

Lesson Twenty-Four: *A Generation's Failure-Discontentment*
Numbers 11:1-25, 31-34

Themes:

Numbers: Despite Israel's rebellion, God raises up a new generation to accomplish His ordained purposes.

Numbers 10:11-25:18: When God's people disobey, they forfeit His blessings and are subject to His wrath.

I. **A Discontented People**

a. *Now the people became like those who complain of adversity...*

b. (1-3) The trials of life:

i. Israel's sin: unbelief, manifested by discontentment, grumbling and complaining

1. The rejection of Yahweh's provision

ii. The heinousness of Israel's sin:

1. Israel's past: bondage in Egypt

2. Israel's present:

a. A covenant nation (Ex 19:5)

b. A holy nation (Ex 19:6; Lev 11:44)

3. Israel's understanding:

a. The expectation of adversity (Ex 20:20a)

b. The fruit of adversity (Ex 20:20b; James 1:2-4)

4. Israel's persistence: an ongoing complaint

a. Exodus 15:22-24; 16:2; 17:3; Num 14:2; 16:3; 20:5

5. Israel's God:

a. His provision of guidance and leadership (9:15-10:35)

i. *Those who are of a discontented spirit will always find something to quarrel or fret about, though the circumstances of their outward condition be ever so favourable* (Matthew Henry).

b. His knowledge of the heart

i. *...in the ears of Yahweh*

ii. *Living coram Deo*

iii. A Christian complaint:

1. Is it right for a Christian to offer a complaint to the Lord?

a. Psalm 142:1-2

b. The heart of the issue: a just complaint, humility, trust

2. When is it a sin to complain to the Lord?

a. The heart of the issue: without cause, pride, unbelief

b. *Though God graciously gives us leave to complain to him when there is cause, yet he is justly provoked, and takes it very ill, if we complain of him when there is no cause* (Matthew Henry).

3. The Lord is provoked by Israel's unbelief.

iv. God's response:

1. Wrath: *the fire of the LORD* (cleansing)

2. Mercy:

a. (1) *Outskirts*: a tempered punishment (cf. Lev 10:1-2)

b. (2) *Died out*: God responds to Moses' intercession

c. (3) *Taberah*: a memorial

3. A warning to Israel: Learn from this! (I Cor 10:10)

- c. *The sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"*
- d. (4-10) Perceived deficiencies:
 - i. Israel's sin: a continued failure to trust the Lord's provision manifested by lust and greed
 - ii. The characteristics of Israel's sin:
 - 1. (4) Appetite: the insatiable nature of sin
 - a. ...*greedy desires*
 - b. A sinful appetite is never satisfied (Eph 4:19).
 - 2. (4) Origin: bad example
 - a. The impact of a few (Matt 16:6; I Cor 5:6)
 - 3. (4, 10) Spread: the contagious nature of sin
 - a. Sin must be destroyed in its infancy.
 - 4. (4-6) Distortion: the affect of sin on perception
 - a. (4) God's provision is questioned
 - b. (5) Hardship is forgotten
 - c. (5) We long for what we should not have (Luke 15:16)
 - d. (6) Blessings go unnoticed
 - e. (6) The eternal is exchanged for the temporal
- e. (18-20, 31-34) God's response:
 - 1. (10) Anger: *the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly* (cf. v.1)
 - 2. (18-20) Abundance:
 - a. (19-20) The "blessing" of plenty
 - b. (20) Be careful what you ask for: *loathsome to you*
 - 3. (33) Plague: a just punishment
 - 4. (34) Mercy: a memorial
 - a. *Kibroth-hattaavah*: the graves of craving
 - ii. The lesson:
 - 1. The need to view things in light of God's truth
 - 2. The need to learn from past mistakes
 - 3. The need to trust the provision of the Lord

II. **A Discontented Leader**

- a. *So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you been so hard on your servant?"*
- b. (11-15, 21-22) A vulnerable leader:
 - i. Moses' sin: unbelief, manifested by discontentment and complaint
 - ii. The characteristics of Moses' sin:
 - 1. (11) Forgetting the privilege: the blessing of service
 - 2. (11) Forgetting the cost: the price of leadership
 - a. Exodus 3:11; 4:10, 13; 5:22-23; 6:12, 30
 - b. Luke 9:23
 - 3. (11) Forgetting the past: the example of those who preceded him
 - 4. (11-12, 21-22) Exaggeration: a distortion of the truth
 - a. (11) An assumption of disfavor
 - b. (12, 21-22) An assumption of responsibility
 - 5. (14) Forgetting the resource: God's presence
 - 6. (15) Assuming the worst: despair
- c. (16-17, 23-25) The Lord's response:
 - i. (16) The Lord is listening
 - ii. (17) The Lord is gracious
 - iii. (23a) The Lord is able
 - iv. (23b) The Lord is reliable
- d. The lesson: Israel and her leaders must rely upon the Lord (Prov 3:5-6).