

Numbers Devotionals

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Numbers Devotional Commentary

Our Daily Bread, Our Homily Daily - F B Meyer

Numbers 1:18

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

They declared their pedigrees.

It was not enough to be a true-born Israelite, a man must be able to show his descent. The genealogical tables were kept with the greatest care; and there was a holy pride in being able to vindicate the claim of having the blood of the patriarchs in the veins.

It is a blessed thing to be sure that we have passed from death unto life, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. True, our eternal destiny does not hinge on it. Many will doubtless be saved at last, who have spent their lives between hope and fear. But it is very needful for our comfort and growth in grace to be able to declare our pedigree, and to know that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Gospel of John was written that we might believe; the Epistle that we might know. But many seek this knowledge in the wrong way, and are exposed to endless questionings. They try to discover the date, place, or experience in the past, when they were incorporated into the Divine family; and because they cannot point to these, they imagine that they are still outside. Now for every one that has had a definite experience of the new birth, there are perhaps a score who entered the Divine family almost as a sailor passes the line of the Equator. Yet it is possible for you to know that you are born again, though you may not be able to tell your birthday.

If you are trusting Jesus, if the Spirit witnesses with your spirit that God is your Father, if you are full of a holy fear of grieving Him, if you are becoming like Him, if you love the brethren — you may certainly declare yourself his child. Jon 1:1, Amos 1:1, Mar 1:2, John 1:1

Numbers 1:1-19

Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. - Numbers 33:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Welcome to a new year, full of new goals to set, new hopes to dream, and new challenges to meet. You may or may not make a list of resolutions, but everyone has a choice to make as another year begins: will you or will you not follow God wholeheartedly? We all know what the answer should be, but Jesus wouldn't have called it "taking up your cross" if it were going to be easy.

The critical component in the equation is faith. Faith is the difference between obedience and disobedience, and Israel in the book of Numbers shows us a textbook case study in what faith, or the lack thereof, can do.

Today's reading finds the Israelites at Mount Sinai, where they had been for nine months (cf. Ex. 19:1). It had been just over a year since they left Egypt. They had seen God prove His supremacy through the plagues, display His mighty hand at the parting of the Red Sea, and show His provision in the miraculous manna. He had manifested His presence after the consecration of the tabernacle (an event that is recounted again later in this book). Israel had the opportunity to see God lead them like no other nation, yet some of them still didn't have faith (1 Cor. 10:1-5; Heb. 4:2).

But we know the story of Numbers doesn't have the happy ending Israel would have wanted. The Hebrew name of this book means "in the wilderness or desert," a title that captures both the geographical setting and the spiritual condition that runs throughout the book. God's command for the census had a very clear purpose: preparation for war (v. 3).

Israel at this point had no home, and God was drawing the battle lines that would have led them to the Promised Land. But instead of displaying God's might and taking their inheritance by faith, all but two of the Israelites numbered by this census spent the rest of their lives wandering in the wilderness due to their lack of faith.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Another theme that emerges in this passage is the picture of the servant leader; God delegated leaders from each tribe to serve Moses. God has almost certainly placed you in a similar situation. You are called to serve Him and those He has placed above you, and there are also people in your life who look to you for wise guidance. The key to succeeding in both roles is faith. Ask God to give it in abundance!

Num. 1:19

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.-Num. 1.19.

The Book of Numbers records the wilderness experiences of the people of God. It resolves itself into the account of a long discipline due to disobedience. In the Divine programme, these people should now have gone up and possessed the land promised to them. Their entry was postponed for forty years through their failure, and this Book is occupied largely with matters pertaining to that period. It records two numberings of the people, one of the beginning, and the other at the close of the forty years. This first numbering was that of the men of war, and it was undertaken at the direct command of God. Those to be enrolled were the men of twenty years and up-ward. The numbering yielded an army of 603,550. This was the first movement in preparation for the coming of the people into the land. The nation had been created an instrument for the carrying out of Divine purposes for the world. Its first mission was punitive. The peoples occupying the land of Canaan had become utterly corrupt, and it was necessary in the interests of purity that they should be swept out. The chosen people were to be the instruments of this purifying process. They must be prepared for warfare, and this was the reason of the taking of this census. The reason for the preparation of this army must never be lost sight of. The story of the conquest of Canaan is not that of the spoliation of feeble peoples by a stronger, in order to possess territory. It is that of the purification of a land, in order that there might be planted in it a people from whose history blessing would come to all the nations.

Numbers 1:44-54

The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. - Isaiah 8:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

Many scholars have difficulty with the number 603,550. And if you really stop to think about it, you might have trouble comprehending how Israel could have amassed an army of that many men. To put the figure into context, consider that as of the 2000 census, the city of Boston's total population was less than 590,000. If we factor in women, children, and the tribe of Levi, the number would well exceed one million. You might imagine the entire population of the city of Philadelphia encamped around Mount Sinai to get a picture of the population of Israel here.

Though some think that this number poses a translation problem, not to mention a logistical nightmare, in the end we have no reason to doubt that God was fully capable of shepherding such a large group of people. Indeed, the sheer number of the people isn't the most impressive factor in this passage; the glory of God is far more awesome. The reverence that the Lord demanded regarding the tabernacle should inject a healthy dose of fear into our hearts.

The tribe of Levi was set apart for God's service, a theme we'll study in greater depth in the days to come. For today we can simply observe that God dictated strict rules regarding the place where He dwells, and the consequences for disobedience were stiff.

An outsider who approached the tabernacle was to be killed (v. 51), and the presence of the Levites encamped around it prevented the wrath of God from burning against Israel (v. 53). As would happen many times in Numbers, the wrath of God usually brought terrible plagues against the offenders, often resulting in death.

With such a large crowd of people who were essentially homeless, imposing order was difficult. What made it possible was the

unmistakable presence of God—and for the time being, the nation of Israel obeyed (v. 54).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Paul calls the body of a believer the “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). Paul uses that fact to condemn sexual immorality, and we should have great reverence for the fact that we're indwelt by God in every aspect of our lives. If He gave special handling instructions for each mere object in the tabernacle, how much more care should we show for how we use our own bodies and maintain the condition of our spiritual hearts?

Num. 2:2

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard.—Num. 2:2.

This whole chapter is very full of interest as revealing the orderliness of the Divine arrangements. This host of God was not a mob, lacking order. It was a disciplined company, and in these provisions for its encampment this fact was emphasized. At the centre of everything was the Tent of Meeting, for ever reminding the people that they constituted a Theocracy, and that all their national life was centred in the God Who had called them to Himself. Nearest to this sacred centre—that is, around the enclosure of the courts—the Levites encamped; and thus the nation was kept in the consciousness of the fact that its first obligation was the service and worship of God. Beyond this encampment of priests and Levites came the tribes, and these again were in a Divinely-arranged order. On the east—that is, fronting the entrance—the standard-bearing tribe was Judah, with its symbol of a lion of gold on a field of scarlet. With Judah were Zebulun and Issachar. On the west, Ephraim's standard was a black ox on a field of gold. Associated with Ephraim were Manasseh and Benjamin. On the south, Reuben bore the standard on which was a man on a field of gold. Simeon and Gad were grouped with Reuben. On the north, Dan was the standard-bearing tribe, his symbol being an eagle of gold on a field of blue. With Dan were Naphtali and Asher. Thus the whole encamping of the people was beautifully symbolic of the nature of the national life, and of the presence and purpose of God therein.

Numbers 2:2-34

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard. (r.v.)

Our God is a God of order; and it was needful for the order of the camp, whether at rest or on the march, that each man should know his place, and keep to it. But though there were different standards and positions, there was one center, the ark, and one host of redeemed men.

Each believer has an appointed place in the great army of God. It is indicated by the voice of God, and by the circumstances of our life; and it should be jealously retained. Repeatedly the Apostle bade his converts abide in the calling wherein they were called. Yours may be towards the bleak north of difficulty, or the warm south of privilege — in the home, the country parish, or the difficult foreign post. But, on the whole, you should stay where you are; unless the Captain of our salvation moves you by some unmistakable indication of his will. The apostle Paul ever lived in such dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance, and for the unfolding of the Divine purpose, that from some apparently trivial circumstance he would “gather” the movements of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And interval there was none between his apprehension of the Divine purpose and his endeavor to strike his tent and follow wherever it might lead (Acts 16:6–7).

The main point with us all is to face the ark, to which the doors of all the tents looked, so that we may ever catch the first symptom of the movement of the cloud. On the whole, we do best to pitch and fight under our own standards. There is a closer bond of brotherhood possible between those who think alike. But whilst we are positive in what we affirm for ourselves, let us not deny that other standards represent necessary aspects of the common faith.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 2:31

Numbers 3:1-13

The Levites are mine, for all the firstborn are mine. - Numbers 3:12–13

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the world of fairy tales, firstborn children are involved in some bizarre bargains. In Rumpelstiltskin, the miller's daughter exchanges her future child for the spinning of straw to gold. Rapunzel's parents gave her up for an herb called rampion. Perhaps because of these fabled lopsided deals, the phrase "giving up your firstborn" has become synonymous with paying a ridiculously expensive price.

But in Israel's history, the concept of surrendering the oldest son could never be exaggerated, for it was the price God exacted at the Passover. Most people familiar with the story know that the Lord claimed the lives of the oldest sons of Egypt and spared the sons of Israel, but the story didn't end there. Today's reading informs us that God claimed the firstborn of Israel as well.

In His mercy, God made a substitution of His own. Instead of taking the eldest sons for tabernacle service, He set apart the entire tribe of Levi, the tribe of Aaron and Moses (cf. Ex. 2).

We need to make an important distinction here. Only the direct descendants of Aaron were actually priests (v. 2); the rest of the Levite males were to serve as assistants to the priests. Even though Moses was from the Levi tribe, he was not authorized to have the same priestly access as Aaron and his sons (Ex. 40:35).

This substitution was more significant than it might seem at first glance. Tomorrow we'll examine further the details of this exchange, but for now we can focus on the bigger picture—God created this provision without being asked, which shows that He had no interest in depriving Israelite families of joy. He had the power and authority to do whatever He wanted, but He saw fit to create a plan that would reward His children.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The generosity of God is impossible to fathom. Everything within our control is on loan from God. That should change the way we look at everything in our lives: our belongings, relationships, talents, and responsibilities. As you go throughout the day, take note of all that God has given to you and enjoy it to the fullest. But also look for opportunities to take what He's given you and use it for His service.

Num. 3:12

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn.-Num. 3.12.

In this, and the following chapters, the service of the Levites is dealt with in detail. In the taking of the census for the men of war, the Levites were exempted from military service. This was a clear indication of the mind of God as to the true value of directly religious and spiritual work in national service. A fact which is sometimes overlooked in our thinking of the Levitical order is brought out in the words we have selected from this chapter. It is that the Levites were representatives. The first Divine arrangement was that the firstborn male in every family was to be consecrated to the service of God in the priesthood. Now, in all probability for the sake of cohesion and order, one tribe was set apart to represent the firstborn sons of the nation. In this first carrying out of the arrangement, the number of the tribe of Levi available was 22,000, while there were 22,273 firstborn sons. This company of 273 unrepresented by Levites had to pay a redemption price of five shekels each, which was devoted to the service of the sanctuary. In the light of these things it is interesting to remember that our Lord was the First-born, and so was a Priest according to the original Divine arrangement, and not according to the Levitical order. All those who are redeemed by Him, exercise a priesthood which results from their birthright in Him, and so have no need of any order of men to represent them in priestly work. In this way also the order of Levitical priesthood is done away in Christ.

Numbers 3:38-51

The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal. - Exodus 13:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Edgardo Mortara was taken from his parents when he was just six years old, but there was no mystery to this apparent kidnapping. The year was 1858 in Bologna, Italy, and Pope Pius IX had ordered the police to apprehend the young boy because a servant girl had secretly baptized him. His parents, being Jewish, were forbidden by law to raise a son that the Roman Catholic Church viewed as a Christian. The case drew international attention, but Edgardo never returned to his family.

Today's passage describes a far different method for dedicating children to the Lord.

The Levites became a ransom for the firstborn of the other tribes, but it wasn't a total exchange. The firstborn were still to be

consecrated, or set apart, for the Lord (cf. Luke 2:23 when Jesus was presented at the temple for this purpose). But this consecration didn't involve removing the sons from their families; practically speaking, Israel's families remained intact. The number of Levite males was almost identical to the number of firstborn males from the other tribes. These numbers have troubled some who work out the math. If there are 22,000 firstborn sons in Israel, then there are only 22,000 families with any sons over one month old. How to account for 600,000 adult sons from 22,000 families? This would mean the average family had over 30 sons.

The best explanation seems to be that after the Passover, God decreed that the firstborn of every family in Israel would be consecrated to Him. Although God still claimed those sons as His own, He took the tribe of Levi in their place for His service. In addition, God demanded that every firstborn son that had been born since the Passover be counted. The 22,000 were the firstborn sons that had been born since the Exodus.

This passage shows that God didn't make decisions about His children arbitrarily. He counted every head because He valued every child He claimed as His own.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God commanded that the firstborn son in every family be "redeemed" with a sacrifice (Ex. 13:13). How humbling, then, to know that by faith in Christ, we are redeemed by the blood of God's firstborn (1 Peter 1:18-19)! And just as God placed a ransom for each and every son He claimed, He values you individually and has claimed you as His own. Take courage and comfort in knowing that you are His!

Numbers 3:45

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Take the Levites instead.

Each firstborn son was God's. On the day of the Exodus, as the firstborn of Egypt were stricken, so the firstborn of Israel were hallowed. God claimed the right of their service in his Temple, to serve there as priests and attendants. But instead of them, He accepted the whole tribe of Levi; and for the overplus of firstborn sons above the number of Levites, He accepted redemption money, which went to maintain Aaron and his family. Thus, each firstborn son was represented, either by a substitute, or by a money payment.

An Appeal to Parents. — Would it not be a blessed custom if, in all our churches, the firstborn child was, in a special sense, regarded as God's, and trained for some branch of his holy service in the home and foreign field? What a blessing would rest on our homes if this were the custom! It would lead to very definite prayer, that the young soul might be truly converted and led to realize the parents' ideal.

An Appeal to firstborn Children. — Either go yourself into the service of God, at home or abroad, or send a substitute. Consider yourself under obligation to do some special work for Christ and his Church. And if you cannot, earn money to support your representative. This is laying up treasure in heaven.

An Appeal to Families. — Why should not each Christian family become a missionary society, sending one of its members forth in the name of the rest, who should bind themselves solemnly to "hold the ropes;" and thus obey the Master's parting commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"?

Numbers 4:19

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Every one to his service and to his burden.

Is this what the Apostle referred to when he said that every man should bear his own burden? There are burdens which we cannot share or depute, to bear which we need special grace, and must continually seek the aid of the Divine Spirit.

The burden of our own existence. — Each of us must give an account of himself to God. We were created for a specific purpose; and our failure to fulfil it cannot be settled on another. God will require each man's soul of himself. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (see note Romans 14:12). You have a charge to keep, a soul to save, and a God to glorify.

The burden of our life-work. — What maketh thou in the world? The Maker of all waits for thee to enter his great workshop and

become his apprentice and co-worker. To be an idler, or an absentee, will land thee in inevitable disgrace. The appointed place cannot be left vacant, and thy tools untouched, save at thy grave peril.

The burden of the souls of others. — We are our brothers' keepers, liable at any moment to be called upon to give an account of how they fare; and we cannot rid ourselves of this responsibility by annual donations or subscriptions to charitable or missionary institutions.

The burden of daily intercession. — Jesus bears the burdens of his people as He intercedes for them in heaven; and there is a sense in which we are called to bear up his hands in this holy service. We must consider the work of daily prayer for his Church, for sufferers, and for the world, as part of the burden of the Lord, allotted to us because we are members of his body.

Num. 4:49

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Every one according to his service, and according to his burden.-Num. 4:49.

In this chapter we have a continuation of the instructions concerning the Levites. It gives a minute account of their work in connection with the marching of the people. The duty of carrying all the holy furniture was that of the Kohathites. This furniture, however, they were not permitted to look upon, or touch. Aaron and his sons first entered the Holy Place and covered each sacred piece, affixing the staves which were to rest upon the shoulders of the Levites. On the march these holy vessels were in charge of Eleazar, who carried also the anointing oil and the sweet incense. The curtains and the tents which constituted the Tabernacle itself were carried by the Gershonites. They were under the charge of Ithamar. To the Merarites were committed the boards and bars and pillars, and other things which formed the foundations upon which the sacred hangings rested. These also were under the charge of Ithamar. All this is instructive, as it reveals the Divine thought and care for every detail of the life and worship of His people. It is of particular value, too, as it teaches us that in the thought of God every detail is sacred. These men were in this regard the "caretakers" of the House of God. How often we are prone to think meanly of "caretakers" in these modern times! Such thinking is utterly wrong. The men and women who have charge of the houses of our worship are rendering holy service.

