

Place: Lurgan Baptist 2:2:2014

## MOSES, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Reading: Numbers 11:1-15

### 18. THAT'S IT, I QUIT

Mount Washington is the highest peak in the North Eastern United States. It is famous for dangerous erratic weather. A small monument made from a few stones marks the spot on Mount Washington where a young girl died on a 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 that great mountain without hiring a guide. As darkness fell and the biting 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 light dawned on that wind ravaged mountainside, her distraught 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 crackling fire would have warmed their bodies. A place, where they would have been safe and protected from the cold and from the icy fingers of death. What prevented them from reaching that place of safety? In a word, *discouragement.*

I wonder can you recall an hour in your life when you have been overwhelmed with the temptation to despair? The temptation to give up? There seemed to be no light

but only darkness within. Many professing Christians have given up. Missionaries who never returned to the field of service. Pastors who have given up their sense of call. Believers who had at one time played a vital part in the life of the local church. Those who have found themselves lost in the darkness of discouragement. Have you ever been there? *I mean, can a Christian ever become so discouraged that he wants to die?* Moses did. Moses is a man who chose to walk with God and therefore became the target of the enemy. I mean here is the nation of Israel after spending eleven months at Sinai ( Ex 19:1 Num 10:11 ) and they are on the road again. Moses was so optimistic when they broke camp. This optimism is seen in his prayer to the Lord when they left Sinai, “*Rise up, Lord,*” shouted Moses “*and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before thee.*” ( 10:35-36 ) It all looked so promising. Then it happened.

It was like tearing open an old wound, one that had been healed over. In fact the timing was uncanny. You see, history repeats itself. Three days after the great praise service by the Red Sea, the Jews complained against Moses and God because they did not have water to drink. ( Ex 15:22-27 ) Now three days after leaving Sinai, the Jews complained again. ( 10:33 ) This renewed complaining of the people threw Moses into a state of discouragement. For as Moses climbed the mountain of leading God's people, he became so depressed 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. These rebellions were so serious that cried out to the Lord in despair. “*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.*” ( 11:14-15 ) Moses said, “ **That’s it I quit.**” Have you ever said that ? Are you saying it now ? You see, if you look at the context here you’ll notice that Moses had to deal with three problems that faced him.

## (1) THE PROBLEM OF DESPONDENCY

What is despondency ? Could we define it like this. Extreme discouragement, dejection, despair, hopelessness. Perhaps that last word summarizes it best for us. A feeling of hopelessness, all is lost there’s the desire to quit, you just can’t make it. Well, that’s where Moses was. Despondency. If you look at the context, you can see,

### (a) ITS CAUSE:

Do you see how the chapter opens ? “ *And when the people complained,*” ( 11:1 ) You see,

### 1. Moses Faced a People Problem:

He was the leader and administrator of an estimated two and half a million people. And they gave him a hard time, for they were bellyachers. They were never satisfied by anything. After a while, this would have driven anyone over the edge. As one writer says, “ To live above with saints we love, oh won’t that be glory. But to live below with saints we know, well that’s another story.” I mean these Jews were perpetually complaining. A monk

joined a monastery and took a vow of silence. After the first 10 years his superior called him in and asked, “ *Do you have anything to say ?*” The monk replied, “ *Food bad.*” After another 10 years the monk again had an opportunity to voice his thoughts. He said, “ *Bed hard.*” Another 10 years went by and again he was called in before his superior. When asked if he had anything to say, he responded, “ *I quit.*” His superior said “ *it doesn’t surprise me a bit. You’ve done nothing but complain ever since you got here.*” 1.

### 2. Moses faced a Provision Problem:

In spite of being delivered from Egyptian bondage many of them said it would have been better for them to have stayed in Egypt. As George McDonald says, “ *they did not mind slavery to sin it was slavery to God that troubled them.*” Spurgeon said, “ *The gift of grumbling is largely dispensed among those who have no other talents.*” Think of it, complaining against burdens, blessings and bread. They were saying, “ *all we have got to eat is manna. It is scrambled manna for breakfast, baked manna for lunch, fried manna for dinner. If we had stayed in Egypt at least we would have had a variety.*” Can’t you see Moses walking up and down lines of tents, listening to the constant complaining. There’s griping. There’s crying. There are frowns and long faces, wagging tongues and grim faces. And before long it begins to wear the old man down. The text says “ *he was displeased.*” ( 11:10 ) It means “ *depressed.*” He was emotionally wrung out.

