

# Grumbling and Complaining - Part 1

by Keith Green

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*Keith Green's sermon addresses the serious consequences of grumbling and complaining among believers, urging them towards obedience and trust in God.*

**Duration:** 31:32

**Scripture:** Numbers 11:1-6, Matthew 11:20-24, Hebrews 10:28-29, Hebrews 12:25, Hebrews 13:17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Responsibility", "Grumbling"

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## Description

Keith Green addresses the dangers of grumbling and complaining, emphasizing how such attitudes anger God and burden spiritual leaders. He highlights the contrast between the Old and New Testaments, explaining that while the Old Covenant had severe requirements, the New Covenant carries a greater responsibility due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Green warns that disobedience under the New Covenant incurs harsher judgment, as believers have been given the Spirit to help them obey. He uses biblical examples, particularly from Numbers and Hebrews, to illustrate the consequences of complaining and the importance of trust in God. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper understanding of God's love and justice, urging believers to be mindful of their attitudes and actions.

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## Transcript

...our ways forwards, back through the Old Testament, Hebrews, okay, um, let's pray. Lord Jesus, as we get into your word, we ask that you enlighten our minds, open our hearts, and really bring us to a complete revelation of your glory, and how much you despise grumbling and murmuring, Lord, and how much you love a people who trust you no matter what our minds and intellects and reasonings and emotions have to say, especially our flesh. And we ask now, Lord, that you would make us obedient to your word, and let the scales fall off our eyes, and let our ears become unplugged.

Let us know that you are the Lord of both Testaments, and that we live under the covenant of your blood. In Jesus' name, amen, amen. Okay, um, Hebrews 12, the key scripture, the key scripture for this whole study is in Hebrews 12, verse 25.

Hebrews is right now my favorite book. I have like the book of the month club in my life. I have my favorite book, well, Hebrews is now my favorite book, because it's really, it's a real hard book for me to understand.

And it's suddenly opening up to my mind. Next, hopefully, God will open up Romans to me. Okay, verse 25, see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven. There's a real principle in the New Testament, and it's opposite to what people think. People think the Old Testament is severe, you know, you keep the law or die.

And the New Testament is, it's so easy, you know, it's just so easy to be a Christian, and it's so easy to follow Jesus and to keep the new covenant. And the new covenant is easier to keep, it's true, but the new covenant is easier for us to keep, because instead of the Spirit resting upon us, the Spirit lives in us. In the Old Testament, whenever the Spirit did anything, it would come upon the people, but never would it really live inside the people to keep the law.

Now we've got a new law to keep, the law of love and the law of liberty. And we also have the Spirit to help us keep it, yes, but according to Hebrews and according to Jesus, as we'll see in Matthew, if we disobey under the new covenant, the punishment's even worse. Let's look at this, verse 25.

See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth. Much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven.

Turn back two chapters to chapter 10, verse 28. Chapter 10, verse 28. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses, or let me paraphrase that for you, or anyone who has disobeyed under the old covenant, dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? The key word here is, by which he was, past tense, sanctified. That's an incredible, well that'll just destroy your theology right out the back door. You know, if you come from any kind of a, you know, I mean most modern day American Christian theologies wouldn't even allow for a sentence like, he was sanctified.

That means that now he isn't. You know, like you can lose your sanctification. Or, I won't even say it.

I don't want to stand the hair up on the back of your neck. Verse 29, let's read this again. Verse 28, anyone who has set aside the law of Moses, dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

And we're going to go back and we're going to look in the Old Testament over some of the principles that people, the things that made God the angriest. The things that made God the angriest. Now, this is a subject that, you know, if any of you were brought up under a real strict Christian home or Christian church or Christian theology, you're probably tired of hearing of hellfire and brimstone.

And I'm not here to tell you about hellfire and brimstone. I'm here to tell you about the love of God. And the love of God also has a justice.