Numbers 5:3

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Without the camp,... in the midst whereof I dwell.

What a sublime conception! — God dwelt with his people. The Tabernacle was his tent amongst theirs; the cloudy pillar was his ensign. To attack them was to come into collision with Him. All the expense and anxiety of the march rested on his shoulders, as the care of a family of young children on a father. How needful it was that nothing should be permitted which could grieve or offend Him!

What the camp of Israel was in those long-ago days, the Church is now. It is the host of the redeemed, the representative of God, the pilgrimage of the saints. Amongst his people God still walks, and dwells, and tabernacles. Their griefs, conflicts, and experiences, are shared by their ever-present Almighty Friend.

The presence of God in the Church is by the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). He is with her and in her as the Body of which the risen Lord is Head. When the one Advocate went up, the other came down; when the Second Person in the Holy Trinity ascended to his throne, the Third Person came down to perpetuate his work in the world, through the Church. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

How careful should we be in the ordering of our church-life, as well as of our individual lives, so that there may be nothing to offend Him! "What will the Holy Spirit think of this?" should be always our first inquiry. We must walk in the paracletism of the Holy Ghost, if we would be edified and multiplied, as were the churches throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31).

Numbers 5:1-4

I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. - Leviticus 11:44

TODAY IN THE WORD

Throughout most of history, scientists have had no understanding whatsoever about infection. In the late 1800s, Louis Pasteur's revolutionary discoveries in microbiology disproved the long-accepted theory of spontaneous generation, an idea that life or even

disease could spring from nonliving matter. (Ironically, some evolutionary scientists still cling to a similar theory.) His work proved for the first time that diseases were caused by tiny living organisms and could be transmitted from person to person.

God knew something that scientists took thousands of years to figure out: a diseased person could contaminate an entire camp. But His command in today's passage isn't strictly practical medicine. It was a symbolic reminder of spiritual purity as well. The dwelling place of the Lord was not to be defiled. This command showed Israel that impurities have no place in God's presence or among His people.

The Israelites weren't perfect apart from the impurities described in these verses, but it was important for them to observe a proper respect for the Lord's presence—the land was different because He lived there, and these people were to be different because they were His.

Notice that the Israelites obeyed. That's a key fact in a book categorized by failure. Israel's main weakness at this point was not a failure to obey the letter of the law—although those instances would come. Instead, the critical flaw in the nation of Israel would later prove to be a lack of faith and a lack of appreciation for what God had done for them. It was good that Israel followed the instructions God gave through Moses, but obeying a series of commands is not enough to please God. Every unclean thing must be removed from His presence and from the dwelling place of His people to prevent the spread of both physical infection and spiritual impurity.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Sin spreads in our lives and among people like an infection. If God is absolutely pure, we should honor His presence within us by addressing any impurity in our own hearts and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ to do the same. Avoid the tendency to let the behavior of others to set the tone for our own conduct. Instead, employ God's zero-tolerance policy on your own sin. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict and purify your heart and life.

Numbers 5:5-8

The priest will make atonement for him before the Lord, and he will be forgiven. - Leviticus 6:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

Zacchaeus, chief tax collector in Jericho, had heard that Jesus was coming. Although curious, he was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he climbed a sycamore tree to get a better look. What luck--Jesus was headed straight in his direction!

How surprised Zacchaeus was when Jesus stopped, looked up at him, and invited Himself to dinner. Touched by Jesus' love, and no doubt also by His message of forgiveness, Zacchaeus repented of his cheating and corruption as chief tax collector. To make restitution, he pro-mised to donate half of his goods to the poor and to pay people he had cheated back four times over!

Jesus affirmed that Zacchaeus' actions showed a true change of heart: "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk. 19:9).

Zacchaeus' repentance and restitution illustrate a core principle of the Old Testament guilt offering (Num. 5:6-7).

Themes of confession and forgiveness have recurred throughout this month. Sin must be dealt with, confessed, and turned from. Failure to do so creates a barrier to fellowship with God. This is as true for us as it was for the Israelites under the Law, for God's hatred for sin is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We should imitate Him, being willing to do whatever it takes to pursue righteousness (see Mt. 5:29-30).

To follow God means to have zero tolerance for sin (1 Jn. 1:5) and to be in love with His beautiful and eternal holiness (see Ps. 93:5). "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Human nature causes us to fear confession of every wrongdoing, but by God's grace we have nothing to be afraid of! We expect our sin to cause shame and suffering, but Christ offers us joy and forgiveness when we confess.

Num. 5:17

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water.-Num 5. 17.

These words occur in a section which emphasizes the necessity for the purity of the camp. All that were in any way unclean were to be put outside that camp. This does not mean that they were left to perish as the people continued their march, but that they were

not permitted to retain their proper place with the tribes of their people. They were, for the time being, camp-followers only, shut out, until their purification was ensured, according to the provision made in the laws already given. It was also insisted upon that there must be moral rectitude among the people in their inter-relationships, and to this end restitution was constantly to be made by all such as had in any way sinned against their fellows. It is in this atmosphere that we find the careful, and to us at first strange instructions as to the peril of jealousy between husband and wife. The very fact of these instructions shows how important it is, in the mind of God, that, in the interest of true national strength, family life should be maintained at its strongest and purest. It is well that we remind ourselves that this ordeal of drinking bitter water has no similarity to the ordeals by fire and poison of which we read in the history of the Dark Ages, and of barbarous peoples. The drinking of this water was perfectly harmless in itself. It only became proof of guilt by the act of God. If a woman, guilty of infidelity, consented to this ordeal, the tokens of her guilt were manifested, not by any action of the water, but by the act of God.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 6:4

Numbers 6:1-21

Throughout the period of his separation he is consecrated to the Lord. - Numbers 6:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

English hymn writer Frances Havergal once visited Areley House where ten people were staying, and she prayed, "Lord, give me all in this house." And the Lord answered her prayer. The unsaved accepted Him, and the wayward believers were rejoicing in His name by the time her five-day visit was over. It was on the last night there that she penned the hymn that begins, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee," and ends with the line, "Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."

That decision of complete surrender to God was at the heart of the Nazirite vow, and it was not a choice that was made lightly—or frequently. In most English translations, the word Nazirite appears only five times outside of this passage, most notably in the story of Samson. Scripture does point to other probable examples such as Samuel and John the Baptist, but we can deduce that such voluntary vows of consecration to God were somewhat rare.

An Israelite man or woman who took the Nazirite vow would be truly set apart for the duration of the vow, sometimes for life. It would have been impossible to "blend in" with hair that had never been cut, never drinking any wine or fermented drink, and never attending the funeral of a family member. Those three aspects of the vow created separation unto God on a personal, social, and familial basis. This truly was a surrender of the whole life.

The ceremony at the conclusion of the vow consisted of five offerings as well as the shaving and burning of the Nazirite's hair, and the various offers give us another picture of the holistic nature of the vow. The provisions made were no small financial expense, either. A male lamb, an ewe, a ram, flour cakes, wafers, oil, grain, wine for the drink offering, and the added stipulation of whatever else the person could afford to offer (v. 21). Nazirites gave all they could give to the Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This passage indicates no reward for taking the vow other than being set apart as holy unto God. Would that be enough motivation for you to surrender your appearance, social celebration, family connections, and your possessions for any period of time? Can you sincerely pray to God and ask Him, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee?" God can use your surrender to do amazing things, but don't make the choice lightly.

Numbers 6:12

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The former days shall be void. (r.v.)

How solemn is the suggestion of these words! If the separation of the Nazirite were broken in upon by his sudden contact with death, he might start afresh; but all the days that preceded that untoward event would go for nothing — they would not be counted.

How many days in our life have been made void! Days in which we have learned no new lesson of God; have had no access into his presence; have done no kind and helpful act; have spoken no loving, tender word. It is all-important that even our days of rest from active engagements should be days of learning deeper lessons, of vision, and of reception from the fulness of God.

Each day comes to us fresh from God, like soft metal, waiting to be stamped with our inscription; or like a piece of yielding clay, to be molded in to some shape of beauty or use. Each morning the slate is brought for us to write on; the canvas on which we may

paint. But too often we miss our opportunity, and a blurred, marred, confused result is all we have to show.

If you would avoid this, let God plan each day; follow the guidance of his Spirit; do all you touch with your might and for his glory; put away all known sin, and be separate from evil; in everything learn to submit to his dealings, and to commit yourself to his faithful keeping. Then each day will have something to keep in charge, and resemble a chalice filled to its brim with holy service. We must ever remember that “every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Numbers 6:22-27 Smile!

The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. —Numbers 6:25

A recent study that I read concluded that smiling can be good for your health. Research shows that smiling slows down the heart and reduces stress.

But smiling isn’t just good for you; a genuine smile blesses those on the receiving end as well. Without saying a word, it can tell others that you like them and that you are pleased with them. A smile can hug someone with love without giving them even the slightest touch.

Life does not always give us a reason to smile. But when we see a heartfelt smile on a child’s face or through aged wrinkles, our hearts are encouraged.

Smiles are also a hint of the image of God in us. In the ancient blessing recorded in the book of Numbers we get an indication that God “smiles”: “The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num. 6:25-26). Those words are a Hebrew idiom for the favor of God on a person’s life, asking God to smile on His children.

So today, remember that you are loved by God, and that He is pleased to be gracious to you and to shine His face upon you.

Lord, may my life be so pleasing to You that You are

pleased to have Your face shine on me. And as You

graciously smile on my life, may I find someone

today with whom I can share Your love through a smile.

Your smile could be a message of cheer from God to a needy soul.

INSIGHT: In showering the people with His favor, God instructed the high priest to bestow on the people the blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26. In the New Living Translation, “The Lord make His face shine upon you” (v.25) is rendered as “The Lord smile on you.” The Lord smiling and “lift[ing] up His countenance” (v.26) expresses that the people have God’s special attention and approval. This benediction, pronounced by many pastors at the end of church services today, affirms that God provides for and protects His people, assuring us of His presence, pardon, and peace. The Hebrew concept of peace (shalom) is all-embracing and includes the concepts of completeness, security, health, wealth, tranquility, contentment, friendship, and peace with God and man.

Numbers 6:22-27 Benediction Blessing

By David C. Egner

The Lord bless you and keep you. —Numbers 6:24

Our church introduced a new practice for the close of our traditional morning worship service. We turn to one another and sing the familiar Aaronic blessing the Lord gave to Moses to give to Israel: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you ... ” (Num. 6:24-26). Our hearts are uplifted as we mutually catch the eye of a fellow believer and extend our blessing to him or her.

One Sunday, I noticed a heartwarming and special exchange that has now become a weekly event. In a pew near the front sat Oscar and Marian Carlson, faithful followers of Jesus Christ and devoted partners for the 62 years of their married life. When we began to sing, Oscar reached over and took Marian’s hands in his. They sang the opening words of this special blessing to each other before looking to others. Everyone nearby sneaked a peek at the look of love and tenderness on their faces.

A benediction is not simply a ritualistic closing; it’s a genuine prayerful wish for God’s goodness to follow the other person. In offering it to one another, Oscar and Marian exemplify its warmest and deepest meaning. In blessing others, we express gratitude for what God has done for us through Christ’s death (Heb. 13:20-21).

Bless me, Lord, and make me a blessing;

I'll gladly your message convey;

Use me to help some poor needy soul,

And make me a blessing today. —Zelley.

God gives blessing to us so we can be a blessing to others.

Numbers 6:22-27

The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. - Numbers 6:26

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the movie, Toy Story, Woody and Buzz Lightyear are toys belonging to a boy named Andy. But Buzz has an identity crisis. He whines, "I'm not a space ranger. I'm just a toy; a stupid, insignificant toy." Woody encourages him, "Look, over in that house is a kid who thinks you are the greatest, and it's not because you're a space ranger, pal. It's because you're a toy—you are his toy." Those words finally sink in when Buzz looks at his shoe and sees Andy's name written across it.

When Aaron, the high priest and spokesman of the Lord, issued this blessing to Israel, it was as if He were labeling them with the very name of God (v. 27). For Israel, that carried incredible significance, because the name of God commanded the utmost reverence.

God called His name "glorious and awesome" (Deut. 28:58). To put His name on the Israelites was the highest honor He could bestow, and it could only be given after the offering of sacrifices. This blessing was given when the High Priest emerged from the Tent of Meeting after rendering sacrifices in the Holy of Holies. The sacrifices restored the relationship between God and His people, and the benefits were immeasurable.

The blessing assured the people of God's care and protection. The descriptive images of the Lord's face were particularly powerful. The picture of His face beaming upon Israel shows that God takes pleasure in them. It's a promise of His grace; that He will care for them not because He merely tolerates them, but because He absolutely loves them. And the fact that He can turn His face toward them is the sign of a peaceful relationship. The offerings cleared any account of discord between the Lord and His people. His peace, not His wrath, was theirs to enjoy. The final words describing the blessing rang with hope and promise: "I will bless them" (v. 27). The Israelites should have had no doubt about God's tender care for them.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Christ's sacrifice was more significant than any offering Aaron and his sons could ever make on Israel's behalf. And Jesus can bring us closer to God than any high priest ever could. So if we confess our sins to Jesus Christ and place our trust in Him, we can claim the promises of this blessing with absolute assurance! Read this blessing as your own and take heart based on God's grace and peace. Trust that He is beaming on you with unspeakable love and grace.

Numbers 6:22-27 Smile!

By Joe Stowell

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C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 6:24

Num. 6:27

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

So shall they put My Name upon the children of Israel.—Num. 6.27.

The solemn act of pronouncing this blessing was a distinct part of the worship of the Hebrew people. A reference to Leviticus 9.22 will show that it followed upon the completion of the presentation of the offerings. It consisted of a placing of the Name of Jehovah upon the people, that is, a declaration of His relationship to them. The formula was definitely fixed. That is the significance of the word "SO" which the Revised Version gives us. It was to be done in this way and in no other. The Name in itself was JEHOVAH, the Name signifying the infinite grace of God, wherein He bends to meet the need of His people, becoming to them at all times, exactly what they really need. The sentences of this benediction were interpretative of the values of that Name. The first sentence, "Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee," does not describe the way nor the nature of the blessing, but fixes attention upon the fact that God is its source. The second sentence, "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee," declares, not only that God is the source of blessing, but that He is its channel, that through His activity it reaches men. The final sentence, "Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," is a declaration that the experience of the blessing in the soul is that of Jehovah Himself creating that experience. For us these words must ever speak of the Trinity. The Father is Jehovah the Source of blessing; the Son is Jehovah the Channel of blessing; the Spirit is Jehovah the Creator of the experience of blessing. "So," He has put His name upon us; so He has blessed us indeed.

Numbers 7:1-17

These were the offerings of the Israelite leaders for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed. - Numbers 7:84

TODAY IN THE WORD

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is the great marathon Christmas carol. It's a fun and playful melody at first, but after twelve partridges in pear trees, 22 turtle doves, 30 French hens, 36 calling birds, 40 rings, 42 geese, 42 swans, 40 maids, 36 ladies, 30 lords, 22 pipers, and twelve drummers, the average singer is left out of breath and exhausted—for twelve days of gifts, it's an overwhelming haul.

If you read chapter 7 in its entirety, you'll be left with a similar impression. The list of gifts that Israel gave for the dedication for the altar is so extensive, elaborate, and repetitive, it's hard to fathom. But the inclusion in Scripture of all these gifts shows that God appreciated every gift enough to record them for all time.

The first gifts from the heads of the households were perfectly practical. The tribe in charge of transporting the tabernacle would have an obvious use for six carts and twelve oxen, although the Kohathites were responsible for transporting items so holy they could be carried only by members of that family.

The second round of giving, though, was a far finer assortment of riches. The parade of gifts shows a remarkable unity among the

tribes and leaders of Israel. Each tribe, regardless of size, assembled identical and equal gifts. Even the half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh each gave as much as the other tribes. Their generosity poured out of an appropriate respect and submission to God's authority.

The gift of the tribes also testifies to how generously God had blessed His people. This was a nation coming out of 400 years of slavery to Egypt and another year of nomadic living, yet God had given them the means to lavish Him with riches. They also provided all the material necessary to build the tabernacle and its contents. For a people with no home, God had made Israel very wealthy, indeed!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Repetitive as chapter 7 may be, every gift listed therein was a luxury that Israel could afford to do without. As you go through this day, take note of all the things you use and encounter that aren't true necessities. This is the catalog of God's stockpile of grace. In fact, even the provision of your basic needs displays God's love for you. Thank Him in your heart and don't hesitate to give back to Him.

