

“What elements enter into the murmuring spirit—how is it to be described?

MURMUR - a mumbled or private expression of discontent. To complain, gripe, grumble, or bellyache.

(1) At the basis of it there lies distrust and un-submissiveness. There is distrust of God’s goodness and power, and lack of submission to his will in the situation in which he has placed us. The opposite spirit is exemplified in Christ, in his first temptation in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:1–4; cf. Deut. 8:3*).

(2) Connected with this, there is forgetfulness of, and ingratitude for, benefits formerly received. This is very conspicuous in the case of these Israelites *Exodus 16:3*.

(3) The characteristic feature of this spirit is the entertaining of injurious thoughts of God—the attempt to put God in the wrong by fastening on him the imputation of dealing harshly and injuriously with us. The murmuring spirit keeps the eye bent on self, and on self's fancied wrongs, and labors hard to make out a case of ill treatment. Its tone is complaining. It would arraign the Eternal at its puny bar, and convict him of injustice. It is narrow, self-pitying, egoistic.

(4) It expresses itself in accusations and reproaches. The mental point of view already indicated prepares the way for these, and leads to them being passed off as righteous charges. God is charged foolishly (*Job 1:22*).

(5) It is *prone to exaggeration*. The Israelites can hardly have been as well off in Egypt as they here pretend, though their words (ver. 3) show that their rations in bondage must have been fairly liberal. But the wish to make their present situation look as dark as possible, leads them to magnify the advantages of their former one. They did not think so much of it when they had it.

(6) Murmuring against God may not venture to **express itself directly, and yet may do so indirectly**. The murmuring of the Israelites was of this veiled character. **They masked their rebellion against God**, and their impeaching of his goodness, by **directing their accusations against his servants**. It was God against whom they murmured (ver. 7, 8), but they slightly veiled the fact by not mentioning God, but by speaking only of Moses and Aaron. If the spirit be **bitter and rebellious**, it is God, not others, whom we are contending against (cf. *Gen. 50:19, 20; 2 Sam. 17:10*). “ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., Exodus, vol. 2, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 33.