

The Christians' Complaint Department

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Jer. 31:18-20
- B. Of all of the tribes, Ephraim should have prospered, rejoiced, and served the Lord better than the others; they had an advantage - Gen. 48:15-20
 - 1. Ephraim means "double fruitfulness."
 - 2. They had the largest landholding; the blessing of material primogeniture came to him from Jacob
 - 3. Yet with all of those advantages, they went first and farther into sin than any of the other tribes
- C. On occasion, Ephraim remembered God and would repent and return
 - 1. Ephraim's grievance was based on repentance. He was grieving for his own sins.
 - 2. God embraced Ephraim as a dear son and promised mercy to him.
- D. The Old Testament word for grieving can mean multiple things depending on the context
 - 1. "Nuwd" (nood) - "to nod, waver, to wander, flee, disappear; shaking the head in sympathy, to console, deplore; tossing the head in scorn, taunt; bemoan, mourn, move emotionally, take pity, shake, be sorry" (Strongs)
 - 2. Grieving often means deep sorrow or mourning, but occasionally it can mean "complain or bemoan"
 - 3. Ephraim complained to God about his condition in repentance
- E. The Bible speaks of two kinds of complaints: those that are unwarranted or unrighteous, and complaints that are warranted or righteous.
 - 1. Understand the difference between them and consider their consequences.
 - 2. Understand the role of repentance in complaints
- F. "Do you want me to give you something to cry about?!"
 - 1. "I don't mean to complain, but..."

I. UNWARRANTED, UNRIGHTEOUS COMPLAINTS

- A. Murmurings - "Uttering complaints in a low voice or sullen manner; grumbling; complaining" (Webster).
 - 1. Murmurings usually involve complaining about matters from the perspective of personal opinion or individual judgment; usually they are born from discontent
 - 2. "It's too hot in here." "This food is terrible." "That teacher is boring."
 - 3. 1Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14-15; James 5:9; Jude 16
 - 4. Instead, we should take delight in doing good works - 1Peter 4:9-10
- B. Strife or dissension - "A complaint that is expressed with anger designed to cause discomfort, disagreement, or discord among disciples" (Smiths)
 - 1. 1Tim. 6:3-5; 1Cor. 3:2-3; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:13

II. WARRANTED, RIGHTEOUS COMPLAINTS

- A. From illness - Job 10:1
- B. From desire for children - 1Sam. 1:16
- C. From adverse circumstances - Psalm 64:1
- D. From persecution - Rev. 6:9-10
- E. From pervasive immorality - 1Cor. 5:1
- F. From false doctrine - 1Kings 18:21
- G. From division - 1Cor. 1:10-11
- H. Warranted or righteous complaints usually come from love for persons making a mess of things, or love for truth, or from the strong desire for it to be followed everywhere by everyone.

III. THE FRUIT OF COMPLAINING

- A. Bad fruit - Num. 11:1-10, 18-20; 14:1-5, 27-30; Mark 14:4-6; 2Cor. 7:10
- B. Good fruit - 1Sam. 1:17-18
 - 1. 1Kings 18 - The prophets of Baal were slain over Elijah's complaint about their false teaching.
 - 2. Acts 6:1-7 - Grecian widows received much needed support
 - 3. Godly sorrow produces repentance - 2Cor. 7:8-11

Conclusion:

- A. Two things determine whether our complaints are warranted or unwarranted, righteous or unrighteous:
 - 1. What is the cause of the complaint: my opinion or the truth?
 - a. If your complaint is based on your opinion, keep it behind your teeth and pray to God to forgive you for your bad attitude
 - b. If your complaint is a matter of truth, find a way to express it that will be edifying and not hurtful; otherwise keep it behind your teeth until you are mature enough to speak to others as a Christian should
 - 2. What is the fruit of my complaint: good fruit or bad fruit?
 - a. If it is bad fruit, repent
 - b. If it is good fruit, don't be ashamed and apologetic