

- b) Frankly, it is a wonder, knowing these problems face elders, that any man desires the office of bishop. In fact, that they do is a testimony to their courage and desire to serve the Lord even in the face of opposition. Thankfully, this is not the case in every local church, but it is more common than it should be.
 - 3. Elders can and do sin, and when they do, they are able to be censured (1 Timothy 5:22). However, when elders are doing the work that God gave them to do, we ought to hold up their hands. It is an often thankless job that deserves our thanks.
- B. Church members complain about preachers.
 - 1. Preachers are charged with living righteously and preaching the word (1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 4:2). Their primary use of time must be in the study and preparation of the mind and heart (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15).
 - 2. Yet, complaining is what greets many preachers as they conscientiously do their work.
 - a) Members complain about the preacher's visiting habits.
 - (1) Brethren mistakenly view the preacher as the official visitor of the sick. He is expected to "make rounds" each week, if not daily, between widows, the spiritually weak, hospitals, and nursing homes.
 - (2) No preacher I know is opposed to these activities, nor should he be. A preacher is a Christian and he should be doing what pertains to a Christian's duty.
 - (3) However, it remains an undisputed fact that no scripture assigns the work of visiting all these people to the preacher. In fact, it is entirely possible for a preacher to allow himself to become so burdened by these activities that he neglects his real work of studying, preaching, and teaching.
 - b) Members complain about the preacher's preaching.
 - (1) He preaches too long.
 - (2) His lessons are not meaty enough.
 - (3) He is too soft spoken or he is too loud.
 - (4) He preaches too much of one kind of sermon or he does not address some subjects enough.
 - (5) He is too animated or not animated enough.
 - 3. I can honestly say that I have always been grateful for well-meaning brethren who offer suggestions in the right spirit, who want me to help me be a better and more effective preacher of the gospel (Acts 18:26). But no preacher should allow himself to be hindered in his work by overly critical people.
- C. Church members complain about other Christians.
 - 1. The Grecian Jews murmured because they believed their widows were neglected (Acts 6:1).
 - 2. A lot of congregations have too much pettiness, which is an undue concern with trivial matters, especially of a small-minded or spiteful nature. This pettiness can manifest itself in comments about the appearance of the building, the men who participate in worship, the people who teach classes, or minor squabbles among the members.

3. When brethren murmur and complain about elders, preachers, class teachers, song leaders, prayer leaders, etc., or they have their feelings hurt because of feeling slighted, it destroys the unity of the body (Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 4:2).
4. Murmuring and complaining also prevents the resolution of problems in the correct way (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17), opening people up to slander and gossip (Mark 7:22; Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 3:11; 5:13; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3; 1 Peter 2:1).

III. What Does Murmuring And Complaining Do?

- A. It fosters a negative attitude.
 1. Complaining draws our attention to the negative aspects and circumstances around us.
 2. And focusing on the negatives always brings about greater negativity. Complaining never results in joy (Philippians 4:4); it only sinks us deeper into our misery.
- B. It negatively impacts those around us.
 1. Complaints spread negativity. Misery loves company.
 2. By focusing on and drawing attention to the problems and discomforts around us, we direct other people towards it too (Numbers 16:14-15).
- C. It doesn't change our circumstance.
 1. Complaining words by themselves do not change anything.
 2. Taking action does (Acts 13:1-4). Complaining is always negative whereas suggestions can be positive. Complaining is payback whereas suggestions produce change. Complaining is about the past whereas suggestions are about the future.
- D. It disqualifies the value of discomfort in our lives.
 1. Discomfort — both physical and emotional — can have profound benefit.
 2. There are countless life lessons that can only be learned by embracing discomfort: patience (Romans 5:3-4) and empathy (1 Peter 3:8).
- E. It is highly unattractive.
 1. It is unenjoyable to spend time around people who constantly highlight the negatives (Ephesians 5:8).
 2. And not only unattractive, the self-centered emphasis of complaining can be a turn-off as well.
- F. It leaves us in victim-mode.
 1. One of the greatest obstacles to spiritual growth is blame (2 Peter 3:18).
 2. And complaining finds its foundation almost entirely in blame.

Conclusion. Even though this lesson has been rooted in a single verse written by the apostle Paul, do not look on murmuring and complaining lightly. It has the power to not only destroy a church, but it will also destroy a person. If change needs to happen in a congregation, it can happen the right way, the productive way. So when you see or experience issues in this congregation, determine to correct them in the most positive fashion for the good of the church and the cause of Christ.