

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

by

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"Things new and old."

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by

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Numbers 11

Hitherto we have been occupied, in our study of this book, with GOD's mode of ordering and providing for His people in the wilderness. We have travelled over the first ten chapters and seen in them the illustration of the wisdom, goodness, and forethought of the Lord, the GOD of Israel.

But, now, we reach a point at which dark clouds gather round us. Up to this, GOD and His actings have been before us; But, now, we are called to contemplate man and his miserable ways. This is ever sad and humiliating. Man is the same everywhere. In Eden, in the restored earth, in the wilderness, in the land of Canaan, in the Church, in the Millennium, man is proved to be a total failure. The very moment he moves, he breaks down. Thus, in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, GOD is seen acting as Creator; everything is done and ordered in divine perfection, and man is placed in the scene to enjoy the fruit of divine wisdom, goodness, and power. But in Genesis 3 all is changed. The moment man acts, it is to disobey and bring in ruin and desolation. So after the deluge, when the earth had passed through that deep and dreadful baptism, and when man again takes his place therein, he exposes himself, and proves that, so far from being able to subdue and govern the earth, he cannot even govern himself (Genesis 9). Hardly had Israel been brought out of Egypt, when they made the golden calf. No sooner had the priesthood been set up, than the sons of Korah offered strange fire. Directly Saul was made king, he proved willful and disobedient.

So also when we turn to the pages of the New Testament, we find the same thing. No sooner is the Church set up and adorned with Pentecostal gifts, than we hear the sad accents of murmuring

and discontent. In short, man's history, from first to last, here, there, and everywhere, is marked with failure. There is not so much as a single exception from Eden down to the close of the millennial day.

It is well to consider this solemn and weighty fact, and to give it a deep place in the heart.

It is eminently calculated to correct all false notions as to man's real character and condition. It is well to bear in mind that the awful sentence which struck terror into the heart of the voluptuous king of Babylon has, in point of fact, been passed upon the entire human race, and to each individual son and daughter of fallen Adam, namely, **"Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting."**

Has the reader fully accepted this sentence against himself? This is a serious inquiry. We feel imperatively called to press it home. Say, reader, art thou one of Wisdom's children? Dost thou justify GOD and condemn thyself? Hast thou taken thy place as a self-destroyed, guilty, hell-deserving sinner? If so, CHRIST is for thee. He died to put away sin, and to bear your many sins. Only trust him and all He is and has is thine. He is thy wisdom, thy righteousness, thy sanctification, and thy redemption. All who simply and heartily believe in JESUS have passed clean off the old ground of guilt and condemnation, and are seen by GOD on the new ground of eternal life and divine righteousness. They are accepted in the risen and victorious CHRIST. **"As he is, so are we in this world"** (I John 4:17).

We would earnestly entreat the reader not to rest until this most momentous question is clearly and thoroughly settled in the light of GOD's own word and presence. we pray that GOD the Holy Ghost may deeply exercise the heart and conscience of the unconverted and undecided reader, and lead such to the Saviour's feet.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

"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. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them. And the mixed 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? we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."

Here the poor human heart lets itself thoroughly out. Its tastes and its tendencies are made manifest. The people sigh after the land of Egypt, and cast back wistful looks - after its fruits and its fleshpots. They do not say anything about the lash of the taskmaster, and the toil of the brick-kilns. There is total silence as to these things. Nothing is remembered now, save those resources by which Egypt had ministered to the lusts of nature.

How often is this the case with us! When once the heart loses its freshness in the divine life - when heavenly things begin to lose their savour - when first love declines - when CHRIST

ceases to be a satisfying and altogether precious portion for the soul - when the Word of GOD and prayer lose their charm and become heavy, dull, and mechanical; then the eye wanders back toward the world, the heart follows the eye, and the feet follow the heart. We forget, at such moments, what the world was to us when we were in it and of it. We forget what toil and slavery, what misery and degradation, we found in the service of sin and of Satan, and think only of the gratification and ease, the freedom from those painful exercises, conflicts, and anxieties which attend upon the wilderness path of GOD's people.

All this is most sad, and should lead the soul into the most profound self-judgment. It is terrible when those who have set out to follow the Lord begin to grow weary of the way and of GOD's provision. How dreadful must those words have sounded in the ear of the Lord, "**But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.**" Ah! Israel, what more didst thou need? Was not that heavenly food enough for thee! Couldst thou not live upon that which the hand of thy GOD had provided for thee?

