

What Does the Bible Teach About Making Complaints?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. "If you took one-tenth the energy you put into complaining and applied it to solving the problem, you'd be surprised by how well things can work out. Complaining does not work as a strategy. We all have finite time and energy. Any time we spend whining is unlikely to help us achieve our goals. And it won't make us happier." (Randy Pausch)

B. Jer. 31:18-20

C. Of all of the tribes, Ephraim should have prospered, rejoiced, and served the Lord better than the others; they had a few advantages.

1. Gen. 48:15-20 - Ephraim means "double fruitfulness."

2. They had the largest landholding; the blessing of material primogeniture came to him from Jacob through Joseph.

3. Yet with all of those advantages, they went first, fastest, and farthest 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 him mercy.

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 those 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. COMPLAINING AND MURMURING

A. The danger and damage of complaining and murmuring:

1. Murmuring is defined as: "To complain in low mumbling tones; grumble"

2. The people of Israel murmured frequently throughout their wilderness wanderings, and many were destroyed because of it - 1Cor. 10:10-11.

3. In describing apostates, murmurers are included in the description - Jude 3-4, 16-19.

4. Not only are souls at stake, but when did anyone ever go about a task seriously all the while complaining in low mumbling tones?

5. An employee at work, a student with homework, or a Christian who is to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"
6. How can we "shine as lights in the world" if we are seen to be a group of complainers?

II. 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 of discontent
 2. "It's too hot in here." "The food is terrible." "The teacher is boring"
 3. 1Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14-15; James 5:9; Jude 16
 4. Instead, we must 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" (Smith's Bible Dictionary)
 1. 1Tim. 6:3-5; 1Cor. 3:2-3; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:13

III. 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.

IV. 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

V. REPLACE COMPLAINING WITH THANKSGIVING

- A. When a person is murmuring, it is an indication of dissatisfaction.
 1. But a Christian has so much to be thankful for, including:
 - a. Salvation in Christ Jesus, which includes every spiritual blessing - Eph. 1:3.
 - b. Relationship with a Heavenly Father who understands and will provide for our needs - Matt. 6:31-33; Heb. 13:5-6.

2. Christians should be filled with thanksgiving, not murmuring.
 - a. We should thank God for our inheritance - Col. 1:12.
 - b. We should abound with thanksgiving - Col. 2:6-7.
 - c. We should be thankful for the peace of God ruling in our hearts - Col. 3:15.
 - d. We should give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ - Col. 3:17.
 - e. We must be vigilant in prayer with thanksgiving - Col. 4:2
3. An attitude of gratitude will help us shine as lights in the world much more than murmuring, grumbling, and complaining.
- B. How do people see us? As murmurers who complain about the economy, the government, the neighborhood, the church, everything? Or as people, who though we see much evil about us, also see much good, and are known for being thankful?

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
- B. "I have always found that actively loving saves one from a morbid preoccupation with the shortcomings of society." (Alan Paton)
- C. "What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain." (Maya Angelou)