Numbers 7:89

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Moses ... heard the voice speaking unto him,... and He spake unto him.

The meaning of this verse seems to be that when Moses went into the Holy Place to speak with God he became conscious of the Divine voice, that opened out to him the thoughts and purposes of God in such a way that he was caught up on the current and borne back to God.

This is the true conception of prayer. We often go to God with our thoughts and desires, and having uttered them we go our way. We do not wait long enough to see the cherubim and the light of the Shechinah, or hear the Divine voice. Thus our prayers fail of their answer. We do not ask what is according to the will and mind of our Heavenly Father; and the heavens seem like brass. We have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering.

The true conception of prayer is that it originates in the purpose of God, and passes from the Father to the Son, who is also the Head and Representative of his people. From Jesus it is brought into our hearts by the blessed Spirit, who unites the Head with each member of the mystical body; and from the saints it returns to the source from which it came.

If, then, we would pray aright, we should wait before God until the Holy Spirit suggests what we should pray for, and indeed begins to plead within us for the saints. Silence, solitude, waiting before God; the return to God of his own thoughts; the being burdened with the weighty matters that lie heavily on the heart of Jesus — such is the noblest kind of prayer. It is those who wait upon the Lord that renew their strength, that mount up with wings as eagles; that run and are not weary, that walk and are not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

Numbers 7:89-8:26

They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. - Numbers 8:16

TODAY IN THE WORD

In Richard Connell's short story, "The Most Dangerous Game," Sanger Rainsford was an accomplished big-game hunter who had grown accustomed to tracking down dangerous animals. But after being trapped on the island of General Zaroff, Rainsford finds himself as the prey. That role-reversal story line has often been a theme in suspense films and literature.

From our contemporary perspective, the laying on of hands might seem like a standard gesture of commissioning or blessing. But when the Israelites laid hands on the Levites, they put the priestly tribe in the position usually reserved for animals offered as a sacrifice (vv. 10, 12), and the symbolism was lost on no one.

The Levites were in no danger, but the weight of their responsibility must have been daunting. With the hands of the Israelites on them, the Levites were assuming the role of living sacrifices to make atonement for their entire nation (v. 19). Two bulls were then sacrificed to purify the tabernacle and make atonement for the Levites themselves. Among a people that were themselves set apart, the Levites were set apart even further, declared by the Lord as entirely His (v. 14).

This entire ceremony demonstrates the need for all things surrounding the Lord's dwelling to be purified and atoned, or presented as acceptable in the Lord's eyes. The offerings in this passage made it possible for the Levites to perform their services and for the Israelites to approach the sanctuary to bring their sacrifices to the tabernacle (v. 19). It may seem strict to us, but through these

ceremonies, God was lovingly providing the means for His people to draw close to Him. They had no land of their own, they were wandering, but they were being invited into the presence of the Lord along every step of the journey.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Before you approach the throne of God in prayer today, think about everything He has done to allow you into His presence. We are sinful people who have no right to come near a holy and perfect God. But He offered the ultimate sacrifice of His own Son. And it wasn't because we so desperately longed and pleaded to come near Him. God longed for you and took the necessary steps to draw you close. Humbly thank Him for His love.

Num. 7:89

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

He heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the Mercy-seat.—Num. 7.89.

This is a brief statement of something that happened after the dedication and anointing of the altar. It was a great day, and all this longest chapter in the book is occupied with the account of it, and of the offerings of the princes. These offerings had been twelve days in course of presentation. They were purely voluntary. Not in answer to any compulsion or Divine requirement, but out of the consciousness of the importance of worship did the princes of the people offer willingly. Seeing that they were giving thus willingly, it was Divinely arranged that the giving in each case should be equal, thus precluding the possibility of any spirit of rivalry. When all was done, Moses entered the Tabernacle. The Revised Version here helps us, in that it renders very literally. Instead of attempting interpretation, as in the King James version by rendering, "he heard the voice of One," it translates directly, "he heard the Voice." This is perhaps the one instance in which we have a clear statement that in his communing with God, Moses did actually hear a voice. The communications which he received were more than subjective impressions; they were objective expressions. The place of the voice is definitely and carefully stated. It came "from above the mercy-seat, that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim." This is emphasized by the last statement, "and He spake unto him," which Rotherham has rendered: "So He spake unto him," with undoubted accuracy.

Num. 8:2

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The seven lamps shall give light in front of the candlestick.—Num. 8.2.

A reference to Exodus 25.31-37 will explain the "seven lamps" and the one "candlestick." The word "candlestick" would certainly be better rendered "lamp-stand." The word first occurs in Genesis 1.4, where it is used of sun, moon, and stars. These are light-holders. So also was this golden stand, which occupied a place in the Holy Place opposite the table of shewbread. This light was given by the seven lamps which it held. Thus one light was shining, but it was sevenfold, coming from these seven lamps in the one light-holder. The statement that this light was to shine in front of the lampstand raises the inquiry as to what it fell upon within that Holy Place. As we have already said, opposite to the lampstand was the table of shewbread. Upon that table the priests placed twelve cakes every Sabbath day, having frankincense on them. These were the symbols of the fellowship of the people with God. Upon that table the light from the golden lampstand ever fell. Thus were typified the great principles of the life of fellowship with God, which have their fulfilment for us in Christ. We have a table of communion, but it is well to re-member that upon it the light is ever shining. We only have right to that table as we dwell in that light. The light for us comes from the Holy Spirit; but we are responsible for the reception of His in-dwelling; we have to keep the lamps trimmed.

Numbers 8:11, 13, 15, 21

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Aaron offered them for a wave offering. (r.v.)

This is interesting and instructive. The Levites were substituted for the firstborn of Israel. They were first separated from the rest of the people, cleansed, sprinkled, shaven, and finally presented to the Lord by the act of Aaron, who, according to the Hebrew word, waved them before the Lord. This waving must, of course, have been done in symbol and figure. But it was not enough that they were thus waved, they had thereafter to go in to do their service. In other words, they were called to realize actually that which was

their position and standing in the sight of God.

There is a precise analogy in all this to the work which the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us all. He said, "I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated." When He offered Himself without spot to God, to do his Father's will, though it cost Him the agony of Calvary, the heavenly Aaron waved us before God to be his. We were separated by his most precious death, that we should be wholly for God. But what is ours in the great deed of Christ, must become ours by our own choice and deed. We must go in to do the service for which we have been chosen and set apart by the Holy Ghost.

This can only be through the grace of the blessed Spirit. Ask Him to realize in you the purposes of God: trust Him to keep you trusting: each morning say, "Holy Spirit, I rely on Thee to keep me in the current of the Divine purpose." Then dare to go forth to do the day's duties, believing that you may be always engaged in God's holy service; that in everything, whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God.

Numbers 8:23-26 Don't Just Retire

By C. P. Hia

They may minister with their brethren ... to attend to needs. —Numbers 8:26

The first people to climb Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, were Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. Hillary was just 33 years old. His feat afforded him fame, wealth, and the realization that he had already lived a remarkable life.

So, what did Hillary do for the next 55 years? Did he retire and rest on his laurels? Absolutely not.

Although Hillary had no higher mountains to climb, that didn't stop him. He achieved other notable goals, including a concerted effort to improve the welfare of the Nepalese people living near Mt. Everest—a task he carried on until his death in 2008.

Did you know that God told the Levites to retire from their regular duties at age 50? (Num. 8:24-25). But He did not want them to stop helping others. He said that they should "minister with their brethren ... to attend to needs" (v.26). We cannot take this incident as a complete teaching on retirement, but we can see a godly implication that continuing to serve others after our working days are over is a good idea.

Many people find that when they retire they have nothing meaningful to do with their time. But as the Levites and Sir Edmund Hillary did, we can refocus when we retire—giving of our time to help others.

The Lord will give you help and strength

For work He bids you do;

Serve others from a heart of love

Is what He asks of you. —Fasick

Life takes on new meaning when we invest ourselves in others.

Numbers 9:15-23

To Work Or to Wait?

Our Daily Bread

"Be still, and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

A gifted and active Christian woman was stricken with an illness that confined her to bed. On her wall hung a motto, 'Be Strong - And Work For the Lord', based on 1 Chronicles 28:20. But those words, which used to bring her encouragement and strength, now brought only distress.

A friend recognized her troubled state of mind and read the last part of Numbers 9 to her. She pointed out that during Israel's wilderness wanderings, they rested whenever the guiding cloud remained over the tabernacle. But when the cloud moved on, they journeyed forward.

The friend then said that there are times when God expects us to move ahead in our work for Him. At other times He expects us to rest. To emphasize her point, she walked over to the wall, took down the first motto, and replaced it with a new one: 'Be Still, And Know that I Am God' (Psalm 46:10).

All of us need to recognize that God in His wisdom not only leads us into service but also provides times of rest. Often we desire the

thrill of activity when He knows we will draw closer to Him through peaceful stillness. A real test of consecration is the ability to wait when we prefer to work. - H G Bosch

Whenever your plans are thwarted,

Just Quietly keep still,

And wait for God's sure leading,

His timing, and His Will.-Anon.

Thought for the Day: God orders our stops as well as our steps.

Numbers 9:1-14

This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it. - Exodus 12:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Nicholas Sparks had an urgent request from his wife Catherine the morning after their wedding. Her grandparents had been too ill to attend the ceremony, so she asked Nicholas for a sort of “do over.” So he in his tuxedo and she in her gown went for a forty-minute drive to greet the ailing grandparents with a video, some wedding cake, and their boutonniere and corsage. For the grandparents, the occasion was a welcome reminder of their own love, which still burned brightly—in fact, it inspired Sparks' best-selling novel, *The Notebook*.

Some occasions are too important to miss. In Israel, the Passover was to become an annual observance of the greatest rescue of all time. Not only were the people delivered from the hand of Egypt, they were also spared from the wrath of God because of their faith. And that faith wasn't to be a one-time performance. God wanted them to remember the Passover every year and for their faith to continue as they proceeded toward Canaan.

Today's observance was special because it was the very first anniversary. Note that this chapter begins in the first month of the second year after Israel left Egypt (v. 1) while the census at the beginning of Numbers was in the second month (1:1). And the consecration of the tabernacle actually occurred just before today's passage and a month before the census (cf. Ex. 40:1). The book of Numbers is less concerned with recounting a detailed timeline; rather, the point is that all of these events happened within weeks of each other. It was a month filled with triumphant developments in Israel, and no one wanted to be left out.

God's provision for those restricted from the camp or otherwise unavailable for the Passover shows that God's love isn't bound by time and space. He didn't disregard those who, for good reason, were away from the ceremony. He didn't even object to outsiders taking part. He did, however, disdain those who chose to ignore the Passover (v. 13).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We're people who enjoy commemorating history—perhaps because we're also people who easily forget those events that we fail to commemorate! For this reason, don't dismiss the importance of observances such as communion, baptism, or even holidays like Memorial Day. Don't let them become mere rituals. The next time you take the communion cup in your hands or witness a baptism, be sure to remember and solemnly thank God for the events that made it possible for you to live life as you do.

Numbers 9:15-23 Following The Master

By Jennifer Benson Schuld

At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed. —Numbers 9:23

At a dog show near my home, I watched a Cardigan Welsh corgi named Trevor perform. At his master's command, he ran several yards away and immediately returned, he jumped fences, and he identified objects using his sense of smell. After finishing each exercise, he sat down at his master's feet and waited for more instructions.

Trevor's careful attention to his master's instruction reminded me of the devotion God desired from His people as they followed Him through the wilderness. God led in a unique way. His presence appeared as a cloud. If the cloud ascended, He wanted His people to move to another area. If the cloud descended, they were to stay put. “At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed” (Num. 9:23). The Israelites followed this practice day or night, regardless of how long they had to remain in one place.

God wasn't simply testing the Israelites; He was leading them to the Promised Land (10:29). He wanted to take them to a better

place. So it is with us when God asks us to follow Him. He wants to lead us to a place of closer fellowship with Himself. His Word assures us that He is loving and faithful in leading those who humbly follow Him.

In fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,

Or we'll walk by His side in the way;

What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;

Never fear, only trust and obey. —Sammis

God asks His children to follow the Leader.

Insight - The tabernacle (Num. 9:15) was not only a place of worship, it was intended to be the center of Israel's national life. This "tent of meeting" also foreshadowed the incarnation of Christ, the living Word who "dwelled" (that is, "tabernacled") among us in a tent of human flesh (John 1:14).

Numbers 9:15-23

They obeyed the Lord's order, in accordance with his command through Moses. - Numbers 9:23

TODAY IN THE WORD

Military strategy has evolved over the years, but armies have always relied on mobility. General George Patton stressed its importance, saying, "My men don't dig foxholes. I don't want them to. Foxholes only slow up an offensive. Keep moving. And don't give the enemy time to dig one either."

Israel wasn't yet on the offensive, but they definitely maintained mobility as they approached the Promised Land. We mentioned earlier that Numbers began with the air of a military strike in the making. The leaders were identified, the people were sectioned off, and the potential army was counted. The great size of the army was undeniable.

Then God turned Israel's attention to their leader, Himself. He created a plan and a place for worship. For Israel's purposes, this was the most crucial tactic they could employ. Apart from faith in God, this army would fail. The focus of the nation was united.

In today's passage, we look at what could have been the most problematic element that Israel faced: mobility. Israel wasn't moving as a well-trained army. Men and women of all ages, children and babies, the sick and the healthy—everyone had to move. But there was never any question about where they should go, because the manifestation of God's glory directed them. The presence of God was unmistakable.

Note the almost militaristic tone of today's passage. If the cloud moved, Israel moved. When the cloud rested, Israel rested. No questions asked. As Israel swept across the landscape of the wilderness, they acquired no new land. They didn't weaken the enemy in Canaan. What they gained was intangible—the spoils of their efforts thus far consisted of faithful obedience. And God made it easy for them by showing them His glory. As has been mentioned before, Israel wasn't asked to obey Moses with blind faith. God appeared to them in the form of a cloud by day and fire by night.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you ever wish that God appeared to you as a pillar of smoke, directing your movements every day? You might think that then you would be free from all decision-making! But wishing for such a cloud is no substitute for studying the Word of God. And our life mission is not to wander in the wilderness; it's to draw closer to God. He's given us all we need to do that. Will we act with the obedience required for victory?

Numbers 9:15-23 Following The Master

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At a dog show near my home, I watched a Cardigan Welsh corgi named Trevor perform. At his master's command, he ran several yards away and immediately returned, he jumped fences, and he identified objects using his sense of smell. After finishing each exercise, he sat down at his master's feet and waited for more instructions.

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Never fear, only trust and obey. —Sammis

God asks His children to follow the Leader.

INSIGHT: The tabernacle (Num. 9:15) was not only a place of worship, it was intended to be the center of Israel's national life. This "tent of meeting" also foreshadowed the incarnation of Christ, the living Word who "dwelled" (that is, "tabernacled") among us in a tent of human flesh (John 1:14).

Numbers 9:15-23

To Work Or to Wait?

"Be still, and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

A gifted and active Christian woman was stricken with an illness that confined her to bed. On her wall hung a motto, 'Be Strong - And Work For the Lord', based on 1 Chronicles 28:20. But those words, which used to bring her encouragement and strength, now brought only distress.

A friend recognized her troubled state of mind and read the last part of Numbers 9 to her. She pointed out that during Israel's wilderness wanderings, they rested whenever the guiding cloud remained over the tabernacle. But when the cloud moved on, they journeyed forward.

The friend then said that there are times when God expects us to move ahead in our work for Him. At other times He expects us to rest. To emphasize her point, she walked over to the wall, took down the first motto, and replaced it with a new one: 'Be Still, And Know that I Am God' (Psalm 46:10).

All of us need to recognize that God in His wisdom not only leads us into service but also provides times of rest. Often we desire the thrill of activity when He knows we will draw closer to Him through peaceful stillness. A real test of consecration is the ability to wait when we prefer to work. - H G Bosch

Whenever your plans are thwarted,
Just Quietly keep still,
And wait for God's sure leading,
His timing, and His Will.-Anon.

Thought for the Day: God orders our stops as well as our steps.

Num. 9:18

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they encamped.-Num. 9.18.