Do we count ourselves free to ask such questions? Do we always find our heavenly manna sufficient for us? What means the enquiry inquiry raised by professing Christians as to the right or wrong of such and such worldly pursuits and pleasures? Have we not even heard from the lips of persons making the very highest profession such words as these, "How are we to fill up the day! We cannot be always thinking about CHRIST and heavenly things. We must have some little recreation."

Is not this somewhat akin to Israel's language in Numbers 11? Yes truly; and as is the language, so is the acting. We prove, alas! that CHRIST is not enough for the heart, by the palpable fact of our betaking ourselves to other things. How often, for example, does the Bible lie neglected for hours, while the light and worthless literature of the world is greedily devoured. What mean the well-thumbed newspaper and the almost dust-covered Bible? Do not these things tell a tale? Is not this despising the manna, and sighing after, nay, devouring, the leeks and onions?

We specially call the attention of young Christians to that which is now before us.

We are deeply impressed with a sense of their danger of falling into the very sin of Israel as recorded in our chapter. No doubt we are all in danger; but the young amongst us are peculiarly so. Those of us who are advanced in life are not so likely to be drawn away by the frivolous pursuits of the world - by its concerts, its flower shows, its pleasure parties, its vain songs and light literature. But the young will have a dash of the world. They long to taste it for themselves. They do not find CHRIST an all sufficient portion for the heart. They want recreation.

Alas! alas! what a thought! How sad to hear a Christian say, "I want some recreation. How can I fill up the day? I cannot be always thinking of JESUS." we should like to ask all who speak thus, How will you fill up eternity? Shall not CHRIST be sufficient to fill up its countless ages? Shall you want recreation there? Will you sigh for light literature, vain songs, and frivolous pursuits there?

It will, perhaps, be said, "we shall be different then." In what respect? We have the divine nature - we have the Holy Ghost - we have CHRIST for our portion - we belong to Heaven we are brought to GOD. "But we have an evil nature in us." Well, are we to cater for that? Is it for that

we crave recreation? must we try to help our wretched flesh - our corrupt nature - to fill up the day? Nay, we are called to deny it, to mortify it, to reckon it dead. This is Christian recreation. This is the mode in which the saint is called to fill up His day.

How is it possible for us to grow in the divine life if we are only making provision for the flesh?

Egypt's food cannot nourish the new nature; and the great question for us is this, which do we really mean to nourish and cherish - the new or the old? It must be obvious that the divine nature cannot possibly feed upon newspapers, vain songs, and light literature; and hence, if we give ourselves, in any measure, to these latter, our souls must wither and droop.

May we have grace to think of these things - to think seriously. May we so walk in the Spirit that CHRIST may ever be a satisfying portion for our hearts. Had Israel, in the wilderness, walked with GOD, they never could have said, **"Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes."**

That manna would have been quite enough for them. And so with us. If we really walk with GOD, in this wilderness world, our souls shall be satisfied with the portion which He gives, and that portion is heavenly CHRIST. Can He ever fail to satisfy? Does He not satisfy the heart of GOD? Does He not fill all Heaven with His glory? Is He not the theme of angels' song, and the object of their adoring homage and wondering worship? Is He not the one grand subject of everlasting counsels and purposes? Doth not the history of His ways overlap, eternity?

What answer have we to give to all these queries? what but a hearty, unreserved, unhesitating, YES? Well, then, is not this blessed One, in the deep mystery of His Person, in the moral glory of His ways, in the brightness and blessedness of His character, is not He enough for our hearts! Do we want anything beside? Must we get the newspaper or some light magazine to fill up the vacuum in our souls? Must we turn from CHRIST to a flower show or a concert?

Alas! that we should have to write thus. It is most sad but it is most needful; and we here put this question most pointedly to the leader, Dost thou really find CHRIST insufficient to satisfy thy heart? Hast thou cravings which He does not fully meet? If so, thou art in a very alarming condition of soul, and it behooves thee to look at once, and to look closely, into this solemn matter. Get down on thy face before GOD, in honest self-judgment. Pour out thy heart to Him. Tell Him all. Own to Him how thou hast fallen and wandered - as surely thou must have done when GOD's CHRIST is not enough for thee. Have it all out in secret with thy GOD, and take no rest until thou art fully and blessedly restored to communion with Himself - to heart fellowship with Him about the Son of His love.

