

Don't Complain

We are continuing in 1 Corinthians 10. The apostle Paul is giving admonition from events that happened to ancient Israel.

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

What event is Paul referring to? There are two events in the Old Testament where grumbling led to the death penalty. One of them is the 12 spies. That is recorded in Numbers 13 and 14. The other event is in the 16th chapter of the same book. Four people named Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On led in a rebellion about the priesthood. Today we will look at the first of these events.

Numbers 13:1-3 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." ³ So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who *were* heads of the children of Israel.

Numbers 13:21-33 of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. ²² And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, *were* there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. *They also brought* some of the pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. ²⁵ ¶ And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. ²⁶ Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. ²⁸ "Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ "The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan." ³⁰ ¶ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." ³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." ³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. ³³ "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came

from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

The people had witnessed God drowning the largest army in the region, the Egyptian army, in the Red Sea. But now most of the spies are afraid of the people living in the promised land. Why? Because they did not trust God, that's why. Was the promised land beautiful? It was beautiful. The Hebrew expression, "flowing with milk and honey" means that it was a productive land. One cluster of grapes with its branch took two men to carry it. One of the 12 spies was Caleb and he gave a positive report. But his testimony was not sufficient to influence the people.

What was the influence of the bad report of the others?

Numbers 14:1-3 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. ² And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! ³ "Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

Our words are powerful for good or for evil. Our words, our attitude, even our body language influences others in either a positive or negative way. In this story, the words of a handful of people guided all the people to complain.

What is your influence on others? In general are you a positive or negative person? Do people in your presence receive an optimistic or pessimistic atmosphere? Does the influence you leave lead people to God or away from God?

If you are a negative, pessimistic person, what changes are necessary in your life? How can you make those changes?

Numbers 14:4-12 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." ⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. ⁶ But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were* among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; ⁷ and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. ⁸ "If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' ⁹ "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them." ¹⁰ ¶ And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. ¹¹ Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? ¹² "I will strike

them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

If Moses had been selfish, he could have said, "Lord you are right! Make me a great nation! Save me from this grumbling people!"

But what did Moses do?

Numbers 14:13-19 And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, ¹⁴ "and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, *are* among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ "Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, ¹⁶ 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' ¹⁷ "And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, ¹⁸ 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.' ¹⁹ "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

Moses intercedes for the ones complaining about him. Is Moses more merciful than God? No. God was giving an opportunity to show his motivations and character.

Numbers 14:20-38 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; ²¹ "but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD -- ²² "because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, ²³ "they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. ²⁴ "But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. ²⁵ "Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea." ²⁶ ¶ And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²⁷ "How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. ²⁸ "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: ²⁹ 'The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. ³⁰ 'Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land

which I swore I would make you dwell in. ³¹ 'But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. ³² 'But *as for* you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ 'And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. ³⁴ 'According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. ³⁵ 'I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.' " ³⁶ Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, ³⁷ those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. ³⁸ But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

Our God is a merciful God. But unbelief leads to rebellion. This kind of attitude can never enter heaven. This kind of attitude would ruin the atmosphere of heaven. Will you enter heaven while complaining? Think again!

Numbers 14:39-45 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. ⁴⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!" ⁴¹ And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. ⁴² "Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD *is* not among you. ⁴³ "For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." ⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

The Lord said, "Enter" and they didn't go. The Lord said "Don't enter" and they try to enter. Pitiful! Look at these important words in verse 44: they presumed. That's the sum of the matter. They didn't trust the Lord, they trusted themselves.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.