Overloaded, overworked, overwhelmed. My .... have you been there ? Are you there now ? Have the complaints, criticisms, and comments of others, even Christians brought you to despair ? (a)

### **(b) ITS CONSEQUENCE:**

Is it not sad to see a great man of God ask the Lord to take his life because he believes that his role is an unbearable burden by which God has afflicted him and made him wretched ? Somehow I feel that Moses has lost his perspective and got his eyes off the Lord and onto himself something that's easy to do in the difficult experiences of life. You see, Moses lost sight of,

#### **1. God's Promises:**

Do you see his prayer in ( 11:11-12 ) Moses thought God was going to leave him with the sole responsibility of leading Israel into the land. But had God not said, “ *My presence shall go with thee .....*,” ( Ex 33:14 ) but somehow Moses forgot it.

#### **2. God's Power:**

He says in effect, “ *Where am I going to get meat to give unto all these people ?*” ( 11:13 ) And God had to remind Moses “ *Is the Lord's hand waxed short ?*” ( 11:23 ) “ *Is my power limited Moses ?*”

#### **3. God's Plan:**

He says, “ *I am not able to bear all this people alone .....*,” ( 11:15 ) The Lord, of course had never told Moses he would have to do it all by himself. Rather He had promised Moses at the burning bush that He would be His all sufficiency. Do you recall what He said, “ *Certainly I will be with thee .....*,” ( Ex 3:12 ) Moses may have been inadequate but His God wasn't. *Now sometimes we lose our perspective in times of great stress.* Do you recall Elijah ? One moment he confronts the prophets of Baal undaunted. The next he flees panic stricken from the threat of a woman. One moment he is on the mountain victorious, the next he is in the valley defeated. One second he is on the pinnacle, the next he is in the pits. Do you remember Jonah ? He had just witnessed a great revival in the city of Nineveh but like Moses and Elijah he was so depressed he wanted to die, “ *O Lord take I beseech thee, my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live.*” ( Jonah 4:3 )

Let me ask, is your desire to quit due to the fact that you have taken your eye off the Lord ? Have you got your eye of the Lord's promises ? “ *Lo I am with you alway .....*,” ( Matt 28:20 ) Have you taken your eye of the Lord's power ? “ *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me.*” ( Phil 4:13 ) What about the Lord's plan ? Do you remember saying to the Lord “ *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?*” ( Acts 9:6 ) “ *And the Lord said .....*,” so what about His plan for your life when you say, “ *That's it I quit.*” (a) (b)

### **(c) ITS CURE:**

What did the Lord do for Moses ? “ *And the Lord said unto Moses, gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel ..... that they may stand there with thee, and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and put it upon them and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee that thou bear it not thyself alone.* ” ( 11:17 ) The Lord helped Moses to see that he could not do everything and he could not do it alone. God said, “ *Moses spread it out man. Eliminate, delegate, dedicate.* ” My ... is this not a New Testament principle ? Do we not believe in the priesthood of all believers ? You see, God took a load of Moses to allow him to be emotionally renewed. Have you too many irons in the fire ? What you don't realise is that somewhere along the line you are going to get burned in the fire you have got your irons in. ( 1 )

## **(2) THE PROBLEM OF INDISPENSABILITY**

Now of course indispensable means absolutely necessary. To say, that you are indispensable means that you cannot be done without. Now that brings us to this second problem that Moses had to face. Its introduced to us in ( 11:26 ) where it says, “ *but there remained two of the men in the camp the name of the one was Eldad and the name of the other was Medad .....* ” now that may not mean very much to us unless we realize that Moses had told seventy elders of the people to come and stand by the tabernacle for these were the men that God had appointed to carry the load with Moses. But when they called roll two of them didn't show up. Now its not that they were rebels for we read “ *and the Spirit rested upon them .... and they prophesied in the camp.* ” ( 11:26 ) A young man

saw what was happening and scurried to Moses with the breathless report, “ *Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.* ” ( 11:27 ) I want to you see here,

