

**Grumbling
Stand Alone
1 Cor 10:1-14
11/20/23**

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. Family Vacation Recap. 1 Corinthians 10. Pray.

- I don't know why I moved here, I don't like anything about this **city** – the traffic's consistently bad, the food is bland, the housing prices are outrageous. It's all frustrating and annoying and just makes my life difficult. I wish I lived somewhere else.
- Man, my **job** is just a lot right now. My boss is the worst, my coworkers are annoying, I go back and forth between overwhelmed and bored out of my mind. The pay is terrible. I just wish I could find something else.
- My **spouse** has been so frustrating lately. It's like they don't understand me, they don't get where I'm coming from, they don't pay attention to me, they're on their phone all the time. We've lost the romance and excitement. I wish it was different.
- Ugh...my **kids** are so needy. Day after day after day it's just one thing after another after another. They scream because they want grapes, I give them grapes, they throw the grapes. It's just so much. I'm just so tired. I just wish I could have a little break.
- My **church** just feels so lacking right now. Community Group is dull and boring. The pastor keeps preaching too fast and for too long. They don't offer the ministry I want. They don't have enough people my age. I wish it was closer to my house. I wish it was at 10:30 instead of 9:30. I just wish it was different.

I'm curious...Do any of those statements sound remotely like anything that you've said over the past few days, week, month, 6 months?

- If so, the Scriptures would say you may be guilty of one of the most **prevalent** and **widely accepted** sins in the world and in the church today.
- An act of rebellion against God so damaging and unholy that, according to our passage today, those who did it were "destroyed by the destroyer."
- A posture towards life so dangerous to our souls, that one theologian calls it – "the empowering force of hell itself."

Today I want to talk about grumbling.

Or if you prefer its synonyms – *complaining, murmuring, venting* – or my personal favorite – "A general posture of *smoldering discontentment*." What comes out of our hearts and our mouths when we think – "life should be something else or something more."

Grumbling. That's where we're going today.

Personal Weakness

Now, that I've frightened you a bit...if I can just be honest with you for a second, I am preaching today out of a place of weakness and conviction.

- I am really really bad at this. (*Last night*)
- And the Lord has been using 1 Corinthians 10 to just mess me up in all of the best and worst ways.

- Grumbling has become over the past month or so one of these points of conviction I just can't shake off.
- It's a bit like taking the red pill in the matrix. Like now I see it and I can't unsee it.
- And misery loves company, so I'm going to share this conviction with you...that's a joke.

Genuinely:

- Pete Scazzero – “As the leaders go, so goes the church.”
- And that's true in a positive sense (prayer, mission, etc), but it's also true in a negative sense.
- And I have not done well in leading us in this area, and that's on me.

So today is a sermon from a place of conviction and repentance, and I hope is a step in helping shape us away from grumbling as a community.

Walkthrough of v 1-8

That's my long intro, alright. 1 Corinthians 10. We've got our work cut out for us this morning.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Notes for walkthrough:

- **Fathers** – Paul is about to recap a story that is told in the book of Exodus in the OT about the Israelites. They were enslaved in the foreign nation of Egypt for hundreds of years, God raises up Moses, 10 plagues, all that stuff – delivers them out from slavery, and then takes them into the desert where they're going to be for 40 or so years – that's the story Paul starts alluding to a little bit at a time. What God does for the Israelites during those 40 years of wandering in the desert.
- **Under the cloud** – Ex 13 – when they first get to the desert God shows up and His presence is in a cloud during the day to protect them from the heat and a pillar of fire by night for warmth and light
- **Passed through the Sea** – Ex 14 – God parts the Red Sea, the Israelites walk through it as on dry ground, God delivers them and saves them
- **Baptized into Moses** – Paul is using this as an analogy to talk about how they are brought up under Moses' leadership, it's a way of referencing that they are enfolded into the people of God. Reinforced covenant.
- **Spiritual food + Spiritual Drink**
 - “Spiritual”
 - Modern day – immaterial, invisible, other-worldly, esoteric, mystic
 - Scriptures – Animated by the Holy Spirit/Coming from the Holy Spirit
 - Food – Ex 16 – manna from the sky aka God
 - Drink – Ex 17 – water from the rock aka God
- **“Rock that followed them”**
 - Jewish Rabbinic tradition – the rock followed the Hebrews through the desert
 - Exodus 17 - Moses strikes the rock, water comes out, God saves Israel
 - Numbers 20 - 40 years later, Moses strikes the rock again, water comes out again, God saves Israel again
 - Rabbis asking during that day – how did that happen?
 - Leading story – the rock, like the manna, followed them through the desert
 - Definit'ion of pet rock, you know?
 - Whether that's true or not is beside the point, Paul just co-opts the story to make the next point – that rock was the Messiah.
 - Jesus was there alive and at work 1,000s of years before He takes on flesh and enters into the world as a baby in Bethlehem
 - Caring for Israel through the desert – that rock was Christ/Messiah

