

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

Numbers 12: 9-16

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 12. Today, we are reading verses 9 through 16.

God used Moses not only to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, but also to receive the law in the wilderness of Sinai, build the tabernacle, establish the system of service for the priests and the Levites, and organize the twelve tribes of Israel into an army. Moses became the spiritual authority in the hearts of the Israelites, representing God to lead the Israelites.

Moses' sister Miriam and his brother Aaron were jealous of Moses' spiritual authority, so they used Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman as an excuse to speak against Moses, and they said: Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also? Miriam and Aaron were also leaders of the Israelites, and they also spoke with God. However, from their questioning, we can see that they also acknowledged that spiritual authority comes from God and is manifested in the fellowship between God and man; that is to say, having God's speaking becomes the mark of a spiritual leader.

When Moses was questioned, he did not defend himself, and the Holy Spirit bore witness for Moses: Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth. Moses' humility, in being spoken against and not defending himself, was precisely the proof that Moses' spiritual life was mature and experienced. Moses not only had the spiritual authority given by God, but also had a mature spiritual life to uphold the authority God had given him.

Spiritual authority is different from earthly authority. Earthly authority is always used to protect the interests of those in power, and authority is often used to eliminate threats and strike down those who covet authority. Spiritual authority is used to protect God's interests, not to protect the representative authority

established by God, because the source of authority is God. Not submitting to the representative authority established by God is not submitting to God's authority. When God's authority is challenged, there is no need for man to come out and maintain it; God Himself will act.

As the spiritual authority established by God, Moses was spoken against, but he did not defend himself. He truly was the best example of representative authority. Moses entrusted all these things to God, and God personally vindicated Moses. In God's vindication, God specifically spoke of two important points.

First, in his work, Moses was a faithful servant, faithful in all God's house for God's interests. Second, in his fellowship with God, Moses was different from ordinary prophets. God did not speak with Moses through visions or dreams; rather, God spoke with Moses directly, face to face, and He spoke plainly, not in riddles. After God vindicated Moses, He asked Miriam and Aaron: "Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"

Verse 9: "So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed."

After God finished speaking, His anger was aroused against them, and He immediately departed. God's one sentence, "Why then were you not afraid?" was God's judgment. God's judgment is the end, leaving no room for bargaining.

Verse 10: "And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper."

God departed, and the cloud that had descended with God was also withdrawn and departed from above the tabernacle. When the cloud departed, people could see clearly. Suddenly, Miriam had become leprous. When God called Miriam forward, Miriam was still well. After God finished speaking and departed, Miriam became leprous. This was God's judgment.

Why did Miriam become leprous, while Aaron did not? It is possible that the leader of the whole incident was Miriam, while Aaron was the follower. At the same time, because Aaron was still the high priest, his function was to intercede for others. Here we see that God, in His judgment, still carried mercy and could still show grace beyond the law.

Why was it leprosy and not some other illness? Because leprosy issues from within, showing that Miriam's refusal to submit to authority came from the sinful nature within her. Leprosy could not be healed; one had to wait until the leprosy had fully broken out, and then the priest would determine whether the person was clean. Before leprosy had fully broken out, leprosy was highly contagious, so the person had to be isolated. This also shows that refusal to submit to authority is contagious. The motive of disobedience must be fully exposed before there can be the possibility of cleansing.

God judged Miriam with leprosy, showing that leprosy is a type of disobedience to authority. Miriam became leprous, as white as snow; that is, the skin and hair on her body became white, which was a sign of leprosy. Miriam's leprosy was as white as snow, causing people to see from far away that she had become leprous, so that she could not hide it at all. When Aaron saw that Miriam had become leprous, he knew that God had carried out judgment. This shows that Aaron, to some extent, knew that what he had done was wrong. Although he was an accomplice, God did not judge him, and therefore left him a standing so that he could intercede for Miriam. This was also Aaron's function as the high priest.

Verses 11-12: "So Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned.' Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!"

Aaron's response was quite quick. As soon as he saw that Miriam had become leprous, and as white as snow, he knew that he was wrong. He immediately

confessed his sin to Moses: “Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned.”

First, he called Moses “my lord.” He was Moses’ older brother and was older than Moses, but he acknowledged Moses’ spiritual authority; therefore, he addressed Moses as “my lord.” Second, he acknowledged that he and Miriam were foolish, and he acknowledged that they had sinned. Aaron did not use ornate words to excuse himself. Instead, he simply and directly acknowledged that it was their foolishness that had caused them to sin. After confessing the sin, he asked Moses not to let the punishment of this sin be laid upon them.

Here, Aaron used the function of the high priest to ask for grace on behalf of the one who had sinned. Aaron first asked for grace in a general way, and then he specifically interceded for Miriam. Because he himself had also sinned, but God had not caused him to become leprous, he recognized that God still had grace. Therefore, he first acknowledged the sin, then asked for grace, and finally asked on behalf of Miriam, who had already suffered the punishment of sin, so that Miriam’s sin would not lead to death. “Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb!” This shows that Miriam’s condition was already quite serious. He asked Moses not to let Miriam’s body decay and die.

