

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 10: 29-36

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 10. Today, we are reading verses 29 through 36.

Moses made two silver trumpets according to God's command, as the final preparation for moving forward. On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the priests sounded the silver trumpets, and the Israelites officially set out, leaving the wilderness of Sinai where they had stayed for ten months and five days, and entering the wilderness of Paran. The order in which the Israelites marched was completely according to the order God had spoken to Moses, and which Moses had commanded all the Israelites. At this time, the Israelites had already become the army of the LORD. They had God's presence and God's leading, and they moved forward in the wilderness toward the good land of Canaan promised by God.

Today's passage additionally records two matters: the first is concerning the Gentiles who went with the Israelites, in verses 29-32; the second is concerning the ark leading the Israelites on their way, in verses 33-36.

Verse 29: "Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, 'We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, "I will give it to you." Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel.'"

The translation in the Chinese Union Version is not very clear, and it is uncertain whether this refers to Moses' father-in-law or brother-in-law. Actually, Moses' father-in-law was Reuel the Midianite. In Exodus 2:16-22, after Moses killed the Egyptian, he fled to Midian, where he helped the seven daughters of the priest of

Midian. Exodus 2:18 records that they came to their father Reuel and told him what had happened. So, the name of this priest of Midian was Reuel. Later, Moses married Zipporah, one of the seven daughters, and Reuel became Moses' father-in-law. In Exodus 18:1, Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for His people Israel. From this verse we see that Reuel was also called Jethro. Hobab was the son of Reuel, and therefore he was Moses' brother-in-law.

Moses invited Hobab to go with the Israelites to the promised good land. Moses himself was a very powerful leader; the twelve tribes of Israel had an army of 600,000; and God also used the cloud to guide them on the way forward. Logically speaking, they did not need anyone else's help. Yet Moses humbly sought Hobab's help and invited Hobab to go with them to the good land promised by God, and promised that they would treat him well.

The Bible specifically records this matter, indicating in advance that the gospel was originally for all peoples. Although God had predetermined the path by which the gospel would advance—first coming to the Israelites and then spreading from the Israelites to all nations—yet in the Old Testament, God repeatedly showed that the Gentiles also could receive the benefits of the gospel. Moses' invitation to Hobab to go with them to the good land can also be seen as a model of preaching the gospel. First, Moses acknowledged that he himself was a person following God. Second, God had already given the promise of the good land. Then Moses invited Hobab to go with them and assured him that Hobab also could receive the benefits of the good land.

When we preach the gospel today, we must first tell others that we are people who follow God. Second, we must present to them the promise God has already given in the gospel. Then we invite the other person to receive the gospel, and confirm that once he receives the gospel, he will surely receive the benefits of the gospel.

Verse 30: “And he said to him, ‘I will not go, but I will depart to my own land and to my relatives.’”

Hobab’s response was the same as that of most gospel friends. Man’s first response to the gospel is rejection. In man’s fallen mind, how could something so good be received freely? People do not believe because they have not tasted it, and therefore they are unwilling to easily take the first step. They want to return to their own land and their own relatives, to a place that is familiar and safe.

Dear brothers and sisters, the next time you are rejected when preaching the gospel, do not be discouraged. In fact, this is the most normal response of a gospel friend. People all like to remain in their comfort zone. Let us continue to see how Moses handled this.

Verse 31: “So Moses said, ‘Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes.’”

Moses’ response was very constructive. He not only lowered himself and asked Hobab not to leave; he also went a step further and found the place where Hobab could make a contribution. No one wants to merely occupy space for nothing. Everyone is willing to be able to contribute to a group, and in this way, he can develop a sense of belonging to that group.

Moses was very clear about Hobab’s strength. Hobab had lived in the wilderness of Midian for many years. He knew how to survive in the wilderness, and he also knew the dangers of the wilderness and how to avoid dangerous situations. The Israelites were about to enter the wilderness of Paran, which was also called “the great and terrible wilderness,” and naturally there were many dangerous places. When the Israelites camped in the wilderness, Hobab could be the eyes of the Israelites and help them pass through the wilderness safely.

This reminds us not to treat gospel friends only as guests. At the proper time, we should allow them to participate in the church life, especially when they can provide some help. Through active participation, they may instead more easily

taste the sweetness of the church life and experience the joy of becoming part of one family.

Verse 32: “And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be—that whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same we will do to you.”

