

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

Numbers 11: 24-30

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 11. Today, we are reading verses 24 through 30.

The Israelites officially set out in the wilderness and entered the Wilderness of Paran. At the first encampment, they encountered difficulty, because the Wilderness of Paran had once been called the great and terrible wilderness. They had arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai and camped there on the fourteenth day of the fourth month in the first year, and they did not officially set out until the twentieth day of the second month in the second year. Therefore, they had stayed in the Wilderness of Sinai for ten months and one week, and it seemed that they had already become accustomed to a stable life. During this period, they built the tabernacle, received the law, established the system of service for the priests and the Levites, organized the twelve tribes into an army, and determined the camping positions and marching order. This period of time could be considered quite busy, yet their life was relatively stable.

After they officially began to set out, three days later, when they arrived at the first station and camped, complaints began to arise among the people, so much so that they provoked God's anger. God caused fire to burn among them, and only after Moses' intercession was the fire quenched. Moses then named that place Taberah, meaning that the fire of the LORD had burned among them; the meaning was that the Israelites should receive God's warning and not indulge their lusts, because God dwelt among them. However, the Israelites were not watchful. Immediately afterward, because the mixed multitude among them developed a craving and wanted to eat meat, they stirred up the whole people of Israel to weep loudly. This not only provoked God's anger, but also caused Moses to become angry and complain before God. Moses then brought the difficulty he was facing before God.

Moses' difficulty had two aspects: first, he was unwilling to bear alone the responsibility of managing the Israelites, because he felt that it was truly too heavy; second, how to deal with the problem of the Israelites wanting to eat meat. Moses brought his difficulty before God, and God told Moses very clearly how to handle these two difficulties. This is also what we should learn. Do not take our difficulties and tell them to people, because people may not necessarily have the capacity to bear the emotions that come with our difficulties. But God absolutely has the capacity, and God is able to find a way out for us.

Verse 24: "So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle."

Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. Moses was God's faithful servant. Once he had the answer from God, he faithfully told the people of Israel. Concerning the Israelites' desire to eat meat, God wanted them first to sanctify themselves and separate themselves unto God, and then God would give them meat to eat for a whole month, until they loathed eating meat. After dealing with the Israelites' desire to eat meat, Moses began to deal with the matter of sharing the responsibility of managing the Israelites. According to what God had commanded, Moses gathered those seventy elders and had them stand around the tabernacle.

Verse 25: "Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again."

The LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. This was often the way God spoke to Moses. Now the elders whom Moses had gathered were standing together with Moses, attending before the LORD. They were also able to hear the

voice of God speaking to Moses. What a privilege this was. Not only so, God also took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed Him upon the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested upon them, they were moved by the Spirit and began to prophesy, that is, they began to exercise the function of prophets. A prophet is one who is moved by the Holy Spirit and begins to speak for God. These seventy elders received the distribution of the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy. This was also the sign that God had entrusted to them the function of managing the people of Israel.

The Bible especially adds the phrase “although they never did so again.” Why? A prophet is a vessel specially raised up by God to convey God’s word. Especially when the leaders of Israel deviated from God’s right way and caused the people of Israel to fall into the snare of sin, God would raise up prophets to warn the Israelites. Moses was a qualified leader and often had God speaking to him; therefore, he understood God’s will, and God did not need to raise up other prophets. God took of the Spirit that rested upon Moses and placed Him upon these seventy elders in order to formally entrust to them also the responsibility of managing the people, so that they could be of one heart and one accord with Moses and manage the people of Israel together.

Here we need to digress slightly and look at the matter of God distributing the Spirit to man. At that time, God had not yet given the Holy Spirit, just as John 7:39 says, “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in man is the privilege of the New Testament saints, and the prerequisite for this was that Jesus first had to pass through death and resurrection and be glorified; only afterward could the indwelling Holy Spirit be given. As in John 20:22, “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God coming upon man was temporary, was for specific persons, and was for the accomplishment of a particular purpose; after that purpose was accomplished, this Spirit could be withdrawn. Therefore, in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God coming upon man is often likened to a garment put

upon a person. The clearest example is in 2 Kings chapter 2, when Elijah was about to ascend to heaven and Elisha asked that a double portion of the spirit that moved Elijah would rest upon him. When Elijah ascended to heaven, he took off his mantle, and Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle and struck the water with it; the water was divided to the left and to the right. This proved that Elisha had received the spirit that moved Elijah. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God coming upon man was a great matter. The person who received the Spirit could then begin to do the work God had commanded him to do.

In the New Testament, through believing in the salvation of Jesus Christ, a person receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and this Holy Spirit no longer departs. How blessed we are. This Holy Spirit not only indwells us, but also continually speaks to us, telling us through the anointing what we should do. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us is a God with personhood. He can lead us onto the path of sanctification. But the condition is that we must have a clean conscience in order to sense and understand what the Holy Spirit says to us. May God help us to treasure such a great privilege, and may we be willing to let the Holy Spirit have the authority over us and lead us to complete the commission God has given us.