But we must return to our chapter, and in so doing we call the readers attention to an expression full of weighty admonition for us:

"And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again."

There is nothing more damaging to the cause of CHRIST or to the souls of His people than association with men of mixed principles. It is very much more dangerous than having to do with

open and avowed enemies. Satan knows this well, and hence his constant effort to lead the Lord's people to link themselves with those who are only half and half; or, on the other hand, to introduce spurious materials-false professors, into the midst of those who are seeking, in any measure, to pursue a path of separation from the world. We have repeated allusions to this special character of evil, in the New Testament. We have it both prophetically in the Gospels, and historically in the Acts and in the Epistles. Thus we have the tares and the leaven in Matthew 13. Then in the Acts we find persons attaching themselves to the assembly who were like the "**mixed multitude**" of Numbers 11. And, finally, we have apostolic reference to spurious materials introduced by the enemy for the purpose of corrupting the testimony and subverting the souls of GOD's people. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of "**false brethren unawares brought in**" (Galatians 2:4) Jude also speaks of "**certain men crept in unawares**" (Verse 4).

From all this we learn the urgent need of vigilance on the part of GOD's people; and not only of vigilance, but also of absolute dependence upon the Lord, who alone can preserve them from the entrance in of false materials, and keep them free from all contact with men of mixed principles and doubtful character.

"**The mixed multitude**" is sure to "**fall a lusting**," and the people of GOD are in imminent danger of being drawn away from their proper simplicity, and of growing weary of the heavenly manna - their proper food. What is needed is, plain decision for CHRIST; thorough devotedness to Him and to His cause.

Where a company of believers are enabled to go on in whole-heartedness for CHRIST and in marked separation from this present world, there is not so much danger of persons of equivocal character seeking a place among them; though doubtless Satan will always seek to mar the testimony by the introduction of hypocrites. Such persons do obtain an entrance, and then by their evil ways bring reproach on the Lord's name. Satan knew full well what he was doing, when he led the mixed multitude to attach themselves to the congregation of Israel. It was not all at once that the effect of this admixture was made manifest. The people had come forth with a high hand; they had passed through the Red Sea, and raised the song of victory on its banks. All looked bright and promising; but "**the mixed multitude**" were there, notwithstanding, and the effect of their presence was very speedily made apparent.

Thus it is ever, in the history of GOD's people.

We may notice, in those great spiritual movements which have taken place from age to age, certain elements of decay which, at the first, were hidden from view by the flowing tide of grace and energy; but when that tide began to ebb, then those elements made their appearance.

This is very serious, and calls for much holy watchfulness. It applies to individuals just as forcibly as to the people of GOD collectively. In our early moments, our young days, when zeal and freshness characterized us, the spring tide of grace rose so blessedly that many things were allowed to escape unjudged, which were, in reality, seeds flung into the ground by the enemy's hand, and which, in due season, are sure to germinate and fructify. Hence it follows that both assemblies of Christians and individual Christians should ever be on the watch tower - ever keeping jealous guard lest the enemy gain an advantage in this matter. Where the heart is true to CHRIST, all is sure to come right in the end. Our GOD is so gracious, He takes care of us and

preserves us from a thousand snares. May we learn to trust him and to praise Him!

But we have further lessons to draw from the weighty section which lies open before us. Not only have we to contemplate failure on the part of the congregation of Israel; but even Moses himself is seen faltering and almost sinking beneath the weight of his responsibility.

"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? 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? Whence should I have flesh to give unto, all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat; I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. 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" (Verses 11-15).

This is truly wonderful language. It is not that we would think for a moment of dwelling upon the failures and infirmities of so dear and so devoted a servant as Moses. Far be the thought. It would ill become us to comment upon the actings or the sayings of one of whom the Holy Ghost has declared that **"he was faithful in all his house"** (Hebrews 3:2).

Moses, like all the Old Testament saints, has taken his place amongst the **"spirits of just men made perfect,"** and every inspired allusion to him throughout the pages of the New Testament tends only to put honour upon him, and to set him forth as a most precious vessel.

But still we are bound to ponder the inspired history now before us - history penned by Moses himself.

