

## Numbers 11 - Thursday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- If tonight's teaching had a topical title it would sort of be something along the lines of; "The catastrophic consequences of complaining."
- It's hard to imagine that they would complain after everything the Lord did for the Israelites, and after all that they had experienced.
- Be that as it may, we're about to see what happens when God's people complain. Again, the consequences are just catastrophic.

**11:1** 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.

- We're told that "when the people complained," the Lord not only heard it, but was displeased by it, and had become angry because of it.
- Then we see what happens to them because of their complaining. The fire of God burned among them and consumed some of them.
- Isn't this true in our lives as well? The ones who complain are the ones who are burned, and complaining ends up consuming us too.

- There's something else here we need to notice. Actually it's something that's not here that I believe is crucial we take a look at.
- Conspicuously absent from the text is what the children of Israel were actually complaining about. Why isn't this recorded for us?
- Couple of thoughts, one of which is that it was probably so petty that the Holy Spirit didn't deem it necessary to even bother repeating it.
- Furthermore, it wouldn't have mattered what they complained about anyway, because regardless of the reason, complaining is sin.

- While pettiness aptly describes what's at the core of our complaining, I would like to suggest a possibility as to what the complaint was.
- Notice that at the end of verse one it says the fire "consumed some in the outskirts of the camp;" "could it be that they couldn't be first?"
- In other words, the carnal desire to be first and not last is at the core of our complaining, and all we have to do is ask the disciples.

2 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.

- Notice that they cry out to Moses and not to the Lord. How does Moses respond? He prays to the Lord - quenching the fire of the Lord.
- We're then told how they name that place - according to the nature of what had happened at that place; "Taberah," meaning "burning."

4 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?"

- Now, you would think that after experiencing some among them being literally burned to death, they would never complain again.
- Yet, here we're told that "the mixed multitude who were among them," were overcome by the intense craving for some meat to eat.
- By the way, let me parenthetically say; our word carnal comes from the root word meaning "flesh," i.e. "Chili Con Carne," (with meat.)
- In other words, we're tired of having the same old Manna day in and day out; let's spice things up with some meat/flesh to eat.

- Perhaps it goes without saying, but the lesson here is quite clear; complaining comes when one succumbs to their fleshly desires.
- There are a couple more things here before we go to verse five; notice at the end of verse four, that they ask who will give them meat.
- This seems to indicate that they had given up on the Lord and were now taking matters into their own hands seeking other provision.

- Here's something else I think we should take note related to this complaining "mixed-up" multitude. They weren't forbidden to eat meat.
- God never told them they couldn't eat meat, so that's not the issue. The issue is that they were too lazy to get some meat to eat.
- In other words, they didn't want to do anything about the problem except complain about the problem. That's just what complainers do!
- I've heard it said that if the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, then get up and do something like fertilize your own grass.

Perhaps this quip would be apropos as it relates to the mixed multitude asking who. It's titled; "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, And Nobody," and it goes like this; "This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done."

5 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.

- Apparently, they must have had it pretty good back in Egypt. Oh my goodness, it seems they had an all you can eat buffet at anytime.
- It's important to remember that these are not the Israelites, but the Egyptians as the mixed multitudes. The Israelites didn't eat all that!
- To these onion and garlic eating Egyptians manna from the Lord isn't good enough for them, and now the Israelites are discontent too.
- Again, I think the lesson here is clear; complaining comes from a selective memory of past events, and can be highly contagious.

"The mischief in the camp usually commenced with the mixed multitude, and it is the same with the church of God now: the merely nominal Christians in her are the tinder for Satan's sparks. It is sad, however, to note that the Israelites were ready enough to follow the bad example of the mixed company. They murmured wantonly. They did not want for either bread or water, but pined for luxuries, such complaining is sure to be punished."

Charles Spurgeon

- It's important to keep in mind that this complaining originated from the "mixed multitudes," and permeated throughout the Israelites.
- It is so important that we know this is because carnal complaining Christians can spread discontentment throughout the church today.

