

SCRIPTURE READING: Nu 21:4-9.

ANALYSIS & APPLICATIONS OF THE TEXT:

1. We must quit complaining.

- A. The children of Israel forgot that it was not about them (Nu 21:4), complained (Nu 21:5), ignored their blessings (Nu 21:5; Ps 78:11-17), exaggerated their problems (Nu 21:5), and thought foolishly about God (Nu 21:5; Ps 78:19-20).
- B. And what makes this even worse, they constantly did these things—this was by no means their first rodeo.
- 1) In Ex 15:24, just three days from the Red Sea, we read of the children of Israel complaining because the waters at Marah were bitter. As a result, God made the waters sweet and led them to Elim where there were twelve springs of water.
 - 2) In Ex 16:2, on just the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt, we read of the children of Israel complaining because they had no meat or bread. As a result, God gave them quail and manna.
 - 3) In Ex 17:3, we read of the children of Israel complaining at Rephidim because they were thirsty for water. As a result, God brought water out of a rock for the people to drink.
 - 4) In Nu 11:1, we read of the children of Israel complaining. As a result, God became angry and consumed some of them by fire.
 - 5) In Nu 14:2, we read of the children of Israel complaining because they believed the ten faithless spies who told them they could not conquer the promised land. As a result, God condemned everyone except Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, who were 20 years old and above to die in the wilderness. The ten faithless spies who made all the congregation complain died by a plague before the Lord.
 - 6) In Nu 16:11, we read of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and 250 other leaders complaining against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. As a result, God opened up the ground and killed Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their households, and their servants. He then killed the 250 other leaders with fire from heaven.
 - 7) On the very next day, in Nu 16:41, we read of the children of Israel complaining against Moses and Aaron for killing Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their households, their servants and the 250 other leaders who complained with them. As a result, God killed 14,700 of them by a plague.
 - 8) In Nu 20:2, we read of the children of Israel complaining because they did not have any water. Moses got so angry that instead of speaking to a rock that it might bring forth water as God commanded he struck a rock and his disobedience cost him and Aaron the privilege of leading the children of Israel into the promised land.
- C. We must not be like the children of Israel.
- 1) We must not be grumbling (NASB, ESV), complaining (NKJV), or murmuring (KJV, ASV). Php 2:14A.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit used the specific incident we are studying this morning to remind of this truth. 1 Co 10:1-4, 5, 6, 9-10, 11, 12, 13.

2. What we must do to finally quit complaining.

- A. The children of Israel did not remain faithful to God. They quickly fell back into their pattern of dissatisfaction and disobedience and 2 Ki 18:1-4 tells us why.
- B. If we do the same thing, we will do it for the same reason. 1 Co 10:14.
- C. Why is idolatry a root of all complaining?
- 1) Co 3:5 is a regression analysis of sin. Sexual immorality (fornication)—first mistake? No, before that impurity (uncleanness)—first mistake? No, before that passion (vs. self-control)—first mistake? No, before that evil desire—first mistake? No, before that greed (covetousness).
 - 2) The first step off the highway of holiness is not desiring evil, but being discontented with good, i.e. greed or covetousness. This makes perfect sense. If we are content with good we will not desire evil. We only desire evil when we first choose to be dissatisfied with good.

- 3) We complain because we are discontented with what God provides, i.e. because of greed or covetousness. Why is this idolatry? An idol is anything that dispossess God's place in our hearts. If we are discontented with what God provides, then whatever we prefer is our idol and that is the source of all our problems. 2 Ti 3:1-2, 5.
- D. To be content with what God provides we must choose to believe that God's way is always the best way and allow this choice to dictate everything we do in life. Ec 3:1-8, 10-11A, 14A.
- E. If we truly do this (Ps 78:34-37), instead of complaining about what God has not done, we will praise Him for what He has done and is doing and will be excitedly anticipating all the glorious things He will do next.
- F. If the children of Israel had done this before they left Egypt, imagine how happy they would have been knowing that God knew and wanted what was best for them and watching Him provide it in the most improbable circumstances over and over again.

3. What we must do to be saved from our complaining.

A. The children of Israel complained against God.

- 1) What did they deserve? Death. Nu 21:6.
- 2) Why did they have to rely on God to save them from snake bite? They could not save themselves.
- 3) Was God giving them a way to earn their salvation? No. No amount of good works can atone for even a single sin.
- 4) Why did God give them a means of salvation? He is compassionate and gracious.
- 5) Did they have to do anything to be saved? They had to look at the bronze serpent. Nu 21:8.
- 6) Why did God require them to look at the bronze serpent? Not because it did anything for Him, but because for some unstated reasons it was best for them. He had options. He could have removed the snakes as they requested. He could have healed them the moment they were bit. But He did not do these things because for they were not what was best for them. We know this because God is love and love always does what is best.
- 7) Did it matter why God required them to look at the bronze serpent? In other words, could they have decided to do anything else and still be saved? No.
- 8) Were the Israel trying to earn their salvation by looking at the bronze serpent? No. If they had, they would not have been seeking God's forgiveness of their sins.
- 9) Were the children of Israel saved because they believed in God's offer of salvation and did this type of faith require them to not only trust God but also obey Him? Yes. Nu 21:9.

B. We have complained against God. John 3:14-16.

- 1) What do we deserve? Death.
- 2) Why do we have to rely on God to save us from the consequences of our sins? We cannot do it.
- 3) Did God give us a way to earn our salvation? No. No amount of good works can atone for a single sin.
- 4) Why did God give us a means of salvation? He is compassionate and gracious.
- 5) Do we have to do anything to be saved? We have to obey God's first and second laws of pardon.
- 6) Why does God require us to obey God's first and second laws of pardon? Not because it does anything for him, but because it is best for us. Otherwise, He would not require it.
- 7) Does it matter why God requires us to obey God's first and second laws of pardon? In other words, can we decide to do anything else and still be saved? No.
- 8) Are we trying to earn our salvation by obeying God's first and second laws of pardon? No. If we were trying to work off the debt of our sins, we would not be seeking God's forgiveness of our sins.
- 9) Are we saved because we believe in God's offer of salvation and does this type of faith require us to not only trust God but also obey Him? Yes.