

“When God Turns Our Murmurings into Mournings”

Numbers 14:26-39

Introduction: Noah Webster defined murmur as, “A low sound continued or continually repeated, as that of a stream running in a stony channel, or that of flame. A complaint half suppressed, or uttered in a low, muttering voice.” Basically, murmuring is discontented people grumbling out words in private or public nonstop. Nothing can grieve the Spirit of God any quicker than a murmuring crowd. Murmuring destroys families, friends, churches, and nations. Everyone is capable of committing this sin and therefore it needs to be preached against. Let us take a look at murmuring in the Scriptures.

1. The Individuals that Murmured (Ten Categories of Individuals)
 - a. The Children of Israel—Against the Lord, Moses, and Aaron Exodus 15:24, 16:2, 16:7-9, 16:12, 17:3, Numbers 14:2, 14:27, 14:29, 14:36, 16:11, 16:41, 17:5, 17:10, Deuteronomy 1:27, Joshua 9:18, Psalm 106:25, Isaiah 29:24, 1 Corinthians 10:10
 - b. The Labourers in the Vineyard—Against the Goodman of the House Matthew 20:11
 - c. The Apostles—Against A Woman Having an Alabaster Box of Ointment Mark 14:5
 - d. The Scribes and Pharisees—Against the Disciples and Jesus Luke 5:30, 15:2
 - e. The Multitude—Against Jesus Luke 19:7
 - f. The Jews—Against Jesus John 6:41
 - g. The Disciples—Against Jesus John 6:61
 - h. The People—Against Jesus John 7:12, 7:32
 - i. The Grecians—Against the Hebrews Acts 6:1
 - j. Certain Men Crept in Unawares—Against (Unknown) Jude 1:16
2. The Instructions about Murmuring
 - a. John 6:43- “*Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.*”
 - b. 1 Corinthians 10:10- “*Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*”
 - c. Philippians 2:14- “*Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*”
 - d. Speech is one of the greatest powers that the Lord has given us. We can, with speech, pray, preach, and praise the Lord. Speech can also be one of the most destructive powers. Therefore, we must get control over the tongue!
 - e. “For every word in Hitler’s book, *Mein Kampf*, 125 lives were lost in World War II. Our own words may not have caused wars or wrecked cities, but they can break hearts and ruin reputations.” (Wiersbe)
 - f. What do we do with our tongues? Do we gossip, criticize, run people down, complain, murmur, grumble, slander, exaggerate, cuss, say hurtful things, boast, brag, argue, speak rebelliously, or flirt?
 - g. A slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never get over. (Benjamin Franklin)
 - h. Only a baby is admired for sticking its foot in its mouth.
 - i. Why is a dog man’s best friend? He wags his tail instead of his tongue.
 - j. Is our tongue criticizing and complaining, contaminating and corrupting?
 - k. When Jesus has control of our heart, He has control over our mouth.

3. The Influences of Murmuring Numbers 14:36- *“And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,”*
4. The Insight about Murmuring—The Lord Hears Every Word
 - a. Exodus 16:7- *“...for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD...”*
 - b. Exodus 16:8- *“...for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him...”*
 - c. Exodus 16:9- *“...for he hath heard your murmurings.”*
 - d. Exodus 16:12- *“I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel...”*
 - e. Numbers 14:27- *“...I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.”*
 - f. Matthew 12:36- *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”*
 - (1) According to Strong’s, “idle” means, “inactive, unemployed, lazy, useless”.
 - (2) The word “idle” means “words that accomplish nothing”. If God is going to judge our small talk, how much more will He judge our deliberate words? (Warren Wiersbe)
 - (3) Our thoughts are expressed in our words. (John Phillips)
 - g. Luke 12:3- *“Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”*
 - (1) The homes of that day had flat rooftops, and it was easy for the listeners to visualize the horror of a householder if some of the secrets of the home were suddenly shouted from the roof. The implications were that what men did secretly in hypocrisy, God would proclaim publicly. (Ivor Powell)
 - (2) I have heard of one who said that he would like to have a window in his heart, so that everybody might see what was going on. I think that, if I had such a window in my heart, I should like to have shutters to it. (C.H. Spurgeon)
 - (3) If thou wouldst be ashamed to hear again what thou was about to say, do not say it. (C.H. Spurgeon)
 - (4) Numbers 32:23- *“...and be sure your sin will find you out.”*

Body: Our attention is now drawn to Numbers chapter fourteen. The LORD instructs Moses to send out men to search out the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1-2). Twelve men are selected (13:4-16) and sent into Canaan to give a report about the strength of the citizens and supply of the crops (13:17-25). After forty days the men returned with good reports about the land but evil reports about the people of the land (13:26-29). This stirred up the congregation of Israel, but Caleb tried to still the people (13:30). No matter how much Caleb tried, the Israelites were discontented. This led to them murmuring against Moses and Aaron. Further, there was an uprising that was intended to overthrow the leadership of Moses (14:1-5). Now, let us notice the evil of murmuring as seen in Numbers chapter fourteen.

