

### Complaints About The Problems and God's Provision in The Wilderness

#### Numbers 11:1-15

Numbers 11:1-15 - *"Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. <sup>2</sup> Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. <sup>3</sup> So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them. <sup>4</sup> Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? <sup>5</sup> We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; <sup>6</sup> but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" <sup>7</sup> Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. <sup>8</sup> The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. <sup>9</sup> And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it. <sup>10</sup> Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. <sup>11</sup> So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? <sup>12</sup> Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? <sup>13</sup> Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' <sup>14</sup> I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. <sup>15</sup> If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!"*

#### Background Notes

The book of Numbers covers the events and experiences of the people of Israel during the forty years between their Exodus from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan at the time of the Conquest. They wandered in the wilderness for many years because of their sin, their rebellion, their grumbling and complaining, and their unbelief. Many of these "sins of the wilderness" are recorded in the book of Numbers, especially in Numbers 11-16.

Why did God record the sins of the wilderness in Holy Scripture? He tells us why in 1 Corinthians 10:9-12: *"nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."*

God preserved the record of the sins of the wilderness in His Word - not just to give us an accurate record of what took place, but also **to warn us** not to commit these same sins. If we commit the sins of the wilderness, we too will be kept

from enjoying the blessings, the joys and the victories of the abundant life that the Lord wants to share with us. If we commit the sins of the wilderness, we will wander in the wilderness of Christian experience, and we'll miss out on the abundant life.

Notice: we're **not** talking about **salvation** here. We're talking about **Christian living**. Salvation has to do with trusting in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, because He died on the cross for your sins. The sins of the wilderness have to do with sin and rebellion and unbelief in the Christian life. God not only wants us to **become** Christians – He also wants us to **be** Christians. He doesn't want us to wander in the wilderness of Christian experience.

Numbers 11 discusses the sin of complaining. Complaining is certainly one of the sins that will keep us in the wilderness. It will keep us from the joys and blessings and victories of the abundant life that the Lord spoke about in John 10:10 - *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The sin of complaining results from discontent in the human heart.

In Numbers 11:1-9, the people complained about their **problems** and their **provisions**. What kind of problems? Just the normal hardships of life – hot weather, and having to move when they didn't want to move, or having to stay at the same place when they would have preferred to move on and have a change of scenery. Remember, they were traveling in the Sinai wilderness where the weather can be very hot. The landscape is rocky, rugged and mountainous - not easy walking.

They followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They moved when the cloud moved – day or night. They camped when the cloud stopped - sometimes just overnight, sometimes for months. Read about how they followed the cloud in Numbers 9.

Obviously there would have been hardships and problems along the way, and I think that we probably would have complained, too! After all, we complain about the heat even when we have air conditioning - right? But the Lord was displeased when they complained about their problems.

The Lord is displeased today when we grumble and complain about our problems. In fact, just as God had to discipline His people then with the fire of the Lord, so He disciplines His people today when we complain. Remember Hebrews 12:6 about discipline: *"For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."* And verse 11: *"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

So let's not complain about our problems. Remember Numbers 11:1 ***"When the people complained, the LORD was displeased..."*** This is a great verse to memorize - in fact, we memorized that verse with our children during family devotions, and I have my Bible College students memorize it as a mini-verse!

The people not only complained about their problems, but they complained about their provisions as well. The Lord had given the people of Israel manna to eat. Manna was a good and versatile food. *“The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil” (v8).* The manna fell from heaven miraculously every night - but the people had become bored with it! They were bored with God’s provision for them. **They complained, and the Lord was displeased.**

Do we complain about God’s provision for us? Do we complain about the way He provides for our physical and material needs? Do we complain about His provision for our spiritual needs as well? Manna is a spiritual picture of Christ. In John 6:41 our Lord likens Himself to the manna from heaven: *“I am the bread which came down from heaven.”* Jesus Christ is not only the means of our salvation; He is also the spiritual food that sustains our souls.

Is your soul satisfied with God’s provision for you in Christ? Or are you complaining? Israel complained about their problems and their provisions because they were not content. Are you content in Christ, or are you complaining? Discontent in the heart works itself out in the sin of complaining.

## **2. The sin of complaining results in the discouragement of God’s leaders.**

In verses 10-15 we find that **Moses** had begun to complain! Why? He complained because he was very discouraged. He was so discouraged that he even wanted to die! He was burned out from working with grumbling and complaining people. Have you ever been that discouraged? It can happen, especially when you work with complaining people!

Why is it that so many men and women in the Lord’s work face burnout? We see one of the big reasons right here. When the Lord’s people are never satisfied, and they constantly grumble and complain, their spiritual leaders become very discouraged. *“I can’t take it anymore! I don’t need this job. I can serve the Lord in other ways and other places. I’m out of here!”*

Discouragement is the number one reason why people leave the ministry today. One of the biggest reasons for discouragement is dealing with people who are never satisfied - people who want the church to run **their** way, so they’re constantly complaining. I know people and situations like this, and I’m sure you do too.

What about **your** spiritual leaders? Are they discouraged because of **your** complaining? Will **you** be the reason why they leave the responsibility that God has given them? The sin of complaining discourages God’s leaders!

## **Practical Application**

## **Don't crave the food of Egypt!**

Question: Why did God's people complain about of His provision of the manna? Answer: They complained about the manna because they **craved the foods of Egypt!** *"We remember the fish we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our appetites are gone! All we ever see is this manna!" (v5-6).*

In the spiritual picture, Egypt represents the world -- the world system that surrounds us, the world system that has been specifically designed by Satan to appeal to our sinful nature. As God redeemed His people out from the bondage and slavery of Egypt, so God has redeemed believers out of this world. All too often, however, we crave the spicy foods of Egypt - the "tasty" pleasures of this world. If we **crave** what this world has to offer in the way of entertainment, pleasures, material success and other things, we can be sure that our desire for the things of the Lord will diminish.

Notice verse 4: *"Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the people of Israel also began to complain and said: "Oh, for some meat!"* What was this "mixed multitude"? The mixed multitude included some Egyptians who had come out of Egypt with the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. It appears that they were the ones who started the complaints about the manna, but the people of Israel listened, and were led astray by their desire for something more interesting and exciting than the good food that the Lord had provided for them!

Do you see the spiritual picture here? If we are governed by mixed motives - such as wanting to serve the Lord, but also craving the "exciting pleasures" of the world - we can't please the Lord. If we want to serve the Lord, but we also crave what pleasures the world has to offer at the same time, it won't be long before we become dissatisfied and begin to complain about God's provision for us in Christ.

Are you like the "mixed multitude" in your life as a Christian? Do you have mixed motives? Convicting, isn't it? **Don't crave the foods of Egypt!**