### **(a) THE SEEMING ATTACK ON THE LEADER:**

I mean what did this young man mean ? He meant “ *Moses, that's your job. You are the prophet. And if anyone is going to prophesy around here you ought to be the one who is going to do it.* ” This is the way this young man saw it. “ *Moses a couple of men are stepping out of line, and of all things they are over doing your job.* ” Do you see what happens next ? Look at ( 11:28 ) These young men were jealous for Moses role and position. So they said, “ *Moses you can't let them get away with that. You are the prophet. What are Eldad and Medad doing in there ? Who do they think they are prophesying like that ? That's your job.* ” So Joshua who was disturbed says, “ *Moses put a stop to it.* ” You see, they saw it as an attack on their leader. But Moses saw the matter differently and correctly, and said to Joshua “ *Would God that all the Lords people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.* ” ( 11:28 ) Do you know what that is ? That's

### **(b) THE SELFLESS ATTITUDE OF THE LEADER:**

Talk about being unselfish. There was not one ounce of insecurity in that man of God. Do you know something ? Preachers need to hear this. Is it not so easy to become jealous of the man to whom God has given larger gifts and a greater ministry ? My .... are you pursuing a life of

godliness ? Has the Lord gifted you for service ? If so, somewhere along the line you will face the feeling of being “ *indispensable*, ” to some particular ministry. Perhaps some one around you will plant seeds of jealousy in your heart and that will tempt you to feel indispensable. You’ll, say “ *What’s she doing up there ?* ” Or “ *that man is worth watching. He’s trying to take over. Everybody knows I am the leader.* ” Or “ *I can’t afford to step down I started this organization.* ” Have you heard something like that ? Have you ever said them yourself ? You see, everybody can afford to step down if the Lord is enthroned. Some of the most jealous, suspicious people in the world are so called Christian public figures who are enamored with their own importance. Can I ask you, are you happy when God uses others ? ( Phil 1:18 ) Or do you feel you are indispensable ?

**Sometime when you’re feeling important**  
**Sometime when your ego’s way up**  
**Sometime when you take it for granted**  
**That you are prize winning pup**

**Sometime when you feel that your absence**  
**Would leave an unfillable hole**  
**Just follow these simple instructions**  
**And see how it humbles your soul**

**Take a bucket, fill it with water**  
**Put your hand in it up to your wrist**  
**Now pull it out fast and the hole that remains**  
**Is the measure of how you’ll be missed**

**You may splash all you like as you enter**  
**And stir up the water before**  
**But stop and you’ll find in a minute**  
**Its right where it was before**

Do you something ? I am not indispensable, you are not indispensable, she is not indispensable, he is not indispensable. Nobody is indispensable, except the Lord Jesus. He is head. He is the Preeminent One. He is the founder. He’s in first place. And when He removes one and brings in another, or demotes one and sets up another, He calls the shots. I mean, is this not His sovereign right ? The problem comes when we get to thinking we are sovereign. (1) (2)

### **(3) THE PROBLEM OF JEALOUSY**

How often the green eyed monster raises its head even among the Lord’s people. That feeling of discontent aroused, by someone else’s possessions, position, gifts, accomplishments, and talents. That fear of being displaced by a rival. Do you know what I am talking about ? Moses did, for here is his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam and they take a detour and journey to jealousy. Flick over to ( 12:1-15 ) and notice,

#### **(a) THE ACCUSATION:**

##### **1. It had to do with the Marriage of Moses:**

It is very possible that Moses wife Zipporah had died and that he had married another woman described in ( 12:1 )

as an “*Ethiopian*.” Ethiopia south of Egypt was inhabited by the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham.

( Gen 10:6-7 ) Wait a minute. Who are Miriam and Aaron ? Aren’t they Moses sister and brother ? And yet they are seeking to put down their little brother. One of the saints of the last generation lost his wife and after a few years of being alone, he married a woman several years his junior. Some nosey busybody came up to him and said, “ *The nerve. How could you have the nerve to marry somebody that much younger than you ?* ” And in his gravelly voice he answered, “ *Listen honey, I’d rather smell perfume than liniment any day.* ” What business is it of yours who any believer marries as long as they are “ *in the Lord.* ” 1.

