

26-0927a - Detailed Summary

26-0927a - *Behavior That Repulses God*, Steve Cain

Bible Readers: John Nousek and Roger Raines

See the transcript: [Transcript HTML](#) - [Transcript PDF](#)

Behavior That Repulses God

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:30): John Nousek

Philippians 2:12-16: John opened the service by greeting the congregation and introducing the first reading as coming directly from the mind of the Lord. He read Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 through 16. The passage exhorts the brethren to continue in the same obedience they have always shown, not only when Paul is present with them but even more so in his absence. They are told to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who is at work in them both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

The reading continues with the command to do all things without grumbling or disputing. The purpose of that command is that they may prove themselves blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Among that generation they are to appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. Paul says that if they live this way he will have reason to glory in the day of Christ, because he will know that he did not run in vain nor toil in vain. John closed the reading with “Amen.”

2nd Reading (1:36 - 4:25): Roger Raines

1 Corinthians 10:6-20: Roger then greeted the congregation and read from 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 6 through 20. He began with Paul’s statement that the events that happened to Israel happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. The congregation is warned not to be idolaters as some of them were, with the citation that the

Continued

people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play. They are warned not to act immorally as some of them did, when twenty-three thousand fell in one day. They are warned not to try the Lord as some of them did and were destroyed by the serpent.

they must not grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example and were written for the instruction of those upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore the one who thinks he stands must take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken them except what is common to man. God is faithful and will not allow them to be tempted beyond what they are able, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape so that they will be able to endure it. Therefore they are to flee from idolatry.

Roger continued into Paul’s argument about the Lord’s table. He spoke of the cup of blessing as a sharing in the blood of Christ and the bread which is broken as a sharing in the body of Christ. Since there is one bread, those who are many are one body, because they all partake of that one bread. He pointed to the nation of Israel: those who eat the sacrifices share in the altar. Paul does not mean that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything. What the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and Paul does not want the Corinthians to become sharers with demons. Roger then announced that the reading was concluded.

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 30:59), Preacher: Steve Cain

(4:30–6:49) Introduction: The Title and the Brass Serpent

Steve announced the title of the lesson: “Behavior that Repulses God.” He asked the congregation what repulses God and whether they had already figured it out. He recalled sitting under Scott’s lesson the previous Sunday on the brass serpent. As he listened, he thought of the corresponding New Testament idea that if Christ is lifted up, a person can look to Him and be healed. God told

Moses to make a brass serpent and put it on a pole so that whoever had been bitten and looked at it would be healed. No one wants to be bitten by a rattler or a cobra, because the bite is extremely painful and can kill.

Steve drew the parallel immediately. People die from sin if they do not look to Jesus, because He has been lifted up. Those who look to Him have the opportunity to be healed from their sins and not die from the results of those sins. That reflection led him to the question that governs the rest of the sermon: what behavior caused God to send the fiery serpents among the people in the first place?

(6:49–9:47) Murmuring Defined and Exposed in the Church

Steve directed hearers who were taking notes to Numbers chapters 14, 16, and 21, the three passages he would use to identify the behavior that brought the serpents. The behavior was murmuring. God is repulsed by murmuring. Steve defined murmuring in its biblical context as the act of grumbling, complaining, or expressing discontent, often in a subdued or secretive manner. It is typically directed against God or His appointed leaders and is characterized by a lack of faith and trust in God's provision.

God has been asking His people not to murmur. Murmuring belongs to human nature and can appear without much thought. Steve said it happens in the church. He used the homely phrase that the brotherhood will go home and have “fried deacons or fried elders or fried preachers.” After the sermon, at the dinner table, families talk and run down the preacher, the elders, the song leader who “butchered the songs,” or those who waited on the Lord's table poorly. That conversation is murmuring, and God hates it.

God hates it because the murmuring is aimed at His anointed or appointed person. The one delivering the message, the song leader, the elder, and the deacon are appointed by God. God does not want His people to run those servants down. Steve pressed the point as a matter of personal conduct: a Christian is not to be a murmurer at all.

(9:47–13:29) Murmuring at Work and on the Team

Steve carried the same principle into ordinary employment. Around a desk, employees can hear murmuring constantly. The Christian must not participate. Typical workplace murmuring sounds like this: that is a bad boss, that is a bad supervisor, why am I being asked to do this or that, I could be a better supervisor or foreman than he is. The employer will look for an opportunity to reprimand or remove the murmurer. He does so because he hired those leaders and considered them qualified. Derogatory remarks about them are a reflection on the one who appointed them.

Murmuring also wrecks morale. Others join in and listen. People stop coming to work on time, leave before the day is done, and stop giving their all. Murmuring is the enemy of teamwork. Steve then moved to the sports arena—football, baseball, basketball, or any sport with a clubhouse. The owner watches whether players respect the manager and the way the manager puts the team on the floor. When the owner perceives a murmurer in the clubhouse, he trades him or fires him. Fans who watch the games can tell that something is wrong in the locker room. The team is not playing together. Hearts are not in the work. The cause, again, is murmuring. God does not want His people to murmur.

(13:29–19:04) Numbers 21: The Fiery Serpents and the Road around Edom

Steve returned to the event that produced the brass serpent. Numbers 21 records that Israel was already wandering in the wilderness and would wander there for forty years. God sent fiery serpents because the people were complaining about having to go around Edom. The detour made the journey harder. They had to forage for food and find water. The difficulty became the occasion of murmuring.

They murmured because God would not let them pass through Edom. God withheld that route because He did not want them to fight yet. They were not ready for warfare. The Israelites who came out of Egypt were former slaves. They had never been taught to be warriors. They did not know how to use swords, shields, or the other weapons of war. Their labor in Egypt had been brick, mortar, and mud for whatever the emperor wanted built. They were unprepared for combat.

