

THOU SHALT NOT WHINE

By

Glenn Meldrum

Once I received a gift from a friend that was meant as joke. It became one those gifts that keeps on giving, but not the way you normally would think. The gift was a small tapestry quoting what some humorously call the eleventh commandment, “Thou shalt not whine.” I decided to temporarily hang it in my motorhome thinking that it would give me an occasional chuckle.

Well, it’s still hanging in its place. It seems that every time I begin whining the tapestry is in my face warning, “Thou shalt not whine.” Never would I have imagined that a little wall-hanging could be so convicting. The Lord has used that tapestry to reveal to me that complaining is a corrupt area of my character that has not been conquered.

A LOVING REBUKE

As a young believer I was presented with the erroneous idea that if we are in God’s will then life and ministry will go easy. At age 24 my wife and I pioneered an inner-city church in Detroit, Michigan. It didn’t take long to find out that both life and ministry can be very hard and demanding. I was putting in ridiculous hours pastoring fulltime while working a secular job. The church was open seven nights a week. We had Friday night street evangelism, Saturday night concerts, Sunday services and Wednesday night Bible study. The remaining evenings the church was open as a drop in center for youth.

As a young Christian I didn’t know anything about pastoring. Our house was full of new converts that needed a place to stay. We were living in poverty because all of our personal income went into the ministry. I sold my motorcycle so the church would have a down payment to buy a building. Then I sold a nice car and bought an old jalopy so the church could have chairs for the sanctuary. It was costing me everything.

Eventually I started complaining. Then the Lord gave me a rebuke that I will never forget. First He spoke to me from the Scriptures; “If you have raced with men on foot and they

have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (Jer. 12:5). Then He warned me saying; "Child, stop your whining! You haven't even seen a fierce battle yet. Stand up and be a man. Quit your complaining or I will pass you by and find someone who will follow Me no matter the cost."

The Lord's rebuke shook me to the bone. He was exposing a sinful part of my character and it hurt to see the truth. I thought Jesus was Lord of my life until I was confronted with the reality that entire areas of my life were not under His authority. The truth was laid bare; my will and God's will were at odds with each other and obviously I was the one in the wrong. His reproof was an expression of divine love that I sorely needed; it was health to my life.

Our complaining makes us miserable, inflicts our misery upon those closest to us and slanders Christ before the world. Most terrifying of all, God's strong displeasure rests upon complainers. "Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp" (Num. 11:1). Since divine fire does not burn us up when we start whining we do not think it's a dangerous thing to do. But God hasn't changed His mind about complaining.

Probably the biggest reason we start complaining is that we have perverted views about God and ourselves. Until we learn to think correctly we will never amend those corrupt portions of our characters. We often start complaining when our expectations of life are not being fulfilled. This happens when we make the primary purpose of our existence the pursuit of a safe, happy, pain free life. But such lives only exist in the fantasies of our minds.

There are no rewards given to whining warriors who avoid the battlefield or to perpetual babies who cry at the least discomfort and problem. When we live self-absorbed lives we will be consumed with our problems, whether real or perceived, and ignore the fact that the mass of humanity is dying in their sins. Its time we grow up and stop our whining. We must take the war to the highway and hedges, to the country and the cities, to the highest places of learning and to the most illiterate, to places of power and to the powerless.

Victories in life are not obtained while sitting in a comfy recliner. They are seized in the heat of battle, in the front lines of conflict, in the throws of spiritual combat. That's where we receive our eternal rewards; that's where medals are won; that's where the entire church is commanded be because that's where the Lord Jesus is, fighting for the souls of mankind.

SCARS

Paul was a spiritual revolutionary because he strove to be like his Lord. It began with his radical conversion. For three days Paul was in deep repentance over his sins. Then the Lord told Ananias, “I will show [Paul] how much he must suffer for my name. . . . At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. . . . Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him” (Acts 9:16, 20, 22-23). This is what a Biblical conversion looks like, whether in Paul’s day or our own.

The suffering that followed Paul’s conversion did not make him run away from the Savior but to Him. Notice that the Lord told Paul that he **MUST** suffer for Him. It was not an option for Paul, nor is it for us today. We forfeit a tremendous amount of joy because we grumble and complain when we go through trials.

Years later Paul testified, “For I bear in my body, the marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17). Most western believers will never be beaten for their faith, but we can bear the “marks of Jesus” upon our lives in different ways. For example, we can bear His marks upon our wallets. This is the idea of living simple lives so we can give more money to advance the kingdom of God. We can bear the “marks of Jesus” upon our time by wearing holes in the carpet of our prayer closets. Some can bear those “marks” by giving up a prosperous career to preach the Gospel. His “marks” should grace the life of every believer with efforts to passionately reach the lost. And we must allow His “marks” to beautify our lives through an aggressive pursuit of holiness.

The Lord will not examine us at the judgment seat looking for degrees, success or fortunes, but for scars. What will he find when He examines us? Will He find scars upon our bodies, bank accounts and time spent building His kingdom? What proof will we be able to offer Him of our love and devotion? Though we may not receive physical scars testifying to our devotion to Christ He will, nonetheless, look for those scars of loving sacrifice that were just as costly in a culture where Christians at the present time do not have to face a bloody persecution.

Some of the credentials that verified Paul’s apostleship are based upon what he suffered out of love for Christ (how many self-proclaimed modern-day “apostles” could boast of such credentials?). He suffered imprisonments and floggings, five times he received 39 lashes from the Jews; three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned. He was shipwrecked three

times, once spending a night and a day in the open sea. He lived in constant danger, in want and in need. He toiled and labored because he did not count his life dear unto himself rather he loved Jesus more than his own life (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Paul's credentials are as nothing compared to the testimony of how God used him to turn the world upside down. The Lord poured His power through the man because his life and character were usable by a holy God. Paul's character demonstrates what it means to make Jesus Lord of our lives no matter what we face or have to endure. Whining was not an option for him nor should it be for us. God is still looking for people like Paul who will give up their lives to advance Christ's kingdom.

From experience Peter came to understand the value of suffering. While admonishing his readers on suffering he told them, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Pe. 3:15). When Jesus is Lord of our lives we will find deliverance from whippy, whiny characters. Complaining is telling God that we don't want His lordship over our lives, that we think His plans for us are detrimental to our desires and agendas. If we had the fear of God we would tremble when we comprehend that our complaining is an accusation against the character of God, an attack upon His very person.

The seeming unfairness of the pain and suffering we experience can make us reel as if we are being driven by a raging sea. At such times complaining is something we are all tempted to do. Yet when our hearts are set upon "Christ as Lord," and not upon ourselves or earthly things, then we will learn to rest in His perfect love and wisdom no matter what storms we may face. A character of complaining will disappear when our eyes are fixed upon the Savior's lovely face.

When the waves are ferocious and it seems that the storm will swallow us up, if we look upon the water we will see Christ's lovely face as He comes walking out to meet us in our desperate need. In our pain, in our moment of greatest need, if we listen closely, we will hear His sweet voice calling us to come to Him. But we must get out of the worthless boat we have constructed of self-trust and self-absorption and step into the midst of the raging storm. Everything in us will cry "save yourself." The world will think we are mad. But His hand will be there to rescue us. In His presence the fiercest storms cannot disturb us; we are safe in His arms.

Glenn Meldrum has been a national evangelist since 1997. Prior to his calling as an evangelist he pastored for 15 years. He is ordained and holds an M.A. in theology and church history from Ashland Theological Seminary. Visit www.ihpministry.com for articles, sermons, books and information on Glenn Meldrum and In His Presence Ministries.