Whatever good things God would give to the Israelites, Hobab could also share in these good things. For God’s people, God’s promises must be received by faith. If faith is insufficient, God’s promises cannot be laid hold of and will appear unreal. Moses himself firmly believed that God’s promise would not fail, and he was also certain that if Hobab wanted to receive God’s good things, he had to go with the Israelites. Therefore, Moses invited Hobab once again to go with him and promised that the good things God would give to the Israelites, Hobab would also have a share in.

The Bible does not directly tell us whether Hobab went with Moses, but Judges 1:16 records that the descendants of Moses’ brother-in-law—the Kenite, that is, Hobab—dwelt with the people of Judah in the wilderness of Judah. So, it is very clear that Hobab went with Moses, and after entering the good land, he was also accepted by the people of Judah and lived together with them. Judges 4:11 records that among Hobab’s descendants there was a Kenite named Heber, whose wife Jael helped the Israelites remove Sisera, the enemy of the Israelites. This shows that Hobab’s descendants made a positive contribution to the Israelites.

Even as late as the time when Saul was king, when Saul was going to attack the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 15:6 says, “Then Saul said to the Kenites, ‘Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them.’” ““For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.”” “So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.” Here we see that Saul asked the Kenites to leave the Amalekites first, lest they be killed together with the Amalekites. From the above passages, we can infer that Hobab indeed went with Moses, and the Israelites also kept their promise and continued to treat Hobab’s descendants, the Kenites, kindly.

Verse 33: “So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them.”

According to the order in which the Israelites set out, the Kohathites carried the holy objects between the camp of Reuben and the camp of Ephraim; therefore, the ark should have been at the center of the marching procession. Only when a special situation arose would the ark move to the front of the marching procession, leading the army of Israel forward for certain specific purposes.

For example, in Joshua chapter 3, Joshua led all the Israelites to cross the Jordan River and enter the good land. Joshua 3:6 says, “Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, ‘Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.’” The priests carried the ark and stepped into the Jordan River. When the feet of the priests stepped into the Jordan River, the waters were divided, and the priests carried the ark across on dry ground in the river. When the Israelites did not know how to cross the Jordan River, the ark went in front, causing the waters of the Jordan to be divided so that all the people of Israel could cross over on dry ground. Now, as the Israelites set out for the first time and entered the wilderness of Paran, God wanted to search out a resting place for them. Therefore, the ark went at the front of the army, leading the people of Israel forward.

Verses 34-35: “And the cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp. So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: ‘Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.’”

When the Israelites broke camp and moved forward, the cloud of the LORD guided them in front. Originally, behind the cloud was the army of the camp of Judah. Now the ark was to come out and lead the army of Israel. Moses cried out loudly and said, “Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You

flee before You.” This was Moses’ declaration in faith. He encouraged the Israelites that with God fighting for them, God’s enemies would be scattered and flee. The Israelites were the beloved ones and could stand before God; but those who hated God would flee from before Him. When the Israelites set out for the first time, God Himself came forward to lead them, manifesting God’s presence through the testimony of the ark, and God drove out the enemies for them.

Verse 36: “And when it rested, he said: ‘Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel.’”

When the ark stopped, it meant that God had found a place where the Israelites could rest. Moses then loudly declared, “Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel.” God found a place of rest for the Israelites. The Levites then had to immediately set up the tabernacle, and the twelve tribes had to camp around the tabernacle. The LORD God would return among the Israelites and rest in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. God and man would once again dwell together; therefore, Moses declared that God was among them.

Although the Israelites walked in the wilderness, whether setting out or camping, they had God’s leading. Moreover, God used the ark, which the Israelites could see, to guide them, so that the Israelites would know that God fought for them and that God searched out a place of rest for them. When they camped, God was again among them. God was always with them. How secure this was.

It is the same in the church today. Whether the church moves forward or rests, Christ is always the Head of the church, and Christ is always with the church. We also should be like Moses and declare that Christ is Lord. Christ protects us, Christ leads us, Christ becomes our way, and Christ becomes our rest. In this way, we will not panic, because Christ will bear all responsibility for us. We only need to uplift Christ and take Christ as Lord in all things.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! For the church where we are, we offer thanksgiving and worship to You. Whether the church sets out or rests, You are the Lord of the church. Thank You for continually bringing gospel friends into the

church. Grant us wisdom to know how to testify to gospel friends, so that they also may receive the benefits of the gospel together with us. Let the church become a bright and shining testimony. When we uplift the testimony of Jesus Christ, the enemies will be scattered, and the sheep that belong to You will all find a place of rest. Bless the church where I am. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ!