LESSON 5
April 30, 2023

REBELLION IN THE FAMILY

GOLDEN TEXT

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing.” (Philippians 2:14)

USEFUL PRACTICE

Grumbling leads to arguing. Therefore, we must avoid it in our family.

SCRIPTURE READING

Numbers 11:1-7; 12:1-8

Numbers 11

1- Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.

2 When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down.

3 So that place was called Taberah, because fire from the LORD had burned among them.

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat!

5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”

7 The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin.

Numbers 12

1- Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.

2 “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” And the LORD heard this.

3 (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

4 At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, “Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you.” So the three of them went out.

5 Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward,

6 he said, “Listen to my words: “When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. 7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I) To present the root causes and damage brought about by grumbling among the people of God;

II) To identify the real reason that led to the rebellion of the siblings against Moses;

III) To raise awareness that God honors a meek and humble leader, punishing those who intend to harm him.

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will study the rebellion led by Miriam and Aaron against Moses' leadership. We will see that this rebellion happened in the family, because Moses, Miriam, and Aaron were siblings. This lesson exhorts us to be careful about grumbling and arguing in the family, which contribute to family disharmony. Hence, we will learn that it is wise to avoid family feuds, so that peace and harmony may reign among the people of God.

I - THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF GRUMBLING

1. This is how a rebellion arises.

The word "rebellion" refers to explicit acts of disobedience or a negative reaction against the rules and orders established in a social group. This is what we see in Numbers 11 and 12. In these chapters, there is a description of grumbling that ended in family rebellion against the leadership of Moses. Now let us look at three complaints that go back to the rebellion in the family of Israel's lawgiver.

2. The first complaint.

Israel had moved out of the region around Sinai, which was relatively fertile for the production of grain and water. Suddenly, after walking beyond Sinai and facing the inhospitable desert, the Israelites began to complain that Moses had brought them to die there, when they could have stayed in Egypt. That grumbling not only saddened Moses, but also God, who had set the people free from Egyptian captivity. Therefore, He brought about a judgment of fire, destroying a group of Israelites who used to complain. The Lord called that place "Taberah", which means "burning" (Num. 11:1-3).

3. The second complaint (Num. 11:4-7).

After experiencing the judgment of fire, instead of humbling themselves before God, the people began to grumble against the "manna" that God sent every morning, and miss the food of Egypt (Num. 11:4-6). They easily forgot all the hardships experienced as slaves in Egypt. Those people also

forgot the miracles worked by the Lord, when He opened the Red Sea, when He turned bitter water into drinking water, and many other miracles. Grumbling causes us to forget the good things we enjoy with God.

4. The third complaint (Num. 12:1-3).

In chapter 12, after a whole context of grumbling presented in chapter 11, we have the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron against the leadership of Moses. This is a rebellion in the family of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. First of all, Miriam and Aaron did not accept Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman, who faced a lot of resistance to be accepted, because she did not belong to any Hebrew family, but descended from Ham, son of Noah, since this people was considered vile and despicable. However, this grumbling went further. Because they were older than Moses, Miriam and Aaron wanted to be treated as protagonists like Moses (Num. 12:2). Envy in the family is a dangerous feeling.

II - THE REASON FOR THE REBELLION OF MIRIAM AND AARON

1. Envy.

They both entertained the idea that Israel's leadership would have to be shared with them. Miriam was a prophetess and Aaron was a high priest. Therefore, they thought they had the same authority as Moses, their younger brother. See that Moses was the leader, but Miriam and Aaron thought they had the right to lead the people. Now their role was to assist in Moses' leadership. This question speaks volumes: "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us?" (Num. 12:2). Envy came into the hearts of Miriam and Aaron, leading them to a corrosive feeling, stemming from the desire to take the place of others. All they did was against their own brother. That same feeling is very dangerous these days. When envy gets into the heart of the family, the consequences can be tragic.

2. Family rebellion causes arguments and offenses. Although Miriam played an important role among the people as a prophetess and counselor (Ex. 15:20, 21), she was not to turn against Moses. Though Aaron was a high priest, he was not to burn with envy against his own brother. Unfortunately, this attitude of Miriam and Aaron incited the people against Moses' leadership. God would deal with the two siblings. We must therefore remember that one key to keeping a family spiritually balanced is the practice of mutual respect among family members.

III – MOSES: A MEEK AND HUMBLE MAN

1. The humblest one on the face of the earth.

The Bible declares that Moses was a humble and meek man in his attitudes (Num. 12:3). He did not retaliate against his siblings. His meekness was a quality of character that distinguished him from other men. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Later, in the same sermon, our Lord said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt. 5:9). These two attitudes, emphasized by our Lord, were present in Moses' leading of God's people. In the worldly mindset, being meek can mean “weakness and cowardice”, but in biblical teaching, it implies the ability to exercise self-control, self-mastery. Thus, meekness is one of the qualities of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Moses had the serenity to act firmly without letting himself be carried away by anger. Even knowing of the grumbling and sedition of Miriam and Aaron against his leadership, he did not have a vengeful attitude towards his siblings. Rather, he prayed that God would forgive them. In this sense, meekness and peacemaking are virtues that the Christian family has to pray to God for, and practice. These are two indispensable virtues for the balance of the Christian family.

2. The burden of leadership.

In Numbers, chapter 11, after the second complaint of the people of Israel, Moses opened up to God about the weight of his leadership towards the Hebrews (Num. 11:11-15). There was a moment in his life when the weight of leadership caused him to lose courage to continue the mission of leading Israel to the Promised Land. Then he received direct guidance from God to set apart 70 elders from among the leaders and officials of Israel (Num. 11:16). Chosen the 70 elders, the Spirit of God rested on them and they began to prophesy (Num. 11:25). This episode dates back to the context of the rebellion of the two siblings against Moses. Again, it is a blessing when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the family; in place of hate, there is love; in place of jealousy and envy, there is partnership and communion. May the Holy Spirit work the character of Christ in our family!

3. The punishment of Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12:4-7).

The rebellion sparked by the envy of Miriam and Aaron against Moses' leadership aroused the anger of the Lord. Therefore, they were summoned, together with Moses, to come out of the tent (Num. 12:4). The Lord came down in the pillar of cloud, a demonstration of his presence, and spoke directly to the two rebels, showing them his divine sovereignty. He made it clear that with Moses, unlike with them, he spoke face to face, not in riddles. Because of the gravity of Miriam's sin in instigating her brother Aaron to collude with her against Moses, punishment against her was

immediate. At once, Miriam became leprous and was separated from the camp of Israel for seven days (Num. 12:10, 15). Thus, the text shows that every rebellion in the heart of the family has a tragic consequence. Therefore, we must ask God for wisdom to act in our family. It is necessary to avoid false accusations, back talk, destruction of the reputation of family members. This is not a behavior of those who manifest the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24). God's will is that peace and harmony be upon the Christian family, for it is the Holy Spirit who works the character of Christ in the family.

CONCLUSION

The rebellion raised by Miriam and Aaron was caused by envy of the authority entrusted by God to Moses. Therefore, the consequences of attitudes like these produce great moral and spiritual damage in the family. That is why, the apostle Paul advises us to walk in the Spirit so that the works of the flesh will not have control over our attitudes (Gal. 5:25, 26). It is time to be very prudent.