

It Is Written

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GRATITUDE IN A GRUMBLING WORLD

By Ken Weliever

“As we approach the nation’s 250th birthday, the country that older Americans once knew seems to be slipping away,” opined conservative columnist Cal Thomas in a recent post.

Thomas cited the attitude of “The Greatest Generation,” who banded together during the challenging days of the Great Depression and World War II.

“We’re in this together” was the motto and mantra of that era.

Neighbors helped neighbors. Americans supported our fight against evil and its ultimate defeat. Citizens sacrificed for the greater good. And though political differences existed then as well, Americans shared some basic values.

As Thomas observed, that has changed today. Just by casual observation, we see crime in the streets. Disrespect, moral confusion, and even the celebration of evil are increasingly common.

However, one undesirable quality mentioned in the piece was how we’ve become “a nation of complainers.” Thomas wrote, “Today, we seem to be plagued by complainers who whine about almost everything.”

Higher gas prices, the rising cost of groceries, and the basic cost of living seem to have a lot of folks on edge.

The irony is striking. The other day I waited in line to pay \$4.40 a gallon for gas. Then I pulled into the Winn-Dixie parking lot, and it was packed. Later, I went to Texas Roadhouse for a meal, and there was a waiting list. The point?

While folks love to complain, we’re blessed. Richly blessed. Sure, some folks are struggling, but our generation enjoys a prosperity unequalled in history. As the media constantly reminds us how bad everything is, let’s stop and give thanks for our blessings.

In a culture that has trained us to believe we deserve the best and that our every desire should be satisfied, as Christians, let us dare to be different. Let us embrace the Biblical injunction: “Do all things without complaining and disputing” (Phil. 2:14).

Note this is a command. Not just a divine suggestion. Furthermore, the text doesn’t say “some things,” or “most things,” but “all things.”

Complaining is more than an unpleasant habit. Scripture reveals it as a spiritual issue rooted in discontent and distrust.

The attitude of gratitude should cause us to be thankful and count our many blessings. Thankfulness is one of the hallmarks of Christian living. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul offers this exhortation: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

These two passages, when combined and applied, would negate the constant complaining and irritating grumbling expressed by so many. When we do all things without complaining and give thanks for everything, we will enjoy a more satisfying life. One of peace, contentment, and divine assurance that God will provide for our every need.

One recurring problem with ancient Israel was their incessant grumbling. They complained about their leaders. They complained about the food. They complained they were going to die of thirst. They complained about the dangers of the journey. In essence, they were complaining about their Provider, God Almighty.

In citing their murmuring, Paul warned that we should not complain, “as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10).

Some brethren complain about the church, the preacher, the pastors, and other brethren. James admonished, “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned” (Jas. 5:9).

Don’t be like the negative sister who was once overheard saying, “This would be a great church if it weren’t for the people.” What?! The church is people. Sinners saved by God’s grace. Imperfect people, but people striving to serve the Lord, their fellow man, and one another. Just as God has extended us grace, let’s be gracious to one another.

I wonder if the Lord ever looks down on us and says, as He did with ancient Israel, “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?” (Num. 14:27).

Dr. Brad Harrub was right when he wrote, *“When Christians become known more for what irritates them than for what they endure with grace, something has gone wrong. When our first response is offense rather than patience, critique rather than gratitude, self-assertion rather than humility, we are reflecting the world—not Christ.”*

The next time you’re tempted to grumble about something you don’t like, remember the wise words of Teddy Roosevelt: “Complaining about a problem without posing a solution is called whining.”

Instead of whining, brethren, let us become people known for gratitude, grace, and trust in God.

“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

By Heath Rogers

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13a). This phrase in the model prayer continues the focus upon our spiritual needs. As sheep in the Lord’s fold, we are in need of His guidance and protection as we walk through this world of sin and darkness (Psalm 23).

God allows us to suffer and to be tempted as a means of growing and developing (James 1:12-13). He may not cause the temptation and suffering, but we know God is able to control the tempter (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31-32). He is faithful not to allow us to be tempted in a way or to a measure that is beyond our ability to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Prayer is one of the weapons God has given us in our battle against temptation. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He told Peter, James, and John to, “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Matthew 26:41a). Instead of blindly walking into the Devil’s minefield every day, we should stop and ask the Lord to lead us away from these temptations and deliver us from the evil one.

This guidance and deliverance is not miraculous. We are guided by God’s word, and we are delivered by God’s providence. However, much like receiving our physical needs, we are to ask for this guidance and deliverance, with the faith that God is willing and able to provide.

While forgiveness of sins is available, it is God’s will that we do not sin (1 John 2:1). We need help, guidance, and strength in resisting the temptations that appear in our daily lives. Perhaps if we spent more time requesting God’s help in avoiding and resisting temptations, we would have to spend less time asking God to forgive us for our sins.