

Series: Life of Moses

WHEREFORE HAST THOU AFFLICTED THY SERVANT NUMBERS 11

Text: Numbers 11:11

Numbers 11:11

¹¹ *And Moses said unto the LORD, **Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?** and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?*

Introduction:

A small monument made from a few stones marks the spot on Mount Washington where a young girl died on bitterly cold night.

Yet, her death was something that did not have to occur.

It seems that she and her father had decided to climb the mountain without hiring a guide.

As darkness fell the cold sapped the last of their strength, they became discouraged and sat down on the trail.

During the night the girl died from exposure and heart failure due to the cold.

When the morning dawned on the mountainside, her father soon discovered that if they had walked just a few more feet they would have seen the lights of a place called "Tiptop Cabin"; a place where a fire would have warmed their bodies; a place where they would have been safe and protected from the cold.

What prevented them from reaching that place of safety?

In a word: discouragement!

In our text, we see discouragement in the life of one of the greatest men who ever walked on this planet; a man named Moses.

As Moses climbed the mountain of leading God's people, he became discouraged because of the burdens he had been called upon to bear.

As a result, he came to the place where he just wanted to throw in the towel and quit.

This passage gives us some insights into why this event occurred in the life of Moses. Hopefully, it also teaches us some truths we need when we fight the battles of discouragement day by day.

Note:

1. THE PROBLEMS MOSES PONDERED (VS. 1-10)

The discouragement faced by Moses had its roots in all the burdens he was trying to bear as he led the children of Israel to Canaan. As those problems added up, he allowed himself to become discouraged in the midst of the journey.

Notice what Moses was dealing with:

A. Moses Faced a People Problem (vs. 1-3)

Numbers 11:1-3

¹ And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. ² And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. ³ And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

The children of Israel were complainers! They were never satisfied by anything! After a while, this would have driven anyone over the edge!

We all have "people problems" from time to time! Anytime there is a relationship between any two people there will always be the potential for problems!

Quote:

As one writer said, "To live above with saints we love, oh won't that be glory! But to love below with saints we know, well that's another story!"

Application:

Let me encourage you in this matter of dealing with others. A three step plan will guarantee you that you can overcome a problem with any other person.

- Love them like Jesus loves them, Matt. 22:39.

Matthew 22:39

³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

- Forgive them of anything and everything you think they have done to you, Eph. 4:32.

Ephesians 4:32

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- Pray for them everyday! It is impossible to carry a prayer for someone in your heart and hate them at the same time!

Not only did Moses face a People Problem but not also:

B. Moses Faced a Provision Problem (vs. 4-9)

Numbers 11:4-9

⁴ And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? ⁵ We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: ⁶ But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. ⁷ And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. ⁸ And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. ⁹ And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

These verses remind us that Moses was leading around 2 million people through the wilderness and that they had nothing to eat but Manna.

They did not like the Manna and they complained bitterly about it too!

They tried everything they could to make the Manna taste like the food of Egypt, but it never worked and they griped, whined and complained about it every day!

Sometimes we face provisional problems. In our situation, it may be some unexpected tragedy that takes our funds.

It may be medical bills, or job cut backs.

It may be that there is just more month than there is money.

Either way, I will remind you of something that we forget. Moses forgot it too! God did not call Moses to feed the children of Israel! He called Moses to lead the children of Israel.

It is God's responsibility to feed His children!

If you are facing a provisional problem today, let me remind you that if you are His and He is directing your life, then your provisional problems are His problems to solve and not your own!

Remember: Matt 6:25-33, Phil. 4:6-7, 19

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? ²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: ²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:19

¹⁹ *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

The provisions may not be what you want all the time, but it will get you through the wilderness just like the Manna did Israel.

They may not have always liked what the Lord gave them, but I never read where any of them starved to death!

Not only did Moses Face a People and Provisional Problems but also:

C. Moses Faced a Personal Problem (vs. 10)

Numbers 11:10

¹⁰ *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.*

Because of the weight of the load he was bearing, Moses allowed himself to become discouraged. The word "displeased" means to be "broken to pieces, to be utterly destroyed". Moses had a breakdown!

If we are not careful, the problems we face in life can produce this attitude in our hearts! It happened to Moses!

It happened to Elijah, 1 Kings 19. It happened to Jonah, Jonah 4. It can happen to us too!

Why did this happen?

Moses had allowed the problems he faced to become larger than the God he served!

Anytime that we allow that to happen in our lives, we are in danger of a major breakdown!

We need to come to the place where we remember that every problem we face has the potential to be greater than our ability to handle that problem!

Since that is true, we need to keep our eyes on the Lord as we face our problems.

Note not only the "Problem Moses Pondered" but also:

2. THE PRAYER MOSES PRAYED (VS. 11-15)

As Moses begins to talk to God about his problem, he talks to God in a way that reveals to us the condition of his heart!

He takes a tone with God that is angry and irreverent!

He shows us how not to pray in the time of a crisis!

