



Numbers: God's Faithfulness; Our Grumbling and Complaining

As we continue through the Bible in our Sunday morning worship themes, this week's reading was the Old Testament book of Numbers. Often when we read the Bible, we tend to skip over books like Leviticus and Numbers, as they have sections that seem dry and irrelevant to our lives today. If we step back, however, there are so many messages in these books that mean as much to us today as they did to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. They include:

- **Trust Me.** God asked the Hebrews to leave Egypt and go to the Promised Land. This was a people who had been in slavery for several hundred years, and thus were ill-prepared. However, this was clearly God's Plan – insurmountable odds could only be overcome through total and complete reliance on the God of Abraham. In the same way, God says "trust Me" to us today.
- **Follow Me.** God led them with a pillar of fire and cloud through the wilderness. Israel was not told where they were going, they were just told "follow Me". In the same way, we can't see the future and often are confused or in despair. In those times, God's message is simple. Follow Me.
- **Look Past the Moment.** Israel complained when they were thirsty, complained when they were hungry, complained when they were tired, complained when they were afraid. God continually calls them to remember how He has blessed them, and count on His blessings in the future. In the same way, God reminds us to look past any hurts, doubts, or challenges of the moment, and see how He is leading us.

- **I Keep My Promises.** Whether it was meeting physical needs (manna, water from a rock) or spiritual blessings (His chosen people), God never failed to keep a promise. In the same way, God has promised blessings to us today, most of all the blessing of His Spirit indwelling within us. Never forget God's promises.
- **My People Suffer Hardships.** Within His plan, the wilderness wanderings prepared the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. None of that was easy, and they failed repeatedly along the way. Even before that, the Jews had suffered for hundreds of years in Egypt. But through all of the hardships, God's promise and faithfulness brought them through. In the same way, we are not promised freedom from troubles; in fact, Jesus actually promises hardships and troubles if we are His disciples. But we are also promised that these hardships will strengthen us and remind us of God's care and blessings.
- **I Have a Plan, Whether or Not You See It.** Numbers reveals so much to the Israelites on how God's plan had developed from Adam up to that very moment. It's easy to get lost in a moment in our individual lives, but Numbers gave them a much bigger picture of His plan for each person, and their nation as a whole. In the same way, God has a Plan today, and we are in it! Sometimes we don't see it at the moment, sometimes we don't see it until years of hindsight, and sometimes we'll never know while we're here on Earth. But Numbers helps us see that there is a big picture and God uses each one of us in that picture.
- **Hope!** God clearly demonstrated to the Israelites that their faith in Him would be rewarded. When things seemed hopeless, God repeatedly demonstrated His love and power, strengthening their faith and grounding their hope in Him. In the same way, our hope is not a wish, it is grounded on the tremendous love that God has repeatedly shown over the entirety of His creation. We can read Numbers and realize that our Hope

is in Him, not on ourselves or anything or anyone that will fail us.

As we continue reading through God's Word, we will continue to see the golden thread of God's Plan, and his eternal love for us through His Messiah. I pray that each of you spends quality and quantity time not only reading but really studying how God's Plan comes together in a marvelous way that we as humans could never imagine.

Grace and Peace,

David Shaw