Our chapter brings us to the moment when everything was ready, so far as Divine provision was concerned, for the march to the promised land. The hosts of God waited only for the Divine will. This was to be made known through the cloud. The first appearing of this cloud was in connection with the actual exodus, and from henceforth it was the appointed symbol and token of the Divine presence. It was a remarkably suggestive one, at once mystic and revealing. There has been a good deal of speculation as to the nature of this cloud. It is surely best, reverently to consider it as a supernatural manifestation, indicating the presence and guidance of God. The instructions given were most definite, that the people were only to move in obedience to the movement of the cloud. It was at once a beneficent and drastic provision. It lifted. all responsibility from them, except that of simple obedience. They were not called upon to consider the time or direction of their march, but they were not allowed to object or delay. We have no longer any

such visible means of guidance, but the guidance is as sure for us as for them; and it is given to us to know it by the life of maintained fellowship with the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. In proportion as that is maintained by our fulfilling of the true conditions, there need be no place or time in which we may not discover what is the will of God for us.

Numbers 9:19

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

When the cloud tarried.

This was the supreme test of obedience. It was comparatively easy to strike the tents, when the fleecy folds of the cloud were slowly gathered from off the Tabernacle, and it floated majestically before the host. Change is always delightful; and there was excitement and interest in the route, the scenery, the locality of the next halting-place. But, ah, the tarrying! Sometimes the cloud tarried for two days, or a month, or a year; then, however uninviting and sultry the location, however trying to flesh and blood, however irksome to the impatient disposition, however perilously exposed to danger — there was no option but to remain encamped. The Psalmist says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." And what He has done for the Old Testament saints He will do for believers throughout all ages.

Still, God often keeps us waiting. Face to face with threatening foes, in the midst of alarms, encircled by perils, beneath the impending rock. May we not go? Is it not time to strike our tent? Have we not suffered to the point of utter collapse? May we not exchange the glare and heat for green pastures and still waters? There is no answer. The cloud tarries, and we must remain, though sure of manna, rock-water, shelter, and defence. God never keeps us at a post without assuring us of his presence, and sending us daily supplies.

Wait, domestic servant, before you give notice! Young man, do not be in a hurry to make a change! Minister remain at your post! Until the cloud clearly moves, you must tarry (Numbers 9:8). Wait, then, thy Lord's good pleasure! He will be in plenty of time!

Numbers 10:1-36

The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them ... to find them a place to rest. - Numbers 10:33

TODAY IN THE WORD

Otto Lilienthal didn't invent the airplane, but his studies on the concept of human flight were among the first, if not the very first, attempts to be taken seriously in the scientific world. He designed 18 different hang gliders and personally experimented with all of them. He once said, "To invent an airplane is nothing. To build one is something. But to fly is everything." He was willing to risk his life, and indeed lost it, to make the soaring jump from theoretical genius to practical success.

Today's passage chronicles Israel's leap from theory—that a nation could be led by God—to the practice of literally following Him faithfully. Israel had been encamped at Sinai for about nine months. They had grown as a people, they had built an exquisite and portable place of worship, and they appeared to show all the signs of a faithful nation. But they had not been severely tested.

When the cloud lifted, things got a bit tougher for the Israelites. Verse 33 says that the journey lasted three days. To us, a nine-hour flight with a crying baby might be tough, and a three-day cross-country car ride with four children could be unbearable—a three-day walk or camel ride across the desert with a million or so people would put the modern traveler to shame.

The exchange between Moses and Hobab, the son of Moses' father-in-law Reuel (or Jethro), adds to our understanding of the plight of Israel on the move. Moses sought Hobab's expertise of the landscape to help them know where to camp. The cloud took Israel on a three-day journey, so they would have had to encamp for at least short spells along the way. Moses' request shows that the cloud probably didn't direct them about such intermediate stops. And the fact that they needed a guide gives us a glimpse of just how perilous this trek was. Israel didn't need to fear for their safety because God was there with them—but after a lengthy stay of relative comfort at Sinai, their trust was put to an extreme test.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Is your faith being tested at this point in your life? If so, remember that the God who gave you times of joy and comfort is the same God who accompanies you through the trials. And if you're currently at a high point of closeness with Him, don't take it for granted. Make a mental note and say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace and mercy at this time, and use this moment as a foothold of faith to strengthen you during future tests.

Num. 10:31

Life Applications

Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes. —Num. 10:31.

This is a very suggestive story. Reuel was the father of Zipporah, and so he was Moses' father-in-law (Ex 2:18-21). Hobab, therefore, was his brother-in-law. Just as they were on the eve of departure from Sinai to go into the promised land, Moses sought to persuade him to accompany them. His first appeal was made in the words: "Come with us and we will do thee good." Hobab declined this invitation. Then Moses used another method as he said: "Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes." The words immediately following this appeal, "And they set forward from the mount of Jehovah," leaves no room for doubt that Hobab went. Wherein lay the difference between the argument which failed and that which succeeded? However good the intention, and however true the statement, the first appeal was to selfishness. It promised the man that he should gain something by going. The second was an appeal for help. It suggested that his knowledge of the wilderness would be of service, that he could do something for others which would be of real value to them. The first failed. The second succeeded. Is there not something here that we do well to consider? We are very prone to make our appeal to selfishness—granted, on a high level, but still to selfishness. Would not the appeal that calls to service and sacrifice to the heroic be far more forceful? One thing is certain, and that is that this was the supreme note in Christ's call to men in the days of His flesh. He certainly desires us to come to Him that He may do us good; but He ever calls us as those whom He needs to serve Him, by serving others.

Numbers 10:32

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

What good so ever the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee. (r.v.)

Hobab was a Gentile by race, but he was invited to fellowship with Israel in all the blessings of their covenant. Moses reckoned that Israel was called to a stewardship of the manifold blessings of their lot. Whatever good was entrusted to them, they were called upon to distribute and pass on. As the Lord did them good, they would do Hobab good; making him, Gentile though he were, a fellow-heir, a fellow-member of the body, and a fellow-partaker of the promises of God (see note Ephesians 3:6).

We get by giving. — If the river-bed were to hoard up its waters, they would become stagnant and noisome. It is only in parting with them that it receives constant supplies from the crystal fountainhead. So, if we keep God's good things to ourselves, we make it impossible to receive more. You cannot put more water into a full glass. But as we part with them we get more and better. Distribute five loaves, and you have twelve baskets of fragments.

We learn by teaching. — To stay in a class till you shall feel fully educated, is to miss one prime means of education. There is no way of discovering what we do not know, and getting grounded in what we do, like that of imparting what we have learned to others. Would you learn, teach. Would you grow in grace, tell of the grace which has saved you.

We keep what we give away. — Hoard your money, and you lose it. Give it away, and it is caught in bags that wax not old, and stored beyond the reach of moth or thief. "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want" (Proverbs 11:24). This is folly to the worldling, but sober fact to the child of the King.

Numbers 11:1-10 Goodbye

When the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. —Numbers 11:1

When Max Lucado participated in a half-Ironman triathlon, he experienced the negative power of complaint. He said, "After the 1.2-mile swim and the 56-mile bike ride, I didn't have much energy left for the 13.1-mile run. Neither did the fellow jogging next to me. He said, 'This stinks. This race is the dumbest decision I've ever made.' I said, 'Goodbye.'" Max knew that if he listened too long, he would start agreeing with him. So he said goodbye and kept running.

Among the Israelites, too many people listened too long to complaints and began to agree with them. This displeased God, and for good reason. God had delivered the Israelites from slavery, and agreed to live in their midst, but they still complained. Beyond the hardship of the desert, they were dissatisfied with God's provision of manna. In their complaint, Israel forgot that the manna was a gift to them from God's loving hand (Num. 11:6). Because complaining poisons the heart with ingratitude and can be a contagion, God had to judge it.

This is a sure way to say "goodbye" to complaining and ingratitude: Each day, let's rehearse the faithfulness and goodness of God to us.

Lord, You have given us so much. Forgive us for our short memories and bad attitudes. Help us to remember and be grateful for all that You have provided. And help us to tell others of the good things You have done for us.

Proclaiming God's faithfulness silences discontentment.

INSIGHT: When they faced difficulties, the Israelites often complained against Moses (see Ex. 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:41; 20:3). Their first complaint was made just 3 days out of Egypt (Ex. 15:22-24). Paul warned us not to follow their critical spirit (1 Cor. 10:1-10), for they were sinning against the Lord (Ex. 16:8).

Numbers 11:1-9 Tired Of Manna?

The children of Israel also wept again and said: " ... There is nothing at all except this manna!" —Numbers 11:4,6

A young couple moved to Banff. This vacation paradise located in the heart of the Canadian Rockies is surrounded by majestic mountain peaks. The awesome beauty of the slopes changes with the seasons—glistening snow, bright wildflowers, golden autumn leaves.

For the first year or so, every time the couple walked outside they stopped to admire the beauty of their mountain setting. They were sure they would never tire of the glorious sights that surrounded them. But they did. They began to ignore all that beauty. It wasn't long until it had become familiar and didn't excite them anymore.

This reminds me of the Israelites. After escaping from Egypt into the wilderness, they ran out of food. But God heard their cry and fed them supernaturally with a daily supply of manna. At first they must have been awed by God's incredible provision. After a while they grew tired of the same food day after day. The familiar had lost its appeal.

Do you ever find yourself becoming apathetic with all the blessings God showers on you each day? Don't take them for granted. Remember to thank God for your daily manna: life and strength, and the countless good things He provides each day. —DCE

What once was filled with wonder

Lies cold within my heart;

Return, O Lord, that wonder,

And may it not depart. —Sper

We add to our problems when we fail to count our blessings.

Numbers 11:1-10 Are You A Complainer?

When the people complained, it displeased the Lord. —Numbers 11:1

There's a story about a farmer who was known for his negative attitude. One day a neighbor stopped by and commented on the farmer's wonderful crop. "You must be extremely happy with this year's harvest," he said. The farmer grudgingly replied, "Well, yes, it looks like a pretty good one, but a bumper crop is awfully hard on the soil."

The people of Israel had the same kind of complaining attitude. God had miraculously taken care of them during their wilderness wanderings, yet they constantly complained. For example, they griped about the manna that God had so graciously provided. Remembering the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt, they whined, "There is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:6). What ingratitude!

We too sometimes tend to focus on the negatives rather than the positives of life. We murmur against the Lord when we should be praising Him for His countless blessings. We let ourselves be distracted by the disappointments and deprivations that God allows for our spiritual good.

Whenever we are tempted to grumble, let's remember Numbers 11:1, "When the people complained, it displeased the Lord."

Every time you want to grumble,

Think of others who have less;

Ask the Lord to keep you humble,

Grateful for each happiness. —Marye

Some people go through life standing at the complaint counter.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 11:11

Numbers 11:1-17

Today in the Word

The Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. - Isaiah 30:18a

TODAY IN THE WORD

The final event at the Ringling Brothers' Circus was always the high-wire act of the Flying Wallendas. The finale consisted of a four-level pyramid formation. The Wallendas kept audiences holding their breath with this daring feat. One evening, however, young Dede Wallenda, part of the pyramid's bottom row, began to wobble. He cried out, "I cannot hold on any longer!" As he fell, the entire pyramid collapsed. Several of his brothers were crippled for life, and one died.

As he led the people, Moses must have feared that he too might collapse. Today's passage, however, shows that Moses took this intense pressure to the Lord ... and the Lord provided a safety net.

After the golden calf incident, the Lord renewed His covenant with the people, and the tabernacle was filled with His glory. Things seemed to be looking up. The opening chapters of Numbers show the original generation preparing to enter the Promised Land. After being dedicated, the people went forth from Sinai (Num. 10). Yet no sooner were the Israelites on the road again, that they began to grumble and complain.

First, they complained about the hardships of travelling (v. 1). In His anger, the Lord sent forth a fire on the outskirts of their camp. The people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to the Lord. Then, the people complained about not having any meat to eat. In their ingratitude, they callously recalled the "good old days" in Egypt.

We can almost hear the clamor clanging in Moses' ears! But the Lord's anger, not the people's complaining, really troubled Moses. So once again, Moses cried out to the Lord about such obstinate people. Moses already knew that he had the Lord's favor (see yesterday's study), but in his spiritual and emotional exhaustion, it seemed better to have the Lord simply end his life than to continue on with these people!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Perhaps you can identify with Moses. Sooner or later, all of us experience times of spiritual exhaustion and despair

Numbers 11:1-9 Tired Of Manna?

By David C. Egner

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Bible in a Year:

Numbers 9-11; Mark 5:1-20

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Numbers 11:1-10 Are You A Complainer?

By Richard De Haan

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Bible in a Year:

1 Chronicles 4-6; John 6:1-21

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Numbers 11

Prone to Wander

The book of Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch. Appropriately, the Hebrew title, Ba-midbar is translated “in the desert.” The book journals the desert wanderings of Israel from the beginning in Sinai to the arrival in the Promised Land.

The nation of Israel spent 40 years “wandering” in the wilderness. Their venture into the desert is often depicted as a type of banishment. They were living in-between—no longer existing day-to-day in the bondage of Egypt, yet 40 years away from their arrival in Moab.

When we think of “wandering,” we mean aimlessness or, perhaps, lostness. Yet the Israelites were not really wandering in that sense. They indeed had a destination. God knew where they were going, and He knew where they had started.

After all, it was God who had miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt. After staff turned into serpent, and water turned to blood, they walked free from Ramses's land after more than four centuries of increasing servitude.

Under Moses' leadership, the nation headed toward the Promised Land—assured of God's guidance. God led them by dramatic and supernatural means: by cloud, by fire, with the manna falling from the sky.

Although we say the Israelites “wandered.” God was clearly leading them. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that, during these years, God's people wandered from Him. Again and again, the Israelites failed to trust God. Numbers 11:1 says, “Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard [it], His anger was kindled.”

The wandering of their hearts is uncomfortably familiar. How often we, too, doubt God's leading. Although we have seen His work in our lives, we distrust His provision for our future.

Hymn writer Robert Robinson penned the hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” which depicts the struggle of the sinner. He writes:

Oh, to grace how great a debtor

Daily I'm constrained to be!

Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,

Bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, O take and seal it,

Seal it for Thy courts above.

The Israelites did arrive at the Promised Land, but not without many years of wandering. As we journey, may we be reminded of God's guiding hand in our own lives. May we follow close and not be prone to wander away.

Numbers 11:1-9

Tired of Manna?

Our Daily Bread

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Numbers 11:1-10

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Numbers 11:1-35

You have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wailed before him. - Numbers 11:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Roman philosopher Lucretius once wrote, "So it is more useful to watch a man in times of peril, and in adversity to discern what kind of man he is; for then at last words of truth are drawn from the depths of his heart, and the mask is torn off, reality remains." In today's passage, the mask of works is torn off the face of Israel, and beneath it is revealed the ugliness of disbelief and greed.

If we were to read only the first ten chapters of Numbers, Israel would look like a faithful nation, but the toil of living on the move began to expose the weaknesses of the people. The first chink in their armor was general discontent with their circumstances, and

God's anger literally burned up part of their camp. It seems that no one was harmed during this incident.

The next complaint, hunger, was more intense, as was God's reaction. It started with a greedy few, but the craving spread throughout the camp, including even Moses. God declared this grumbling the equivalent of rejecting Him (v. 20). Instead of asking God to provide, they doubted that He could (v. 4) and ignored the substantial blessing of having Him among them. They worshiped food over the Lord, and God gave them exactly what they wanted. Those who greedily gathered in excess died because of their sinful lust for food (v. 33).

But before God dealt with the people's act of rejection, He graciously provided Moses with help. There's no disguising the severity of his whining. He said that death would be the most favorable solution (v. 15)! Moses basically complained that he didn't have enough power to deal with his responsibilities. Instead of giving Moses sufficient power, which He could have done if Moses had asked for it, He took away responsibility. This provision from God brought about the next cry of dissatisfaction, this time from Joshua. On behalf of his master Moses, he was jealous of the authority of others. In the stress of the desert, Israel's imperfection—from leaders to followers—came to light.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In this chapter, Israel's faith and obedience were shaken by their improper attitudes toward adversity, hunger, power, authority, and worship. Luke 4:1-13 records the temptation of Jesus in all of these areas and His powerful victory over every temptation. Jesus maintained a proper view by quoting Scripture from Deuteronomy and by refusing to serve His personal desires. To avoid Israel's mistake of self-absorption, cast your eyes on Christ and His Word!

Num. 11:4

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The mixed multitude that was among them fell a-lusting.-Num. 11:4.

