

October 18, 2009

GRUMBLERS DON'T LIKE NOBODY (by Dr. Stan Reeder)

Numbers 11:4-15; 12:1-15; 13:26-14:4

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we dealt with the problem of grumbling in Exodus 16. The people had no food and so the Lord provided them with the bread of heaven . . . manna. After a short while they began to grumble again. Look at Numbers 11 verses 4-6:

The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost – also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

You have heard of the garlic diet haven't you. It is a miracle diet; you can eat whatever you want, you don't have to exercise, you just let the garlic do the work for you. You wedge up between your teeth every day...you don't actually lose weight, but your friends will think you look thinner from a distance.

Last week we took a good look at the grumblers. Today, I want us to look at the flip side of grumbling; not the grumblers but how to handle grumbling.

Raise your hand if you've been exposed to grumblers. Raise your hand if that grumbler is sitting beside you this morning. You might be exposed to continual grumbling in the work place. You might have a neighbor who grumbles about everything. You might have a grumbling friend. You might live with a grumbler! Every one of us here today has had to deal with grumblers.

I love the name used to describe those who initiate grumbling: THE RABBLE.

Definition of the rabble :

A tumultuous, heterogeneous, confused, contemptuous group (Websters).

Some general **observations** from the passages we are going to look at briefly today:

1. **Rabble always identifies itself as a group**

There is a red flag that I look for that separates legitimate criticism from the rabble.

When a person comes with a complaint and is willing to stand on their own and say: "You know what, I might be the only one that feels this way, and I might be wrong, but do you think there is anything we can do about" . . . my ears perk up and I'm ready to listen carefully for some advice that may be genuinely useful.

When a person comes with a complaint and says: “There are a bunch of people that have been talking to me and this is the way they all feel. . .” . . . a red flag raises because I think I’m probably dealing with THE RABBLE. The rabble loves to hide behind a group.

2. Rabble always surfaces in any larger group.

If there is one thing we can learn from “Moses – Mr. Nobody” about working with large groups . . . it is that a large group somehow attracts the rabble. If your group is over 12 people and you’ve have got some rabble . . . congratulations . . . you have a normal group.

If the rabble moves away or quits or goes to another group, guess what? You will be blessed with new rabble. No group stays without rabble for long; someone will rise up to become the rabble.

This brings me to my third observation from these passages . . .

3. Anyone is susceptible to becoming the rabble.

Look at the three stories of grumbling we are going to briefly examine today. This passage in Numbers 11, the rabble is not identified at all.

You would think that family members could never become the rabble...

Two mothers were talking about their sons. The first said, “My son is such a saint. He works hard, doesn’t smoke, and he hasn’t so much as looked at a woman in over two years.”

The other womans said, “Well, my son is a saint himself. Not only has he not looked at a woman in 5 years, but he hasn’t touched a drop of liquor in all that time.”

“You must be very proud of him.”

“I am, and next month, when he get’s out on parole, I’m going to throw him a big party.”

But even family can fall into the “rabble trap.”

Numbers 12:1 . . . look at who the rabble is. ***Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses.*** Miriam and Aaron! Those two older siblings that have stuck with Moses through the thick and thin of it have now converted to being the rabble.

Numbers 13:26-14:4 records the devastating influence of the 10 spies. Numbers 13:1-3 notes two times that all 12 of the spies were selected because ***All of them were leaders of the Israelites.*** They were not anonymous nobodies, their names have been recorded for all of history in Numbers 13: 4-15. After they came back from spying-out the land they were in a committee meeting with Moses and Aaron. 10 of those spies were expressing their concern about the land they had inspected. No problem, they are entitled to their view.

10 of those 12 spies, however, turned into the rabble when they left their committee meeting. Numbers 13:32 records what they did: ***And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored.*** The *leaders* of the community had turned into the rabble. Anyone is susceptible to becoming the rabble.

This brings me to the last observation. It is a new line for your notes as I didn't include this:

4. Rabble is highly contagious!

Continue in our look at Numbers 13 (but you will find this pattern anywhere where you find the rabble). Remember, it was just 10 leaders that were the rabble. They started talking to the other Israelites. Look at the result in Numbers 14:1-2, it is astounding: **THAT NIGHT** [talk about highly contagious . . . it only took a few hours for the rabble to move from 10 men to over 1 million people] ***all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron....***

The rabble has the power to spread like a wild fire and totally devastate an organization. Look at the Lord's response to the rabble's spread. It is found in Numbers 14:12: ***I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them.***

This contagious aspect of the rabble, makes it potentially devastating to any organization!

How do you contribute to the spreading of the rabble? Just be a listening ear and you will aid and abet the rabble. Just sympathize with the rabble.

"But pastor, people just come to me with their grumbling?" If you want to stop garbage from going in the can just CLOSE THE LID. If you want people to stop grumbling to you . . . CLOSE THE LID!!

I'm not talking about sweeping real problems under the rug and pretending they are not there.

Dear Marty,

I have been unable to sleep since I broke off your engagement to my daughter. Will you forgive and forget?