Notice:

A. Moses Prayed a Prayer of Confusion (vs. 11-12a)

Numbers 11:11-12

¹¹ And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? ¹² Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

Moses seems to be asking God "Why?" He seems to be saying to the Lord, "These are Your people! I didn't give birth to them! They are your problem and not mine! Why then am I having to bear them and their burdens?"

Moses couldn't grasp the "why" of the situation.

Moses failed to remember that the details were God's responsibility and not his!

God had called Moses to lead the people, not feed them!

We react the same way at times. We at time ask God "WHY"

There is no good answer to our why questions!
However, I would propose that we need to adopt a different mindset concerning the troubles we face. I would suggest that instead of asking "Why", we need to learn to ask two different questions:

- Why Not Me?

The Lord said that we could expect trouble in this life.

John 16:33

³³ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Note the words of Job:

Job 14:1

¹ *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*

Why then should we expect to live lives free from troubles and trials? When trouble comes to you, don't ask "Why?", instead learn to give thanks in the midst of trouble.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

¹⁸ *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

Secondly we need to ask:

- What?

When the Lord allows trouble in our life, remember that it must be part of His plan for you, Rom. 8:28.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

God is merely growing us and showing us a new and more marvelous side of Himself! His purpose in the valleys He sends us through is to change us so that we become for like Him!

Quote:

Thomas Watson said, "Affliction is the furnace in which God tries His gold!"

We need to ask the Lord, "WHAT" is the lesson I have been led here to learn?

Not Moses not only "Prayed a Prayer of Confusion" but also:

B. Moses Prayed a Prayer of Confession (vs. 12-14)

Numbers 11:12-14

¹² Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? ¹³ Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. ¹⁴ I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

Moses came to the place to which we all need to come! He came to the place where he saw, felt and confessed his weaknesses. He knew that he was insufficient to the task at hand.

He described himself as a father attempting to nurse a child! He had no ability to provide anything for those 2 million people!

It is difficult to come to the place of total weakness and dependence before the Lord. But until we do, we will never know Him and His power in our problems!

The sooner we come to the place where we know for sure that we can't, that is the sooner will arrive at the place where we will know that He can!

Moses not only “Prayed a Prayer of Confusions and Confession” but also:

C. Moses Prayed a Prayer of Capitulation (vs. 15)

Numbers 11:15

¹⁵ And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

In this verse, Moses is giving God an ultimatum!

He says, "Either get me out of this mess or kill me!"

Moses also confesses the fact that he cannot bear the thought of facing total failure of his hopes, plans and dreams.

Moses has come to the place where he is ready to offer up his resignation.

He is quitting!

How many of us have walked in these shoes? The problems of life have become so overwhelming and the burdens so great that we begin to ask to be delivered from them, even by death.

It is never good to give God ultimatums.

It's all right to reach the end of your rope, but it is never all right to just quit on God!

Note not only the “People Problem Moses Pondered”, and the “Prayer Moses Prayed” but lastly:

3. THE PRICE MOSES PAID (VS. 16-25)

Whenever we come to the place that we allow the problems of life to eclipse the face of God, there will always be a price to pay.

Moses paid that price and so will we if we allow things to become larger than God.

Note:

A. Moses Paid a Price in the Realm of Authority
(vs. 16-17)

Numbers 11:16-17

¹⁶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

¹⁷ And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

Instead of being the sole leader, Moses now had to share leadership with 70 other men.

Observation:

I have seen this happen in churches and the formation of committees and boards.

Moses had been called to be the leader of the people, but he gave up that lone leadership position and had to share his place with others.

Not only did Moses pay “A Price in the Realm of Authority” but also:

B. Moses Paid a Price in the Realm of Ability (vs. 17, 25)

Numbers 11:17

¹⁷ And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

Numbers 11:25

²⁵ And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

These verses tell us that God also anointed these 70 elders for the task to which He was assigning them. Did you notice where God got the anointing that He gave them? He took from the spirit He had given to Moses and gave it to others!

Moses became no less than he had ever been, but his potential to be greater had become less than it had ever been. You see, what Moses had failed to recognize, and what the actions of the Lord pointed out, was the fact that Moses already possessed all he needed to get the job done for the Lord!

When we come to the place where we are ready to quit on God, we have better be ready for God to remove His hand of blessing from our lives! You may think that you cannot make it, but if you are saved, then God has already equipped you with all you need to fight the battle you face.

Illustration:

David and Goliath - Saul tried to give David his armor. David knew that what he already had, his sling, a few smooth stones and the presence of God was enough to win the day! If God has placed you in it, He has prepared you to handle it! If you quit, He will give the honor and the blessing to one who will stand and do His perfect will. He did it with Moses and He will do it with you and me!

Close:

What will you do when you hit the end of your rope? If you are like Moses, you will try to find a place to get off and let someone else take the heat. If you do what is right, you will submit to that which the Lord is doing in your life and you will trust Him to meet all the needs, answer all the questions and solve all the problems! There was one thing Moses did right in this whole affair: he turned to the Lord in a moment of crisis. Is that what you need to do this evening? If so, the way is

open. Come to Him, tell Him all about it and trust Him to take care of it!