refusing to complain will be a vivid contrast. Believers are to react differently to circumstances. A complaining Chn is a bad witness. Why would an unbeliever want to become God's child if one of His own doesn't like how God treats him?

ILLUS: FCA poem in 1974 "Oh God Forgive Me When I Whine!"

III. THE *CURE*

Such a serious sin has to be quelled. How can we obey Paul's command to "do *everything* w/o complaining?"

A. *Admit* it when you complain and confess it as sin. Accept your responsibility and own up to it. Don't excuse it or try to shift blame.

ILLUS**. -** Skeleton…..guts! Confessing complaints takes courage.

B. *Acknowledge* God's goodness.

C. *Adopt* a gratitude attitude. Cultivate a grateful spirit. Establish a new habit of thanks (1Thess. 5:18). Learn to be content (Phil. 4:11). Recall His past faithfulness (Psa. 78: 10-19). See the Giver not gifts, as we do with our children. Family has plaque displayed "Thou Shalt Not Whine!"

CONC: What could happen at work and in your home if you decided today you're not going to whine anymore? Do you shine or whine?

ILLUS: Limited vision….can't see far enough ahead.