

An Address To Complainers

Lamentations 3:39 says, "*Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins?*" The book of Lamentations is one filled with the deep emotions of the heart. It was written by Jeremiah, who was also known as the "weeping prophet." He wrote this book on the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. One can search the Bible and probably not find a more striking exhibition of patriotism than the one which Jeremiah penned to his people.

Although Jeremiah was a patriot who loved his country dearly, he also taught of the effects of genuine piety. He mourned and lamented over his country, but he rightly attributed her sorrows to sin (Lamentations 1:8). Throughout the book, Jeremiah vindicates God for His actions against the Israelites while exhorting the people that contrition of heart and repentance are the only remedies for suffering. It is very probable that many complaints were uttered by the Israelites. In view of Jeremiah's response in Lamentations 3:39, this article will examine those who complain before God.

It is obvious that not all complaints are sinful. For example, God allows us to pour out complaints before Him in fervent prayer (Psalm 142:2). Even Jesus uttered a complaint (Matthew 27:46). Everyone who is honest with themselves will often find reasons to complain. Paul complained about his severe conflict between the flesh and the spirit (Romans 7:8-25). However, the complaints which Jeremiah refers to were complaints to God, arising from a dissatisfaction with His care.

People tend to complain about many things. Complaints arise concerning people's situation in life. Maybe they desire to be richer. Some complain about disappointments concerning their business, loss of friends or times of suffering which they encounter.

The evil of complaining is that it is a sin against reason. Who is better to manage our affairs than God? Is it appropriate for the creature to complain against their Creator? God sees all, knows all, and can do all things. If infinite knowledge is insufficient, what can our ignorance do?

Complaining is also a sin against God's goodness. All throughout the Bible, the story of God's goodness is extremely prominent. All good things have been given by His hand (James 1:17). If God's goodness has

been bestowed upon man, then how ungrateful is it to complain? What a return for all the blessings of God!

Complaining is a sin against God's faithfulness and truth (Psalm 34:10; Philippians 4:19). After considering all these promises of God, complaining is the essence of unbelief and distrust. It says to God that you do not completely believe in His faithfulness.

Complaining is also a sin against divine condescension and His abounding mercy. A man who complains against the high and lofty One must consider that it is the ultimate condescension for the Lord to come down and deal with man. We are nothing but guilty, condemned rebels who murmur against God (John 3:16)! How can we reject that kind of mercy?

Finally, complaining is a sin which is fraught with evil consequences. Complaining will incur God's displeasure (Numbers 11:1). God punished them for complaining! Complaining deprives us of all the enjoyment of divine goodness and hardens the heart. A complainer cannot enjoy heaven.

What is the remedy for sinful complaints? First of all, one must look within themselves and see their own unworthiness. Be conscious that everything you spiritually possess is from mercy (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8). One must also look abroad. One can see those who are afflicted and destitute, but then we can look at our own selves and realize that our situation is much better than others. We complain about so many "ailments" but we never realize the courage and strength those who are much worse exhibit. One must look back. Many things annoy and displease us, but consider all of the blessings that God has given! Instead of complaining, we should be asking what we should do (Psalm 116:12). Finally, one must look beyond. The voyage of life will soon be over. With heaven prepared for us, why complain? We should cultivate a spirit of devout and constant praise for all that God has given us (Psalm 16:7).

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