That is why God had prepared Moses in the wilderness. Moses had fled Egypt after killing a man and lived in that land until he was eighty. He left Egypt at forty; God used the next forty years to prepare him for leadership, because Israel had no leader. Moses already knew the wilderness through which he would later lead the people. When he was eighty, God called him to bring Israel out of Egypt.

The people complained about Moses and Aaron and about being led around Edom, which they thought would have been the easier trip. God heard it and became angry. He was repulsed because they were murmuring not only against Moses and Aaron but against the plans God Himself had for them. The complaint reflected on God, and God took it personally. Murmuring is something God takes personally. Christians are therefore asked not to murmur at all, at any time, under any circumstances, because God has divine intervention, providence, and preservation.

In His anger God caused the fiery serpents to come. They began biting and killing many of the Israelites. Moses asked God to do something about it. God told Moses to make a brass serpent and put it on a pole so that whoever looked at it after being bitten would be healed. That healing was the result of murmuring.

(19:04–23:00) Numbers 14: The Spies, the Refusal, and the Wilderness Sentence

Steve then asked why Israel was wandering in the wilderness in the first place. That earlier murmuring is recorded in Numbers 14. After the exodus, God led the people by fire at night and by cloud during the day. Moses led them, with Aaron as his right-hand man, toward the promised land, which is Canaan. At the border it was suggested that they send spies into Canaan. Twelve spies went, one from each tribe. Joshua and Caleb were two of the twelve.

When the spies returned, ten of them gave a demoralizing report. They spoke of giants and said that Israel looked like ants in the sand. Joshua and Caleb answered that with the help of God they could take the land. The spies also brought back grapes and other fruit that were huge, delicious, and enticing. The people, however, listened to the ten and began to murmur. They asked why they had been brought all the way out there. Were there not enough graves in Egypt to bury them? They talked of seizing the leaders and going back to Egypt.

God answered that they would not enter His rest. He rejected that generation even after they

realized they had made a mistake by murmuring and by refusing Canaan. God told them He was not with them and that they were not to go in, but they tried anyway and were beaten back. They then had no place to go. God made a vow that those people would never see the promised land. He would make them wander until they all passed away and dropped in the desert, just as they themselves had asked. They had said, in effect, why did You not allow us to die in the wilderness? God replied that He would. That is why they were in the wilderness. They were there because they murmured. God is repulsed by murmuring and will act on it.

(23:00–26:46) Numbers 16: Korah, Dathan, and the Earth that Opened

Steve next turned to Numbers 16 and the uprising of Korah and Dathan. He recapped the events. They complained that Moses and Aaron had taken the leadership and the responsibility for the people's welfare. They did not like what Moses and Aaron were doing. They took special offense at Moses' wife because she was not a Jew and not an Israelite. They disagreed with the marriage and were offended by it. They believed they could do better.

They also said that Aaron had taken the priesthood on himself. Scripture shows that he had not. God had the leaders place their staffs before the ark of the covenant, and the next morning only Aaron's staff was budding. That sign indicated that God truly wanted Aaron to be high priest alongside Moses. The murmuring was against men God had appointed. When a boss appoints people, criticism of those people is a reflection on the one who appointed them. God was upset for that reason.

Korah gathered people behind him. He wanted to overthrow Moses and Aaron and remove them from leadership. God heard it and said He would destroy them. Moses stood in their place and pleaded that God not do so. God then told the congregation to separate themselves from Korah and his family. Steve compared the scene to the line of demarcation in Westerns: those with Moses were to come over to his side; those who stayed with Korah were God's enemies. Korah, his family, and those who followed him stayed on the other side. The earth opened and swallowed them all. The cause was murmuring. Murmuring demoralizes. God asks His people not to murmur.

(26:46–29:42) New Testament Charge: Do All Things without Grumbling

Steve returned to the first reading and narrowed the application to Philippians 2:14 and the verses that follow. The congregation is to do everything without grumbling or arguing so that they may become blameless and pure children of God, without fault, in a warped and crooked generation. Then they will shine among that generation like stars in the sky as they hold firmly to the word of life. Paul will then be able to boast on the day of Christ that he did not run or labor in vain. Even if he is being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service that come from their faith, he is glad and rejoices with them, and they should be glad and rejoice with him.

He then returned to 1 Corinthians 10 and cut to verse 10, after briefly recalling the surrounding warnings. They should not commit sexual immorality, as some did when twenty-three thousand died in one day. They should not test Christ, as some did and were killed by snakes. And they must not grumble—another word for murmuring—as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. God does not like grumbling and murmuring.

Steve said this is something every hearer must pay attention to, because it is so easy to fall into, especially in a group led by a foreman or a boss. It is especially easy, and especially damaging, in a

brotherhood like the church. The church is the worst place to find grumbling, because it demoralizes. He asked them to reflect on office work, on teamwork, and on the brotherhood. There is nothing so demoralizing and so destructive as murmuring. He left them with that charge.

(29:42–30:59) Invitation and Song of Encouragement

Steve closed with an invitation. There might be someone in the audience that morning who understood that he or she was outside of Christ and outside of God and needed the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, and a restored relationship of favor with God. God is offering that very thing through His gospel. The offer is received by accepting His Son, Jesus, as Lord and Savior, becoming a disciple of Him, and becoming a member of His church.

Jesus said to go into all the world, teaching them and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. The necessary response is to be baptized for the remission of sins and to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and Savior. The congregation stood ready to assist. The water and the garments were prepared. While they stood together they would sing the song of encouragement.