And that justice is exact. But he gives us a spirit under the new covenant to keep our part of the covenant. It's almost like he's keeping it for us, but there's a partnership there between his spirit and our ability to, in our will, step out of the boat.

And I have a really great expression of that. When Peter walked on the water, who did the walking? Who stepped out of the boat? Who gave him the power to stay above water? Right. But there was a partnership between, one, the willingness and the action of stepping out and walking.

And the power from God to stay above the water. And today, there's so many Christians that sit back and go, oh, you know, they kind of wait for Jesus to kind of levitate them out of the boat. You know, it's not going to work that way.

You know, it's like people that say, I believe God for a job. I'm just going to sit here and wait for it to come to the door. No, you've got knocking on doors.

If God says, I've got a job for you. Now, of course, there are times when God says, you study the word and I will get, somebody will call. Now, that's the exception.

Most of the time, God will say, you want to eat? Go to work. You know, do you want to have grain? Sow some, you know, plow, dig the furrows, break up the fallow ground, sow the seed, and then stand by with your hoe so you can get the weeds and cultivate. Maybe you even have to irrigate, depending on how dry the land is.

Now, one more scripture out of the New Testament to tell about that if the Old Testament was severe and the punishment of the Old Testament was heavy, how much heavier of a penalty is there when Christians take for granted the spirit of grace or the exact words, as they trample underfoot, Jesus, Son of God, regard as unclean the blood of the covenant by which we were past tense sanctified and have insulted the spirit of grace or grieved the spirit. Okay, turn to Matthew. I think it's chapter 11.

I've got it dog-eared here. I really get a pleasure out of teaching subjects in areas that are not usually taught. The reason being is because when I was first a Christian, I heard nothing but love, grace, forgiveness, and mercy.

And those things are the weightier provisions of the law. Hallelujah. Those things, without love, mercy, hope, forgiveness, I'd be dead at the doornail.

I wouldn't be able to stand. I'm not trying to teach you this stuff going, you better listen or God's going to get you. That's not where my heart's at.

He is, as we'll even see Moses saying, slow to anger, full of loving kindness and compassion. And look what Matthew says. Chapter 11, verse 20.

This is Jesus speaking, Matthew writing. Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his miracles were done, because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon, which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Nevertheless, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? No, you shall descend to hell. For if the miracles had occurred in Sodom, which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

Nevertheless, I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. Meaning... Now, Leonard Ravenhill has a whole book called, Sodom Had No Bible. And the

meaning of that one sentence... I used to look at the title of that book going, what does that mean? Sodom had no Bible.

What do you want to open a Bible bookstore in Sodom? I don't understand this. And I finally figured it out. I was just preaching in Tulsa for two weeks.

And suddenly God enlightened my eyes to what that sentence meant. And I said, you brood of vipers and snakes, Sodom had no Bible. And you've got one in every hotel room drawer, and five on your bookshelf.

You've got four gospel stations blaring the gospel 24 hours a day, and modern music, country music, and funeral dirges. You've got gospel preachers and evangelists and ministries coming out your ears. And you've got porno shops and X-rated movies, and all kinds of scum, and all kinds of homosexuality undercover in the closet.

I said, Sodom had no Bible, and they were destroyed. And if God doesn't destroy you, He's going to have to apologize to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. That's what Jesus says here.

He says, look, I've been preaching the good news. I've been preaching salvation by faith in myself, He says. And you haven't repented.

I have healed the sick. I've raised the dead. I've cast out demons.

And you have not repented. If Sodom would have seen what you see, they would have all given up their homosexuality. They would have given up their impurities, and their greediness, but you haven't.

You're worse than they are. What I'm saying is, anyone who cannot obey under the New Covenant is twice as bad as those who could not obey under the Old Covenant. Because the New Covenant, He gives us His own spirit to help us obey.

Much more patient. And if people won't obey under that, what can He do with such souls as those? For it will be more tolerable, He says, in the day of judgment for Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, than for you, you cities who have seen the Gospel, who have seen miracles and have heard the good news preached. Okay, this is a prologue to the message.

