

Let's Get Ready To Grumble!

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When we talk about the various sins that we must work hard to avoid, it seems that we spend a lot of time discussing the tongue. Too often, we sin when we speak. As James 3:8 say, "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." How true! Also, when we discuss the various sins that we can commit with out speech, we often focus on lying, cursing, or gossip. And these sins definitely deserve our attention. However, today I would like to discuss another sin. A sin that I don't think we discuss very often, but it is just as dangerous as any other. Let's take a few moments to consider the sin of grumbling or murmuring.

Now, when I first mention grumbling or murmuring, I'm sure many of us would not consider these activities sinful. Grumbling is really just another word for complaining. Surely complaining is not a sin, is it? Based on our own actions you would not think it was a sin. We seem to complain all the time (myself included). However, I want you to consider a passage of scripture taken from 1 Corinthians 10:6-11. "Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor **grumble**, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Think about this passage. It is a record of Israel's history in the wilderness. It is worth noting that although they were God's chosen people and He had rescued them out of the land of Egypt, they did not all reach the Promised Land. In fact, only two reached that land. The rest sinned against God and fell in the wilderness. Twice in this passage we are told that these things happened to them as an example for us. Therefore, we had better learn from that example. Israel sinned. They craved evil things. They were idolaters. They acted immorally. They tried the Lord. And they grumbled. That's right, grumbling was listed along with all these terrible sins. In fact, their grumbling resulted in many of the Israelites losing their lives. Let's go back and reflect on this event.

As we examine the earliest period of Israel's history, it does not take long for us to come across examples of their grumbling. In fact, it seems that they did it all the time. Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to trace the mention of 'grumbling' in 1 Corinthians to one specific instance in the Old Testament. However, there is at least one incident that does specifically mention grumbling and resulted in many deaths. It is tied to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah and his followers grumbled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They complained because of the way Moses and Aaron led the people. In fact, they tried to take over the congregation of Israel. As a result, God took the lives of Korah and his followers. However, even after that happened, the people grumbled again. This time because of the death of Korah. As a result, God took the lives of 14,700 people. All of this happened because of grumbling. If you don't believe me, read Numbers 16.

But how does this apply to us today? God still considers grumbling a sin. Israel grumbled against its leadership and many people died. Unfortunately, we are constantly in danger of doing the same thing and suffering a similar fate – at least in a spiritual sense. It is a sin to grumble against God or to grumble against our leaders.

Consider Hebrews 13:17, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” In this passage, we are instructed to obey our leaders or those who have rule over us. In this context, I believe it is talking about elders. We must remember that elders receive their position from God. As Paul said in Acts 20:28, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

What does this mean? It means that we must submit to the authority of the elders. And it means something else – we must not grumble. Now, you might say ‘But we don’t have elders!’ That’s true. But I pray that we will have them one day. And I pray that day will come soon! However, it is still a sin to grumble about the decisions we make as a congregation. Ephesians 5:21 tells us to “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” Does that not include accepting a different result in a matter of judgment? If we were to constantly complain about the decisions made by our congregation, would we be any different from those Israelites who complained about the leadership of Moses and Aaron? I don’t think so. We all have different opinions on some things and we would all make different choices in certain circumstances, but we cannot grumble about the decisions that are made. Grumbling is a sin. Nearly fifteen thousand people lost their lives at one time because of it. This is written as an example for us. Let’s learn from that example and decide not to grumble.

One more thing – do you know what the very next verse in 1 Corinthians 10 says? “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”