

May 18–19 2013

Numbers 11

*“Beware of the Rabble”*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

God was a little angry with the children of Israel in this chapter of the Book of Numbers. Three times in the eleventh chapter we see that “anger of God.” Even though God was angry in this chapter, we must understand that this is the righteous indignation of God. God was not sinning by being angry.

From time to time in the Bible we see God expressing the emotion of anger, but a lot has to happen to make God mad. In fact, the Bible repeatedly says that God is slow to anger but abounding in love and faithfulness.<sup>1</sup> So what made God so mad? There is nothing quite as offensive to God as an attitude of ingratitude. The Israelites were complaining about the food God had provided.

For the fifteen months since they Israelites left Egypt God had provided bread for them to eat. The Bible describes the bread, which was called manna, as white, sweet, frosted bread. The people were tired of manna; they wanted meat. God gave the people what they wanted. The Bible says it rained down quail three feet deep around that camp as far as a day’s walk in any direction.

Their ungrateful, demanding, discontented, complaining attitudes towards God cost many of them their very lives. When you look at the tragic scene you can trace their complaining back to something called “the rabble.”

The rabble was a group of people that left Egypt with the Israelites.<sup>2</sup> The people were not Hebrews and were likely foreign travelers who joined out of curiosity or the hopes of starting a new life. The rabble was the instigators. They were the ones who led many Israelites astray and ultimately to their death. There are people around you who will do

---

<sup>1</sup> See [Psalm 103:8–12](#)

<sup>2</sup> See [Exodus 12:37–38](#)

nothing more than drag you down or sabotage your faith and the purpose or plan God has for your life. Beware of the rabble.

In this study, Pastor Gary shares three practical ways to help us identify the influence of the rabble in our lives.

### The Rabble Try To Pull You Back To Your Past

1. The rabble say to the Israelites in **Numbers 11:5**, *“We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at not cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.”*
  - a. The rabble left out the miserable part. They did not remind the Israelites of the taskmasters and their whips or edict of Pharaoh to slaughter the baby boys.
2. They are just like people who try to pull you back to your past. Look at the life you used to live before Christ and how much you have overcome.
  - a. There are always people in you life trying to hold you back or pull you back into old ways, old habits, old places, or old relationships.
  - b. The rabble tries to convince you that the life before Christ is better than the new life in Christ.
3. **Philippians 3:13-14** *“ . . . Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

### The Rabble Think God’s Goodness Is Never Good Enough

4. **Numbers 11:6** *“But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna.”*
  - a. Whenever you think God’s goodness is not good enough it feeds a sense of dissatisfaction and entitlement.
  - b. The rabble tried to convince the Israelites that God was holding his best from them.
5. Because of the influence of the rabble, all of a sudden, we believe that what God has given us is not good enough.
  - a. “My home, my car, my job, my money, is not good enough.” It’s the song of the rabble.
6. Rather, we should say. “God has been so good to me and blessed me. I’m content with what he has given me and I pray to be a good steward of

everything he adds to me. Thank you God for my family, job, and home. God is good to me!”

The tragic result of the influence of the rabble was that many of the people died there. In fact, [Numbers 11:34](#) says, *“Therefore, the place was called Kibroth Hattaavah,<sup>3</sup> because there they buried the people who had craved other food.”* The influence of the rabble, if allowed to persist, can lead to discontentment and an ungrateful, complaining attitude and can arouse the anger of God. Beware of the rabble!

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Numbers 11:1-35](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Discuss the story of God providing food in the wilderness for the Israelites.
  - a. In what ways has God provided for members of the group during hard times?
  - b. How did you realize the provision as God’s “best” for you?
  - c. Have you ever become discontent or ungrateful because of what or how God provided?
4. Discuss with the groups times where discontentment and ungratefulness have arisen in life?
  - a. What were the circumstances that surrounded these feelings?
  - b. How did you overcome or deal with those feelings of discontent and ungratefulness?
5. In what ways have you seen the influence of the rabble in your life?
  - a. What form did it take (i.e. co-worker, family, or a situation)?
  - b. How did you identify the rabble in your life?
  - c. How have you overcome its influence?
  - d. What could you do differently in the future?
6. Discuss with the group the consequence of an ungrateful heart.
  - a. In what ways have you experienced the consequence of an ungrateful heart especially as it pertains to the anger of God?
  - b. Read [Psalm 103:8-12](#) and discuss the patience of God.
  - c. What can we learn from this passage about being slow to anger?

---

<sup>3</sup> Kibroth Hattaavah in Hebrew means “Graves of Craving” or “Graves of Lusting.”

7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: be aware of the voice of the rabble in their lives; to search their hearts for a spirit of ungratefulness or discontent; and to help them be thankful for the goodness and blessings of God.