

“Everyone Else Is Doing It”

Sometimes people attempt to justify their sinful conduct on the basis of "well everyone else is doing it." If "everyone else" is dressing immodestly, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is going to a "must see" R-rated movie, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is lying, stealing, or cheating what are we going to do?

In the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, "everyone else" was bowing down and worshiping his golden image (see Dan. 3:1-7). But what did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego do? They said *"let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods..."* (Dan. 3: 18). These men loved the Lord and courageously served him regardless of what everyone else was doing.

May we too have the courage to be different. Brethren, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (**Rom. 12:2**). God's children are not to follow in the sins of others, but are to lead others out of darkness and into the light.

- by David McPherson

The Sin of Murmuring

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.

- by Earl Fly

A Response to a Recent Article

We received this email message in regards to a recent bulletin article:

. . . (concerning) your article on Matthew 18. I appreciated it very much. I have been trying to teach these principles . . . I agree with the idea that if (a sin) were a private matter, it fell under Matthew 18 and if it were a public matter, it could/should be approached publicly. A brother replied that he did not agree that a public matter would necessarily be approached as Paul did Peter and would require "an influential person who is a teacher of the gospel and has great influence on others" . . . What about the idea that he and other Christians have that since we are not Paul we can't do what Paul did? Isn't what Paul did in Galatians 2 an example for us? Thanks for your help.

Here's our reply:

I agree completely with you -- and I disagree completely with the brother you described. If we can't imitate Paul in his handling of the situation with Peter, then in what matters can we imitate him? I know you know these verses, but they actually COMMAND us to imitate Paul:

1 Corinthians 4:16 "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

1 Corinthians 11:1 "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Philippians 3:17 "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."

Philippians 4:9 "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, **and seen in me, do**: and the God of peace shall be with you."

Thanks for taking a stand for truth on this important subject.

- by Greg Gwin