

Message #12**Numbers 11:1-35**

Over the years we have probably met a few people who have been addicted to something. We have known of those who are addicted to alcohol and they go to AA meetings. We have known of those addicted to drugs and they go to an anonymous gathering. We have known of those addicted to Gambling and Sex and they go to their meetings. Many of these people see counselors on a regular basis. They get together with the group to share their struggles and hopefully get victory.

In all of our years of ministry, I have never seen someone say I am addicted to murmuring and complaining and grumbling. But if you just quietly listen to some people, you will discover that some of them have this addiction and they have it in and out of church.

As far as I know, there is no Grumblers Anonymous group meeting or 12-step program and frankly, in over 35 years of ministry, I have never had anyone come into my office and say I have a serious verbal addiction problem in that I grumble and complain all the time about everything and everyone. Most people don't see that as much of a problem. But I guarantee you this, God does.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that the worst grumblers he ever saw in church were people who loved to have the gatherings, but they hated a focus on serious study of God's Word. They loved to sit in the background and show up at the gatherings and they were never happy with anything (*Numbers*, p. 480).

God views this as serious sin and He takes this very seriously. There can be very dangerous and deadly consequences for one who grumbles and complains. It is serious business to the hearing ear of God to be known, heard and seen as a complainer and if ever you want to see that point, analyze Numbers 11.

GOD GETS SO FED UP WITH HIS PEOPLE WHO ARE GRUMBLERS AND COMPLAINERS THAT HE WILL SEND NEGATIVE THINGS INTO THEIR LIVES AS A CHASTISING JUDGMENT.

Let's remember the context. Israel is organized and is moving to the Promised Land and according to 10:33, they had only been travelling for three days. But three days was enough to cause them to whine and complain and grumble and mumble. There are three main grumbling episodes we want to see in this chapter.

GRUMBLING EPISODE #1 – The people grumbled because of supposed adversity. 11:1-3

The people were probably tired after they had marched for three days. They had been at Sinai for about a year and things appeared to be great. They were all numbered and ready to go to the Promised Land, but they had not got there as quick as they wanted so they started "complaining."

That word “complain” (anan) is very rare. According to William Gesenius, the word means to mourn and groan and whine and complain because one is so sad (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 65). Here is what is really sad about this. God had delivered Israel and they were on their way to the Promised Land, so what in the world are they actually sad and complaining about.

It is interesting that the only other place this word is used is in Lamentations 3:39. In Lamentations 3:39 the meaning is why should a man complain about anything in view of all of his sins.

Now they were complaining like those who were suffering “adversity.” That word “adversity” (ra) means these people were complaining like those who were going through bad, unhappy, evil times and conditions (*Ibid.*, p. 772). **God is leading them to the Promised Land and they are complaining as if things in life are rotten for them.**

There are some people who are like that. All they do is complain even if things are good. They are so negative about everything and God gets sick of it.

What in the world did these people have to complain about? This should have been an exciting and happy time for Israel. But not for this group. They complained.

Let me ask us a question. We live in the United States of America and what do we have to complain about? I could see it if we lived in some third world country. But God has so blessed us, what in the world do we have to complain about.

So according to the end of **verse 1**, God got angry and sent some fire on the outside of the camp as a way of saying knock-it-off. Apparently the fire didn’t burn up any of the people, but it should have scared them and apparently did scare them.

According to **verse 2**, they sensed the danger of the fire and they went to Moses and cried out to him and Moses prayed and God caused the fire to die down. Moses interceded on their behalf and God. Dr. Wiersbe said I have seen that so many times. People complain about their Pastor or leaders and then things fall apart and they run to them for help.

According to **verse 3**, they commemorated the event by naming the location “Taberah,” which comes from the word “baar” which means “to burn.” Moses referred back to this moment in Deuteronomy 9:22 and he said that they had provoked God to wrath and that is why He started the fire.

Think of this. Their grumbling and complaining angered God to the point that He sent a fire that could have destroyed them. Had they not gone to Moses and got him to pray, it would have destroyed them.

We have a right as God’s people to take our concerns to God, but if we start complaining and blaming Him, God is angered.

GRUMBLING EPISODE #2 – The people grumbled and complain about the food. **11:4-9**

Verse 4 says there was some “rabble” among the people. This “riff raff” group complained about the food God was supplying. They had “greedy desires.” They remembered the fish and the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and onions and garlic that they used to eat in Egypt (**v. 5**). There were no great bodies of water to fish in the wilderness and they missed that. They said in **verse 6** their appetite was gone and all they had was manna to eat.

God supplied that manna miracle every day six days a week. They would go out in the morning and gather what they needed for the day. God supplied what they needed and they would take that manna and grind it (**8a**) and boil it (**8b**) and make cakes with it (**8c**). God saw to it they had plenty to eat every day (**v. 9**).

I do not believe that it pleases God when His people go to church to crave other worldly things and not feed on His Word. There are people who go to church on Sunday and they crave rock music of the world and they crave entertainment that is nothing more than heathen “religious substitutes.” But they are not after a real feeding on God’s Word and it angers God.

GRUMBLING EPISODE #3 – Moses complains to God about his calling. **11:10-15**

According to **verse 10**, Moses heard the people weeping apparently about the food situation. They are actually crying because they don’t like the manna.

Two things happened; 1) God’s anger was kindled; 2) Moses was displeased.

Moses was being asked to provide a food that he could not provide and they were all complaining about him and his leadership for bringing them out in the wilderness.

In **verses 11-12**, Moses says to God, why in the world have you given me this job? He says to God, I have obeyed you and you put me in charge of these people and I cannot bail them out of this food dilemma.

In **verse 13**, Moses said, where am I supposed to get meat for them? They are literally weeping and crying about this like a bunch of babies. They were not content getting the miracle manna.

In **verses 14-15**, Moses said I cannot carry the burden of this. If this is what I am supposed to do, then kill me at once. Moses was exhausted.

There have been many men who got fed up with the ministry and chucked it because of mumbling, grumbling people. Ministers have developed ulcers and had nervous breakdowns because of the criticism and complaints and the whining. There is such a thing as minister burn out. Moses, himself, was on the verge of that.

GOD'S RESPONSE – God responds to Moses and the complaints. **11:16-35**

There are four different responses to these whining, sniveling, murmuring people:

Response #1 - God tells Moses to select and gather 70 elders. **11:16-17**

God told Moses to select 70 men from the elders of Israel, and He would come down and put on them the same spirit He put on him and they would be able to help share the burden (**11:16-17**). Now **verse 16** says that Moses was to get men he knew. He was to get these guys that he could trust and bring them to the tent of meeting. Moses was to make the selection, not the people.

These 70 men will continue down through history in Israel and, by the time of Jesus Christ, they were given the name the Sanhedrin. It was eventually this group that killed Jesus Christ.

Response #2 - God tells Moses to give a message to the people. **11:18-23**

God tells Moses to inform the people that the Lord will provide meat for them until it comes out of their nostrils (**11:18-20**). Because they had rejected the Lord's provisions and cried about them, God says I will provide meat until they can't eat it anymore.

God says I will give you so much meat for a month that it will be coming out of your nose.

There were over 600,000 soldiers on foot, not including the children and women, so Moses wondered if they should slaughter the animals for the food. God said is My power limited? Do you think I need you to slaughter all your animals to provide food? **Verse 23 asks and answers a great question: Is God's power limited? No!**

Response #3 - Moses responded to God. **11:24-30**

Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord and he gathered 70 elders and stationed them around the tent and God came and imparted to them His Spirit. He did it this one time, but He did not do it again.

Apparently two of the 70 elders had not gathered at the Tabernacle with the other 68 when the Spirit was poured out on them. They received God's Spirit but had not gone out to the tent of Meeting. They were just prophesying among God's people in the power of the Spirit. Their names were Eldad and Medad.

According to **verses 27-28**, a young man went and told Moses about the two prophesying and Joshua, who was a loyal servant to Moses, asked Moses to stop them from prophesying. Joshua was a very bright spot in Moses' life. He was a very loyal man to Moses and God will greatly use him.

Verse 29 says that Moses said are you jealous for my sake? I wish everyone in Israel was interested in accurately communicating the Word of God.

Response #4 - God sends the quail and the plague. **11:31-35**

The Lord sent a wind that brought quail to the wilderness. Harrison thinks the birds may have been migrating in the direction of Africa.

He says there is a quail migration that is still observable today in that the birds leave their winter habitat in Africa and fly north along the coast of the Red Sea into the Sinai Peninsula. God just decided to direct the quail to the location of Israel (*Numbers*, p. 191).

According to **verse 31**, God directed the quail to fall a day's journey on each side, two cubits or 36 inches deep on the surface of the ground. A day's journey is about 12-15 miles.

Now according to **verse 32**, the people spent all day and night gathering the quail. Of those who stockpiled it, they collected about 10 homers which is the equivalent of 60 bushels or 480 gallons of meat. They did not have refrigeration, so they had to cook the meat and eat it.

According to **verse 33**, the people were just devouring the meat. They had meat stuck in their teeth and kept eating. They hadn't enjoyed this in moderation. So God sent a plague and many died. Deuteronomy 9:22 says they "provoked the LORD to wrath." We don't get the numbers of people who died, but Moses named the place "Kibroth-hattaavah" which means "the graves of lust or the graves of craving."

It is interesting that in Psalm 106:14-15 that they craved intensely so God set a wasting disease among them, which included a "leanness to their own souls."

Sometimes when God wants to judge His people, He will let them have their own way and then they are consumed by it. God may permit you to fulfill your lusts and your lusts may end up killing you.

You may be a criticizing, complaining, grumbling, murmuring type of person. You may be a real negative and downer. I promise you this—you will never please God. You will not glorify God and you will not be rewarded by God.

God does not want you that way. He wants you happy and joyful.

Now you may think what in the world does this mumbling and grumbling business have to do with us? Plenty. According to I Corinthians 10:6,10, this evil craving and grumbling can anger God even in the Grace Age to the point that He can and will do destructive, chastising things to His own people.