## **2. It had to do with the Ministry of Moses:**

Look at ( 12:2 ) They felt they were entitled to equal billing with Moses and they were not getting it. Jealousy. Someone is getting more noticed than I. Someone’s ministry is better received than mine. Someone has been given a higher position than I. How easy it all is and how very damaging. And yet we read “ *And the Lord heard it.* ” ( 12:2 ) You see, in every slander there is a gossiper and a listener.. And between the two is the Lord. Before the listener ever hears the comments, the Lord has already intercepted what was said. There is a fable of an eagle which could outfly another, and the other didn’t like it. The latter saw a sportsman one day, and said to him, “ *I wish you would bring down that eagle.* ” The sportsman replied that he would if he only had some feathers to put into the arrow. So the eagle pulled one out

of his wing. The arrow was shot, but didn’t quite reach the rival eagle; it was flying too high. The envious eagle pulled out more feathers, and kept pulling them out until he lost so many that he couldn’t fly, and then the sportsman turned around and killed him. I wonder this .... is your problem jealousy ? And do you realize that if you are jealous the only you can hurt is yourself ? (a) Are you misrepresenting some servant of the Lord ?

## ***(b) THE VINDICATION:***

Do you remember the days when you were in school and you got a note to report to the principal’s office ? It was then you were looking for the fire escape. You just couldn’t believe that you were summoned to the principal’s office. Isn’t it interesting that in ( 12:4 ) the three names are reversed from the order in ( 12:1 ) ? *God put Moses first. He called all three to the tabernacle, spoke to the two Miriam and Aaron and pronounced judgment on the one, Miriam.* My .... God knows when you are complaining, slandering, and accusing. People who complain about someone often hope that it will not back to their ears. Do you realise that it always gets back to God and He does not take it lightly ? Moses does not vindicate himself, he left his defense to the Lord, and what a defense it was.

## **1. There was the Element of Sovereignty:**

The reason that Moses and Miriam were not getting equal billing is because that He, the Lord, had determined that Moses should occupy a unique role. ( 12:8 ) It was God

who gave Moses his position and authority and it was wicked for Miriam to challenge her brother.

## **2. There was the Element of Supremacy:**

Miriam and Aaron said, “*hath he ( the Lord ) not spoken also by us ?*” ( 12:2 ) You see, they wanted to be equal with Moses, and so the Lord calls their attention to the fact that while He spoke to all the prophets ( 12:6 ) He spoke in a special way to Moses that is “*face to face.*” ( 12:8 Ex 33:19-23 ) No wonder the Lord says, “*were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses ?*” ( 12:8 ) My .... do we need to remember these things when God’s faithful servants are being maligned by the critics ? The Lords says “*Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm.*” ( Ps 105:15 ) Miriam put forth her hand against the Lords anointed and,

## **3. There was the Element of Severity:**

“*Miriam became leprous white as snow ....,*” ( 12:10 ) Matthew Henry says, “*Her foul tongue is justly punished with a foul face.*” For leprosy was nothing short of a living death. No wonder Aaron begged for Moses to intercede for Miriam and himself for he says “*we have sinned.*” ( 12:11 ) My .... have you been guilty of the sin of jealousy ? Have you misrepresented some servant of the cross ? Have you accused them falsely ? (a) (b)

(c) ***THE CESSATION:***

For while the sin of jealousy belonged, to Miriam and Aaron alone it affected all the people. For we read “*and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.*” ( 12:15 ) Think of this. One sin halted the progress of the children of Israel, for “*none of us liveth unto himself.*” ( Rom 14:7 ) Everything we do influences others and a lot more than we think. Now do you see these three problems ? (1) (2) (3) Could you be that one or all of them are bringing you to the place where you are saying, “**That’s it, I quit.**” Do you feel that all hell has broke loose upon you ? Then can I remind that all heaven will come to your rescue for we serve a God who is ever able to do “***exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.***” ( Eph 3:20 )

Several years ago Dr. Howard Hendricks a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary had just returned from speaking to thousands of pastors at a pastors conference in the U.S.A. He had flown home then almost immediately on the Sunday he drove out of Dallas into the Texan countryside to preach at a very small church. In his own words “*he preached his guts out that Sunday,*” but hardly got a “*thank you.*” Driving home that evening with his wife he was pretty dejected. Perhaps like Moses he was ready to quit. Then from the passengers side he heard these words, “*Howard who are you doing it for ?*” Can I ask you the same question, **who are you doing it for ?**