What is Paul's big point? God was good to Israel. He was kind beyond their wildest imagination.

- Delivered them out of slavery.
- Gave them His tangible presence as a guide and protection.
- Grafted them in as His people and gave them His Law, the Torah to guide them.
- Gave them food and water.
- His Spirit was with them.
- Christ Himself was ministering to them.

He was saving them and delivering them and caring for them every step of the way.

Here's the problem, 1 Cor 10:5-6:

5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

God was kind to the Israelites. Saved the Israelites. Cared for the Israelites. And yet with how they responded and how they behaved He was not pleased – they chose evil in response to His kindness.

What is that evil? Paul tells us starting in v7...

- **1 Cor 10:7 – Idolatry**
 - Exodus 32 (Golden Calf)
 - Worshiping or centering your life around anything or anyone other than God.
 - It is evil and God punishes them for it.
- **1 Cor 10:8 – Sexual Immorality**
 - Numbers 25 (Moabite women)
 - Any sexual thought or deed outside of God's design for sex between one man and one woman in the context of the covenant of marriage.
 - It is evil and God punishes them for it.
- **1 Cor 10:9 – Putting Christ to the Test**
 - Numbers 21
 - They need/desire something from God and rather than approaching him with faithful, hope-filled prayers based on the goodness of God but rather...
 - Putting God on trial – IF YOU CARED, you would help us.
 - It is evil and God punishes them for it.

Grumbling

Now those three things aren't all that surprising.

Like if you've been around church for very long, if you hear – “Do not desire or crave evil...” – you probably start to think in the back of your mind at least, “Ok, that means things like idolatry and sexual immorality, and I can see the whole not putting God on trial thing.”

But look at the last one, verse 10...

10 nor grumble (whine, complain, gripe, pity-party, moan and groan, criticize) **, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.**

Numbers 14

- The people, after this period of walking in the desert, God providing for them, caring for them.
- They finally get to the Promised Land – they send up some spies, spies come back and 10 of the 12 are like “The warriors in this land are HUGE, this is not going to go well for us.”
- And the text says the people grumble at Moses and Aaron – “Why did you bring us here just to have us killed. What were you thinking?”

Just for the record, this wasn't the first grumbling. By my count it was at least, at least, grumble occasion #15.

- In fact, if you go back through the stories Paul is reminding them of in v1-4, most of those start with a grumble. They grumble, God is patient and gives them what they need.
- For 40 years!! 40+ years of grumbling and finally at the edge of the Promised Land, God says – no more.
- Because of your grumbling you're going to be destroyed and your bodies left in the wilderness. And sure enough that's exactly what happens.

This entire generation except for 2 people die in the wilderness and never enter the promised land.

So God is not pleased because of the Israelites' idolatry and sexual immorality and putting God on trial... But He's just as equally displeased, and Paul considers it “evil” (aka - morally rotten), for them to grumble both to God and to one another.

The Pattern

Now, what is Paul's point...to the church at Corinth but also for us 2,000 some odd years later.

Track with me here. Look back at v6...

6 Now these things took place as examples for us...

11 Now these things happened to them as an example...

That word “examples” in Greek can be translated as “types, or patterns” – in other words – “The way the world operates.”

Meaning – It happened and it happens.

It happened a long time ago way out in the middle of nowhere in a desert, and it happens all the time today.