The mixed multitude was a perpetual source of trouble to Israel. For an explanation of this multitude we must refer to Exodus 12:38. There the statement is simply made that such a multitude accompanied them on their journeys. They were merely camp-followers. The fact of their presence was apparently innocent and harmless. The issue proves that it was far otherwise. The influence on the children of Israel of these people was that of making them dissatisfied. The statement in Exodus shows that they were wealthy, having "flocks and herds, even very much cattle." Perhaps that accounted for the willingness of the people of God to permit them to accompany them. The fact that they had such possessions would seem also to suggest that they were more than adventurers. They had a certain interest in the migration—one of curiosity, perhaps. The only thing that is certain is that they were not of the Theocracy; and not having true part or lot in the Divine movement, they fell a-lusting after the things of Egypt, and infected the people of God with the same unholy desire. What significant teaching there is in this story for the Church of God! How often she has been defiled and weakened by the influence of camp-followers! The mixed multitude which have no vital relation with Christ, but who follow out of curiosity and interest that is less than absolute, are a perpetual menace to the people of God. Better far, a fellow-ship of souls all actually sharing the life of Christ, and loyal to His enterprise, though it be small in numbers, than a crowd of those who follow outwardly, but in whose heart there is yet the lusting for the things of evil.

Numbers 11:4-29

My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. - Exodus 33:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Some people may think of the apostle Paul as a kind of lone ranger, always off doing his own thing. Nothing could be further from the truth! The New Testament records nearly one hundred individuals who were connected with Paul's ministry in one way or another. Although we can only imagine how Paul might have encouraged his coworkers, we get a glimpse of it in his words to the Ephesian elders: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God" (Acts 20:28).

Centuries earlier, Moses also learned the valuable lesson that he also needed Spirit-led leaders. All along, the Lord assured Moses of His presence, as today's verse records. Significantly, the Lord gave Moses this assurance just after the people worshiped the golden calf; today's passage follows another rebellious episode. After weeks of miraculous manna and supernatural water, the people complained because they had no meat! Their constant grouching brought Moses to the end of his rope, and he prayed that God would end his life right then and there!

The Lord heard Moses' real prayer (v. 14), and raised up elders to help Moses. These seventy elders weren't to minister in their own

strength, so the Lord promised that the same Spirit that rested upon Moses would be on them.

The text doesn't explain why the elders prophesied or what they said (v. 25). Later, two elders, Eldad and Medad, who hadn't been at the Tent of Meeting, also prophesied when the Spirit came upon them. Perhaps this was a way of letting others know that the Spirit was indeed upon these men.

More important, Moses recognized that the Spirit wasn't limited to one individual, but was to be shared by all leaders appointed by God. This explains Moses' wish in verse 29; he knew that God's people could never have too much of the Spirit's leading.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - As we've seen, throughout the Old Testament the Spirit rested upon specific individuals for specific tasks. Yet Moses' wish (v. 29) anticipates the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. Since then, all believers receive the Holy Spirit at their conversion. Even so, it's right to pray that the Spirit would be with our spiritual leaders in a special way, enabling them to guide God's people with wisdom. Take time this week to pray for your pastor and other spiritual leaders.

Numbers 11:4-17 Help for a Heavy Load

[The men] shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. —Numbers 11:17

It's amazing what you can haul with a bicycle. An average adult with a specialized trailer (and a bit of determination) can use a bicycle to tow up to 300 pounds at 10 mph. There's just one problem: Hauling a heavier load means moving more slowly. A person hauling 600 pounds of work equipment or personal possessions would only be able to move at a pace of 8 miles in one hour.

Moses carried another kind of weight in the wilderness—an emotional weight that kept him at a standstill. The Israelites' intense craving for meat instead of manna had reduced them to tears. Hearing their ongoing lament, an exasperated Moses said to God, "I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14).

On his own, Moses lacked the resources necessary to fix the problem. God responded by telling him to select 70 men to stand with him and share his load. God told Moses, "[The men] shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (v. 17).

As followers of Jesus, we don't have to handle our burdens alone either. We have Jesus Himself, who is always willing and able to help us. And He has given us brothers and sisters in Christ to share the load. When we give Him the things that weigh us down, He gives us wisdom and support in return.

Who has come alongside you? Have you thanked them?

God's help is only a prayer away.

Numbers 11:6

Boring?

Our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes! —Numbers 11:6

Many of our recurring complaints focus not on what we don't have, but on what we do have and find uninteresting. Whether it's our work, our church, our house, or our spouse, boredom grumbles that it's not what we want or need. This frustration with sameness has been true of the human spirit since the beginning.

Notice the protest of God's people about their menu in the wilderness. Recalling the variety of food they ate as slaves in Egypt, they despised the monotony of God's current provision: "Our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:6).

God provided exactly what they needed each day, but they wanted something more exciting. Are we tempted to do the same? Oswald Chambers said: "Drudgery is the touchstone of character. There are times when there is no illumination and no thrill, but just the daily round, the common task. Routine is God's way of saving us between our times of inspiration. Do not expect God always to give you His thrilling minutes, but learn to live in the domain of drudgery by the power of God."

During the boring times of life, God is working to instill His character in us. Drudgery is our opportunity to experience the presence of the Lord. —David McCasland

Steadfast, then, in our endeavor,
Heavenly Father, may we be;
And forever, and forever,
We will give the praise to Thee. —MacKellar

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 11:23

Numbers 11:27-29

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

[Back to the Bible](#)

Zealous for What?

How easy it is to misplace our zeal. Around 1420 A.D., "golfe" or "the Gouf" became so popular that King James II of Scotland feared the pastime placed the country at risk in its ongoing war with England. He reasoned that his men were spending too much time chasing the "golfe" ball and too little time practicing archery. Consequently the king persuaded his government to pass an act of parliament banning "golfe." Obviously, his zeal was misplaced, not to mention ineffective.

Joshua also had a misplaced zeal. As the assistant to Moses, he considered it his responsibility to make sure his master's power and influence were not threatened. Since part of Moses' authority stemmed from the fact that God spoke through him, the thought of others prophesying or speaking for the Lord disturbed Joshua. In his enthusiasm to protect his master's position, he was ready to hinder the proclamation of God's Word.

Over the centuries, God has used many instruments to proclaim His Word. Sometimes these instruments possessed questionable motives. The apostle Paul noted that some "preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely" (Phil. 1:16). His conclusion? "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (v. 18).

Our zeal must primarily focus on the message, not the messenger. If the Word of God is being faithfully proclaimed, let's rejoice. God sometimes chooses the least likely to speak for Him. If someone is not a true spokesman for Him, God will take care of that. We need not worry.

Be zealous for the message; God will judge the messenger.

Numbers 11:4-34

God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts. - Romans 1:24

TODAY IN THE WORD

One of the most memorable episodes of I Love Lucy is "Job Switching," in which Lucy and Ethel decide to prove they could handle jobs and Ricky and Fred think they can manage the cooking. They all get what they want—only things don't go so well when Lucy's job wrapping chocolates turns into a high-speed race to get candies off the conveyor belt. The men don't fare much better when Ricky asked Fred if he knew anything about rice. Fred replied, "Well, I had it thrown at me on one of the darkest days of my life!" They proceed to attempt to cook several pounds of rice for dinner!

As Lucy frequently discovered, getting what you want isn't always so great. The Israelites found this out in today's passage, which introduces several days where we'll examine the use of irony in Scripture.

The language used at the beginning of the story immediately alerts us to the comic elements: the people were "wailing" about their boring diet (v. 4). They romanticized their life in Egypt—conveniently no mention is made of the forced labor and slave drivers and infanticide as they wax nostalgic about cucumbers! They insisted that they were sick of manna, which the text takes care to describe as rather tasty (vv. 7-8).

Moses was exasperated by the wailing and begged God to do something. Fed up with the moaning and complaining, the Lord announced: "Now the Lord will give you meat, and you will eat it" (v. 19)! He would give them what they wanted—and they would regret it. They would eat it until "it comes out your nostrils and you loathe it" (v. 20).

In a dramatic display, God provided quail in the middle of the desert. And as promised, they were nearly drowning in meat—the birds were piled three feet high all around the camp (v. 31). But while the people were still in the act of eating, the Lord sent a plague as punishment for their complaint. Their wailing was not just about food preferences, it was about a lack of gratitude for God's provision and deliverance.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY This text exhorts us to be careful about what we ask from God—we might get it, but it might not be best for us. How can you know whether your prayers are in line? First, ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Are you ungrateful for any

of God's provision? Are your requests motivated by envy of what someone else has? Second, delight in the Lord through Scripture and praise. As we know the Lord more deeply, our desires become conformed to His (see Ps. 37:4; 40:8).

Numbers 11:29

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets! (r.v.)

This one saying proves the incomparable greatness of Moses' character. Little souls are monopolists. They like to be good and gifted, because it gives them a kind of superiority to others; but they dislike to see a leveling-up process at work by which the Eldads and Medads are lifted to stand by their side.

This was the mistake of Joshua. — When he heard that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them!" But he was immature, a saint in the process of manufacture, and smitten with jealousy, for the sake of his master and friend.

This was the complaint of John's disciples, when they saw the crowds ebbing away from their great teacher.

This was the quarrel of the Pharisees, that Jesus made religion so cheap and accessible to all, that even the publicans and sinners received his priceless wares.

But when a man is really great and good, he longs that all should be as he is, and better; he takes a deep delight in the spread of vital godliness; he is glad when others are endowed with greater gifts than himself, that they may make the Gospel better known than he could ever do; he is content to decrease, if Christ may only increase; he is willing that affliction should be added to his bonds, if only Christ may be magnified; he prays that the Lord would put his Spirit on all his people. This is very unnatural to any of us; but God, the Holy Spirit, waits to baptize us even into this, and to make the glory of God the object of our life. Make haste, O blessed Paraclete, and do this for me!

Numbers 12:1-16

With [Moses] I speak face to face. - Numbers 12:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Julius Caesar had all the power a ruler could want, and he was overwhelmingly popular with the masses. But the Senate believed that Caesar's power was growing too strong, especially after he was named "Dictator for Life." Brutus and Cassius plotted his assassination in order to prevent the establishment of a monarchy; ironically, Caesar's death led to the end of the republic.

It's easy to see how power could have affected Julius Caesar. He was never declared the most humble man on earth—but Moses was! His siblings still showed the same type of political jealousy that plagues families and governments today.

Miriam and Aaron were among the leaders God had used to deliver His message and show His power, and they allowed this privilege to boost their egos while Moses maintained humility. When they criticized Moses, they were, in effect, criticizing God for how He had used Moses. God swiftly reprimanded them for doing the opposite of what they should have done, which was to remain humble and respect Moses. God's angry reaction against Miriam and Aaron, coupled with His high praise of Moses, clearly indicated that Moses was the primary leader of His people. God called him faithful, or trustworthy, and then also revealed the unique relationship that they had. Other prophets received revelation from indirect means, but God communicated to Moses openly and directly.

The punishment for Miriam was temporary but harsh, which shows what a grievous sin she had committed (the language of the passage indicates Miriam led the complaint against Moses). Had it not been for God's display of anger, Miriam's sin might not offend our sensibilities. But God made a profound statement that pride, jealousy, and dissatisfaction were to have no place in the hearts of His leaders. Such conceited desires reveal that the antithesis of faith, which is self-reliance, is present within us. Throughout the book of Numbers, and indeed the Bible, God judged severely those men and women who trusted in themselves for what only God could give.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Complaining might seem harmless, but it can spread like a cancer through the body of Christ. When you complain about anyone or anything, you immediately turn the focus of your heart away from God and onto yourself. And when you complain to others, you direct their eyes away from God as well. When you feel tempted to complain, check your heart for jealousy and pride, and humbly approach God for a resolution to your dissatisfaction.

NUMBERS 12:1

Jealousy or zeal?

"Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman)" (Nu 12:1)

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife" (Philippians 1:15).

When the famous sculptor Michelangelo and the painter Raphael were creating works of art to beautify the Vatican, a bitter spirit of rivalry rose up between them. Whenever they met, they refused to speak to each other. Yet each was supposedly doing his work for the glory of God.

Jealousy often parades behind the facade of religious zeal. Miriam and Aaron criticized their brother Moses for marrying an Ethiopian. But God's anger revealed that it was actually jealousy that prompted their criticism. Out of jealousy, Saul sought to kill David, whom God had chosen to succeed Saul as king. And when the apostle Paul was in prison, some people were so jealous of the way God was using him that they preached Christ in order to add to the apostle's distress.

We can overcome this harmful attitude, but first we must identify it. Jealousy believes that someone else is getting what we deserve—whether money, popularity, wisdom, skill, or spiritual maturity. Second, we must confess it. Call it what it is—sin. And third, we must give thanks. The moment we see someone enjoying any advantage, we must accept it with gratitude. We can keep jealousy in check by refusing to compare ourselves with others.

As we learn to find our satisfaction in God, His grace enables us to rejoice with those who rejoice. When we do that, we have little room for envy. —D. J. De Haan

When we turn green with jealousy, we are ripe for trouble.

Numbers 12:1b

The Friction of Jealousy

"Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" (Numbers 12:2).

In the world of technology, friction is an enemy of efficiency. That's why auto engineers put so much emphasis on aerodynamics, easy-rolling tires, and short-stroke engines. They want to reduce the friction caused by air resistance, road contact, and moving parts.

In Numbers 12, we read about a form of friction that creates discord, makes everybody uneasy, diminishes our witness, weakens our worship, and hinders the Spirit's work in our lives. Miriam's jealous revolt against her brother Moses brought God's rebuke and slowed the Israelites' progress. The energy-robbing friction she caused was not unlike personality problems among jealous church members today.

Probably all of us have felt the sting of cruel verbal barbs shot at us by "envious archers." But the greatest pain caused by envy is felt by the person who harbors it. A God-centered, loving attitude is at the heart of the believer's life and health, but envy eats like a consuming disease into the bones and marrow of a person's moral fiber. That's why Socrates called envy "the soul's saw."

Whenever we begin to feel friction due to our envy or jealousy, we must confess it as sin and ask the Lord for His help. Then we must forgive those who have wronged us or apologize to those we have wronged. The friction will disappear, and we'll once again become spiritually energy-efficient. —H. V. Lugt & H. G. Bosch

Numbers 12:3; Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 3:12

MEEKNESS:STRENGTH UNDER CONTROL BY [THEODORE EPP](#)

In Strength for the Journey

In reviewing Isaac's life, we should also take special note of his spirit of meekness. All through his life his temperament was of a

passive nature rather than of an active or aggressive nature.

In childhood he was subjected to the insults of Ishmael, but there is no record that he became angry about them. As a young man he was taken to Mount Moriah to be offered as a sacrifice, and in meekness he surrendered and made himself available.

He did not even choose his own wife, as she was chosen for him through his father's arrangements and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Isaac also accepted the rebuke of Abimelech in meekness. There were no reprisals. He and his men yielded whenever they were wrongly driven away from the wells they had redug.

Isaac's meek spirit brought forth praise from even his enemies. They testified concerning his great power and might and their realization that the Lord was with him.

The world thinks little of meekness, yet it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23). The Apostle Paul urged all Christians: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5).

Meekness involves the self-sacrifice of our own desires and interests. Because Isaac gladly gave up his own personal desires, it pleased God to refer to Himself as "the God of Isaac."

"For thus saith the Lord God,... In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15).

Num. 12:4

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The Lord spake suddenly unto Moses.-Num 12.4.

That is an arresting statement. It marks an action on the part of God, so definite and immediate, that to Moses His speech was that of suddenness. It lends emphasis to the importance of this story. It is the story of rebellion against Moses, the God-appointed leader of the people, on the part of Miriam his sister, and Aaron his brother. The occasion was that of Moses' marriage with a Cushite woman. This was not the reason of it. It gave Miriam and Aaron an opportunity of acting upon a deeper feeling of jealousy which was present in their hearts. They resented the exercise of Moses' authority, evidently desiring to share it with him in a larger degree. The story illustrates a great truth in human experience. Sooner or later, if there be hidden evil, circumstances will occur in which it will be outwardly manifested. Stern and majestic was the Divine method of dealing with this outbreak. The sudden summons of God brought these three people out from the host, and into the immediate presence of God. Then in the plainest terms Jehovah vindicated His servant. Thus are we taught that God will not permit any interference with His appointments. To question the authority of those whom He appoints is to question His authority. There is great beauty in the end of the story. Aaron pleaded with Moses on behalf of his sister. Moses pleaded with God on her behalf. The cry was heard, and after seven days Miriam was restored. Surely He is ever a God ready to pardon. Nevertheless, the warning was solemn and severe, showing that rebellion is most reprehensible when it is manifested by the most highly placed.

Numbers 12:7-8

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

My servant Moses is faithful:... with him will I speak mouth to mouth.

