

LESSON 4



A LUSTING FOR FLESH

Scripture Text: Numbers 11:4-6, 10-20, 31-33

God does not condemn one for feeling natural hunger. Why was it wrong for these people to desire meat to eat? The sin was in what they did about it. Their attitude in the asking was wrong. They complained, they rebelled against God's way, they insulted God by saying that Egypt was better than His way, and lusted, or allowed a carnal, earthly desire to gain mastery over them. Had they gone to the Lord in a reverent, obedient spirit and requested flesh to eat, the result would have been different.

Today we look at another historical event to draw from it a spiritual lesson for ourselves.

MEMORY VERSE: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

—Galatians 5:16

The People Complain and Lust

Numbers 11:4-6 Traveling through the wilderness toward Canaan, the people **fell a lusting**—let a selfish desire gain control of them. Lust is an inordinate desire, desire which controls the person rather than being controlled. They **wept . . . [like spoiled children] said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?** They did not keep their desire within proper and obedient limits. They complained. They had not learned from the recent death by fire some had suffered for complaining (verses 1-3). They despised God's gift of manna that they had earlier loved, and they longed for the fish, cucumbers, onions, and garlic of Egypt that they once hated. They forgot that with the manna were freedom and liberty and with the fish and onions was slavery.

Are we ever helpless before our natural appetites and unable to control desire as these people were? Must we be driven against our will by hunger, anger, hate, or love, unable to deny their demands? We can be more than conquerors through Him that loves us (Romans 8:37). He has provided that we may have the Holy Spirit to give us power over all temptations (Philippians 4:13). If we follow His leading, we will not let desires grow to the point of lust. Read the Memory Verse.

No Satisfaction in the Flesh

The desire FOR flesh was a desire OF the flesh. There are two uses of the word *flesh* here. The first is simply flesh food, as we call meat. The word in Romans, Chapter 8, and elsewhere means the carnal, earthly, bodily, natural appetites of we humans. This flesh is the opposite of the spirit, or the higher, heavenly desires of man. It is, as the Israelites did, putting first selfish, temporary enjoyment for our bodies and shoving aside the lasting interests of the spirit. They were living **after the flesh**. It did not satisfy their desire, and it brought death. There is nothing of the flesh that brings lasting satisfaction.

The Spirit Rested Upon Them

Numbers 11:10-17 The people wept, **every man in the door of his tent**. They wanted their way. The Lord was angry and Moses also. When the Lord is angry, it is always because someone has sinned. Moses went to the Lord. He told the Lord that carrying these spoiled children in his **bosom, as a nursing father beareth the suckling child**, had grown into too heavy a burden. Moses felt need for help in bearing the burden of leading Israel. He received help. The Lord said, **Gather unto me seventy men of the . . . elders of the people . . . unto the tabernacle**. God gave him seventy elders as helpers. The seventy elders took a different course from the people. God put His Spirit upon them, the same Spirit which Moses had from Him. This would enable them to share Moses' duties. They received the wisdom, judgment, and love necessary to lead Israel. Without the power of the Spirit of God being placed upon them, they could not have done that work. It is the same today in the church. We cannot do the work of God without His Spirit upon us (1 Peter 4:11). When these elders were given the Spirit, **they prophesied**, or preached. They had the need supplied (verse 25).

God Granted Their Desire

Numbers 11:18-20 God gave Moses a message for the people—**Sanctify yourselves . . .** A gift from God was coming, and they must be clean in body and clothing to receive it. **Ye shall eat flesh . . . a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils . . . loathsome . . .** This gift was a punishment rather than a blessing. **Because that ye have despised the Lord**. They confused values, calling the bondage of Egypt better than the lasting, spiritual blessings of God. Never let us think that we could enjoy Egypt—a type of sin—if we went back to it. Once we have enjoyed the good things of the spiritual realm, the Kingdom of God, we can never be satisfied again with the things Egypt has to offer.

Their Desire Brought Death

Numbers 11:31-33 God is always true to His Word. He sent a wind that **brought quails from the sea** in great abundance. They extended a day's journey on either side of the camp. A day's journey was about twenty miles. The people gathered them for two days and a night. Each one gathered at least ten homers. A homer measured approximately eleven bushels. They spread them out all around the camp for themselves, probably for salting and drying. But while they ate, **the wrath of the Lord was kindled**. A plague of illness seized them, and many died. Read Psalm 106:13-15, where we find that God sent leanness into their souls. This is always the result of receiving our desire contrary to the will of God.

JUST A THOUGHT

**One hundred wishes to do God's will cannot
equal one doing of it.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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