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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 commended to “do all things without murmuring and disputings.” (Philippians 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 Corinthians 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 (Numbers 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” (verses 32-33). “And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense” (verse 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 (verses 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” (Hebrews 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.

We Can Do That

Stephen Russell

As we look for ways to tell the world around us about the God we serve and His marvelous word we will find no better "instruction manual" than the very word we hope to teach. Specifically, the book of Acts shows us many examples of the truth being spread throughout the world. There are a number of circumstances in that book that are unique to the time that we cannot duplicate. For instance, we cannot do signs and wonders to show we are from God. We cannot deliver the gospel for the first time in history. These peculiarities of the first century, however, should not hinder us from learning from the examples written there for our learning. While there are some things we cannot do, there are a number of things that we most certainly can do.

We can find individuals who are interested in truth. The day of Pentecost was a grand response to the first gospel sermon but we cannot expect to always have such an audience before us. Philip had a eunuch so he preached to him. Peter had Cornelius and his household, Paul had Lydia or Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. The point is that the teachers of the first century didn't wait until a great multitude had gathered to teach God's word. It was ever in their conversation and on their mind whether they had one or 3000 to speak to. The world is not brought to God one multitude at a time but one soul at a time.

We can teach God's word. Peter and the other preachers of the first century enjoyed the blessing of having God's word directly revealed to them. That must have been wondrous. But equally wondrous is having the complete revelation laid out before us. We are at no disadvantage today for not having direct revelation, for the same truths that were being revealed then can now be read and repeated by anyone who would pick up that marvelous book. It was not the method of delivery that converted souls but the message.

Finally, we can depend on God for everything as they did. These men had great powers and knowledge yet they also knew from whom all these blessings flowed. Paul makes it clear that he knew exactly what his role in the process was (1 Cor. 3:6). His role was to deliver the truth and let God's power work in the hearts of men. We too must make our goal to the delivery of the message. It is God who saves and we are simply the messengers of that salvation.

We are preaching to the same kinds of people. People of different religions and people of no religion. People who are seeking to know God and people who have been ignoring God. We receive the same types of reactions to the message. Some believe while many reject. In these respects we are no different than those Christians in the book of Acts. We should then be no different in our zeal and boldness to proclaim the good news that has lost no luster in these 2000 years since that day. www.pepperroadchurch.org