

A CASE OF THE GRIPES

*We must not grumble, as some of them did
and were destroyed by the Destroyer.
(1 Corinthians 10:10)*

Grumbling is not included among the Seven Deadly Sins and yet in the Bible it is clearly one of the most destructive attitudes of which the human spirit is capable. A simple look in the thesaurus reveals how serious this sin can be by noting the synonyms with which it is associated: complaining, muttering, grunting, putting up a squawk, griping, bellyaching, making a fuss, fretting and fuming, etc.

Again and again during the journey from Egypt to Canaan, the people of Israel grumbled and complained. The water was bitter (Exodus 15:24). The people were hungry (Exodus 16:2-3) and homesick for the "good old days" in Egypt (Numbers 14:1-4). The leadership was poor (Numbers 16:3, 41). Circumstances are hard (Numbers 11:1). Such grumbling made God really angry and brought the people to the brink of spiritual disaster.

Not only in the Bible, but throughout the history of the Church, saints of God have recognized the deadly nature of a grumbling spirit. This sin can poison health, destroy relationships, quench the Spirit, extinguish faith, produce a wasted life and keep people doing laps in the wilderness forever!

There is a delightful passage in *Pilgrim's Progress* in which John Bunyan (the author) describes in quaint Old English language a case of "the gripes." Matthew, a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City, has fallen ill because he has eaten some green plums from Beelzebub's orchard. Mr. Skill, a godly physician, examined Matthew and immediately diagnosed the problem: he was sick with the gripes.

Poor Matthew had swallowed something he was unable to digest and was "much pained in his bowels, so that he was with it at times pulled as 'twere both ends together." Mr. Skill knew there was only one hope. "He must be purged or else he will die."

So he made him a purge....'Twas made ex carne et sanguine Christi¹ (you know physicians give strange medicines to their patients) and it was made up into pills with a promise or two, and a proportionable quantity of salt. Now he was to take them three at a time, fasting, in half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance. (p. 280).

At first, Matthew refused to take the pills. He feared it would have a bitter taste. But when finally he took the medicine, he discovered that it was sweeter than honey. Immediately, he was cured of the gripes.

If you find yourself this morning with an ache in your "bowels" because of a grumbling spirit, I have good news for you. The Great Physician has a potion that can purge you and make you well. Take your medicine! There is no other way to be cured of the gripes.

Pastor Stan

¹From the body and blood of Christ