

The Poisonous Grumble

Dear Friend,

Nobody likes a grumbler. This person seems like they are never content, always questioning others and complaining about their lot in life. They walk around spreading dissatisfaction like a dry sponge soaks up water, filling the air around them with poisonous ingratitude. Nobody likes a grumbler because they never appear satisfied. Once they get what they grumbled about, they quickly replace it with something new.

Grumbling is a point of view that is easy to slip into. Our society encourages us to seek instant satisfaction as often as possible. We want fast cars, fancy clothes, smart technology and tasty food yesterday and if we don't get it, we grumble. What does the Bible have to say about grumbling? What happened when the Israelites grumbled? How should Christians avoid grumbling and set their eyes on Jesus? Today we are going to read God's word and answer these important questions.

The Israelites were set apart by God to be His people. God performed amazing, awesome miracles to provide for His people and prove to the world that they were special. He sent Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt after ruining the country with 10 awful plagues.

Even after all of these wonders, it did not take long for the Israelites to grumble against the Lord when they faced trials in the wilderness. Right after God parted the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh and his army, He led the Israelites into the wilderness. Because of the lack of resources, the Israelites grumbled against Moses. Exodus 16:1-2 says, **“The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.”**

The Israelites failed to trust God to provide for their needs. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron and caused division among the whole community. God responds by giving them Manna, the bread of heaven. He miraculously provides food for the whole community. This heavenly food for angels doesn't satisfy the Israelites for long.

In the very next chapter, the Israelites grumble against the Lord again. Exodus 17:1-3 says, **“The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?’ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’**”

Water is incredibly important for survival. We can almost sympathize with the Israelites and their complaint. With over 600,000 members in the community, they would need A LOT of water to survive. Don't forget that they had just seen God provide food for their huge community! The Israelites have a deep heart problem and that's why they continue to grumble against the Lord. They don't really trust God to provide for their needs, so the instant things are tough, they grumble against their leaders. When the Israelites grumble against Moses, they are really putting God to the test.

In World War II, men were engaged in something called “trench warfare.” Enemies on both sides would fight tooth and nail for just a few hundred feet of land. They would dig trenches and tunnels to hide from the shrapnel, bombs and gunfire from the opposite side. Soldiers would live in these trenches for months, firing back and forth praying for an end to their nightmare. Trench warfare was a brutal, slow and dangerous method of fighting.

Grumbling is a lot like spiritual trench warfare. When we grumble, we dig a trench for ourselves by choosing to look at our situation with discontent and despair. The more grumbling becomes our only point of view, the deeper we dig the trench, making it harder for us to see the light. Grumbling does this by giving us the false sense that if our discontent is not voiced by grumbling, we won't get our satisfaction. We begin to trust our trench, afraid to stick our heads out to face the hardship we are in with courage and prayer. The Israelites had every reason to trust God to provide for their needs. They had seen Him protect them so many times before. Instead of trusting His leadership, they grumbled, digging themselves a deep trench of discontent and despair.

Grumbling is a poison that slowly kills the will to trust others. **There are five main reasons why we grumble:**

- **The first reason we grumble is because we lack faith.** We don't see how God can provide our needs, so we grumble against our leaders, expecting them to fix our problems.
- **The second reason is laziness.** We see a problem but are too lazy to try to do something about it ourselves.
- **The third reason is we fail to see the whole picture.** Most of the time we cannot look at a situation from every angle. This causes us to assume that grumbling is the only way the problem will get fixed.
- **The fourth reason we grumble is impatience.** We do not want to wait for God to provide and the problem isn't getting fixed when we want it to. Grumbling never speeds up resolution of the problem.
- **The fifth and final reason we grumble is the feeling of power it gives.** A grumbler feels important and powerful by dividing and pulling down others around them. Accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is the only antidote to the poisonous grumble.

Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for the sins of the world, so that anyone who believes in him can have eternal life! The gospel leaves no room in our hearts to grumble. Instead, it sets fire to our souls and kills off any discontent and despair left inside. When Jesus ministered to the Israelites, proclaiming the message about himself, he received a lot of pushback.

In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was very popular because of the miracles he performed all over the countryside. Later, as his ministry drew to a close, he lost many disciples because of how he spoke about himself. In the gospel of John, we learn more about why they left. **“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”** (John 6:35). Jesus is making a direct link between himself and the manna and water the Israelites received in the wilderness.

He is radically declaring that he alone can provide eternal life. He continues to say, **“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”** **At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, ‘I am the**

bread that came down from heaven.’ They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’? “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day”** (John 6:40-44). The audience knew Jesus’ family personally. They struggled to accept what Jesus said of himself and grumbled against him. They could not believe he was the Son of God, even though they had seen him perform miracles many times.

Jesus makes the radical claim that he is only way to eternal life. He is going to resurrect the faithful and bring them into eternal life. Even now, in a world of self-reliance and individualism, we can struggle to accept Jesus’ claim. John 6:60 continues the dialogue, **“On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.’ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”**

They could not accept the divinity of Jesus. They could not accept the claims Jesus made about how to enter heaven. His disciples grumbled against him because they lacked faith in him. They wanted Jesus to tell them how they could make THEMSELVES righteous. Jesus says **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”** The false disciples do not want to follow a man who claims to provide all. They would much rather grumble and work out resolutions to their earthly problems themselves. The disciples turn away, losing their opportunity to the greatest provision of life there is. If we do not watch our own hearts, we can make the same mistake.

Who do you put your hope in? Is it the political leaders of the time? Maybe you put all of your hope in your pastor, or maybe you only trust yourself. Grumbling comes from a place of discontent, despair, resentment, and lack of faith. It slowly poisons your outlook on life, making you complain to everyone around you. The gospel leaves no room for grumbling. It is the only antidote to the poisonous grumble. Christians have every reason to be courageous, content, and happy, even in the middle of intense hardship.

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi saying, **“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’”** **Philippians 2:14-15** The world around you is going to grumble and argue. It has no other method or response to address the brokenness and sin.

As Christians, we can witness to the world by responding to hardships in a different way. When we experience different kinds of trials, and we respond with contentment, peace and, yes, even joy, we act as lights to this dark world. We become blameless and pure, by living out the gospel love we receive from Christ Jesus. You and I do not have to grumble any longer. We have every reason to treat that poison with the antidote of Jesus Christ. God bless you.

Yours In Christ,



Chris Aaron Rice