The meekest of men was vindicated by God Himself. He held his peace, but his Almighty Friend spoke up for him. It is thus that the meek inherit the earth and rejoice themselves in the abundance of peace. Oh, keep still, ye afflicted and tormented souls, God will not let you be trodden underfoot, if only you commit your cause to Him, and are faithful in all that He has committed to you.

"That good thing keep which was committed to you: He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."
(see **note** 2 Timothy 1:12) (Click the precious hymn [I Know Whom I Have Believed](#), Fanny Crosby's less well known hymn ['Tis Summer in My Heart](#))

Notice to what faithfulness leads! The vision of God is not given to great intellectual ability or mental gift; but to those who as servants are faithful in the administration of God's Household, and the performance of such duties as are entrusted to them by the Great Householder. Such are they that enjoy the face-to-face fellowship, and the mouth-to-mouth speech.

These words about Moses are quoted in Hebrews 3 (see **note** Hebrews 3:5), as though it was pleasant to the Holy Spirit to

commemorate in all ages the faithfulness of him servants: and there is this further thought added, that the Household is one, and that all dispensations are included in its precincts. "Whose house are we." It is inspiring to know that we are in the same house with Moses, and may have the same blessing. Are God's dealings with you in dark speeches, in mysterious and perplexing enigmas? Be patient and faithful in well-doing: He is but testing you, and soon He will say, I have called you not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but all things I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you.

Numbers 12:1-15

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. - Hebrews 13:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Senator Strom Thurmond from South Carolina ran for President in 1948 as the candidate for the States Rights Democratic Party on a segregationist platform. In 1957, he launched the longest filibuster by a single Senator in history—clocking in at over 24 hours—in an attempt to defeat the Civil Rights Act. So many were surprised when after Thurmond's death it was revealed that he had fathered a daughter with a black maid. While neither of them acknowledged the relationship while he was alive, Thurmond had supported his daughter financially for many years, and she had visited him in Washington, D.C.

Our passage contains irony related to skin color. But the ultimate issue was not black or white skin, but whether Aaron and Miriam would demonstrate appropriate respect for God's appointed leader.

Miriam and Aaron began to complain about Moses' dark-skinned wife from the land of Cush (v. 1). Whatever their complaint about Moses and his wife, the core issue was that Miriam and Aaron were jealous of Moses' authority. Each of them had been granted special positions of responsibility, but they weren't content with those roles (see Ex. 15:20; 28:1). Moses didn't defend himself, but God did. The three siblings were summoned to appear before the Lord.

God detailed His special relationship with Moses. Unlike prophets, to whom He spoke in visions and dreams, Moses heard from the Lord face to face. He had seen the very form of the Lord (v. 8; see Ex. 33:12-23; 34:29). His face glowed with the radiance of God. How could Miriam and Aaron even conceive of challenging the position and authority of Moses? They were really challenging the authority of the Lord.

Miriam had complained about her dark-skinned sister-in-law, and in judgment God turned her own skin deadly white—with leprosy. Devastated, Aaron begged Moses for forgiveness, and Moses begged God for healing for his sister. The Lord agreed, but Miriam still suffered exile from the camp for seven days.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY During your prayer time today, spend extra time praying for your pastor and leaders in your church. Pray that they would seek the face of the Lord and that God would bless them with wisdom. Pray that they would lead your church to growth in unity and love in Christ. Pray that the church would be strengthened for service through their ministry. Thank the Lord for providing His people to do His work, and thank Him for the gifts that you have been given to support your church (see 1 Corinthians 12).

Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33

Today in the Word

I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? - Jeremiah 32:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

There's a reason that most television documentaries about important historical events mix narrative from the participants with flashbacks to the events. Reliving the moment as it happened and then hearing about its importance from those who were there are powerful ways to get a message across. That's what we hope to do on a smaller scale over the next ten days or so. We want to weave Moses' narrative in Deuteronomy with flashbacks to the events he spoke of, so we can better appreciate the message that God's Word has for us today.

Today is our first historical flashback. Numbers 13 takes us back in time almost forty years before what is recorded in Deuteronomy 1. This story is one of the pivotal points in biblical history. Israel had made the 11-day, 150-mile march from Mount Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land at Kadesh Barnea. All that remained was to enter the land and take possession.

The decision to send twelve spies into Canaan was apparently the people's idea, one that Moses (Deut. 1:22-23) and God agreed to (Num. 13:1-2). God gave the specific command that one man be selected from each tribe. By the way, note the quiet inclusion of Caleb and 'Hoshea,' or Joshua, on that list (Num. 13:6, 8).

Moses gave the spies very specific instructions on the facts and impressions he wanted them to bring back (vv. 17-20). The men did their job even bringing back a cluster of grapes from Canaan that was so big two men had to carry it on a pole between them.

The report that the spies brought to Moses started out fine. They told about a 'good land' (Deut. 1:25) that 'flow[s] with milk and honey!' (Num. 13: 27). That shouldn't have surprised anyone. After all, their generous and loving God had prepared this land for His people.

But then came the bad news, at least according to ten of the spies: in a nutshell, the people and the walled cities of Canaan were too big for a band of Israelite shepherd-nomads to handle.

Caleb tried to deliver a positive minority report on behalf of himself and Joshua, but their voices were drowned out by the other spies. The people opted for disobedience, forfeited God's blessing, and brought a death sentence upon themselves.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Are you 'conquered' today, or are you a conqueror? There's a world of difference between the two. The Israelites were beaten exactly at the point where God was ready to give them victory. When He calls us to do something, the obstacles aren't really the issue. Is God asking you to do something that seems impossible? If He is in it, even giants and walls cannot keep you from being more than a conqueror in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:37).

Numbers 13:1-6, 30; Joshua 14:1-15;

TODAY IN THE WORD

In a recent survey approximately 900 business managers were asked: ""Would you continue to work if you suddenly came into enough money to live comfortably for the rest of your life?"" Nearly 40 percent of the managers said they would quit. About 26 percent said they would stay in their present jobs. Interestingly, a similar survey in 1955 among business professionals found that only 14 percent said they would quit their jobs.

Given the chance, would the Israelite warrior Caleb have taken the easy road to retirement? Not a chance! Not when he was ready at age eighty-five to kick the Amalekites off the land God had promised to him forty-five years earlier (Num. 14:24). According to Joshua 14-15, he successfully did so. Talk about finishing well!

If Caleb were alive today, he might have his own workout show on cable TV--""Fitness After Eighty."" But we don't need to know Caleb's diet or exercise routine to learn the secret of his vigor. Caleb was a spiritual powerhouse, a man who followed the Lord with the fervor of a teenager.

Caleb first appears in the biblical narrative as one of the twelve Israelite spies Moses sent from Kadesh to check out the promised land. He and Joshua brought back a good report, saying the land was bountiful and ready for conquest by God's people.

But the other spies gave a different report; Joshua and Caleb were outvoted ten to two. So much for democracy! The faithless Israelites turned back at Kadesh and wandered in the wilderness for another forty years. But God did not turn His back on Caleb. That's because Caleb never turned his back on God.

Caleb and Joshua were the only two men of their generation to survive those years of wilderness wandering. When the conquest was nearly complete and the land of Canaan was ready to be divided among the Israelite tribes, Caleb approached Joshua to claim his inheritance.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - What earnest Christian wouldn't love to have the epitaph that he or she had followed the Lord wholeheartedly? God has not made the path of wholehearted discipleship a mystery. If we seek Him, we will find Him.

Numbers 13:1-33

Be strong and courageous... For the Lord your God goes with you. - Deuteronomy 31:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

Adjusted for inflation, Gone with the Wind is the top-earning American movie of all time, grossing the modern equivalent of \$1.2 billion since its release in 1939. But according to Hollywood legend, Gary Cooper turned down the role of Rhett Butler, saying, "Gone with the Wind is going to be the biggest flop in Hollywood history," and later adding, "I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face."

Those are words to be eaten! The spies who explored Canaan also made the wrong call about the potential for success. And this wasn't just a ragtag group of men; these were leaders of Israel, hand-picked by Moses. They examined the land, saw the giants,

and gathered the proof of Canaan's bountiful resources. They even gave Moses a glowing report of all that the land had to offer.

But that's as far as their faith carried them. They reported the size and strength of their enemies with a finality that suggested that attacking Canaan was not an option. Caleb's optimism seemed insane to them. The fear of the spies wasn't even their worst sin.

In a far more treacherous act, they poisoned public opinion. These leaders of the tribes sabotaged their own people by giving a bad report. They spread their faithlessness because they didn't think they could win the battle.

The military analysis in verse 31 was cowardly, but also somewhat accurate from a human perspective. The Canaanite people were indeed stronger than the Israelite people. But how could the presence and power of God disappear from their minds so quickly? In effect, they believed that tall men and fortified cities were a greater threat than the wrath of God. The only two men who were willing to fight the Anakites, the descendants of the Nephilim or giants, were the two warriors who eventually defeated them: Joshua and Caleb (cf. Josh. 11:21; 15:14). But Joshua and Caleb could not defeat the wave of doubt initiated by the other spies.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Some people have the strength to be the lone voice of courage. Caleb's boldness is rare, and we'd do well to follow his model. But if doing what you know is right ever scares you, at the very least, seek out the advice of a strong brother or sister in the Lord. Whatever you do, don't spread the seed of fear to others. You don't want to cause others to respond to God's direction with fear.

Recipe For Victory

The word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. —Hebrews 4:2

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:1-2,26-33

A visitor was taking a tour of a mill where power was generated by a fast-flowing river that ran close by its walls. All the gears inside, however, were inactive. "How do you make things work?" the visitor inquired. She was told to pull a handle that the guide pointed out. Immediately the wheels turned and the place was alive with motion.

In a similar way, the power of God surges into the heart of those who reach out by faith. Our belief or unbelief determines whether we receive or reject those things that the Lord promises.

For example, when the children of Israel were confronted with the problem of advancing against the Canaanites, most of them were terrified by the strength of the enemy. Caleb, however, was not alarmed by the giant opponents and their walled cities. With a courage born of faith he said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30). The promise of God that Israel was to inherit the land was mixed with faith in his heart, and he did not shrink back from what seemed to be impossible odds.

What difficulties are you facing today? You too can be victorious by trusting in God's promises. By: Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Increase our faith, and clear our vision, Lord;
Help us to take Thee at Thy simple Word,
No more with cold distrust to bring Thee grief;
Lord, we believe! Help Thou our unbelief.
—Sherwin

Faith is the link that connects our weakness to God's strength.

Numbers 13:1-14:38

Today in the Word

And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. - Numbers 14:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

Andrew Jackson knew what it took to face military and political battles. He recognized the power of a leader's convictions when he said, "One man with courage makes a majority." Today's reading would amend that quote slightly to say, "One man with God makes a majority." The people of Israel should have taken the land of Canaan shortly after the spies returned in today's reading, but the entire nation was swayed by the opinions of ten men.

All the spies confirmed the good news, that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey (13:27). They even showed the impressive fruit that the Promised Land yielded. The bad news: the ten cowardly spies sowed seeds of fear among the people by focusing on the size and strength of the land's inhabitants.

Joshua and Caleb were alone in their desire to enter the land, and indeed it was Caleb who was the most outspoken (13:30; 14:24). The people ignored these men of courage and instead cast their votes with the men of grasshopper-sized faith. The only men they were willing to attack were Joshua and Caleb.

In the book of Joshua, strength and courage were characteristics God demanded of Joshua. The rest of today's reading helps us see why. Instead of enjoying the fruit of God's promises, the Israelites' weakness and fear brought about God's judgment, although it was tempered by His gracious answer to Moses' plea for mercy (14:19). As a result, Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who lived to see another day (14:37). The vote among the spies quickly became a unanimous 2-0 in favor of obeying God.

Chapter 13 holds a footnote that is important to God's plan for Israel and the rest of the world. Verse 16 notes that Moses actually chose the name Joshua for this hero of faith; it means: "God brings salvation." God used Joshua to bring salvation to the people of Israel by delivering them into the land He promised. That earthly salvation symbolizes the eternal salvation that God brings to us through the One who bore the same name—Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The Israelites had seen the glory of God and witnessed miracle after miracle. But when they got a secondhand account about some big, bad men, they regretted that God had brought them out of the unfriendly confines of Egypt. If you've put your faith in Christ, you've witnessed the greatest miracle of all through the Holy Spirit—eternal communion with our glorious God! Don't lose sight of that when the problems of this world threaten to discourage you.

Numbers 13-14

Keeping Faith:

The Message of the Book of Numbers

Faith matters to God. This is the dominant theme in the book of Numbers and the key to its theology. Linked with the books of Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers demonstrates the nature of faith by contrasting God's faithfulness in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham with the faithlessness of Abraham's descendants.

God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants, and also promised that they would take possession of the cities of their enemies (Gen. 13:12; 22:16). Yet just as God's people were poised to see how God is faithful, something went horribly wrong. On the threshold of Canaan, Israel questioned their ability to overcome their enemies and take possession of the land (Num. 13:1-33).

This lack of faith proved to be costly; the generation that followed Moses into wilderness died there because they failed to take God at His word (Num. 14:22-23). In discussing this incident, the apostle Paul catalogs Israel's sins: idolatry, immorality, doubt, and ungratefulness (1 Cor. 10:1-11). This tragic experience served as both an example and a warning to the church. On the one hand, it was meant to teach us humility. Israel's weakness is matched by our own (1 Cor. 10:12). More important, it was intended to show us that our weakness is countered by God's strength. Paul summarizes the lesson to be learned from Israel's failure with this bold conclusion: "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 10:12-13).

Our faith is grounded in the faithfulness of God. He deserves our trust because He is true to His word. Israel's experiences in the wilderness are a sobering reminder that this kind of faith does not come naturally. It is a gift of grace and it is strengthened by experience (Eph. 2:8-9). Because God is faithful, we can have faith in Him.

Numbers 13:17-33 Only a Scarecrow

"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." - 1 John 4:4

Like the children of Israel in today's Bible reading, Hannah Hurnard, author of "Hinds' Feet on High Places," was once paralyzed by fear. Then she heard a sermon on scarecrows that challenged her to turn her fear to faith.

The preacher said, "A wise bird knows that a scarecrow is simply an advertisement. It announces that some very juicy and delicious fruit is to be had for the picking. There are scarecrows in all the best gardens... If I am wise, I too shall treat the scarecrow as though it were an invitation. Every giant in the way which makes me feel like a grasshopper is only a scarecrow beckoning me to God's richest blessings." He concluded, "Faith is a bird which loves to perch on scarecrows. All our fears are groundless."

Hannah testified that this humble parable has encouraged her to walk along some frightening but fruitful pathways more times than she could number.

What is your scarecrow today? Difficult circumstances? Personal inadequacy? Uncertainty? The enemy of your soul wants to keep you away from the place of God's blessing. Perch on your scarecrow by faith, start singing, and expect an abundant feast! -- J E Yoder

So let us trust Him in our troubles,
For He is loving, kind, and wise;
And most often trials and troubles
Are but blessings in disguise.-- Jarvis

When you fix your eyes on God, your fears will vanish.

Numbers 13:25–14:9 Trouble Ahead

By Joe Stowell

Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land; ... the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. —Numbers 14:9

Inevitably, trouble will invade our lives: A bad report from a medical test, the betrayal of a trusted friend, a child who rejects us, or a spouse who leaves us. The list of possibilities is long, but there are only two options: forge ahead on our own, or turn to God.

Flying solo into the face of trouble is not a good idea. It can lead to bad behavior patterns, blaming God, and retreating into defeat. Like the Israelites, we may spin out of control and into despair (Num. 14:1-4).

When the majority of the spies brought a report of intimidating giants and dangers ahead, they used the pronoun “we” seven times with no reference to the Lord (13:31-33). The Israelites were on the cusp of the ultimate blessing that God promised to them. They were eyewitnesses to the miracles in Egypt and their feet had walked the dry bottom of the Red Sea in jaw-dropping victory. God’s faithfulness had been amazingly evident. What short memories! What disappointing faithlessness! Sadly, they turned their backs on God and left the blessing behind.

Caleb and Joshua, on the other hand, opted to turn to the Lord with this confidence: “The Lord is with us” (14:9). When your giants show up, what will you do?

In this world of sin and trouble
Where so many ills are known,
If I shun the ways of evil,
I am kept by Him alone.
—Smith

God’s presence is a life preserver that keeps the soul from sinking in a sea of trouble.

Numbers 13:25–14:19 House-Hunting Ants

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. —Psalm 90:1

According to researchers from the University of Bristol, the European rock ant may be better than we are at staying on top of the housing market. The researchers found that the ant colonies use scout ants to continually monitor their colonies’ living conditions. Using social skills complex enough to stun the scientists, the rock ants work together to find the right living space, darkness, and security needed to give the queen mother and her larvae the best available housing.

