

4. God's call and people's complaints

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It is so easy to do. It infects others very easily. It spreads extremely fast. It is hard to stop. I am talking about people's complaining. The most current example is "Occupy" protests that happen across America.

The "Occupy" movement is an ongoing series of incohesive international protests which began in New York City on September 17, 2011 with Occupy Wall Street and are primarily directed against social and economic inequality. By October 9 protests had taken place or were ongoing in over 95 cities across 82 countries and over 600 communities in the U.S.

Initiated by the Canadian activist group Adbusters which is for anti-capitalism, the Occupy Wall Street protests are partly inspired by the Arab uprising movement, especially Cairo's Tahrir Square protests.

The majority of these "Occupy" protesters don't have jobs, not because they couldn't find jobs, they'd rather choose not to have jobs, but live on government hand-outs. They don't want to work, but they want the government to take money from wealthy and hard working people so that they can continue in their habitual-no-job-life. It is a Socialism protest that President Obama and Democrat Party endorse. Their slogan speaks itself – "We already know that we own everything. The task is to exclude the intrusions of capital and power."

During the time of the Exodus of the Israelites, there were a group of people who started complaining and they managed to have the entire 2.5 million of the Israelites to join them against God and His servant Moses. From chapter 10 to the end of the Book, there are a series of complaints which made their journey in the wilderness much longer.

A. TWO SILVER TRUMPETS

Numbers 10:1-10 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. 3 When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 4 But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. 5 When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. 6 When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys. 7 And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance. 8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations. 9 When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. 10 Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God."

The two silver trumpets were used not to accompany worship, but to communicate orders quickly to the entire Israel camp. In other words, the leaders and people had to keep their eyes and ears open for the sound of the trumpets all the time.

It is not the same one as shofar which is made out of a ram's horn and has not so clear pitches like a silver trumpet, used for Jewish religious purposes. Shofar-blowing is incorporated in synagogue services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. You can say, "Shofar, sho good."

The trumpets were used either to call the leaders only, or the entire congregation, or to give the signal to move out the place and advance, to sound an alarm that commanded soldiers to prepare for battle, and to be used in the time of special festivals that were part of their religious calendar.

Like the OT people of God, Christians today are awaiting "the sound of the trumpet of God" that signals our gathering together to Jesus as well as His declaration of war against a wicked world ready for judgment with the seven year Great Tribulation. Until that time, we remain as pilgrim people in this wilderness world, following His directions and serving Him faithfully.

B. A QUICK RESPONSE FIRE

Numbers 11:1-3 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. 2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched. 3 So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.

Aren't we glad that the Lord doesn't practice this kind of quick response fire judgment against people's complaining now? If He did, there would be heaps of ashes all over the world, especially in America's churches.

History repeats itself. Three days after the great praise that was given to the Lord right after they crossed the Red Sea, the Jews complained against Moses and God because they didn't have water to drink. Now three days after leaving Sinai, they complained again.

It takes faith to be able to accept God's providential leading. Our gracious and generous God does not lead us to the place where He would leave us alone without Himself and His provision. During His leading we face the situations that threaten to choke out our lives or destroy our strength, but in reality those situations are there as character building custom-made exercises from the Lord just for us. In many cases, we flunk because we lack faith in Him like these Jews.

C. THE MIXED MULTITUDE

Numbers 11:4-9 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? 5 We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6 but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" 7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. 8 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. 9 And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

God supernaturally provided for the children of Israel on a daily basis with something from heaven called manna. As they journeyed through the wilderness, the manna would be waiting for them every morning when they would come out of their tents. All they had to do was pick it up and eat it.

But after awhile, they got tired of manna. So they started to do what they do best – complaining – like us.

Who was this ‘mixed multitude?’ They could be mixed breeds from Hebrew and other nation parents. Some servants or slaves of Egyptians who thought that it would be safer to go with the Israelites than staying in Egypt with their masters.