True it is - blessedly true - that the defects and failures of GOD's people, in Old Testament times, are not commented upon in the New Testament; yet are they recorded, with faithful accuracy, in the Old; and wherefore? Is it not for our learning? Unquestionably. **"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"** (Romans 15:4).

What then are we to learn from the remarkable outburst of feeling recorded in Numbers 11:11-15?

We learn this at least, that it is the wilderness that really brings out what is in the very best of us. It is there we prove what is in our hearts, and, inasmuch as the Book of Numbers is, emphatically, the book of the wilderness, it is just there we might expect to find all sorts of failure and infirmity fully unfolded. The Spirit of GOD faithfully chronicles everything. He gives us men as they are; and even though it be a Moses that **"speaks unadvisedly with his lips,"** that very unadvised speaking is recorded for our admonition and instruction. Moses **"was a man subject to like passions as we are;"** and it is very evident that, in the portion of his history now before us, his heart sinks under the tremendous weight of his responsibilities.

It will, perhaps, be said, "No wonder his heart should sink." No wonder, surely, for his burden

was far too heavy for human shoulders. But the question is, was it too heavy for divine shoulders? Was it really the case that Moses was called to bear the burden alone? Was not the living GOD with him? And was not He sufficient. What did it matter whether GOD were pleased to act by one man or by ten thousand? All the power, all the wisdom, all the grace, was in Him. He is the fountain of all blessedness, and, in the judgment of which, it makes not one whit of difference as to the channel, or whether there is one channel, or a thousand and one.

This is a fine moral principle for all the servants of CHRIST.

It is most needful for all such to remember that whenever the Lord places a man in a position of responsibility, He will both fit him for it and maintain him in it. It is, of course, another thing altogether if a man will rush unsent into any field of work, or any post of difficulty or danger. In such a case, we may assuredly look for a thorough breakdown, sooner or later. But when GOD calls a man to a certain position, He will endow him with the needed grace to occupy it. He never sends any one a warfare at his own charges; and therefore all we have to do is to draw upon Him for all we need. This holds good in every case.

We can never fail if we only cling to the living GOD. We can never run dry, if we are drawing from the fountain. Our tiny springs will soon dry up; but our Lord JESUS CHRIST declares that, **"He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."**

This is a grand lesson for the wilderness. We cannot get on without it. Had Moses fully understood it, he never would have given utterance to such words as these: **"Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?"** He would have fixed his eye only upon GOD. He would have known that he was but an instrument in the hands of GOD, whose resources were illimitable. Assuredly, Moses could not supply that vast assembly with food even for a single day; but the Lord could supply the need of every living thing, and supply it for ever.

Do we really believe this? Does it not sometimes appear as though we doubted it? Do we not sometimes feel as though we were to supply instead of GOD? And then is it any marvel if we quail, and falter, and sink? Well indeed might Moses say, **"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me."**

There was only one heart that could bear with such a company, namely, the heart of that blessed One, who, when they were toiling amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, had come down to deliver them, and who, having redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, had taken up His abode in their midst. He was able to bear them, and He alone. His loving heart and mighty hand were alone adequate to the task; and if Moses had been in the full power of this great truth, he would not and could not have said, **"If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I play thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight and let me not see my wretchedness."**

This surely was a dark moment in the history of this illustrious servant of GOD.

It reminds us somewhat of the prophet Elijah, when he flung himself at the base of the juniper tree and entreated the Lord to take away his life. How wonderful to see those two men together on the mount of transfiguration! It proves, in a very marked way, that GOD's thoughts are not as

ours, nor His ways as ours. He had something better in store for Moses and Elijah than anything that they contemplated. Blessed be His name, He rebukes our fears by the riches of His grace, and when our poor hearts would anticipate death and wretchedness, He gives life, victory, and glory.

However, we cannot but see, that, in shrinking from a position of weighty responsibility, Moses was really giving up a place of high dignity and holy privilege. This seems most evident from the following passage.

"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. 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" (Verses 16, 17).

Was there any additional power gained by the introduction of seventy men?

Not spiritual power certainly, inasmuch as it was only the spirit that was upon Moses, after all. True, there were seventy men instead of one; but the multiplication of men was no increase of spiritual power. It saved Moses trouble, but it lost him dignity. He was henceforth to be a joint instrument instead of the sole one. It may be said that Moses - blessed servant as he was! - did not want dignity for himself, but rather sought a shady, retired, humble path. No doubt; but this does not touch the question before us.