Paul tells the story of the Israelites to show the pattern of how things tend to go. And we aren't studying the whole book, but there's all these sorts of parallels that Paul is trying to use to show the church in Corinth just how similar they are to Israel.

- Israelites – baptized into Moses | Corinthians – baptized into Jesus (1 Cor 1)
- Israelites – God's spirit OVER them by the cloud | Corinthians – God's Spirit is all over you (1 Cor 2)
- Israelites – God gave them spiritual food and drink in manna and water | Corinthians – God gave you the bread and wine of communion (like we saw 2 weeks ago)

Look at all the parallels, look at the Israelites and look at you...But not all the parallels are good.

That's why he goes on in verse 11...

11 Now these things happened to them as an example...but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall....

Corinthians – make sure you see this – your story is eerily similar to the Israelites in Exodus. Both God’s blessing, but also your rebellion.

And you’re living into the age old pattern. This is how it works. This is how the world turns. It happened and it happens.

God is kind to His people → They forget His kindness → They grumble.

It happened a long time ago.

It was happening in the church at Corinth.

Is it not the same pattern in our own lives today?

I mean we read the story of the Israelites in Exodus and we think to ourselves – “they’re so silly!”

- God is literally dragging them out of Egypt, all under his own power and might.
- He’s got a cloud over their heads during the day, a cloud of fire to warm them and guide them at night.
- Literal bread from heaven and water from a rock.
- His law to guide them.
- His Spirit with them.

And we read about their grumbling and think – “that’s ridiculous! I would never...”

I would never see how God...

- Saved me out of slavery...
- Gave me his presence to comfort me...
- Provided for me more food and water than I could ever need...
- Gave me His Word to guide me...
- His Holy Spirit inside of me...

And then turn around and complain and whine and grumble because my immediate desires aren’t being met. I would never...**Oh wait...**

- **It happened... in a far away wilderness a long time ago.**
- **It happened... in a first century church in the city of Corinth.**
- **And it happens all of the time today.**

We see what God has done for us and yet slowly but surely we forget his goodness. His kindness. Start grumbling, complaining, whining...

So Paul says – Look at these examples, these patterns. Heed this instruction, lest you too fall.

Grumbling is a Big Deal to God

Because grumbling is an evil with which God is not pleased.

Which is hard for me...

I do this all the time. Grumbling is how I bond with people. It’s my primary form of friendship building.

- Yes, I would love to whine and complain about our kids together.
- Yes, I too think taxes are ridiculous.

- Of course I would love to gripe about how bad Charlotte drivers can be.

And I laugh it off. I shrug my shoulders. I call it “venting” and I move on.

But it’s a big deal to God. And it’s been making me ask the question the past month or so – “why?” I want to view my sin how God views my sin, so I’m trying to understand why grumbling makes its way into this 1 Corinthians 10 passage.

1. Grumbling is an affront to God’s kindness and character.

I mean you’ve got 40+ years of grumbling in the wilderness and God responding kindly to their complaints. And yet again and again and again they don’t go “you know what, I know we’re hungry, and God showed up last time. So maybe instead of complaining and griping, we could just pray?”

And yet instead what do they do? They go back time and time again saying – “I don’t know if we can trust you. I don’t know if you’re good. I don’t know if you know what you’re doing.”

And they don’t realize that it’s saying to and about God – “We don’t actually, at the core of our being, think you’re good.”

Whether or not our grumbling is 1 for 1 about God, our grumbling always says something about Him.

So when you grumble about...

- **Your kids.** It says something about whether you think God gives good gifts and gives you strength to endure.
- **Your job.** It says something about whether you think God is sovereign over vocation.
- **This city.** It says something about your belief in Acts 17 – God putting people where He puts them.
- **This Church/The Church/A Church.** It says something about what you think God’s heart for His people, His bride, truly is.

