

Concerning Complaint

Hebrews 13:15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁵ *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of lips that **give thanks** to His name.*

Introduction

Today's topic is complaint. We are going to talk about it in the following three ways:

First, we will think about scientific explanations on how complaining affects our physical health negatively. Then, we will listen to the Word of God that explains how it is related to the thoughts we store up in our hearts. Finally, we will consider the best remedy for chronic complaining.

Content

Chronic Complaining and Negative Plasticity

“Researchers divide complainers into several categories: chronic complainers, attention seekers, and complainers who are oblivious to those around them.”

(<https://www.neurolifecenter.com/2018/05/14/effects-of-complaining-versus-gratitude-on-brain-health/>)

For my sermon today, however, I am going to limit my focus on chronic complaining.

“Chronic complaining results from a brain mechanism called negative plasticity.

Plasticity is a term used in neurology to explain how we learn new things via communication between neurons. When you learn something new, such as a language, new pathways of communication begin developing in the brain.

The more you practice, the more efficient those pathways of communication become so that the new skill eventually becomes automatic. This conserves energy in the brain.

Unfortunately, plasticity can be negative too, making you more efficient at something that is harmful to your health. Examples include bad habits, addictions, stress, PTSD, and chronic complaining.

In other words, the more you complain, the more efficient this process becomes for your brain eventually becoming automatic.

As a result, you start to see life through a bleak lens which gradually affects your behaviors and belief systems for the worse.”

Three Negative Health Effects: dementia, heart/digestive system, immune system

Research shows that frequent complaining accelerates brain degeneration and showing gratitude regularly enhances brain function. *“Chronic complaining can raise your risk of **dementia** by releasing excess cortisol, a stress hormone, that rapidly degenerates areas of the brain related to learning and memory.”*

(<https://www.neurolifecenter.com/2018/05/14/effects-of-complaining-versus-gratitude-on-brain-health/>)

*“**heart and digestive system** suffer from the effects of complaining, too. This increases the likelihood of suffering from diseases like diabetes, obesity, or high blood pressure.”*

Thirdly, *“your **immune system** is also affected if you continually complain. These problems are associated with cortisol. This is the hormone that’s released by the adrenal gland during stressful moments. When it’s produced in excess, your immune system is disrupted. When this happens, problems start to arise.”*

(<https://steptohealth.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsteptohealth.com%2Fcomplaining-affects-your-bodys-health%2F>)

What Does the Word of God Say about Complaining?

When we complain, something happens to us spiritually. Jesus calls this spiritual phenomenon ‘defilement.’ Every word of complaint that we utter soils us in the sight of God.

Jesus tells what defiles us. Not what we eat, not what goes into our mouth but what comes out of the mouth from the heart where we have stored up evil, unclean, negative, and destructive thoughts. He says, *“It is not what enters into the mouth that **defiles** the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this **defiles** the man. ¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰ These are the*

things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man”
(Matthew 15:11, 18-20).

Imagine that you just come out of shower. You put clean clothes on yourself. You feel fresh and clean. Then, on your way out, you grab charcoal and smudge it on your clean clothes. That’s what it happens to us spiritually when we utter any negative and destructive words including complaints. We soil ourselves in the sight of God with complaints. Remember: such a defilement originates from our thoughts in heart and culminates in the words that we speak.

You don’t have to take my word for it. Listen to our Lord Jesus who says about the connection between what’s in our heart and the words we speak. *“⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for **his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart**”*
(Luke 6:45).

What we have filled up and treasured up in our heart eventually comes out. If we store up a lot of complaining thoughts in our hearts, out of them the words of complaint will overflow.

No one becomes a chronic complainer overnight. We all begin somewhere with a single thought of complaining. *We don’t like it. We disapprove of it whatever it may be. We sit on it. We harbor it in our hearts for some time.* Then, given opportunity, we verbally complain. We defile ourselves. We repeat it. If we do it often enough, then we become a habitual complainer. It eventually affects our perspective on life, both temporal and eternal.

Do you want to stop being a chronic complainer? Begin with what you store up in your heart/mind/brain.

The Best Remedy for Chronic Complaining

By being thankful. By doing the opposite of complaining, we can change chronic complaining. Storing up praise and thanks to God in our hearts and letting them flow regularly out of our mouths, we give no chance to complaining.

Remember: complaining weakens you spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Thanksgiving, on the other hand, strengthens you in all areas. E.g. There are five benefits of gratitude, Stephen Post wrote in his article “The Power of Gratitude: 1) It **sharpens**: naturally grateful people are more focused mentally and measurably less vulnerable to clinical depression. 2) It **calms**: A grateful state of mind induces a physiological state called resonance that’s associated with healthier blood pressure and heart rate. 3) It **defends**: Just

15 minutes a day focusing on the things you're grateful for will significantly increase your body's natural antibodies. 4) It **strengthens**: Caring for others is draining. But grateful caregivers are healthier and more capable than less grateful ones. 5) It **heals**: Recipients of donated organs who have the most grateful attitudes heal faster. (Guideposts, November 2007, pp. 78-79).

The opposite effects are quite true too. Complaining dulls your focus and makes you more vulnerable to clinical depression. It agitates you and negatively affects blood pressure and heart rate. It reduces your body's natural antibodies. It weakens your productivities. It hurts. Recipients of donated organs who have the grumpiest attitudes heal slower.

Develop the habit of being thankful: The best defense is a good offense, right? Be proactive. To stay away from chronic complaining, actively practice thanksgiving in everything. You may ask, "How can I be thankful when I lose my health, job, and so forth?"

Well, my advice to you is this: like anything else, don't begin with tough cases. Start with simple things. For instance, thank the Lord for food, clothing, shelter, and family. Do it from your heart. As you practice thanking more and more daily, and as you increase your words of praise and thanksgiving, you will be able to be thankful even in adversities. That will reduce the chance of complaining.

Action Point: Doing-Of-Thanking (D.O.T.) for 20 Things.

Do D.O.T. 20 every day. Thank God for 10 'good' things, first. Thank God for 10 'not-so-great' things. Begin with small things. Be specific. You may not understand why you do it, but as you follow God's will, a habit will gradually form in you that would benefit you for eternity. Remember: **attitude** to obey God's will no matter what determines **decision**. **Decision** leads to an **action**. And, **action** becomes a **habit**. Then, that habit becomes a part of your character, and you will carry it into Heaven and live there with gratitude for eternity.

Conclusion

Do you want to stop complaining? Then, start being thankful in all circumstances, for it is God's will for you. *Continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the **fruit of lips** that **give thanks** to His name (Hebrews 13:15).*

Make every effort to be thankful to God, even when you don't understand why or how it works. Give your mind and heart to the Lord every moment. Let Him fill your hearts with good, godly, honorable, and thankful thoughts and praises, and they will overflow from your mouth. Let us pray.