

PSALM 78:21-39

We continue the history of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness, and learn from this portion the great sin of murmuring against God. With all God's miraculous blessings before them, the Israelites showed base ingratitude; and such ingratitude brought down not only immediate vengeance but the permanent exclusion of a whole generation from the promised land. Forty years they wandered in the desert until that unbelieving generation died there.

All too many in the church profess Christ as their Saviour, but their lives are often indistinguishable from that of an unbeliever. They fail to show forth love for the Master and zealous diligence in his service, grumbling instead over what they consider their poor lot in life. Let us all take heed lest we come short of the glory of God and fail to obtain that inheritance purchased by the blood of Christ.

A Maskil of Asaph

21 Therefore YAHWEH heard and was full of wrath;
 and a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also mounted against Israel,
22 because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation.
23 Yet He commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven;
24 He rained down manna upon them to eat and gave them food from heaven.
25 Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance.
26 He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
 and by His power He directed the south wind.
27 When He rained meat upon them like the dust,
 even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,
28 then He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their dwellings.
29 So they ate and were well filled, and their desire He gave to them.
30 Before they had satisfied their desire, while their food was in their mouths,
31 the anger of God rose against them and killed some of their stoutest ones,
 and subdued the choice men of Israel.
32 In spite of all this they still sinned and did not believe in His wonderful works.
33 So He brought their days to an end in futility and their years in sudden terror.

34 When He killed them, then they sought Him,
 and returned and searched diligently for God;
35 and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer.
36 But they deceived Him with their mouth and lied to Him with their tongue.
37 For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant.
38 But He, being compassionate, forgave *their* iniquity and did not destroy *them*;

and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath.
39 Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return.

PRAYER

O heavenly Father, how our hearts smite us when we think of all our grumbling and ingratitude at the portion you have meted out to us in this life. Rather than being content in all our circumstances, we have pined away in envy at those who seem to fare better than ourselves in worldly attainments. We are guilty of looking only at the outward prosperity and failing to see the inward poverty of those the world applauds. Forgive us, we plead, and grant that we may watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. Let the example of our Saviour be ever before our eyes, for we ask in his name. Amen.