Moses, as we shall see presently, was the meekest man upon the face of the earth; nor do we mean even to hint that any mere man would have done better under the circumstances. But then we must seek to bear away with us the great practical lesson which our chapter so impressively teaches. The very best of men fail; and it seems exceedingly plain that Moses, in the eleventh chapter of Numbers, was not in the calm elevation of faith. He appears, for the moment, to have lost that even balance of soul which is the sure result of finding one's center in the living GOD. We gather this, not merely from the fact of his tottering beneath the weight of his responsibility; but let us ponder the following paragraph.

"And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, Saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word will come to pass unto thee or not" (Verses 18-23).

In all this we see the working of that spirit of unbelief which ever tends to limit the Holy One of Israel.

Could not the Almighty GOD, the Possessor of Heaven and earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth - could not fail provide flesh for six hundred thousand footmen? Alas! it is just here we all so sadly fail. We do not enter, as we ought, into the reality of having to do with the living GOD. Faith brings GOD into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties; yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, GOD is the grand answer to every question - the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence, it matters not in the least to faith, whether it be six hundred thousand or six hundred millions; it knows that GOD is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, "How can such and such things be?" It is full of "Hows"; but faith has one great answer to ten thousand "hows," and that answer is - GOD.

"And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. 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 seventh elders; and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, And did not cease."

The true secret of all ministry is spiritual power. It is not man's genius, or man's intellect, or man's energy; but simply the power of the Spirit of GOD. This was true in the days of Moses, and it is true now. **"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"** (Zechariah 4:6). It is well for all ministers to bear this ever in mind. It will sustain the heart and give constant freshness to their ministry. A ministry which flows from abiding dependence upon the Holy Ghost can never become barren. If a man is drawing upon his own resources, he will soon run dry. It matters not what his powers may be, or how extensive his reading, or how vast his stores of information; if the Holy Ghost be not the spring and power of his ministry, it must, sooner or later, lose its freshness and its effectiveness.

How important therefore that all who minister, whether in the Gospel or in the Church of GOD, should lean continually and exclusively on the power of the Holy Ghost! He knows what souls need, and He can supply it. But He must be trusted and used. It will not do to lean partly on self and partly on the Spirit of GOD. If there be anything of self-confidence, it will soon be made apparent. We must really get at the bottom of all that belongs to self, if we are to be the vessels of the Holy Ghost.

It is not - need we say it? - that there should not be holy diligence and earnestness in the study of GOD's Word, and in the study too, of exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and the varied difficulties of souls. Quite the reverse. We feel persuaded that the more absolutely we lean, in self-emptiness, upon the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, the more diligently and earnestly we shall study both the Book and the soul. It would be a fatal mistake for a man to use professed dependence upon the Spirit as a plea for neglecting prayerful study and meditation. **"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all"** (I Timothy 4:15).

But, after all, let it ever be remembered that the Holy Ghost is the ever living, never failing

spring of ministry. It is He alone that can bring forth in divine freshness and fullness, the treasures of GOD's Word, and apply them, in heavenly power, to the soul's present need. It is not a question of bringing forth new truth, but simply of unfolding the word itself, and bringing it to bear upon the moral and spiritual condition of the people of GOD. This is true ministry. A man may speak a hundred times on the same portion of Scripture, to the same people, and, on each occasion, he may minister CHRIST, in spiritual freshness, to their souls. And, on the other hand, a man may rack his brain to find out new subjects, and new modes of handling old themes, and, all the while, there may not be one atom of CHRIST or of spiritual power in his ministry.

All this holds good in reference to the evangelist, as well as to the teacher or pastor. A man may be called to preach the Gospel in the same place for years, and he may, at times, feel burdened by the thought of having to address the same audience, on the same theme, week after week, month after month, year after year. He may feel at a loss for something new, something fresh, some variety. He may wish to get away into some new sphere, where the subjects which are familiar to him will be new to the people. It will greatly help such to remember that the one grand theme of the evangelist is CHRIST.