In the days of Moses, the families of Israel were looking for a new home. The slave yards of Egypt had been brutal. The wilderness of Sinai was no place to settle down. But there was a problem. According to Israelite scouts, the homeland to which God was leading them was already occupied—by walled cities and giants who made the scouts feel like grasshoppers in their own eyes (Num. 13:28,33).

Sometimes it may be helpful to compare ourselves to insects. House-hunting rock ants instinctively follow the ways of their Creator. But we often let our fears keep us from following and trusting God. When we rest in the assurance of His presence and love, we can say, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Father in heaven, please help us to see that today there is no better place to live than in Your presence and love. Help us learn to settle in and be comfortable with our place in You.

Finding ourselves at home in God is a good place to be.

What, Me Worry?

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. — Philippians 4:6

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:26-33

Whenever a preacher begins to talk about worry, I sense a pair of eyes staring at me. Without even turning my head, I know that my husband is looking at me to see if I'm paying attention.

I hate to admit it, but I'm a worrier. And precisely because there are a lot of people just like me, Jesus addressed this problem in Matthew 6:25-34 when He said: "Do not worry." Don't worry about the basic needs of life—food, clothing, shelter—and don't worry about tomorrow.

Worry may be a symptom of a bigger problem. Sometimes it's a lack of gratitude for the way God has cared for us in the past. Or perhaps it's a lack of faith that God really is trustworthy. Or it may be a refusal to depend on God instead of ourselves.

Some people expand the worry circle to their families, friends, and churches. They're a lot like the 10 spies in Numbers 13:26-33 who spread their fear and doubt to everyone else. But those who put their trust in God alone can stand alongside Joshua and Caleb, the only ones in the group of 12 whom God allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Don't let worries hold you back from what God may be trying to teach you. He invites you to bring your anxious thoughts directly to Him (Phil. 4:6). By: Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you feel the tension mounting,
And across the busy day
Only gloomy clouds are drifting,
As you start to worry—pray!
—Anon.

To be anxious about nothing, pray about everything.

Numbers 13:26-14:24

Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. - Matthew 7:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

The final lines of Robert Frost's famous poem, "The Road Not Taken," read: "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Jesus preached a similar message (Matt. 7:13-14). A mass of unfaithful people choose the wide and well-beaten road, but God always preserves a faithful remnant that walks the less popular path to life. Our text today also displays the salvation of the faithful few.

The Israelites whom God had rescued out of Egypt (Exodus 12-14) and with whom He had made a covenant (Exodus 19-20) obeyed His instruction to send spies into Canaan before entering the Promised Land (Numbers 13). After forty days of exploration, they returned to Moses and the people with a full report.

Following a brief confirmation that Canaan did flow with milk and honey, their testimony changed to fear and disbelief. Upon measuring their opponents' strength and the insurmountable situation, the majority of spies persuaded the people that victory was impossible and invasion of Canaan should be avoided. The Lord called their fear unbelief, which had a severe penalty (14:11-24).

Only two spies—Caleb and Joshua—chose the less-trodden path. In the middle of the negative report, Caleb boldly spoke to encourage the people to have faith (13:30). Both men wept for the community's lack of faith and tried to convince Israel of God's faithfulness to secure conquest (14:6-9). Despite these efforts, their minority report was shunned and the two men threatened. While the community ignored them, the Lord praised these two men of courageous faith (vv. 24, 30).

Caleb and Joshua represent the remnant who kept the faith. They were not blind to the challenges witnessed by their fellow spies, yet they responded differently. Caleb and Joshua placed their confidence in God's presence and faithfulness, and so they alone from their generation entered the Promised Land.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - "He followed the Lord wholeheartedly." The Lord says this of Caleb three times in the Old Testament (cf. Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36). Despite opposition and challenge, he maintained trust in God's faithfulness to keep His promises. Though his eyes saw difficult circumstances, his heart rested in God's powerful presence. Perhaps you have surveyed the landscape around you and feel defeated. Ask God for assurance like Caleb's so that you may respond to your giants with wholehearted reliance on His faithfulness.

Numbers 13:17-33 Only a Scarecrow

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Like the children of Israel in today's Bible reading, Hannah Hurnard, author of "Hinds' Feet on High Places," was once paralyzed by fear. Then she heard a sermon on scarecrows that challenged her to turn her fear to faith.

The preacher said, "A wise bird knows that a scarecrow is simply an advertisement. It announces that some very juicy and delicious fruit is to be had for the picking. There are scarecrows in all the best gardens... If I am wise, I too shall treat the scarecrow as though it were an invitation. Every giant in the way which makes me feel like a grasshopper is only a scarecrow beckoning me to God's richest blessings." He concluded, "Faith is a bird which loves to perch on scarecrows. All our fears are groundless."

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What is your scarecrow today? Difficult circumstances? Personal inadequacy? Uncertainty? The enemy of your soul wants to keep you away from the place of God's blessing. Perch on your scarecrow by faith, start singing, and expect an abundant feast! -- J E Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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For He is loving, kind, and wise;
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Are but blessings in disguise.-
- Jarvis

When you fix your eyes on God, your fears will vanish.

Num. 13:28 G Campbell Morgan Life Applications

Howbeit- Num. 13.28.

This is the revealing word as to the report of the majority of the spies. The Hebrew word means cessation, an end; and when used adverbially it signifies, no further! It suggests that what has already been said is all that can be said in that direction; and therefore that now other things are to be said, which will have a corrective effect on the things already said. The report of these men so far has been entirely favorable concerning the land. They were convinced of its desirability. They had clearly seen its excellencies. "Howbeit," they had also seen the difficulties, the strength of the inhabitants, the fenced cities, and the compactness of the enemies they would have to encounter. They had seen themselves also in comparison with these enemies, and they were but as grasshoppers. The remarkable fact is that in their report there was no reference to God. They would seem to have lost sight of Him completely for the time being. In that lay the secret of their failure. Human calculations are not wrong. They are wrong when they do not take account of all the quantities; and unutterably wrong when they omit the chief quantity. What a revealing story it is! How constantly we are all in danger of making the same mistake! The way of God is revealed to us; we see it, and recognize all its advantages; "howbeit," we see the difficulties, and become so occupied with them as to lose sight of God. Then our hearts fail us, and fear paralyses us, and quite naturally. The foes massed against the people of God are always mightier than are they, if they are called upon to act alone.

A Warning To Grumblers

They did not believe His word, but complained. — Psalm 106:24-25

Today's Scripture: Psalm 106:6-25

Most of us do our share of complaining, but few of us see it for what it is. Although we condemn some sins in others, we tolerate our own murmuring as nothing more than a negative attitude. But in the Scriptures, God condemns it as a grievous sin. One example of its seriousness is found in Numbers 13 when Israel refused to enter the Promised Land, objecting that the people were stronger than they were (vv.26-33).

Psalm 106:24-25 lists three sins that kept the Israelites in the wilderness: They "despised" the blessings of the Promised Land, they "did not believe" God's word that all would be well there, and they "did not heed" His voice of direction. Instead, they sat in their tents and "complained."

God wanted to bless His people, yet they preferred to hang on to the barren familiarity of the wilderness. So God did not allow any of that generation to enter the land. Author Ian Thomas warns today's grumblers: "Ignoring what you need, you will begin to clamor for what you want, and if you are not careful—God will give it to you!"

If you're a grumbler, ask God to change you. It's a sad thing to impoverish yourself with what you think you need, when He is longing to bless you with His best! By: Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When things go wrong, I would not be a grumbler,
Complaining, seeing everything as grim;
For when I think of how the Lord has blessed me,
I cannot help but give my praise to Him.
—Hess

God always gives his best to those who leave the choice with him.

Numbers 13:30-31 Ten to Two by Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Numbers 12-14, Mark 5:21-43

Back to the Bible

A children's chorus begins with the words, "Twelve men went to spy on Canaan, ten were bad, two were good." Can you name the two that were good? The answer, of course is, Caleb and Joshua. But can you name any of the others?

A speaker I knew would at times get out his wallet and offer to pay a dollar for each of those names a person could recall. He never gave away a single bill. As he put away his wallet with all its dollar bills intact, he would say, "We remember the people who stand for God, but not the ones who don't."

Joshua and Caleb stood for God. Shammua, Shaphat, Igal and the others did not. Their collective voices drowned out the faith of the other two. It was not just a matter of a majority vote but of rebellion. When the people decided not to do what God wanted, it was a rebellion that resulted in 40 years of wandering plus the death of all but the younger generation.

But Joshua and Caleb were spared. They ultimately entered the Promised Land.

The lesson is clear: stand for God-whatever the numbers.

There are probably times you do not stand boldly. Perhaps today something will happen and you will have to make a choice either to speak up or be silent. Stand up for Jesus.

Numbers 13:33 Our Daily Homily F B Meyer

We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

There is a good deal of talk in this chapter about giants and fenced cities. But the way of speaking about them was very different on the part of the ten, and on that of the two. The ten said:

"The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan." (Numbers 13:29)

But the two said:

"Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." (Numbers 13:30)

They saw the same spectacles in their survey of the land; but the result in the one case was panic, in the other confidence and peace. What made the difference? It lay in this, that the ten spies compared themselves with the giants, whilst the two compared the giants with God.

"The Lord is with us, fear them not." (Numbers 14:9)

Faith looks away from the greatness of her difficulty to the greatness of her God.

"If considered in itself, it is dear that this difficulty is too great for me to combat; but it is nothing to my God. The wall is too solid and high for me; but before God's touch it will fall down like cardboard. These ropes are stout; but before God they are only as tow before flame. I will not consider the man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass; but will look away resolutely to my Maker, who made heaven and earth, and who can still the roaring of the sea."

Do you want a fearless faith, be careful not to measure the comparative forces of yourself and others; but remember that God is working for you to will and do of his own good pleasure. If He is for you, who can be against you? When compared with Primrose Hill, Snowdon is high; but where is it when compared with the Himalayas? (See related studies **Fear, How to Handle It**)

Scarecrows In The Garden

There we saw the giants . . . and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight. —Numbers 13:33

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:1-2,26-33

In my garden I have four rows of everbearing strawberries—a fact that evidently has been proclaimed from the housetops to all the robins, starlings, and brown thrashers in the neighborhood. They have been having a picnic! So I spent quite some time building a scarecrow from broomsticks, an old coat, a pair of trousers, and a white hat.

I was in for a surprise, for one morning soon afterward, a wise robin was perched on top of the hat and seemed to be singing at the top of his voice, "Free strawberries here!"

I saw two kinds of birds: wise ones and foolish ones. The foolish birds sat in the trees, afraid of the scarecrow. The wise birds knew that the scarecrow was simply an advertisement in disguise.

The Bible tells us about some wise and foolish people. Moses sent 12 spies to check out the Promised Land, a land of fabulous fruits and blessings. Ten of them feared the "scarecrows"—the giants and the walled cities. Two wise "birds," Caleb and Joshua, believed God had given them the land. They weren't fooled. They said, "Let us go up at once and take possession" (Num. 13:30).

God richly blesses those who live by faith and are not stopped by the scarecrows of doubt and fear. By: M.R. DeHaan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The foolish see giants when troubles appear,
They tremble in weakness, their hearts filled with fear;
The wise are undaunted when trouble they scan,
They go forth to battle, for God's in their plan.
—DJD

Our God is bigger than any problem.

Numbers 13:33

Streams in the Desert

"There we saw the giants"

Yes, they saw the giants, but Caleb and Joshua saw God! Those who doubt say, "We be not able to go up." Those who believe say, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able."

Giants stand for great difficulties; and giants are stalking everywhere. They are in our families, in our churches, in our social life, in our own hearts; and we must overcome them or they will eat us up, as these men of old said of the giants of Canaan.

The men of faith said, "They are bread for us; we will eat them up." In other words, "We will be stronger by overcoming them than if there had been no giants to overcome."

Now the fact is, unless we have the overcoming faith we shall be eaten up, consumed by the giants in our path. Let us have the spirit of faith that these men of faith had, and see God, and He will take care of the difficulties. --Selected

It is when we are in the way of duty that we find giants. It was when Israel was going forward that the giants appeared. When they turned back into the wilderness they found none.

There is a prevalent idea that the power of God in a human life should lift us above all trials and conflicts. The fact is, the power of God always brings a conflict and a struggle. One would have thought that on his great missionary journey to Rome, Paul would have been carried by some mighty providence above the power of storms and tempests and enemies. But, on the contrary, it was one long, hard fight with persecuting Jews, with wild tempests, with venomous vipers and all the powers of earth and hell, and at last he was saved, as it seemed, by the narrowest margin, and had to swim ashore at Malta on a piece of wreckage and barely escape a watery grave.

Was that like a God of infinite power? Yes, just like Him. And so Paul tells us that when he took the Lord Jesus Christ as the life of his body, a severe conflict immediately came; indeed, a conflict that never ended, a pressure that was persistent, but out of which he always emerged victorious through the strength of Jesus Christ.

The language in which he describes this is most graphic. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body."

What a ceaseless, strenuous struggle! It is impossible to express in English the forcible language of the original. There are five pictures in succession. In the first, the idea is crowding enemies pressing in from every side, and yet not crushing him because the police of heaven cleared the way just wide enough for him to get through. The literal translation would be, "We are crowded on every side, but not crushed."

The second picture is that of one whose way seems utterly closed and yet he has pressed through; there is light enough to show him the next step. The Revised Version translates it, "Perplexed but not unto despair." Rotherham still more literally renders it, "Without a way, but not without a by-way."

The third figure is that of an enemy in hot pursuit while the divine Defender still stands by, and he is not left alone. Again we adopt the fine rendering of Rotherham, "Pursued but not abandoned."

The fourth figure is still more vivid and dramatic. The enemy has overtaken him, has struck him, has knocked him down. But it is not a fatal blow; he is able to rise again. It might be translated, "Overthrown but not overcome."

Once more the figure advances, and now it seems to be even death itself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But he does not die, for "the life also of Jesus" now comes to his aid and he lives in the life of another until his life work is done.

The reason so many fail in this experience of divine healing is because they expect to have it all without a struggle, and when the conflict comes and the battle wages long, they become discouraged and surrender. God has nothing worth having that is easy. There are no cheap goods in the heavenly market. Our redemption cost all that God had to give, and everything worth having is expensive. Hard places are the very school of faith and character, and if we are to rise over mere human strength and prove the power of life divine in these mortal bodies, it must be through a process of conflict that may well be called the birth travail of a new life. It is the old figure of the bush that burned, but was not consumed, or of the Vision in the house of the Interpreter of the flame that would not expire, notwithstanding the fact that the demon ceaselessly poured water on it, because in the background stood an angel ever pouring oil and keeping the flame aglow.

No, dear suffering child of God, you cannot fail if only you dare to believe, to stand fast and refuse to be overcome. --Tract.

How Is Your Vision?

By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, . . . for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. — Hebrews 11:27

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:26-14:10

Several months ago, I visited two professing Christians who were terminally ill. I was struck by their contrasting attitudes. One man was glum and quite listless even when I read Scripture and prayed and spoke about our hope in Christ. His spiritual eyesight seemed dim.

When I visited the other man, I found him talking cheerfully with two of his granddaughters. He expressed his desire that they would

have a good life, and he urged them to live for Jesus. This man had 20/20 spiritual vision. By faith he saw the invisible God as he was facing death.

We read of similar responses in Numbers 13 and 14. Twelve spies had been sent out to explore the Promised Land. All 12 saw the lush, green, fertile areas. It was truly a land of great agricultural promise. But 10 of them were intimidated by the size and number of the hostile people who lived there. They said it would be foolhardy to invade. The other two spies, Joshua and Caleb, insisted that with the Lord on their side they could take the territory. By faith they saw God beyond the obstacles.

What do we focus on? Do we see only the size of our problems, or do we see the greatness of our God? Only He can give us 20/20 spiritual vision. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The eyes of faith when fixed on Christ
Give hope for what's ahead,
But focus on life's obstacles
And faith gives way to dread.
—DJD

In every difficulty you can find an opportunity.

You're Afraid Of Whom?

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. —Proverbs 29:25

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:30-14:10

Mrs. Ima Terror chased her husband through the crowds at the zoo, waving her umbrella and unleashing insults like invisible missiles. Her perspiring and winded husband, seeing that the lock on the lion's cage had not quite closed, yanked it open, jumped into the cage, slammed the door, pushed the astonished lion hard against the bars, and peered over its shoulder. His frustrated wife shook her umbrella, stuttered in anger, and finally managed to explode, "Ralph, come out of there, you coward!"

