

JOKE: A pastor is walking down the street one day when he notices a small boy trying to use the doorbell on a house across the street. However, the boy is very small and the doorbell is too high for him to reach.

After watching the boys efforts for some time the pastor walks across the street up to the little fellow and rings the doorbell.

Kneeling down next to the child, the pastor smiles and asks, "And now what, my little man?" To which the boy replies, "Run!"

---

Exodus 14:10–12 (NIV) - <sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

I think there is a valuable lesson in these verses right here. Let me set the stage a moment. Moses had just delivered the people from Egypt. God has given miracle after miracle through the process. The people of God had seen the hand of God do the miraculous numerous times.

Now here they are with the sea before them and the Egyptian army behind them and what do they do? Complain.

Complain. . .

They had been fed manna from heaven, seen Pharaoh release them, and so much more and they decide it was best to complain.

Let me ask you a question, two really, “Do you have any complaints?” And if so, “What do you complain about the most?”

I’m single, complaint. I’m married, and my spouse is stupid, complaint. The traffic is mess, complaint. My teacher is an idiot, complaint. 150 channels and nothing good is on TV, complaint. The sermon was boring, complaint. My . . . you feel in the blank. I’m sure none of you have done that . . .

“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

I love what the Apostle Paul writes:

2 Corinthians 11:16–28 (NIV) - <sup>16</sup> I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. <sup>17</sup> In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. <sup>18</sup> Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. <sup>19</sup> You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! <sup>20</sup> In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. <sup>21</sup> To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. <sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. <sup>23</sup> Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was

pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup> I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. <sup>27</sup> I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. <sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

If anybody had a right to complain it would be Paul.

I love that Paul writes this letter to the church at Corinth because they were complaining about some of the things going on and then Paul says,

Worked harder, in prison more often, flogged more severely, left for dead, beaten with rods, pelted with stones, shipwrecked, and the list goes on.

And in case you didn't notice there isn't a third letter to the Corinthians.

Paul had reason to complain.

Oh, and by the way those things Paul had on the list, they took place because he preached the gospel. Paul's in prison because of the gospel, Paul is ship wrecked because of the gospel, Paul's stoned because of the gospel, Paul is beat because of the gospel.

If anyone had a right to complain, to let God know how unfair life is, it would be Paul.

But no where do I hear Paul complaining about how bad he has it. As a matter of fact, listen to what Paul writes to the church in Philippi.

Philippians 2:14–15 (NIV) - <sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

Philippians 2:14–15 (NLT) - <sup>14</sup> Do everything without complaining and arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.

Wow Paul really everything?

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that. . .

Let me pause here for a moment.

Not sure who said this, but it does seem to fit, someone said, “I think some people enjoy complaining almost as much as they enjoy doing nothing about it.”

There are some situations you can change when people complain. . .then there are others that you have no control over.

Paul goes on to say and I love this:

Philippians 2:16–18 (NIV) - <sup>16</sup> as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Oh, did I mention that Paul wrote this while he was in prison tied to a Roman soldier? Nope I didn’t, but he was.

What is Paul talking about anyway? What is a drink offering? I’m glad you asked. Basically, when the priest offered up a sacrifice a lamb for example after the sacrifice was consumed what would

you have? Hot coals, the priest would take the most expensive drink perhaps wine and pour it on the alter. And what happens when you pour a liquid on a hot fire or hot coals? That is what Paul was trying to say.

Paul was saying, I want the way I live to be a drink offering poured out as a fragrance before the Lord.

No wonder Paul could write:

Romans 12:1 (NIV) - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Worship isn't just coming together and lifting up our hands as we sing a few songs, but rather worship is every single day, offering your life wherever you are to a holy God, living out what God has called you do, even chained to a Roman guard in a Roman prison.

How could Paul be in prison, chained up to a Roman soldier, and offer praise and worship to God?

I don't know I haven't had to do that. I do have an idea however, and this is what it is.

Jesus was all Paul lived for.

1 Corinthians 2:2 (NIV) - <sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Jesus was the center of Paul's life, not Paul.

See too many of us are consumed with our self's and if things don't go our way we think it gives us a right to complain.

My boss, my wife, my spouse, my kids, my. . .

ME, ME, ME it's all about me.

Because Jesus was the center of Paul's story that allowed him to take a negative circumstance and change his perspective about the situation he found himself in and allow it to bring glory to God.

Look what he wrote a chapter before to those in Philippi

Philippians 1:12–14 (NIV) - <sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

He's not complaining. He's changed his perspective.

Every eight hours I'm strapped to a new guard. They have no choice, but to listen to what I have to say. I can't change where I'm at so I will have to change my perspective where I'm at. It wasn't my choice, not the life I would have planned for myself to be in, but. . .

Romans 8:28 (NIV) - <sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

William A. Ward - "The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sail."

Let me ask you another question this morning, "What are you chained to?"

Are you willing to adjust your sail?

There is a circumstance you are going through right now that seems to have its grip on you and you're not sure how to handle it.

Let me suggest that instead of complaining you look at it from a new perspective. Change the way you look at, see it, act upon it. God has a plan and works all things out for good.

Rather than complaining about something you cannot change, choose to see God's presence and his power, even in the middle of something you would have never ever asked for.

I have a choice, I can believe that this is the worst thing ever, or I can look for some sign that God's going to use me through it. I just may be a little more conformed to the image of Christ when I get to the other side of it. I may be a little more dependent on the goodness and the grace of God in the midst of it. I may pray a bit more passionately because of it. It may draw me into a more intimate relationship with God. I have a choice, complain or trust God during it.

I love the phrase Paul uses. "Even if". That is powerful. "Even if." Even if this isn't what I asked for. Even if my days on this earth are few. Even if all hell is breaking loose around me, he says, "Yet I will rejoice." Why?

Because in the middle of this thing I never would have asked for, I can still see how God is using me, strengthening me, working in and through me, I can still see the goodness of God in my circumstance.

For me even if my bladder is not functioning, I will still praise my God. I will continue to declare his goodness. For you it may be something else. Whatever it is, even if, you need to still trust the goodness of God. Even if.

How do you do it. Recognize that He is writing your story. You were born to make a difference in the people around you. And

church that doesn't happen by complaining about the people around you.

Psalms 139:16–18 (NIV): 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

Even if I never get out of this situation, even if I'm never healed, I will still praise my God because he is good. He never leaves me or forsakes me. His presence is always with me. His power is in me. Therefore, I will praise him with everything I have.

Nick Vujicic has said, "I have the choice to be angry at God for what I don't have, or be thankful for what I do have."

Tell about who Nick Vujicic is: Nick is a motivational speaker he was born with tetra-amelia syndrome, which is a rare disorder characterized by the absence of arms and legs.

Nick has no arms or legs yet. . .

He also said, "Just because I don't understand God's plans does not mean that he is not with me."



