

Complaining Christians

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:14-15)

Few things can be more destructive to a child's future (both earthly and heavenly) as a propensity to whine and complain. Such is the manner of those who are ungrateful, greedy and self-seeking. Continued grumbling and griping is evidence that a child has successfully trained his parents to cater to his wantonness, placing in jeopardy not only the child, but also the parents (Pr 22:6; Deut 6:7; Eph 6:4). If the routine is not broken (Pr 2:15; 23:13-14), the murmuring child will become a murmuring adult, and an irritation to his peers.

Recall, when God brought the children of Israel from Egypt, they were a nation of complainers (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3). The apostle Paul candidly states, "...with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." (1 Cor 10:5) He cites the things which happened to them as "...our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." (v 6) Friend, you and are not to "...complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." (v 10)

A Christian complaining is no more acceptable than any child or the nation Israel doing so. If the Lord commands that we "drive it far" from the child, and if He scattered the Israelite bodies in the wilderness on account of their murmuring, then surely we can understand that such has no place in the child of God. The context of Philippians 2 supplies Jesus as our great example, through His obedience in going to the cross. Recall, the prophet wrote of Him, "...as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." (Isa 53:7) If he endured such hostility and pain for us, without complaint, ought we not endeavour to serve Him daily without complaint?

Understand, my friend, our standing as children of God depends upon us laying aside all murmuring. If we are to shine as lights in this world, it will be through faithful obedience, and the knowledge that we are to be "blameless and harmless", not whiners and complainers.

- by William Stewart

The Reliability of the Gospels

Evidence for the life of Jesus of Nazareth is presented in the Gospels: the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. How reliable are these written records? When we read them, are we getting an accurate account of what Jesus actually said and did?

These questions are important because the gospels are the main source of information about the earthly life of Jesus Christ. If they are unreliable or undependable, then our knowledge of Him is greatly limited. If they are precise historical records, then they serve a valuable purpose in educating us about the most incredible person in history.

It should be noted that historical evidence is sufficient in itself to prove something as fact. Empirical evidence (evidence based on experimentation) is only rarely available to those studying ancient historical facts. To illustrate, the life of Genghis Khan cannot be established in the laboratory.

Historians collect data on people and events based on eyewitness accounts, written documents, public records, or archaeological finds. Using the material available, one could determine the facts about persons such as George Washington or Julius Caesar, or find out what happened at the Battle of Waterloo. Public records are commonly used to prove when a person lived or died, or to verify that he graduated from a certain school, or to show that he was married. Some historical events are known only by eyewitness account, such as in courtroom cases when a person testifies to what he has personally seen in the past. Written testimony is admissible in a court of law.

The gospels present us with the testimony of many eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ. These witnesses lived in the same generation as Jesus with the opportunity to observe Him very closely:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life

which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you... (1 John 1:1-3)

These men understood that their historical record serves an important purpose in revealing to mankind the miraculous deeds of Jesus:

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)

Based on their testimony, we have more information about Jesus Christ than any other person in ancient history. That evidence tells us Jesus was more than just a man; He is the Son of God.

- by Tom Rainwater

Are You An Encourager or Discourager?

His real name was Josés, but because he was such a great encouragement to those around him he was given the name Barnabas. It means literally, "the son of consolation," or "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36,37). What a great thing! Can you imagine having such a positive reputation that others actually give you a nickname based upon it?

There are lots of ways to encourage one another, and we ought to be looking for opportunities to do so. In fact, if we don't make a conscious effort to encourage others, we may very well become a discouragement.

One of the more obvious ways that we encourage each other is by worshipping together. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24,25). Do you see it? By being together in the assemblies we have a chance to "provoke unto love and good works" and to "exhort one another."

If the attendance slips because of our neglect, then we have actually become discouragers rather than encouragers. Some do this without even thinking about it. They make plans to be out of town regularly, or they allow minor excuses to become a reason to miss the assemblies. Others let mild aches and pains keep them away. Clearly, you can't be an encouragement if you aren't present.

We hope everyone will think about the important work of encouraging their fellow Christians by faithful attendance and by every other acceptable means. Who knows, we may have to think up a nickname for YOU!

- by Greg Gwin