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