



Cross Over

Exodus 16:1-36; John 6:22-59

Dr. Greg Wilton

After reading this passage, I want to address two subjects that come from this passage:

1. Our Grumbling
2. God Providing

Let's address this first subject - Our Grumbling.

I want us to consider this question, "Is it ever good to grumble?"

In Exodus 16:2, "the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness."

They grumbled because a) they were in the wilderness [watching the show Alone], b) they had already been wandering for a long time [camping for just 3 days, and in an camper trailer], c) they were hungry [getting hangry].

Not all of us, but most of us believe these are valid reasons to grumble.

Oftentimes we think we are justified in our grumbling.

Many times we feel it is our noble right to grumble and bicker and complain and mouth-off considering the circumstances we find ourselves in.

An important theme during the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt is their grumbling.

They grumble in Exodus 15 about the bitter water. (15:24)

They are grumbling in Exodus 16 because of hunger. (16:2)

They grumble in Exodus 17 because of thirst. (17:3)

Still on their exodus journey, the people of Israel also grumble in the book of Numbers.

They grumble in Numbers 14 because of the report of the Nephilim. (14:2)

They grumble in Numbers 16 during Korah's rebellion (16:11).

God decisively responds to their grumbings in Numbers 17.

Grumbling is a common response by the people of Israel during the exodus.

Grumbling is defined as muttering in discontent. One source defines grumbling as “murmuring that suggests the malicious whispering of slander.”

In the New Testament, the parallel word for grumbling is associated with murmuring, indignation, and fault-finding. Grumbling in the New Testament is connected with the complaining of the Pharisees and scribes.

I heard this quote once regarding grumbling. Someone once said, “I believe in grumbling; it is the politest form of fighting known.”

Many of us, and I’m willing to say most of us or all of us, experience weekly and daily opportunities to grumble. Some of us try to exercise restraint, but many of us are unhinged regarding grumbling.

### **Grumbling is not good because:**

#### **a) God does not like it.**

- In the story of the exodus, God doesn’t respond happily to grumbling.
- God’s dislike of something should be sufficient for us to not do that thing, no matter how justified we may feel.

#### **b) The Bible forbids it.**

- Philippians 2:14,15 states, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.”
- This verse implies that a sign of a crooked and twisted generation is grumbling. Grumbling is often used to pervert the truth, to switch the narrative.

#### **c) It is a stark contrast to faithfulness.**

- God heard their cry (Exodus 3) and used Moses to deliver the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. God uses multiple signs and wonders to deliver them, but most importantly is the simple fact that God said he would deliver them. God said He would save them. So for the people to grumble against Moses, against Aaron, against God, albeit with seemingly justified reasons (wandering, hungry) is a declaration of faithlessness, not faithfulness. Grumbling is “I’m not sure I believe you anymore.” So when someone who feels they have the opportunity to grumble, yet doesn’t, they are seizing an opportunity to practice faith.

Peter Enns said this with regard to grumbling, “**Neither grumbling against God nor grumbling against God’s people is acceptable for those who have been raised in**

**Christ's image. The pattern of behavior exhibited by the Exodus generation must be transcended by those who have partaken of the new Exodus in Christ."**

Scripturally speaking, a grumble is different from a complaint or a cry.

An example of a complaint and a cry is Psalm 55

"Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me." (Psalm 55:1-3)

The difference between the grumbling in Exodus 16 and the complaint/cry of Psalm 55 is seen in Exodus 16:3, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Do you hear their unbelief, their bickering spirit, their lack of faith in their grumbling?

Grumbling is taking a complaint too far by taking it to the point of gossip or slander.

Practice avoiding grumbling at all costs.

An opportunity to avoid grumbling is an opportunity to increase faith and humility. I already mentioned how grumbling is a stark contrast to faithfulness. Grumbling is a product of faithlessness, not faithfulness. Grumbling is also a stark contrast to humility. In other words, grumbling is a sign of pride. When someone grumbles, they think they know better. And in several circumstances, with regard to other people or current events, you possibly might know better. But when it comes to God, to grumble in any way shape or form in relationship to Him is to declare in a prideful way that you know better than God. And that's just not possible.

I think there are plenty of justified reasons to cry and complain, to voice our concerns, our displeasures and discomforts, and we should go to God in prayer often in that way. But Scripture seems clear enough that grumbling is not Christian.

I pray conviction falls on all of us regarding the role of grumbling in our lives. I pray we are driven and motivated to honor God and others in all circumstances so that it shapes how we react to God and to others.

Onto the second subject from Exodus 16 - God Providing.

The people of Israel are grumbling because they are hungry in the wilderness. God hears them and answers by providing them with “bread from heaven” (16:4). This is what God does. He provides. God is Jehovah Jireh, the God who sees, the God who provides.

He saw and heard the people in Egypt. He responded. He rescued. This is what God does.

Some of us are wondering if God will provide. Some of us have small matters of concern regarding provisions. Some of us have significant matters of concern regarding provisions.

God knows. God is listening. God has provided already. God may provide yet again.

Regardless of your particular need, you can rest assured that God has already provided. He has done so through His Son Jesus.

Never read Exodus 16 without John 6 in mind.

Our God has provided. He has done so through Jesus, who is the bread of life.

Our opportunity now is to trust and obey, not to grumble and complain, because He said He would rescue us. Now is the opportunity to increase our faith and humility. Continue to trust that God will provide, because He has and He will.

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19