I. The Cries of Israel Numbers 14:1-3

A. As Seen in their Murmuring

1. Exodus 15:24- *“And the people **murmured** against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?”*

2. Exodus 16:2- *“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel **murmured** against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:”*
 3. Exodus 17:3- *“And the people thirsted there for water; and the people **murmured** against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?”*
 4. Numbers 14:2- *“And all the children of Israel **murmured** against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!”*
 5. Numbers 16:11- *“For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye **murmur** against him?”*
 6. Numbers 16:41- *“But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel **murmured** against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.”*
 7. Numbers 17:5- *“And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the **murmurings** of the children of Israel, whereby they **murmur** against you.”*
 8. Deuteronomy 1:27- *“And ye **murmured** in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.”*
 9. Joshua 9:18- *“And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation **murmured** against the princes.”*
 10. Psalms 106:25- *“But **murmured** in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.”*
 11. Isaiah 29:24- *“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”*
 12. 1 Corinthians 10:10- *“Neither **murmur** ye, as some of them also **murmured**, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”*
- B. As Seen in their Complaining
1. Murmuring and Complaining Go Together Jude 1:16- *“These are **murmurers**, **complainers**, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.”*
 - a. Jude 1:4- *“For there are certain men crept in unawares...”*
 - b. Jude 1:8- *“...**these** filthy dreamers...”*
 - c. Jude 1:10- *“...**these** speak evil...”*
 - d. Jude 1:12- *“**These** are spots...”*
 - e. Jude 1:14- *“And Enoch...prophesied of **these**...”*
 - f. Jude 1:16- *“**These** are murmurers, complainers...”*
 - g. Jude 1:19- *“**These** be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”*
 2. Numbers 11:1- *“And when the people **complained**, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.”*
- C. As Seen in their Speaking

1. Numbers 12:1- *“And Miriam and Aaron **spake against** Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.”*
2. Numbers 12:8- *“With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to **spake against** my servant Moses?”*
3. Numbers 21:5- *“And the people **spake against** God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”*
4. Numbers 21:7- *“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have **spoken against** the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.”*
5. Psalm 78:19- *“Yea, they **spake against** God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”*

II. The Conspiracy of Israel Numbers 14:4

A. Against Moses and Aaron Numbers 14:4-5

1. Exodus 7:1- *“And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.”*
2. Numbers 14:2- *“And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron...”*
3. Psalm 105:15- *“Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”*

B. Against Joshua and Caleb Numbers 14:6-10 (v. 10)

III. The Condemnation of Israel Numbers 14:11-39

A. God Planned to Disinherit Them Numbers 14:11-19

1. The Intention of God Numbers 14:11-12
 - a. Israel had Murmured against the Man of God Numbers 14:2
 - b. Israel had Murmured against the Miracles of God Numbers 14:11
2. The Intercession of Moses Numbers 14:13-19

B. God Purposed to Destroy Them Numbers 14:20-39

1. Notice what the children of Israel were doing:
 - a. They were Doubting God’s Charge Numbers 13:1-25
 - b. They were Discouraging God’s Children Numbers 13:26-33
 - c. They were Defying God’s Chosen Numbers 14:1-10
 - d. They were Disrespecting God’s Command Numbers 14:39-45
 - e. They were Deserving of God’s Condemnation Numbers 14:20-38
2. The judgment of God was threefold in this instance:
 - a. The whole number of Israel (1:46 – 603,550) would die in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. Numbers 14:26-32
 - b. The children of Israel would wonder around in the wilderness for forty years, one year for each day the spies were in the land. Numbers 14:33-35
 - c. The ten spies would die in the plague. Numbers 14:36-38
3. The Jews had lamented that they wanted to die in the wilderness (Numbers 14:2), and they had complained that their children would die in Canaan (Numbers 14:3); but God declared that their children would live in Canaan (Numbers 14:31)and

the adults would die in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29, 32, 35)! Out of their own mouths, God passed judgment. (Warren Wiersbe)

4. Be careful what you say to God when you complain, because He may take you up on it! After all, God's greatest judgment is to let people have their own way. (Warren Wiersbe)
5. Moses led the world's longest funeral march, and Caleb and Joshua watched their generation die. Numbers 14:29, 32, 35 (Warren Wiersbe)
6. God turned the murmurings of Israel (Numbers 14:2, 27) into mourning (Numbers 14:39). If God will chastise the apple of His eye in this manner because of their murmuring, how will He react when you and I murmur?

Conclusion: Is there murmuring that is taking place in the camp? Are you privately murmuring in your "tents" (Psalm 106:25- "*But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.*"). We need to remember that the Lord hears every complaint that we make (Exodus 16:7- "*...for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD...*"). Also, we need to realize that murmuring is evil (Numbers 14:27- "*How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?...*"). May we confess our sin of murmuring and allow God to do a work in our heart.