I was much too sensitive about your Mohawk, tattoo and pierced tongue. I now realize motorcycles aren't really that dangerous, and I really should not have reacted that way to the fact that you have never held a job for more than 3 days.

I am also very sure that some other very nice people live under the bridge in the park. Sure my daughter is only 17 and want to marry you instead of going to Harvard on a full scholarship. After all, you can't learn everything about life from books.

I sometimes forget how backward I can be. I was wrong. I have not come to my senses and you have my full blessing to marry my daughter.

Sincerely, Your future Father-in-law.

PS Congratulations on winning the lottery!

When rabble has a complaint...they talk to everyone but the one involved. Jesus' way of dealing with the complaint is go first to the one who offended you (Matthew 18:15-17).

RABBLE'S EFFECT:

1. It can result in discouragement (Numbers 11:4-15)

Every one of us knows how discouraging it is to listen to the rabble when it is complaining against us. Listen to what the Scripture says about how Moses felt when the rabble had spread to every tent and every family in Israel. You'll find his response in Numbers 11:10b: ^{10b}*Moses was troubled. . . .* ¹⁵*If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now – if I have found favor in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin."*

2. It can result in personal attack (Numbers 12:1-15):

Numbers 12:1 records Miriam's and Aaron's personal attack: *Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.* It was none of their business about who Moses married!

How do you deal with personal attacks? Moses, in his humility, had learned the secret:

a) Don't take compliments too personally.

Young preacher was complimented by Mrs. Jones on the best sermon she ever heard. He took this compliment to heart. On the way home he asked his wife: "How many great preachers do you think there are in the world today?" She responded wryly: "One less than you think there is."

b) Don't take criticism too personally.

A young Christian came one day to an elderly saint and asked, "What is it to be dead to self?" The old saint replied, I cannot explain it now; but I have a duty for you to perform. Brother Martin died last week and is buried in the churchyard. Go to his grave, standing close beside it, with a loud voice, flatter Brother Martin with any and every good quality you can think of and report the result to me."

The young Christian went to do his bidding, wondering what all this could mean. Soon he returned and the old saint asked him what had transpired. Why nothing," replied the young man. "I did as you told me and that was all." "Did Brother Martin make no reply?" asked the gentle saint. "Of course not, for he was dead," said the young man. The elder shook his head thoughtfully saying, "That is very strange. Go again tomorrow at the same hour, and attribute

to him the worst slander and calumny your mind can imagine, and report the result back to me.

Again the young man obeyed, and brought back the same report. He had heaped unlimited abuse on the head of Brother Martin and yet had received no reply. "From Brother Martin you may learn," said the elderly saint, "what it is to be dead to self. Neither flattery nor abuse has moved him, for he is dead.

If you are going to be a godly leader there must be a death to self. ***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me*** (Galatians 2:20).

3. It can result in total rejection (Numbers 13:26-14:4)

Some might think . . . "Oh, a little rabble rousing is no big deal . . . I think you are over reacting to this whole thing Pastor." Let's visit the rabble spies one more time. Remember how the rabble spread. As a result of the influence of the rabble, the Israelites totally rejected Moses. Look at Numbers 14:4: ***And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*** Now look down at Numbers 14:10: ^{10a}***But the whole assembly talked about stoning them.***

APPLICATION:

Dealing with the rabble:

1. Understand that Godly people will be attacked by rabble.

Moses did the right thing with his discouragement. He did the only thing that works. He got down on his knees before the Lord. He didn't pour out his heart about the complaints; he poured out his heart about his discouragement.

Moses took care of his own discouragement first. If you are going to be a leader, you can't stay discouraged for long and continue to lead. Take your discouragement to the Lord . . . he will minister to you and help you. Then you can deal with the complaints of the rabble.

Verses 16-23 of Numbers 11 show God's gracious response to Moses. Verse 23 records: ***The Lord answered Moses, "Is the Lord's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."*** GOD IS BIGGER THAN "WHATS-THE-MATTER"

Psalms 62:5-8:

*Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
My hope comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
He is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;
He is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, O people;*

Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

You cannot, you will not...

1. Accomplish your salvation, or...
2. Restore the honor of your name against the rabble . . . that is something only the Lord can do. God to him. He is your refuge when the rabble rouse up against you!

2. Pray for a thick skin and a soft heart.

You will never be used of God in a great way as long as you have thin skin.

You will never be used of God in a great way without a soft heart.

3. View Godly life as a tremendous adventure.

Close with this quote from Chuck Swindoll's Book Moses (p299):

The truth is, if you really want to break the boredom syndrome, commit yourself to Jesus Christ. Life will start comin' at you! You will become effective, empowered from heaven, and the battle will rage. You never find people on the front lines going to sleep. They're in the fray. The war's exploding. It's terribly eventful when your life counts for Christ. Psalm 34 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." (v.19).

I can promise you one thing: If your walk with Christ is consistent, all hell will break loose. But all heaven will come to your rescue! And you'll be right in the middle of cosmic, high-stakes warfare.

In fact, it's the only way to live!