

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Sin of Murmuring

“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10).

When the Apostle Paul penned his first letter to the brethren in Corinth, he addressed numerous problems among them. For example, he rebuked them for being divisive and contentious (1 Cor. 1 and 3); he rebuked them for being fleshly minded (1 Cor. 2-3); he rebuked them for tolerating fornication (1 Cor. 5); for going to law one against another (1 Cor. 6); for despising the church and polluting the Lord’s supper (1 Cor. 11); for their doubt of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15), to name a few.

In our text, the Apostle reminds the Corinthian brethren of the *murmuring* of the Israelites while in the wilderness, most of whom died there. He mentions numerous sins committed by the Israelites during this time and twice reminds the Corinthians with the following warnings – ***“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted”*** (vs. 6). Then in verse 11 he wrote, ***“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”*** Of course, the examples the Israelites left for all to study and heed are examples **NOT** to follow! But, please read and notice the rebuke he issues concerning their *murmuring* in 1 Corinthians 10:10 where he said, ***“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”***

When Paul wrote to the Philippians he commanded, ***“Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”*** (Phil. 2:14-15). In Jude 16, Jude wrote of some who, ***“...are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts....”*** These people were also described by Jude as, ***“ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Jude 4).

There is a great deal said about *murmuring* in the Old Testament scriptures especially. The harm caused from *murmuring* is often not realized or regarded by those who are guilty of this sin. The purpose of this article is to help all who read it, better understand the damage that can result from *murmuring* and encourage those who do *murmur* to repent of this sin.

In the first four chapters of Deuteronomy Moses looks retrospectively at events that occurred during the forty years journey from Sinai to Moab. He recalls that when the Lord called upon the Israelites to take possession of the land of Canaan and how they refused to enter the land to possess it because of the evil report of the majority of the spies due to their fear of the sons of Anak. Only Joshua and Caleb gave a good report saying, ***“Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not”*** (Num. 14:9). In Deuteronomy 1:26-38 Moses recalls this period of rebellion which stemmed from the *murmuring* of the Israelites! From this text of scripture there are many lessons which show that *murmuring* is sinful and will result in spiritual disaster!

First, murmuring is a rebellious sin against God! In verse 26, Moses wrote, ***“Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God.”*** Rebellion is a common practice among most people and a serious matter, especially when it is against God. When King Saul rebelled and did not obey God’s command to ***“...go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey”*** (1 Sam. 15:3), he sinned. Instead of obeying God, ***“Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly”*** (1 Sam. 15: 9). When Samuel went to Saul to rebuke him at the Lord’s direction, Samuel said, ***“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the***


LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Beware of *murmuring*!

Second, murmuring is a sin that can be practiced privately or secretly! In verse 27 of this text Moses said, **“And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.”** The Israelites suffered from *murmuring* in their tents (privately) which generated an evil imagination about the plans the Lord had for them, even though He had promised to bless them and give them the land. When brethren *murmur*, they often do it “under their breath” or in a private setting amongst others who agree with them. Often, they do not have all the facts of the particular situation for which they are *murmuring* and the result is sowing seeds of discord, a sin as well (Prov. 6:14, 19; 16:28). Remember, we reap what we sow, and if the seeds of discord and strife are sown, increased discord and strife will come (Gal. 6:7, 8). Instead, sow righteousness and you will reap a sure and certain reward (Prov. 11:18).

Third, murmuring doubts and misunderstands God’s purpose! In Deuteronomy 1:27 the text says, **“And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.”** This text reveals at least one notable assumption made by the Israelites—they said the **“Lord hated us.”** No, He actually loved them! He heard their crying, sighing and groaning while in Egyptian bondage (Ex. 2:23-25). Thus, because of His love for the Israelites, He delivered them from the bondage of the Egyptians. Likewise, God has revealed a plan whereby man today can be delivered from the bondage of sin through faith in Christ. Many today *murmur* and complain at God’s plan of salvation by denying the necessity of baptism **“for the remission of sins”** (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 3:24, 25). Be satisfied with God’s way. Heed the words of Solomon who wrote, **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”** (Prov. 16:25; 14:12).

Fourth, murmuring discourages others! In Deuteronomy 1:28 the text says, **“Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.”** The spies that doubted were a discouragement to their brethren. In Numbers 13:30, Caleb said, **“Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”** But, the *murmuring* spies that went with Caleb, said, **“We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we”** (Num. 13:31). Verses 32-33 of this chapter records the **“evil report of the land”** that these *murmurers* brought fourth.

Likewise, many have “cooked up” an evil report, which are often fabrications of multiple evil surmisings about something or someone. In 1 Timothy 6:4, Paul instructed Timothy in the Master-Servant relationship. You see, when one person despises another, the one who is doing the despising often speaks words to harm another by “cooking up” imaginary evil. Paul went on to say, **“And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself”** (1 Tim. 6:1-5). Paul does not mince words in his description of the one who engages in such sinful conduct! Because of the sin of *murmuring*, the reputations of good, faithful people suffer severe damage resulting in discouragement amongst brethren! We do not have to wonder why James warned of the dangers of the tongue in James 3:1-12.

In conclusion, nothing good comes from *murmuring*! Nothing but, rebellion against God, which is often done in secret, resulting in doubtful disputations that discourage others! Now, can you see how harmful *murmuring* is and why God’s word warns against this sin? May we all strive to respect the warnings and teaching of God’s word and heed the instructions of the apostle Paul who commanded, **“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”** (Phil. 2:14-15). Think on these things! – *tgmc* 

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” — Psalms 19:14

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist