

COMPLAINTS AND CRAVINGS Sunday School- August 2, 2009

Unifying Topic: PEOPLE GRUMBLE

Lesson Text

I. The Israelites Complain (Numbers 11:1-6)

II. Moses Complains to God (Numbers 11:10-15)

The Main Thought: And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. (Numbers 11:4-6 KJV).

Unifying Principle: When people experience difficulties, they often forget their blessings. What happens when we forget our blessings during times of trouble? When God brought the people out of slavery in Egypt and provided for them in the desert, Moses and the people complained repeatedly.

Lesson Aim: Students should be able to recount the Israelites' grumbling about life in the wilderness and realize that the Israelites' dissatisfaction was matched by God's providence.

Life Aim: As a result of this lesson, students should examine and give thanks for their blessings.

-
- 11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.
- 11:2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.
- 11:3 And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.
- 11:4 And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?
- 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:
- 11:6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.
-
- 11:10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.
- 11:11 And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?
- 11:12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?
- 11:13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.
- 11:14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.
- 11:15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

HISTORY:

In the Hebrew Bible, **Numbers is entitled "In the Wilderness."** It is the Book of Wanderings. The lesson is clear, it may be necessary to pass through wilderness experiences, however, you do not have to live there. For Israel, an eleven day journey became a forty year agony.

Numbers takes its name from the two numberings of the Israelites- **the generation of Exodus** (taken at Mount Sinai in preparation for the wilderness) and **the generation that grew up in the wilderness and conquered Canaan** (taken near the Jordan, almost 40years later in preparation for entering the Promise Land). The name 'numbers' comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and refers specifically to the census figures given in two census reports (Num. 1-21 wilderness years) and (Num. 26-36 before entering Canaan). The content of the Book of Numbers moves back and forth between lists of laws and narratives and begins in the same manner as Leviticus, with more Divine instructions from Mount Sinai, and still dressing priestly matters. It should be studied with Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

After Mount Sinai (receiving specific instructions), a census was taken and the second Passover was celebrated (first in Egypt, lavery. Preparation was the main key now, for Israel needed organization in order to reach that land flowing with milk and honey.

In the **tenth chapter of Numbers**, Moses was told how to summon the people, go to war, in times of gladness, annual festivals, and at the beginning of each month blow the trumpet with a certain blast. Each blast had a different meaning in summoning and breaking camp. Only the priests were permitted to blow the trumpet. This is

where God would be reminded of His Covenant with them. This was also a permanent instruction to be followed from generation to generation. God showed up for Moses in the burning bush. He showed up at the Red Sea, and He's showing up in the Wilderness for the Israelites. They moved with the cloud of the Lord by day and a pillar of fire by night.

LESSON:

Numbers 11:1-6: The Israelites Complain

After the three-day journey in the wilderness on their way to Canaan, the Israelites grew tired and the vast desolate desert before them must have frightened them. They grumbled, murmured, and complained about their hardships and the Lord heard them.

NOTE:

Complaint

About their misfortunes.

About the lack of meat.

Sin

Complained about their problems instead of praying to God about them.

Lusted after things they didn't have.

Result

Thousands of people were destroyed when God sent a plague of fire to punish them.

God sent quail, but as the people began to eat, God struck them with a plague that killed many.

This made the Lord very angry. (After all God had just delivered them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and was living among them and bringing them into the Promised-Land). Shouldn't they have been filled with hope and gratitude?

God's reaction to their complaints was swift. He sent fire to burn among them. The angry fire from the Lord consumed some people in the outskirts of the camp. When the people understood the power of the fire, they panicked and cried out to Moses. Moses immediately prayed to God and God heard Moses' prayer and responded by quenching the fire.

POINT:

Every time you turn around, Moses is having to pray to God not to give the Israelites what they deserved, but to give them what they don't deserve. Moses served as intercessor for the Israelites in the text, but Jesus Christ serves as our intercessor today! Moses was temporary intercessor, while Jesus is eternal intercessor between God and man!

They memorialized the place where God punished them for their complaints by naming it Taberah, which means burning.

The gift of manna, their food, (their daily bread) would rain down from God every morning. The manna looked like coriander seed but was white. The people would gather it from the ground in the morning and they would grind it and cook it. The prepared manna tasted like bread made with olive oil. Nevertheless, the people grew tired of eating manna.*

NOTE:

It is interesting to note that the first complaints about the manna began with the mixed multitude, that is, the Egyptians who traveled with them. This mixed multitude experienced intense cravings for meat. Soon the children of Israel followed their lead and began to crave meat. The children of Israel complained to God that they wanted meat. They actually said, that in Egypt they had fish and meat and cucumbers and melons and leeks and garlic. They complained in a manner that indicated they lived in luxury in Egypt instead of as what they actually were—slaves, being brutally whipped. Had they so quickly forgotten all that God had done for them? Like Freedom? God didn't just move them from Egypt, from oppression, but God moved them to a place of responsibility, from servitude to service.

POINT:

Proof of the prosperity of a country was building monumental buildings like pyramids and tombs. The Egyptians were proud of their ability to organize work. The Israelites had known the city of Ramses, for it was one of the store cities they had built while being slaves.

NOTE:

**The Word of God is our gift from God. Like the manna, we must receive it by gathering it, grinding it and cooking it. We gather it by reading it, we grind it by thinking about it, and we cook it by making it part of ourselves. Although God's Word is a gift, we must accept it, ponder it, and unlike the children of Israel, we must be on guard not to be tempted by the things of the world and grow tired of it.*

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Be careful who you mix with, because when encountering with unsatisfied people, that same grumbling complaining spirit will rub off on you as it did Moses and will cause displeasure to the Lord. People gravitate to the thing they're not suppose to have, not suppose to do, not suppose to include on their plate, not suppose to inquire about; instead they're looking at the other small part they don't have, don't need, that won't fit, or God didn't say to have. *"Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door"* (James 5:9, NASB). Gratefulness is an attitude of thanks from the heart.

Numbers 11:10-15: Moses Complains to God

Moses, heard the people from every family crying from their own tent and Moses was troubled. These cries of complaint angered God as well as Moses. Moses spoke to God in what must have been exhausted frustration. Moses asked God, "Why have you placed this burden on me? What have I done to displease you, did I give birth to all of these people? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries a baby, to the Promised Land? Where can I get meat for these people? This burden you have placed on me is too heavy for me! If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now! If you favor me at all, please put me to death and do not allow me to see my own wretchedness (miserableness, unclean)!"

Moses had complaints and wondered where he would get so much meat. After all there were 600,000 men with their families, totaling approximately 2.5 million people. So Moses asked God, "Would there be enough meat if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?"

POINT:

*Moses is upset, asking the Lord, "what is he to do? I can't handle this! Just kill me NOW!
If I have found favour in Your sight...?"*

When we complain, it may not be the problem but only a symptom of a problem.

The Lord answered Moses, "Has God's arm been shortened? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true." (v.23). Moses entrusted himself to God, knowing that everything that happens is totally up to God.

SUMMARY:

The wilderness is that place where you aren't where you were, nor are you where you are going to be. We sort of lose our identity out there in the wilderness. We forget who we are and whose bringing us out. The Israelites were no longer slaves in Egypt nor were they yet residents of the Promised Land. They're somewhere in between. Yet even in the wilderness God is responsive to the needs of these complaining people. God provides what they cannot.

Deliverance comes, but not in being removed from the wilderness. There is a gift of food where the resources are only temporary and momentary. There is a gift of water where only rocks abound. There is a gift of healing if needed. Death is transformed into life from within a death-filled surrounding of conditions. A sanctuary is provided, in the wilderness by God.

Moses was displeased (the people complained); he was distressed (the people harassed him), and he was defiant (anger made him disobedient). If all these negative feelings are not the root of the problem, what was? Well, Moses expected the people to be grateful because of what God had done for them; and doubting your ability to lead keeps lurking in those low moments that brings up your wretchedness. We let ourselves be distracted by the disappointments and deprivations that God allows for our spiritual good.

However, in his despair he took his complaint to God. You can ask God questions, but be careful when you complain. It's easy to say God did not bring this upon Moses - a carnal and ungrateful people did! Yet, though God did not directly afflict Moses with this, He ultimately allowed it. If we're burdened, we must share it, first of all with God. He can't handle it until you've given it to Him. We can leave our Egypt, our places of oppression, and we can move toward our Promised Land, that place of healing and wholeness, if we don't complain, don't have the negative spirit, and don't allow the issues to cling to you. Elijah was one to allow the issue to cling to him, who also wanted to die after demonstrating a great feat for God. Trust and believe that you have a Covenant keeping God working on your behalf. The reason God allows any affliction in our lives is to compel us to trust Him in all things. Maturity comes in the mist of trials. So whenever we are tempted to grumble, let's remember, *"When the people complained, it displeased the Lord"* (v.1).

Every time you want to grumble,
Think of others who have less;
Ask the Lord to keep you humble,
Grateful for each happiness. —Marye