Verse 26: "But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp."

When Moses gathered the seventy elders, two of the elders did not appear. One was named Eldad, and the other was named Medad. They did not go out to the tabernacle, but remained in their own camp. When the LORD took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed Him upon the seventy elders, these two elders who were not present also received the Spirit distributed by God. When the Spirit rested upon them, they, like the other sixty-eight elders, were moved by the Spirit and began to prophesy. The difference was that the sixty-eight elders prophesied around the tabernacle, while these two elders prophesied in the camp.

Here we see two things. First, God greatly respected the seventy elders whom Moses had appointed; even though they had failed to come before the tabernacle according to the command, God still remembered them. Second, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. Although they were not before the tabernacle, the Spirit could still descend upon them, and they were moved by the Spirit and began to prophesy. In other words, the power of the Spirit was not diminished in the least.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Spirit is not limited by time and space. The Spirit can transcend time and space and convey God's moving to us in a timely way. Therefore, we must treasure all the more the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This Holy Spirit is always with us, ready at any time and in any place to anoint God's will into us. Therefore, how could we not understand God's will? Unless there is still some sin that we have not dealt with, and this sin has blocked the channel of the Holy Spirit, causing us to be unable to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Paul exhorted his young co-worker Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:19, "having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck." If a person has an offended conscience, he has no way to be led by the Holy Spirit and walk in the truth.

Verses 27-28: "And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, 'Moses my lord, forbid them!'"

A young man in the camp heard Eldad and Medad prophesying, and he hurriedly ran to tell Moses. It turns out that being moved by the Spirit and publicly prophesying was a sign God gave to the Israelites, showing that God wanted to use this person to complete the commission God had given. Before Moses had time to speak, Moses' assistant, Joshua the son of Nun, said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" Joshua was chosen by Moses as his assistant. He was an outstanding one among the younger generation of Israelites, the young leader who would later succeed Moses and lead the Israelites into the good land.

Verse 29: “Then Moses said to him, ‘Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!’”

Here we see that what Joshua did was actually very similar to what the apostle John did in Luke 9:49-50. John said: “Now John answered and said, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.’” John saw someone casting out demons in the Lord’s name and wanted to forbid him, but Jesus said not to forbid him, because he who is not against us is on our side.

Moses was the same. At a glance, he saw through Joshua’s motive. Joshua was Moses’ assistant and was unwilling for others to share Moses’ leadership function. Moses therefore said directly, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!” Here we see Moses’ broadness. He was not jealous because others were being used by God. Instead, he wished that all God’s people could receive God’s Spirit, and that every Israelite could be moved by the Spirit and rise up to speak for God. No wonder God called Moses “very humble” and faithful in all the house of Israel. Moses truly understood God’s heart’s desire.

In Exodus chapter 19, when the Israelites first arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai, God revealed to Moses that God desired all the Israelites to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Later, because the Israelites worshiped the golden calf and offended God, God raised up the Levites to serve God in place of the Israelites; He also chose the males of Aaron’s household to become priests, to lead the Israelites in worshiping God. But God’s original good pleasure was that all the Israelites would rise up to serve God. Here Moses grasped the good pleasure in God’s heart and wished that God’s Spirit would descend upon every Israelite.

This matter was not realized in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, through Jesus Christ being glorified, the Holy Spirit was given to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, we now all have the indwelling

of the Holy Spirit, so we should even more cleanse ourselves and become holy and useful to the Lord, as 2 Timothy 2:21 says, “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

Verse 30: “And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.”

Moses was unwilling to bear alone the responsibility of managing the Israelites, so God raised up the seventy elders whom Moses had chosen and distributed the Spirit upon them, causing them to be moved and prophesy. They then bore the responsibility of managing the Israelites together with Moses. God used being moved by the Spirit and prophesying as the sign that they had received their function. In this way, Moses’ first difficulty was solved. Moses and the elders of Israel all returned to the camp.

Dear brothers and sisters, being moved by the Spirit and speaking for God was a great matter in the Old Testament, and it remains the same in the New Testament. But the difference is that in the New Testament, every saint, through believing in Jesus Christ, already has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As long as we cleanse ourselves, we can become holy, useful to the Lord, and rise up to bear the commission God has given us.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You! Through our simple believing, You have given us such a great blessing. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit not only leads us to understand all the truth, but also continually anoints God’s will into us, so that we may understand the commission God has given us. If we can continually maintain a clean and blameless conscience, we will be able to have intimate fellowship with the Holy Spirit and rise up to bear the commission God has given us. If every saint in the church is willing to be exercised, then we can all be moved by the Holy Spirit together and rise up together to build up the Body of Jesus Christ, so that the church may become God’s beautiful testimony on the earth. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.