

Scripture: Numbers 11:1-15

Notes: Today we are beginning a series on attitudes. The major points from this series are taken from Dr. James Macdonald's book "Lord Change My Attitude, (before it's too late)". He defines attitude as a *pattern of thinking about things-a way of approaching life. Attitudes are patterns of thinking formed over a long period of time.* Since they are formed over a long period of time they become habitual meaning we often practice them without knowing it. Today are going to look at complaining. *Complaining is expressing dissatisfaction with a circumstance that is not wrong and about which I am doing nothing to correct.* Another key idea, Complaining is expressing dissatisfaction with circumstances, criticism is expressing dissatisfaction with people.

I. Complaining make's the Lord angry. **Numbers 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.* In response to the complaining the Lord judged the people by consuming them with fire. That seems a little harsh but we should learn from this that God does not want us to have a complaining attitude. Every time we complain God hears it.

II. There are folks who kindle a complaining attitude among the people. **(4)** *And the mixt 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? Dr. McGee describes them well: They are fellow travelers with the world and with the church people. They like to have a church banquet, but they don't want the Bible study. They don't want to be forward in the march, close to the ark of God; they want to stay way in the back because they are not sure but what they may want to turn and go back some time. They are not quite clear about what they believe.* These folks believe in Jesus but stepping out in faith trusting him is difficult. Notice the mixed multiple started the problem and the Israelites followed. We should note here that complaining is expressing dissatisfaction with something that is not wrong. Expressing dissatisfaction with things that are wrong is not complaining.

1. Complaining tells the Lord we are dissatisfied with his provision. **(5-6)** *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: ⁶But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.* God had miraculously provided manna for the people but instead of being grateful they lusted after the food of the world. They were saying to God we deserve better than you are providing. That is just the food. God had delivered them from bondage, protected them from Pharaoh's armies and dried up the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground. It shows the condition of the heart. These people wanted God to serve them. Complaining becomes a way of life. This is not the first time the people complained. **Exodus 14:12**¹² *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.* **Exodus 16:3** ³ *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.* **Exodus 17:3** ³ *And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? Dr. Macdonald writes: Over and over the people complained: saying Why can't we have more of this....and when are we going to get more of that; and why didn't you let us... the complaint chorus never ended.*

2. Complaining is an unnecessary burden to leadership. (11-15) 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? 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? 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. ¹⁴ I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is too heavy for me*. 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. I wondered why God wasn't angry at Moses. Moses was crying out to God for help. Lord what am I supposed to do with all these complainers. It doesn't matter what I do it's never enough. Notice he moves to despair. In essence he is saying I've had enough take me out of this. God does help him by telling him to get help with the people.

3. Complaining leads to a wilderness experience with Jesus. We should not point fingers at the Hebrews, God has blessed us with salvation and an invitation to abide in his love but often we find ourselves asking why can't we have this program at our church or why do we have this program. *Dr. Macdonald* found a website for people to complain. At the site Christians have the option to complain about the cost of Bible College, people cussing, what people wear to church, the youth pastor, if the pastor didn't visit someone who is sick, too much praise music or not enough hymns. Some complain because the pastor quoted someone who used a different Bible translation or some complain because they only will use one translation. If we are constantly focusing on what isn't perfect we miss the joy of Christ love and peace in our hearts. It is hard to have peace when we focus on things that bother us. Our experiences with God are only concepts and not personal realities. That leads to a wilderness experience.

III. Complaining robs us of the blessings of grace during the trials of life. James 1:2-4 ² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Let's face when do we complain the most. Isn't it when God doesn't answer our prayers the way we want. Dr. Macdonald says we complain when our lives are not perfect according to our will. God how could you let my loved one die, why do I have cancer while the person down the street was cured. God why did you allow my parents to be killed in a car accident? We complain about things that happen. **Dr. McGee writes:** The question is often asked whether the Christian is to experience joy in depth in all the trials and tensions of life. Very frankly, the answer is no—that is not what James is saying here. It leads to unreality to say that you are reconciled to the will of God when troubles come to you when you really are not reconciled. People piously say they have accepted God's will yet go around with a long face and weep half the time. My friend, you are not reconciled to the will of God until you can rejoice. I'm glad Dr. McGee wrote that. How can you have joy when someone you love is sick or when someone dies or many of the other trials we face in life. The key word is count which is an attitude. This is where we allow ourselves to fall into the arms of Jesus and allow Him to be the gentle shepherd to our souls; allow Him to mend our broken heart. Our joy is resting in His presence. That is the blessings of grace. A complaining attitude will not change the facts of the sorrow and it will keep your mind trapped in a wilderness experience.