The reason I wanted to give you this stuff out of the New Testament is I wanted to show you in the Word of God that the Bible distinctly states that the Old Testament might have had a harsher requirement, but it had an easier judgment. The Old Covenant had a harsher requirement, but it had an easier judgment. Because it says in James, Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall be judged with greater strictness.

In another place, Jesus says, If you did something that was wrong and you knew it, you will receive many stripes. But if you did something worthy of many stripes and you didn't know it, you'll receive but few. Meaning, the more you learn, the more you sit in these classes and take notes, the more Bible books you read, the more teachers you hear, the more that you understand and comprehend, the more God requires of you in obedience.

As Winky Prattney, our brother, says, Knowledge equals responsibility. And we are all here. It says, Be not many masters.

Guess what you're all studying to be, folks? You're not learning all this stuff for your health. You're not learning all this stuff for your beauty. You're learning this stuff to spread it.

A friend of mine once signed a letter, Don't keep the faith, spread it. And it's pretty heavy, because we're going to learn some things today that if you don't want to be accountable, you buy. Okay, this is heavy stuff.

Let's turn to numbers in the Old Testament. Chapter 11 of Numbers. Numbers is the fourth book in the Bible.

It's part of the, I can't pronounce this word, Pentateuch. Anybody know any Hebrew here? It means the five books of Moses. I never liked these books except for Genesis.

I always liked the flood and all the stuff there, you know. I never liked these other books, because I thought they were full of the law. But they're not just full of the law.

They're full of some incredible principles. Incredible principles. Okay.

You can title this subject, Grumbling, Murmuring, and Complaining. Okay. Chapter 11 of Numbers.

Okay. The first subject we're going to cover is the complaining of the flesh. You can put in parentheses after flesh, the appetites.

Comma, or desires. The complaining of the flesh, appetites, in parentheses, appetites, or desires. Each chapter here, in the next four or five chapters, except for one chapter of Levitical law, has a different sort of murmuring.

A different sort of complaining. See if you do not see yourself here as we go into this. This can be very humorous, unless we take it seriously.

And a lot of times we cry, we laugh, so we won't have to cry. You know, when I get nervous, I either laugh or cry. I usually laugh, so I don't cry.

If I can't stand it, I start crying. Chapter 11. Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord.

And when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. The people therefore cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died out. So the name of that place was called Tabera, which means burning, because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

Now that's just one story. We're going to hear about five different cases. This is like a little... The reason, you know, the Bible is such an incredible book.

It's thousands of years of history condensed into one book. You ever seen the rise and fall of the Roman Empire? Or the rise and fall of the Third Reich? You know, it's giant volumes. Here, we've got the New Testament, minus my concordance at the back, is this thick.

This is the whole history of the early church, all the Gospels, all Christian theology, that thick. The Old Testament, which was a little bit coarser, which also has a lot of poetry involved in it, and a lot of history that the New Testament doesn't have, is this thick. This is the whole history of a people, and all their doctrines, all their laws, all their poetry, all their theology.

You ever seen the average theology book or a commentary? Look at how concise God is. So here's a little concise story. Moses is setting up the stage.

He's not going to tell you... He wants to tell you these three verses so that you don't think that God has got a short temper. These three verses tell what God's going through and what Moses is going through for quite a while. The people were complaining of adversity in the hearing of the Lord.

The Lord got angry, sent some fire, burned up the outskirts of the camp, cried to Moses. Moses said, Please God, stop it. They stopped it.

God stopped it. Okay. God had to go through a lot of stuff.

He had these people. Verse four. And the rabble... Now the word rabble... What is it saying, King James? Anybody read another King James? The mixed multitude.

Wow. Impure. Impure.

Mixed is the opposite of pure. 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? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt.

The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. What a breath they must have. Call it Egypt breath.

But now our appetite and our breath is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna. Moses would go, What's the manna? Right? Oh.

I had to do that. There's nothing... Manna again. You know, they come out in the morning going, Maybe he'll send us post-toasties.

You know? Bacon and eggs from heaven. You know? Manna. Manna omelettes.

Fried manna. Deep fried manna. Re-fried manna.

Boiled manna. Manna hotcakes. Manna kadi.

Manna sundaes. Oh, man. Manna's coming out of our ears.

We're tired of manna. All the time. They forget.

They don't deserve nothing. God sent them out in the desert giving them free bread. They don't even have to work for it.

They just pick it up. Wonder bread again. You know? Okay.

You got an idea? It's wonder bread. Right. Now, it tells you a little bit about manna.

The manna was like a coriander seed. Its appearance was like that of Bdelium. The people would go about, gather it, grind it between two millstones, beat it in the mortar, or boil it in the pot.

Make cakes with it. You could probably sleep on it. And its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil.

Okay? When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it. Now, Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families. Each man at the doorway of his tent, and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased.

Now, here you're going to see one of the first results of the people of God complaining. It will make their elders' burdens too hard for them to bear. Here's one of the first results.

It will make the people that are supposed to be overseeing them, their burden too hard to bear, and make them cry, and even make them complain, and even, if they're not really watching out, these elders, these pastors, these teachers, these overseers, make them sin before the Lord. Now, there's no such thing as somebody making you sin, but there is such a thing as making it harder on people to be godly, or making it harder on people, making it aggravating for people. The scripture for this, keep your finger in numbers, turn back to Hebrews, is in Hebrews 13, verse 17.

Hebrews 13, verse 17. This is the favorite scripture of all pastors and elders throughout the land. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for who? For you. Let them do this with joy, not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Why would it be unprofitable for you? Because if you cause them grief, all of a sudden, their efficiency level goes from 10 down to 2. All of a sudden, they're pulling their hair out, trying to figure out how to please their sheep.

All of a sudden, the bleeding of their sheep is coming into their ears and they start getting, oh, what am I going to do? Now listen to Moses. Poor Moses. He only had 600,000 sheep, the largest church in history.

Those were just the men, 600,000 men. He numbers them a couple chapters up. Now, verse 11.

So Moses said to the Lord, Why has that been so hard on thy servant? Why have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou hast laid the burden of all this people on me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth that thou should say to me, Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant to the land which thou didst swear to their fathers? In other words, he's saying they're all a bunch of babies. Do I have to, you know, change their diapers and wipe their noses as we travel through the desert? Now listen to this, verse 13. Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, Give us meat that we may eat.

I alone am not able to carry all this people because it is too burdensome for me. Now listen to this. So if thou art going to deal like this with me, please kill me at once.

If I have found favor in thy sight, do not let me see my wretchedness. Now, wretchedness here does not mean, he's not talking about his sin, he's talking about his wretched countenance, his grief. You know how when you're grieved you feel wretched? He says, Do not let me see my grief, my wretched feelings.

Now, if anybody talks like this to God, they're either going to turn into Moses dust quickly, or they better have a good relationship with God. To any of the other people that would have talked like that, God would have went, You know? You know? But Moses had a face-to-face relationship with God, as we'll see in chapter 12. And I'm telling you something.

God does not directly rebuke Moses for his complaining. Because Moses' walk with the Lord is so tight, he doesn't directly rebuke him. In fact, he answers his prayer and starts giving him elders.

Let's see what happens. Now, he's bringing two complaints to God. Complaint number one.

This job is too big for me. It's too burdensome for me. And God, instead of God going, Listen Moses, I'll make you able.

God goes, Yeah, I know what you mean. You really do have a... Boy, these people are really something. Moses, you know what I'm going to do? Verse 16, The Lord therefore said to Moses, Gather for me 70 elders, 70 men from the elders of Israel.

Here's the qualification. Whom you know to be already the elders of the people. Who already have the marks, the qualifications, and the ability and the respect of the people.

Before you say, These are elders. You know, before in any ministry, I'll raise up an elder. Or in any other ministry.