Whatever their origin was, this mixed multitude caused Moses and the people of Israel a great deal of trouble. A similar group is still creating problems for God’s servants and people today. The devil is an imitator and an infiltrator which explains why apostle Paul warned the church about false brethren, false ministers with a false gospel. They may act and sound like God’s people, but not in reality.

How tragic it is when professed believers in churches crave worldly substitutes instead of desiring the heavenly manna, the Word of God! In trying to attract and please the mixed multitude, churches have turned their sanctuaries into theaters; their God-pleasing-ministries to men-pleasing ones; worship has become entertainment and concerts.

Philippians 3:18-19 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

Apostle Paul also had to deal with this crowd in his day. It is nothing new.

Listen, it is a very serious thing to complain against the Lord and ask for substitutes that satisfy our fleshly carnal desires. The Israelites’ murmuring cost them their lives and this incident was used by Paul to warn us.

1 Corinthians 10:10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing

The Israelites had a serious case of SMS – Selective Memory Syndrome. Somehow they only remembered the foods they ate, not the whip lashes on their back from their slave taskmasters. The funny thing is that when the devil reminds us of our past, we often look at it through rose colored glasses.

D. DEPRESSED AND BITTER MOSES

Numbers 11:10-15 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!”

In the last portion of chapter 10, Moses was singing triumphantly about the Lord, but now he was lamenting bitterly and totally depressed with the situation he was in.

Few things discourage God's servants more than people criticizing them unjustly and complaining about the blessings the Lord has given. This is the first of two occasions when the attitude of the people caused Moses to sin. Knowing as we do how ungrateful and hardhearted the people of Israel were, we wonder that Moses wasn't discouraged more often!

It's sad to see a great man of God ask God to take his life because he feels that his divine calling is a heavy burden by which God has afflicted him and made him wretched.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Moses lost his perspective and got his eyes off the Lord and on himself in the midst of the difficult experiences in his life. But at least Moses took his burden to the Lord and accepted God's counsel.

1 Peter 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

E. NOT INDISPENSABLE

Numbers 11:26-30 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, both he and the elders of Israel.

I love it that Moses is more broad-shouldered than his young men. He was secure in the Lord His God without a hint of jealousy. Talk about unselfishness. There wasn't an ounce of jealousy or insecurity in that man of God.

I've seen one too many men of God who didn't handle himself like Moses. If a new pastor comes into their cities or towns, some pastors act like animals who fight for their territories. For some goofy reason, they think that they are indispensable and they are the only ones whom God can use in that area. I've seen these many times and even experienced it.

You're not indispensable. I'm not indispensable. Nobody is indispensable, except the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the head. He's the Preeminent One. He's the Founder.

When He moves one out and brings in another or demotes one and sets up another, He calls the shots. That is His sovereign right. The problem arises when we get to thinking we're sovereign. If you are involved in ministries for the Lord, He put you where He wanted you. He gave you that job, not because you are so special. He can take it away just as fast as He gave it.

Job 1:21b The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.

F. YOU WANT IT, YOU GOT IT

Numbers 11:31-35 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. 32 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. 33 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. 34 So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. 35 From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.

My wife's favorite Country Music singer Garth Brook once said, "Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." Though I don't agree with many of his song lyrics, but I agree with him on this.

I remember my own stupidity for this kind of thing. I begged and begged to the Lord for what I wanted. He let me have it. Boy, was I ever miserable and have learned a valuable lesson from it. When the Lord says, "No," it is the best thing for us to walk away. Going against God's will is NOT a pretty sight.

Romans 1:24-26 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) It takes faith to be able to accept God's providential leading.
- 2) An unthankful heart makes it easier for people to commit all kinds of sins.
- 3) If you want to stop complaining, start praising and worshiping the Lord.
- 4) Faithfully do your work, lie low, and exalt Christ.
- 5) When the Lord says, "No," it is the best thing for us to walk away.