The power to handle that theme is the Holy Ghost; and the one to whom that theme is to be unfolded is the poor lost sinner. Now, CHRIST is ever new; the power of the Spirit is ever fresh; the soul's condition and destiny ever intensely interesting. Furthermore, it is well for the evangelist to bear in mind, on every fresh occasion of rising to preach, that those to whom he preaches are really ignorant of the Gospel, and hence he should preach as though it were the very first time his audience had ever heard the message, and the first time he had ever delivered it. For, be it remembered, the preaching of the Gospel, in the divine acceptance of the phrase, is not a barren statement of mere evangelical doctrine - a certain form of words enunciated over and over again in wearisome routine. Far from it. To preach the Gospel is really to unfold the heart of GOD, the person and work of CHRIST; and all this by the present energy of the Holy Ghost, from the exhaustless treasury of Holy Scripture.

May all preachers keep these things before the mind, and then it will not matter whether it be one preacher or seventy, one man in the same place for fifty years, or the same man in fifty different places in one year. The question is not at all as to new men or new places, but simply and entirely as to the power of the Holy Ghost unfolding CHRIST to the soul. Thus in the case of Moses, as recorded in our chapter, there was no increase of power. It was the spirit that was upon him given to the seventy elders.

GOD can act by one man just as well as by seventy; and if He does not act, seventy are no more than one. It is of the very utmost importance to keep GOD ever before the soul. This is the true secret of power and freshness whether for the evangelist, the teacher, or any one else.

When a man can say, "**all my springs are in God**," he need not be troubled as to a sphere of work, or competency to fill it. But when this is not so, we can well understand why a man should sigh for a division of labour and responsibility.

We may remember, at the opening of the book of Exodus, how unwilling Moses was to go into Egypt, in simple dependence upon GOD, and how readily he went in company with Aaron. Thus it is ever. We like something tangible, something that the eye can see, and the hand can handle.

We find it hard to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. And yet the very props we lean upon often prove to be broken reeds that pierce the hand. Aaron proved to be a fruitful source of sorrow to Moses; and those whom we, in our folly, imagine to be indispensable coadjutors, frequently turn out the very reverse. O that we may All learn to lean, with an undivided heart, and unshaken confidence, upon the living GOD.

But we must draw this section to a close, and ere doing so, we shall just glance for a moment at the truly excellent spirit in which Moses meets the new circumstances in which he had placed himself.

It is one thing to shrink from the weight of responsibility and care, and it is quite another thing to carry oneself with grace and genuine humility toward those who are called to share that weight with us. The two things are totally different, and we may often see the differences strikingly illustrated. In the scene now before us, Moses manifests that exquisite meekness which so specially characterized him.

"But there remained two of the (seventy) men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"

This is perfectly beautiful. Moses was far removed from that wretched spirit of envy which would let no one speak but himself. He was prepared, by grace, to rejoice in any and every manifestation of true spiritual power, no matter where or through whom. He knew full well that there could be no right prophesying save by the power of the Spirit of GOD; and wherever that power was exhibited, who was he that he should seek to quench or hinder?

Would there were more of this excellent spirit! May we each cultivate it! May we have grace to rejoice unfeignedly in the testimony and service of all the Lord's people, even though we may not see eye to eye with them, and though our mode and our measure may vary. Nothing can be more contemptible than that petty spirit of envy and jealousy which will not permit a man to take an interest in any work but his own. We may rest assured that where the spirit of CHRIST is in action in the heart, there will be the ability to go out and embrace the wide field of our blessed Master's work and all His beloved workmen: there will be the hearty rejoicing in having the work done, no matter who is the doer of it.

A man whose heart is full of CHRIST will be able to say - and to say it without affectation, "Provided the work is done - provided CHRIST is glorified - provided souls are saved - provided the Lord's flock is cared for and fed, it matters nothing to me who does the work."

This is the right spirit to cultivate, and it stands out in bright contrast with the narrowness and self occupation which can only rejoice in work in which "I, myself have a prominent place. may the Lord deliver us from all this, and enable us to cherish that temper of soul expressed by Moses

when he said, **"Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them?"**

The closing paragraph of our chapter shows us the people in the miserable and fatal enjoyment of that for which their hearts had lusted.

"He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."

They got what they longed for and found it death. They would have flesh; and with the flesh came the judgment of GOD. This is most solemn. May we heed the warning! The poor heart is full of vain desires and hateful lusts. The heavenly manna fails to satisfy. There must be something else. GOD allows us to have it. But what then? Leanness - barrenness - judgment! O Lord, keep our hearts fixed on thyself alone and at all times! Be thou the ever satisfying portion of our souls, while we tread this desert, and till we see thy face in glory!

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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