Aaron himself was the high priest, but he himself had also sinned; therefore, he did not ask God directly, but instead turned to Moses. Because he had offended Moses, he had to first confess his sin to Moses, call Moses “my lord,” and ask Moses not to let Miriam decay and die.

Verse 13: “So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘Please heal her, O God, I pray!’”

Moses immediately cried out to God, asking God to heal Miriam. Moses had suffered their slander, yet Moses did not vindicate himself. Now, seeing that God had judged his sister Miriam, he cried out to God, asking God to heal Miriam. Moses

was indeed God's faithful servant, faithful in all the house of Israel. He did not care about his own gain or loss, but when other leaders offended him and were punished by God, he was willing to intercede for them. Moses truly was a good example of a spiritual leader in the church.

Verse 14: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received again.'"

God heard Moses' cry and agreed that Miriam's sin would not lead to death. However, having sinned, she had to bear the shame of sin. If she had done something wrong and her father had spit in her face as a rebuke, would she not also be shamed seven days? Seven days is a complete period of time, enough for her to reflect and learn from it, so that she would not commit the same sin again. She had to be shut out of the camp for seven days, because leprosy is contagious. She could not live inside the camp, but had to be shut outside the camp for seven days, and afterward she could be brought back in. That is to say, God agreed that Miriam's leprosy could be cleansed after seven days. But being shut outside the camp for seven days and being separated from the Israelites, so that she would be put to shame, was an indispensable process.

Verse 15: "So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again."

Moses then, according to what God had promised, shut Miriam outside the camp for seven days. Only after seven days was Miriam brought back in. I believe that during these seven days, it was a time for Miriam to repent and reflect. Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey for seven days. Here a very serious fact is pointed out: when the leaders of Israel could not be one, the Israelites could not move forward in the wilderness.

Actually, the church today is the same. When the leaders of the church cannot be of one heart and one accord, the whole church cannot move forward. Man cannot change God's eternal will for the church, but man can delay the progress of the church. God greatly values the one accord among the leaders of the church. When leaders do not submit to one another, and scheme against one another, that church cannot possibly move forward. Therefore, the leaders in the church must learn to confess sins to one another and bear with one another. Especially in life, they must be mature and experienced; in dealing with people and matters, they must be gentle and humble, not fond of contending and striving, but kind toward others in all things. A leader who is subjective in personality and extreme in conduct will surely become a difficulty to the church, and sometimes may even paralyze the church for several years.

Therefore, when the leaders of the church come together, they must be clear about how to discuss matters and how to make decisions. Once a consensus has been reached, it must be strictly observed. If someone is occasionally overtaken by a trespass, they must also intercede for one another and bear with one another in the spirit of one accord. Only when the leaders are of one heart and one accord can the church move forward healthily.

Verse 16: "And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran."

After this matter, the Israelites moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran. From this point onward, Moses seems no longer to give the names of the stations one by one. In 10:12, the Israelites blew the trumpets and officially began to set out. After traveling for three days, they came to the Wilderness of Paran. By 11:34, we see that the first station after entering the Wilderness of Paran was Kibroth Hattaavah, where they buried the people who craved. Then 11:35 tells us that the Israelites moved from Kibroth Hattaavah and came to Hazeroth, the second station in the Wilderness of Paran.

At Hazeroth, Miriam, because she did not submit to Moses' authority, was judged by God and became leprous. She was shut outside the camp for seven days, and the Israelites were delayed for seven days. Afterward, they moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran. The Wilderness of Paran was a very large region, and Moses did not tell us at which specific place they camped. From this point onward, Moses no longer records the stations one by one, but only records several major events that occurred. As for the location, Moses only vaguely says that it was in the Wilderness of Paran. Because Moses records it this way, some people think that the Israelites simply lived in the Wilderness of Paran and no longer journeyed. This is incorrect.

By the time we come to Numbers chapter 33, there Moses reviews the journey they had traveled, and Moses lists the stations one by one, for a total of forty-two stations. Numbers 33:18 records: "They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah." Looking further down, we then see the names of the stations one by one. Why did Moses do this? Perhaps there was a special intention. When we come to Numbers chapter 33, we will explain it in detail.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Through the text of Numbers, You allow us to see how much You value the one accord among the leaders of the church. Even if someone is overtaken by a trespass, they must still come together and intercede for one another. When the leaders of the church cannot be one, the church cannot move forward. The leaders of the church are spiritual representative authorities. When we come to the house of God, it is a place where God's authority can operate freely.

Lord, have mercy on us, so that we may all be people who submit to authority, knowing that what we submit to is not man's authority, because the source of authority is You. Bless the church where I am, that the leaders may all be of one heart and one accord, leading the church to move forward healthily. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.