2. Grumbling leads to idolatry.

I think you can walk the order of Paul’s story backwards. At least this is how I’ve seen it work in my own life:

- It starts with **grumbling**. I just wish I had more free time. I’ve got all these demands and pressures and responsibilities. I have my work at the church, 2 kids, and a wife. I’m trying to work out, have friendships, and be a responsible contributing human in society. I just don’t feel like I have any time for me.
- And then that **grumbling** turns into **testing**. Alright God, you say you’re good. You say your yoke is easy and your burden is light. You say you’re the good shepherd who leads me beside still waters. Where is that in my life?
- But God is not a cosmic vending machine, so he doesn’t work on my prescribed time table, doesn’t answer how I want, and what do I do? I guess I need to look for an escape somewhere else. And I turn to all sorts of unhealth, unrighteousness, **idolatry** to fill what I think I need or deserve.

It’s a big deal, not simply because it’s evil in and of itself, but because it also leads to further evil and idolatry and rebellion against God.

3. Grumbling is corrosive to life with God.

Think about what the Israelites lose here because of their grumbling.

- They lose out on the Promised Land. God from Adam and Eve onward, has been writing this story of his people in His presence in a particular place. And here we are on the brink of this generation getting to live in that hundreds and hundreds of year old promise. They could step into the fulfillment and yet they instead choose grumbling.

- But not only that, think about what they missed for the 40 years of wandering. Yes, they're in the desert. But God is providing for them and caring for them. And yet they miss out on decades of intimacy, decades of receiving and living in the love of their heavenly Father because they are too busy griping about what they don't have.

This is why I argue grumbling is corrosive to life with God. Because it fixates your attention on the proverbial desert – struggle, pain, hurt, pressures and stress, whatever in life is not how you wish it was – and you miss what God is doing in the midst of that.

We get so busy grumbling about the wilderness, that we miss the God who is present to us in the midst of it.

God's Faithfulness

So Paul says – Look at these examples, these patterns. It happened and it happens. So heed the instruction lest you fall.

But...here's the good news he follows it up with...

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

God is faithful.

- He is faithful to us despite our grumbling.
- He is faithful to us when we grumble.
- He is faithful to give us a way to escape the temptation to grumble.

There is a way of escape. What might be some of the ways we “escape” from grumbling in our lives.

How do we “escape” against Grumbling

Practices.

1. Lament

Goal is not to “hey stop grumbling and go be happy!” Life is hard. We face brokenness and struggle and suffering and pain. Some very real, some we just need a bit more patience.

But the Bible gives us the path for what to do in our sorrow – and it's not grumbling. But it's also not naive optimism.

The Bible instead calls us to ***hope-filled and hopeful lament.***

Humble honesty and grief in prayer – where we bring our doubts and our questions to the Lord in patient surrender and trust.

That is very different than angry, demanding – “you're not good and you better prove otherwise or else.” That is testing the Lord. And the Lord is not pleased with that.

Mark Vroegop (*Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*) – “If you're going to offer a complaint to God, it must be done with a humble heart...Proud, demanding questions from a heart that believes it is owed something from God will never

lean into true lament... In other words, lament does not give you an excuse to wallow in your questions or frustrations. It is a means to another end... you are not meant to linger in complaint. If you never move beyond complaint, lament loses its purposes and its power."

Complaint is a step in lament where we get honest about our grief before God.

- But when we just live in the world of complaint, that is grumbling.
- When we just complain to everyone else around us and never take our needs to God, that is grumbling.

It's dishonoring to God. It's broken. It displeases Him.

So we learn, and this is the simplest definition of lament – **to bring our grief to God in hope-filled trust.**

That's the first way of escape. When grumbling thoughts arise in our hearts, over very real brokenness, not over just some silly frustration, over very real difficulties in our lives...

Rather than join the pity party grumbling brigade, we bring our griefs to the Lord, ask Him to help us, to do what only He can do – either change us or change our circumstances, and we ask in faith and trust.

2. Gratitude

We fight, through conscious effort and practice, to grow into more grateful people.

- So we don't just try to stop grumbling about our kids, we also learn to be more grateful for them.
- So we don't just try to stop grumbling about our jobs, we also learn to be more grateful for it.
- So we don't just try to stop grumbling about our relationships, we also learn to be more grateful for them.

Gratitude is a practice, not simply a posture.

• Cues

- Picking up a piece of silverware to eat
- Putting on your shoes
- Waking up your kid

• Rhythms

- Gratitude Prayer
- Worship
- "High, Low, Marshmallow Buffaloes"

• Feasts

- Thanksgiving