

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Sin of Murmuring

By Earl Fly

The word “*murmur*” is defined as “*low, muttered complaints; grumbling.*” (*Webster*). It is condemned by God as being sinful. We are commanded to “*do all things without murmuring and disputings*” (Phil. 2:16). The apostle Paul warned Christians against this sin in his letter to the Corinthians: “*Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer*” (1 Cor. 10:10). The sinfulness of murmuring is vividly illustrated by God’s severity of punishment toward the guilty Jews, as shown in the following account.

Korah, Dathan, Ahiram, fifty princes of the congregation and others rebelled and murmured against God’s servants Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1-11). “*The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation*” (vss. 32-33). “*And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense*” (vs. 35). When the Jews murmured that Moses and Aaron were responsible for the deaths. God killed fourteen thousand, seven hundred of them by a plague (vss. 41-49). This is written for our admonition and should cause all murmurers in the church to repent and reform, lest they suffer a “*sorer punishment*” (Heb. 10:28-29).

A murmurer can do great harm and irreparable damage in a congregation by creating discontent discouragement and apathy among members, by sowing discord among the brethren (which God hates - Proverbs 6:19), by undermining the work of preacher, teachers, deacons, and the rule of elders. This, many times creates a general attitude of dissatisfaction and loss of interest, enthusiasm and zeal, resulting in decreased attendance, contribution and impairment of all work in general. The murmurer may then be the first to criticize the lack of growth, and may use the preacher or someone else as the scapegoat to bear the blame, not realizing or ignoring the fact that his own sin is responsible.

The murmurer does not truly love God and is not really interested in the welfare and growth of the church, but in his own selfish desires and opinions. He is either woefully ignorant of or willfully disregards God’s word regarding his sin, and is a dangerous threat to the cause of Christ. He can and does destroy or greatly lessen the influence and work of those who happen to be the object of his disgruntled attack. It is difficult to deal with such a situation because often times the murmurer does not have the courage or character to honorably discuss his complaints with the proper ones, but whispers them in secret to others. Christians should not lend receptive ears nor endorsement to murmuring, but exhort the guilty one to cease his sin. Remember, if one will murmur to you, he may murmur about you, because many times he is a pharisaical faultfinder, a chronic complainer with a hypercritical attitude who is usually never satisfied very long with any arrangement.

We earnestly exhort all murmurers everywhere in the name of Christ to repent of this sin, to cease and desist in tearing down the work of God, and to get busy in the kingdom to build it up. Those who truly love God and his church have no desire to be hypercritical faultfinders, wandering about murmuring to all who will listen. If anyone should persist in this sin after proper warnings and efforts to restore, then scriptural discipline should be brought about to protect the flock of God and its work. The work of our Lord is too important to allow murmurer to run and ruin the church. – *Collegevue church of Christ Bulletin Articles*, January 25, 2015. ■

MURMURERS, COMPLAINERS, AND WHINERS

By R. J. Evans

Murmuring and complaining can be extremely destructive to a local church. These sins are much like a cancer in a church that spreads and can be more destructive than many other sins combined. It takes much love, faith, goodwill,

and hard work to keep a congregation strong and growing. Thus, we can understand why the Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians not to be like the Israelites in the wilderness, when he told them not to ***“murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer”*** (1 Cor. 10:10). He also told the Philippians to ***“Do all things without murmuring and complaining”*** (Phil. 2:14). Here is a list of things that can happen when we murmur and complain:

- Things look worse than they are.
- It becomes a habit that is contagious.
- It skews our focus.
- It discourages others.
- It kills enthusiasm.
- It promotes bad relationships.
- It creates companions and cliques.
- It leads to pessimism.

Another word that is closely associated with murmuring and complaining is whining. In fact, it is defined by both terms, as well as approaching life in a self-pitying manner. It reminds me of the famous poem - ***“Lord, forgive me when I whine!!!”*** (Author Unknown). Please consider it:

Today, upon a bus, I saw a lovely girl with golden hair,
I envied her—she seemed so beautiful—and wished I were so fair.
When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle.
She had one leg and wore a crutch; but as she passed—a smile!

Oh God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two legs; the world is mine!

I stopped to buy some candy. The lad who sold it had such charm.
I talked with him. He seemed so glad. If I were late, it'd do no harm.
And as I left, he said to me, “I thank you. You have been so kind.
It's nice to talk with folks like you. You see,” he said, “I'm blind.”

Oh God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two eyes; the world is mine!

Later, while walking down the street, I saw a child with eyes of blue.
He stood and watched the others play. I stopped a moment,
When I said, “Why don't you join the others, Dear?”
He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew he could not hear.

Oh God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two ears; the world is mine!

With feet to take me where I'd go, with eyes to see the sunset's glow,
with ears to hear what I would know.

Oh God forgive me when I whine,
I am blessed indeed; the world is mine!

When we are tempted to start engaging in murmuring, complaining, and whining, we need to reverse course and begin counting our blessings, naming them one by one, as one of the hymns that we often sing teaches us. Also, it will do us good to turn to Psalm 103 and read and meditate upon it often.

We close with the encouraging words of the Psalmist: ***“This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it”*** (Psa. 118:24). ■

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

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