"Like with the mixed multitude, carnal Christians can't make the world like the church, so they will try to make the church like the world so that they can feel more comfortable in it. The mixed multitude didn't have another church that they could go to in the wilderness to be more comfortable, so they had to spread this discontentment and discord amongst the congregation of Israelites."

Pastor Damian Kyle, Calvary Chapel Modesto

10 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. 11 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? 12 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? 13 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.' 14 I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. 15 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!"

- Now Moses starts complaining, and it's so bad that he just wants God to kill him. See, I told you that complaining is highly contagious.
- It's so highly contagious that even the strongest and meekest amongst us are susceptible to being infected by this horrific virus.

16 So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. 17 Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.

- The Lord responds to Moses, not his complaining but rather his prayer. He tells him that he empower seventy elders to bear the burden.
- In other words, the Lord knows how much we can bear up under, and will raise-up and fill up others with the Holy Spirit to stand with us.

18 Then you shall say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt." Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?"'

- It's as if God is saying; "OK you want to know who will give you meat to eat? I will give you plenty of meat to eat and it will last a month."
- Lest you think God is giving into their complaining, He's not, rather, He's giving them over to their complaining with the lust of their flesh.

21 And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.' 22 Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?" 23 And the LORD said to Moses, "Has the LORD's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."

- This is interesting because Moses is trying to figure out how God is going to be able to BBQ that much quail, and offers to help God out.
- I love how the Lord responds to Moses. He tells him not to worry because He isn't running short, and that he just needs watch and see.

24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again.

- Notice that the Holy Spirit rested upon these elders giving them exactly what they needed and only for when they needed it.
- There's an important lesson here in that God's callings are God's enablings. In other words, He will package the how with the what.

26 But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." 28 So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" 29 Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" 30 And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

- I find it rather interesting that the Lord would deem it necessary to include this account in light of everything else that's going on here.
- Perhaps one reason is because He wants us to see how Joshua is being protective of Moses, and Moses is being discerning of others.
- Joshua doesn't want Eldad and Medad undermining Moses' leadership, and Moses discerns that this is both from and of the Lord.

31 Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground.<sup>32</sup> And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.<sup>33</sup> But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.<sup>34</sup> So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. <sup>35</sup> From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.

- This is as explicit as it is graphic in its detail. For me, it's too much information, however the Lord wants this burned into their memories.
- Once again the place is named according to the nature of what happened at the place; Kibroth Hattaavah means graves of craving.
- I find it interesting that we see this mentioned in the Psalms where we read about it yet again. God doesn't want them to ever forget.

**Psalm 106:13-15** 13 They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. 15 And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul. NKJV

**Psalm 78:27-31** 27 He rained meat down on them like dust, flying birds like sand on the seashore. 28 He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents. 29 They ate till they had more than enough, for he had given them what they craved. 30 But before they turned from the food they craved, even while it was still in their mouths, 31 God's anger rose against them; he put to death the sturdiest among them, cutting down the young men of Israel. NIV

### The Catastrophic Consequences of Complaining:

1. Complaining will burn us
2. Complaining can consume us
3. Complaining is petty
4. Complaining is a slap in the face of God Himself
5. Complaining is carnal
6. Complaining exposes our motives and agenda's
7. Complaining desires to be first not last
8. Complaining is usually to and about others
9. Complaining comes when we're bored with the bland
10. Complaining can become an intense craving
11. Complaining is an indicator that we're not trusting the Lord to provide
12. Complaining causes us to take matters into our own hands
13. Complaining about everything is much easier than doing anything about something
14. Complaining usually exaggerates
15. Complaining will glamorize and idealize the past
16. Complaining is contagious
17. Complaining creates and breeds discontentment
18. Complaining can lead one to despair
19. Complaining becomes a heavy burden on others
20. Complaining may cause God to give us over to the lust of our flesh
21. Complaining causes some to offer man made solutions which always fall short