

The Rumbling of Grumbling

One translation of the English Bible often uses the word “murmur” (KJV) or some form of that word, whereas another translation uses some form of the words “grumble” or “complain” (NKJV). How serious is this condition of murmuring, grumbling or complaining? Well, evidently murmuring, grumbling or complaining is a common **sin** that is often characteristic of the children of God. Of course, any sin of which we are guilty and for which we do not repent will condemn our souls and prevent us from enjoying eternity in heaven (Romans 6:23). Therefore, we need to look more closely at the sin of murmuring, grumbling or complaining so that we can be better Christians.

The Greek verb *gogguzo* means “to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone” (*Vine’s*). It means “to express one’s discontent” (*Greek-English Lexicon*). For instance, this is what the workers did in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. “And when they had received it, they complained [“murmured” KJV] against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day’” (Matthew 20:11-12 NKJV). Likewise, this is what the Pharisees did, too. “And their scribes and the Pharisees complained [“murmured” KJV] against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’” (Luke 5:30 NKJV). In addition, the Jews did this toward Jesus Christ as well. “The Jews then complained [“murmured” KJV] about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven’” (John 6:41 NKJV). Even our Lord’s disciples did this about Him. “When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained [“murmured” KJV] about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you?’” (John 6:61 NKJV).

The apostle Paul cautioned Christians at Corinth in the first century not to grumble, because for grumbling God destroyed many Israelites during the wilderness wandering. “[N]or complain [“murmur” KJV], as some of them also complained [“murmured” KJV], and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10:10 NKJV). Merely grumbling is a serious offense before Almighty God! Faithful Christians are not grumblers.

The Greek verb *diagogguzo* means “to murmur through” such as through a crowd, and it “is always used of indignant complaining” (*Vine’s*). One can easily sense the disgust in the complaints in these two passages. “And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:2 NKJV). “But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner’” (Luke 19:7).

Then, the Greek noun *gongusmos* means “a murmuring, muttering... in the sense of secret debate among people... displeasure or complaining (more privately than in public)” (*Vine’s*). This Greek noun is in the following texts. “And there was much complaining [“murmuring” KJV] among the people concerning Him. Some said, ‘He is good’; others said, ‘No, on the contrary, He deceives the people’” (John 7:12). “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint [“murmuring” KJV] against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1). “Do all things without complaining [“murmuring” KJV] and disputing” (Philippians 2:14). “Disputing” comes from the Greek *dialogismos* and means “debating”; its presence in the verse emphasizes the subject under consideration. Complaining or grumbling is cowardly since it is “secret displeasure, not openly avowed” (*Thayer’s*). The apostle Peter provided this inspired warning: “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling [“grudging” KJV]” (1 Peter 4:9).

Another Greek noun *gongustes* means “a murmurer... one who complains... especially perhaps of utterances against God” (*Vine’s*). This person is “one who has a **habit** of complaining or grumbling” (*Greek-English Lexicon* emphasis added). Notice a passage in which this usage occurs. “These are grumblers [“murmurers” KJV], complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage” (Jude 16). Incidentally, “complainers” here comes from another Greek word (*mempsimoiros*) defined as “blaming fate, i.e. querulous (discontented)” (*Strong’s*).

It is a serious matter to be a grumbler or a complainer. Using still another word group (*stenazo*), God through James instructs: “Do not grumble [“grudge” KJV] against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:9-10 NKJV). Remember, God through the apostle Peter commands: “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9). Listen to our Lord: “Jesus therefore answered and said to them, ‘Do not murmur among yourselves’” (John 6:43).

Did you notice that the reason for which one grumbles or complains does not matter? Grumbling or complaining is condemned no matter why one chooses to do it. Even if one’s complaint had to do with doctrinal error, it would still be wrong to murmur, grumble or complain about it in a secretive, cowardly way. When sound doctrine is compromised, for instance, one must boldly defend the Gospel (Philippians 1:7, 17; Titus 1:9; Romans 16:17). Christians are forbidden to be murmurers, grumblers or complainers.

How can we apply what we have learned? Talking against someone quietly rather than openly is not Christ-like. Differences between people (e.g., races, tribes, nationalities, economic status, academic levels, politics, personalities, etc.) are not to be the subjects of dissension discussed between Christians about each other. If we truly try to be Christ-like in imitating His love for mankind (John 15:13), we will genuinely love the brotherhood (Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:17). Then, we will not be guilty of murmuring, grumbling or complaining. “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). Putting 1 Peter 1:22 into practice in our lives, we cannot possibly be murmurers, grumblers or complainers about fellow Christians!

By: Louis Rushmore