They already have to have the godliness and the respect. The godliness from God. And the respect of the people.

People already respect them because of their walk with the Lord. You don't just go, Alright, here's an elder. Respect him.

You know. So, this is really great. Whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers.

Bring them to the tent of the meeting and let them take their stand with you there. Then I will come down and speak with you there and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you and I will scatter or put him upon them. And they shall bear the burden of the people with you so that you shall not bear it alone.

Okay, that's the answer to number one. Sounds like a pretty good idea. Hey, listen.

Listen, Moses. Can't bear it? Let's spread it out. Sounds like God's just blessing him for his complaining.

Doesn't it? Sounds like God, but you know, about four or five chapters up, there's a little... We're not going to read it right now. We're going to get into that in the next session. In verse chapter 16, you can put a little thing in your Bible or in your notes to turn to chapter 16.

And you will see the results of God spreading the burden out to 70 other men. It's called, quote, The Rebellion of Korah. It's only five chapters on.

Moses says, I can't handle it. Now, look. Moses could have prayed this prayer.

God, this is hard, but please make me able. Now, God... God might have said, Okay, I'm going to make you able by giving you helpers and not have allowed The Rebellion of Korah to happen. But since... There's two ways to pray.

There is two ways to pray and get the same physical results. God, please take care of our needs. My wife and children, the roof's falling in.

The rain's coming down into the house. Please... God says, Okay, brings in the funds. The other way to pray.

God, why are you doing this to us for? It's your fault! It's your fault! And you come at God with this finger pointing. Was it I who brought this people? Did I conceive... What do you think I am? Be careful how you pray. For God may answer your prayer.

And you may find out you didn't want it answered. God, if you want me to get married, I'll take anybody you've got, no matter how ugly I might think she is, how untalented I might think she is. If you say this is your... God, I'll do it.

And you know what? I'm willing to never get married at all. God blesses that attitude. God, I want a wife! Oh, God, give me a wife! I can't stand not having a wife and I want one pretty and talented person.

I want this. Oh, God might give you the prettiest, most talented, rebellious witch in the world. Be careful how you pray.

I have seen people pray for that kind of a wife and get the most backbiting, gossiping, rebellious, non-submitting women and still God would work it out. God loves us. But as He loves us, He teaches us.

And boy, have I gotten lessons that I wouldn't trade in for 40 years in seminary. I sure wish it didn't have to be so hard. I'm glad afterwards that it was.

Be careful how you pray. Make sure it's with the right motives for whose glory. Amen.

Okay, now the answer to part number two of Moses' complaining prayer. Verse 18, And say to the people, Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow you shall eat meat. And for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Oh, that someone would give us meat to eat, for we were well off in Egypt.

Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat. Now I can hear everybody going, Yay, Lord! Hey, this pays off. We ought to complain more often.

Verse 19, You shall eat not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you. You want meat? I'll give you meat. Buckets and buckets of Colonel Sanders' fried quail.

Because you have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why did we ever leave Egypt? Egypt, in Revelation, spiritual Egypt is considered the world, Babylon. They call the world, the spirit of the world, either Babylon or spiritual Egypt. And I'm working on a song right now.

It goes, So you want to go back to Egypt, where it's warm and secure? Are you sorry you bought that one-way ticket when you thought you were so sure? You want to live in the land of promise, but now it's getting too hard. Are you sorry you're out here in the desert instead of your own backyard? That's part of what I'm working on. And there's a whole thing about Christians.

They pray the sinner's prayer, which you can find in 3 Corinthians, and they go, the Old Testament's in Hezekiah, Lord, come into my heart, be my Savior. Christian, instant Christian, yes, I'm a Christian, you know. Three or four weeks later, the sun comes out.

God, I thought there were blessings in this. I thought this would be a happy, joyful experience. Peace that passes understanding.

It's passing understanding. It's passing all notice. I don't even see it.

Where's my peace? God.

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