

# "God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

## Section 7: Trust and God's Love Go Hand in Hand (The Book of Numbers)

There is much which can be spoken about the nation of Israel in the Book of Numbers. To start with was an early census (1:2) in which the men were 603,550 (Numbers 1:46), hence the name *Numbers*. There are many sections of Jewish history from the book such as...

- The adultery test of chapter 5
- The Nazarite Vow of chapter 6
- The cleansing of the Levites in chapter 8
- The Passover Feast of chapter 9
- The trumpets of chapter 10
- The Red Heifer offering of chapter 19.
- The death of Miriam and Aaron in chapter 20

What seems to stand out in this book of the Bible is that there was a lot of grumbling and discontentment taking place among the people of Israel. By the time we reach the middle section of Numbers, God confronted the Israelites about this issue.

- Numbers 14:22-23 "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice,<sup>23</sup> shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.
- Numbers 14:27 "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me."

Numerous times the Israelites murmured against God's Love Story of deliverance from the world and into His Promised Land. Here is brief sample of that history, much of which was mentioned in the Book of Numbers.

### They grumbled because they did not have water.

- Exodus 15:22-24 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.<sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah.<sup>24</sup> So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"
- It was only three days after passing through the miracle of the Red Sea and being delivered out of the Land of Egypt when they first started grumbling. They were in a desert area and traveling, so it was natural to be a bit concerned about something to drink. It was likely many of them were thirsty. When they came to a large body of fresh water, they found it to be bitter, hence they named it Marah, meaning bitter (Ruth 1:20). They

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grumbled against God and Moses, failing the test of trust. God healed the waters, they drank and experienced God's love once again.

- Later on down the road they hit another dry spot, bringing on the thirst again. They grumbled against Moses and God, demonstrating their lack of trust. God showed them love again by bringing forth water from a large rock they named Meribah. The name meant contention "...because the sons of Israel *contended* with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them (Numbers 20:13). God had already demonstrated His love to them, but they doubted it through demonstration of their murmuring.

### They grumbled because they did not have food.

- Exodus 16:2-3 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."
- The Lord could have wiped them out from their lack of trust in Him, but He was patient. He gave them bread from heaven called *manna* to which they said "*What is it?*" (Ex 16:15). They literally lived on bread from heaven for four decades. It states in *Ps 78: 25* *Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance.* The mere fact they were fed with this miracle did not keep them from grumbling in the end.

### They grumbled because they did not have the right food.

- Numbers 11:4-6 The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?" <sup>5</sup> "We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, <sup>6</sup> but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna."
- Numbers 11:31-35 Now there went forth a wind from the LORD and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground. <sup>32</sup> The people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. <sup>33</sup> While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague. <sup>34</sup> So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy. <sup>35</sup> From Kibroth-hattaavah the people set out for Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.
- It was not long until the Israelites were reminiscing about their "more tasty" slave food they had in Egypt. They had figuratively bitten the hand of God that fed them bread from heaven by grumbling like underprivileged children. God decided to send them so many

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quail that is would be coming out their noses (11:20) and become loathsome to them. Now they became greedy and the least of them gathered more than 13 barrels of quail, resulting in a great display of mistrust to the God that provided for them. They only amplified their grumbling into greed. God struck them with a plague so severe they named the location Kibroth-hattaavah, modern translation "Glutton Memorial Park Cemetery".

### They grumbled because they thought Moses bailed on them on Mount Sinai.

- Exodus 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."
- Moses was receiving the Law on Mount Sinai and it did not fit their time schedule. They felt that Moses and Jehovah deserted them. Their grumbling led to the reinstitution of worshipping the Apis Bull of Egypt by making a golden calf. God allowed 3,000 of the rebels to choose their fate and they chose against Him. They died in their sin, but many others repented of their lack of trust and recommitted for a time.

### Miriam and Aaron grumbled against Moses out of sibling rivalry.

- Numbers 12:1-2 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); 2 and they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the Lord heard it.
- His own siblings began to question Moses about his leadership through their grumbling. the result was Miriam being punished with leprosy for seven days and Aaron being reminded of the fear of the LORD. Their grumbling was really mistrust for God.

### They grumbled because they did not trust God that the Promised Land was theirs.

- In Numbers 13:1-33 Moses sent representatives from the twelve tribes spy out the land to see how easy it would be to take. After the forty day reconnaissance mission in the Promised Land, all but two of them reported back, *"We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us"*(vs.31). They issued a bad report to the people saying, *"The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"*(vs.32-33).
- The result was grumbling which spread throughout the people (Numbers 14:2-4). *All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!"<sup>3</sup> "Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our*

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*wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"<sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt." They were willing to return to slavery rather than to trust God, yet He still showed His mercy..*

### They grumbled because they had a problem about God's choice of leadership.

- Numbers 16:11-13 "Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?"<sup>12</sup> Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come up."<sup>13</sup> "Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us?"
- Apparently the lesson showed to Miriam and Aaron did not take among the general population. Korah and his posse of 250 men challenged the priesthood of God through their grumbling. They lost the argument and their lives in the end, but God still showed His love to the people through His mercies.

### They grumbled against God's judgment against the grumblers.

- Numbers 16:41 But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the Lord's people."
- 14,700 people took the side of Korah the next day. They grumbled that God was not just when He wiped out the 250 ringleaders of the rebellion. In the end God took them with a plague, but still showed His mercy to the ones who did not.
- In the end, that generation whom departed Egypt could not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:19). They would spend the next four decades in the desert trying to learn God's Love Story before fading into the annals of history. Psalm 106:25 says "*But grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.*" They refused to make God's Love Story their story.

### Application:

We must understand that trust and God's Love goes hand in hand. God is trying to reach out to us in so many ways, but we neglect Him through our grumblings today. It says in 1 Corinthians 10:7-11 that the Israelites went through this trying time as an example to Christians today.

Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play."<sup>8</sup> Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.<sup>9</sup> Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.<sup>10</sup> Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.<sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to

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them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

They allowed their grumbling to feed so many sins in the lives. Once you take away contentment from a relationship, you destroy the trust needed to hold the relationship together. This is why Paul wrote to the Christians in *Philippians 2:14-15* "*Do all things without grumbling or disputing; <sup>15</sup> so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world...*" When the crooked and perverse generation hear the children of light grumbling, it demonstrates that there is a lack of trust. How can we encourage others to trust in God and His love story if we ourselves are not doing so? How can we encourage others in the church to keep trusting God when we moan, complain, bellyache, murmur and grumble?

## Be Content With What You Have!

- 1 Timothy 6:6-8 But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. <sup>7</sup> For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. <sup>8</sup> If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.
- Hebrews 13:5-6 *Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," <sup>6</sup> so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"
- Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Solution: If you want to truly understand God's Love Story, then you will have to trust Him. Contentment is the greatest way we can trust God to carry us through to the end. Trust and Obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.