Ralph, in this fictitious story, is like the people of Israel that we read about in the book of Numbers. They were confused about whom they should really fear. They saw themselves as grasshoppers when compared to the giants in the land where God wanted them to go (Nu 13:32-33).

If we are so afraid of people that we stop following the Lord, we're not trusting Him. It shows that we have doubted His plan, His power, and His promises. We have failed to recognize that He, above all others, is the One to be feared—which means that He is to be revered, trusted, loved, and obeyed.

Father, forgive us for fearing what we should not be afraid of, and for not fearing and trusting You. By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our love for God should always move
Our hearts to do what's good and right;
Love also fears His judgments true
And stands in awe of His great might.
—D. De Haan

Fear God, and you'll have nothing else to fear.

Numbers 14:1-11 Thorns or Roses?

Two boys were eating some grapes. One of them remarked, "Aren't they sweet!" "I guess so," the other replied, "but they're full of seeds." Wandering into a garden, the first boy exclaimed, "Look at those big, beautiful red roses!" The other commented, "They're full of thorns!" It was a warm day, so they stopped at the store for a soft drink. After several swallows, the second youngster complained, "My bottle's half-empty already." The first quickly responded, "Mine's still half-full!"

Many people are like the negative-thinking boy in this story. They always look at life through dark glasses. Like the children of Israel in today's Scripture, they complain and grumble when they should be praising the Lord for His gracious provision. But thank God, not everyone is like that. There are people who concentrate on the bright side and are radiant, happy, and grateful. They are realistic about the somber side of life, but they don't pout and fret.

You can overcome negative thinking. No matter who you are or what your circumstances, there's always much to be grateful for. Think about God's love for you. Praise Him for His providential care. Then, instead of complaining about thorns, you'll be thankful for the roses. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Some folks see so many thorns,
They scarce can see one rose,
While others count two blossoms
For every thorn that grows. —Garrison

Instead of grumbling because you don't get what you want,
be thankful you don't get what you deserve.

Numbers 14:1-4, 11-23

Rearview Mirror

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.- Galatians 5:1

Some people go through life looking into the rearview mirror. They yearn for the "good old days" when life seemed better. Families were stronger, Christians were nobler, people were happier -- or so they think!

The ancient Hebrews were masters of glorifying the ugly past. As slaves in Egypt they had been desperate! Yet after Moses led them out of bondage, they were soon idealizing the "good old days." Many of them actually wanted to go back to Egypt and again stick their necks under a yoke and feel Pharaoh's lash. Little wonder that God canceled their passport to the Promised Land.

Some Christians would like to get back to the "good old days" of the church. But which church? Believers have faced huge difficulties since the days of Paul. The early church was plagued by sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1), heresy (Gal. 1:6-7), and dissension (Acts 15:1-2). There were no good old days for the church -- not in the first century, not in the sixteenth, and not in the twentieth.

Avoid the trap of looking back -- unless it's to recall a lesson learned or to glory in what God has accomplished. Remember, for those whose lives are centered in Christ, the best is always yet to come. - H W Robinson

How often God gives victory
And then we revel in the deed,
While present opportunity
Slips past its bloom and turns to seed.- Gustafson

When we live in the past, we tarnish the present and ignore the future.

Lurking Lions

The Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them. Numbers 14:9

Today's Scripture & Insight: Numbers 14:1–9

When I was young, my dad would "scare" us by hiding in the bush and growling like a lion. Even though we lived in rural Ghana in the 1960s, it was almost impossible that a lion lurked nearby. My brother and I would laugh and seek out the source of the noise, thrilled that playtime with Dad had arrived.

One day a young friend came for a visit. As we played, we heard the familiar growl. Our friend screamed and ran. My brother and I knew the sound of my father's voice—any "danger" was merely a phantom lion—but a funny thing happened. We ran with her. My dad felt terrible that our friend had been frightened, and my brother and I learned not to be influenced by the panicked reaction of others.

Caleb and Joshua stand out as men unfazed by the panic of others. As Israel was poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses commissioned 12 scouts to spy out the region. They all saw a beautiful territory, but 10 focused on the obstacles and discouraged the entire nation (Num. 13:27-33). In the process, they started a panic (14:1-4). Only Caleb and Joshua accurately assessed the situation (vv. 6-9). They knew the history of their Father and trusted Him to bring them success.

Some "lions" pose a genuine threat. Others are phantoms. Regardless, as followers of Jesus our confidence is in the One whose

voice and deeds we know and trust. By: Tim Gustafson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, we face many fears today. Help us distinguish between real danger and empty threats, and help us trust You with all of it. May we live not in fear, but in faith.

The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1

An Impossible Challenge?

Do all things without complaining and disputing. —Philippians 2:14

Today's Scripture: Numbers 14:1-5,26-27

A pastor in Kansas City gave what seemed to be an impossible challenge to his congregation—to go 21 days without complaining (the amount of time some say it takes to develop a new habit). Special bracelets were distributed to participants as a reminder to live complaint-free lives. A movement was started, and millions of bracelets have been distributed all over the world.

The biblical principle “Do all things without complaining and disputing” (Phil. 2:14) is an important one. The ancient Israelites discovered this when, because of their constant complaining in the wilderness, they were judged by God and not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num. 14).

How can we learn to develop a noncomplaining, positive attitude that will please the Lord?

- By disciplining our thoughts (Rom. 12:2). We need to meditate on Scripture and remember our blessings.
- By confessing our critical spirit and committing ourselves to obedience each time we fail (1 John 1:9).
- By enlisting God's help and the help of others. The Spirit will empower us as we depend on Him (John 14:26).

Because God helps us, doing all things without complaining is not an impossible challenge. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help me stop complaining
When things don't go my way;
Instead, give me a thankful heart
For all You do each day.
—Sper

A complaining Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Numbers 14:1-10

What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? - Romans 3:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

In Harper Lee's Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Tom Robinson is convicted of rape despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence. The deciding factor in his trial was the color of his skin. Scout Finch, the story's narrator, described the injustice faced by Tom and her father Atticus, who defended him: “In the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.”

Sometimes evidence isn't enough for people whose priorities have been skewed. The Israelites closed their minds to the truth, not because of the color of the Canaanites' skin, but because of the imposing size of their cities and strength of their people. With a very small exception, the entire country ignored everything God had done to prove His power and dismissed His ability to give them the land.

They had seen God bring plagues down upon Egypt. They watched Him emancipate them from slavery. They saw Him divide the Red Sea so they could cross on dry land and then crush Pharaoh's army beneath the water once all of Israel was safe. They saw God provide quail and manna to eat and water from a rock. They had shaken in fear at His voice. They had already seen God give them military victory and pour out His wrath on their rebellion with the golden calf.

The lack of faith of the majority went beyond hesitancy, apprehension, or fearful doubt. They were ready to stone Joshua and Caleb

(and perhaps Moses and Aaron as well) for their requests to enter the Promised Land. Had Israel been a democracy, they would have voted to return to Egypt with a leader of their own choosing! The people God had claimed as His own rejected Him. Compare Israel here with Eve: she allowed her desire for forbidden fruit to overpower her fear of death, while the people of Israel were too fearful to accept the fruitful land of life that God promised to deliver into their hands.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY It may be relatively easy to recall people you know who have stubbornly ignored the power of God and adamantly refused to trust in Him. But we may need to reflect a bit more deeply to remember times when our own hearts have been so blinded. Maybe you're even feeling that way right now. If you are facing a strong giant in your own life, put your trust in the omnipotent Lord and Creator of all. Don't let fear stand in the way of doing what is right.

Not Fear but Faith

The Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them. Numbers 14:9

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:25–14:9

"My husband was offered a promotion in another country, but I feared leaving our home, so he reluctantly declined the offer," my friend shared with me. She explained how apprehension over such a big change kept her from embracing a new adventure, and that she sometimes wondered what they missed in not moving.

The Israelites let their anxieties paralyze them when they were called to inhabit a rich and fertile land that flowed "with milk and honey" (Ex. 33:3). When they heard the reports of the powerful people in large cities (Num. 13:28), they started to fear. The majority of the Israelites rejected the call to enter the land.

But Joshua and Caleb urged them to trust in the Lord, saying, "Do not be afraid of the people in the land" for the "Lord is with us" (14:9). Although the people there appeared large, they could trust the Lord to be with them.

My friend wasn't commanded to move to another country like the Israelites were, yet she regretted letting fear close off the opportunity. What about you—do you face a fearful situation? If so, know that the Lord is with you and will guide you. With His never-failing love, we can move forward in faith. By: Amy Boucher Pye ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Loving Father, may I not let my fear stop me from following You, for I know that You will always love me and will never leave me.

Fear can paralyze but faith propels us to follow God.

Numbers 14:1-10

Today in the Word

The Lord is slow to anger... Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished. - numbers 14:18

TODAY IN THE WORD

Whenever the subject of our society's growing violence comes up, it is usually suggested that one way to solve the problem is to start holding people accountable for their actions. What's amazing in these discussions is that this seems like a radically new idea to some people something they had never thought of before.

Well, holding people accountable for their actions may be a novel idea in the 1990s, but it's the only program that God has ever had. It follows that if obedience to God brings blessing, then disobedience brings punishment. That's the inescapable lesson of Numbers 14, summarized in today's key verse.

Yesterday we read Moses' recap of the way Israel reacted to the fear-producing report of the ten spies. The great lawgiver had pulled no punches, portraying the people as unwilling, rebellious, grumbling, accusing, fearful, and completely lacking in trust. It was not a pretty picture.

There is nothing in Numbers 14 to contradict Moses' judgment. The people bewailed their terrible fate, grumbling against God and His representatives Moses and Aaron. And when Caleb and Joshua tried to rally the nation to believe God and go forward, the people held a quick committee meeting and took a vote to stone those courageous men!

It seems that this threat was the last bitter taste of rebellion and unbelief God would endure. Immediately, He appeared at the tabernacle in His glory, a signal that it was time to settle some accounts.

Tomorrow and Sunday we will see how God's fierce anger was poured out on Israel. All of the rebellious grumblers would be punished for their astonishing lack of faith in the God who had delivered them from Egypt. Not one guilty party would escape.

One key portion of this generation's judgment came from the people's own lips. They fretted over the fact that their children would fall prey to their enemies because God had brought them to the edge of Canaan only to let them die (v. 3).

So God said in effect: 'Are you afraid I will let your children become captives? Then I will show My power by preserving your little ones while you perish in the desert.'

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Studies on the results of disobedience are not usually pleasant or comforting. But they can have positive benefits if we will hear and heed the message.

One thing that got the Israelites into trouble was their faulty, and incredibly short, spiritual memory. Somehow they forgot what God had done for them, so their trust in Him faded quickly. Why not refresh your spiritual memory today by rehearsing God's goodness to you during this year? Better yet, share these thoughts with your family, friends, or roommates.

Numbers 14:1-19

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. - Joshua 1:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

Some governments, such as the ones in Great Britain and Israel, allow for members of parliament to call for a vote of no-confidence in their leaders. This referendum on the leader of the ruling party can force a change in power in the middle of a political term if there is dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

Moses was up for a vote of no-confidence in our reading from today. But what's most shocking is that the vote had been proposed by members of his own "party," leaders of the Israelites. The twelve-member delegation, chosen in Numbers 13 and representative of the top leaders of each of the twelve Israelite tribes, was most likely composed of men who Moses trusted. The scouts were commissioned to explore the Promised Land and bring back information that would help to form their strategy for invading and occupying the land. Their job was an important one, and as Moses himself stayed behind, he would not have entrusted these responsibilities to just anyone. We've seen the criteria used to select the men to whom Moses had delegated judicial authority (Ex. 18:21). We know that special times of worship were the privilege of Israelite leaders (Ex. 24:1). Given this, we can conclude that the men chosen to spy in Canaan had a reputation of faith and courage.

Their betrayal wounded Moses. Of the twelve men who returned, only Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report. The other ten inspired fear in the hearts of the Israelites. Yes, the land was bountiful, but they denied the possibility for victory. They had, along with Moses, seen all the miracles God had performed on behalf of the Israelites, but they did not choose to believe that God would intervene here.

Fear and lack of faith is a prelude to rebellion. If leaders are to lead well, as Moses did, they must be strong and courageous, just as our key verse reminds us!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We must not allow fear into our lives. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity [fear], but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." Fear germinates when we spend more time looking at our circumstances and less time considering God's promises. When we fear, we essentially doubt God. And doubting God is treating Him with contempt. This is no minor infraction. It's a serious spiritual pitfall that will lead us into disobedience.

Numbers 14:11-44

How long will they refuse to believe in me? - Numbers 14:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

When Moses was with the Lord on Mount Sinai and the rest of Israel had crafted the golden calf as their new object of worship, God expressed His desire to destroy the people and to make a new nation from Moses and his descendants. Moses pleaded with the Lord to relent, citing the negative image it would leave in the minds of foreign nations and recalling His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 32). God had mercy on His rebellious children.

A little over a year later, Moses found himself in an almost identical situation. We read yesterday about Israel's mutinous reaction to the plan for entering Canaan. Today's passage begins with God's furious response, renewing His intentions to destroy the rebellious

people and start anew with Moses. Once again, Moses asked forgiveness for His people, and once again the Lord answered his request. However, Israel would not go unpunished.

All the Israelites who were at least twenty years old were sentenced to die in the wilderness, a result of protracted wandering over forty years. The spies who had given bad reports because they were more afraid of the Canaanites than of God were all killed immediately with a plague. Of the adults, only Caleb and Joshua were permitted to enter the Promised Land, but even they had to wait forty years before it happened. The punishment for Israel's crime this time came directly from God. He withheld the benefits of His special promise from those who refused to trust Him.

Ironically, Moses' pleas for mercy may have indirectly prevented him from entering the Promised Land. Many leaders would have seized the opportunity to become the father of a new nation, but Moses acted unselfishly. Yet later in the book of Numbers, Moses' frustrations with these same people incited him to disrespect God's commands, and his penalty was God's ban on leading the people into Canaan (20:9-12). A wicked people can create the conditions for the downfall of their own leaders.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Failure to trust in God will always lead us to miss out on blessings He intends for us. You might not see your rebellion or the cost as specifically as Israel did in the wilderness, but you may very well spend decades wandering aimlessly with little reward. When God asks you to trust in Him, obey without hesitation—though you should take the time to ensure you are acting on faith in His true will and not selfish impulse. Be willing today to do what is right, no matter how difficult it may seem.

Numbers 14:1-45

The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. - Numbers 14:18

TODAY IN THE WORD

About ten years ago, Steven Richard King attempted to rob a bank in Modesto, California. He took a rather unconventional approach, using his forefinger and thumb to create the illusion of a weapon. He wouldn't have been the first to pull off that trick, but his plan had one major flaw: he kept taking his hand out of his pocket.

Israel attempted an even more foolish heist. After failing to trust God for victory the first time, many of the Israelites ignored the Lord's pronouncement of punishment. They tried to take Canaan with no Moses, no ark, no faith, and no help from God. It didn't work.

The failed attack on Canaan was the culmination of a back-and-forth string of fear and rebellion. The people wanted to return to Egypt, they wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua, and they were in danger of being completely wiped out by God.

But as great as the rebellion of Israel was, God's compassion was far greater. Moses' plea for forgiveness on behalf of his people showed just how humble he really was. He refused the opportunity to become the father of his own great nation, opting instead to magnify the glory of the Lord and preserve the nation he was leading.

God's judgment, while slow, was devastating. He pronounced a death sentence to everyone numbered in the census just a short time before. His mercy, however, fell on the next generation who would enter the Promised Land along with Joshua and Caleb. The rest of the spies, were killed immediately. Failing to believe in God is a deadly sin.

After seeing God's punishment, Israel decided that now they would attempt to take the land on their own terms. Victory would have been sure had they followed God's terms; defeat was certain outside of His will. They ignored Moses' warning, replacing their cowardly doubt with foolhardy defiance.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Israel's attempt to attack Canaan on their own is a perfect illustration of trying to earn favor with God by works. On our own, we can never enter into communion with God. By faith in Christ, however, we can be sure of salvation. If you have been placing your hope for eternity in the merits of your own actions, you are charging into battle against an unbeatable opponent. Put your trust in the blood of Christ that was shed for your sins!

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 14:2

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 14:11

Num. 14:8 G Campbell Morgan Life Applications

If the Lord delight in us, then ... —Num. 14:8.

These are the outstanding words of the minority report. They reveal the difference in viewpoint between the minority and the majority. These men saw all the others saw, and more. They had clear apprehension of the goodness of the land; they were by no means blind to the formidable nature of the difficulties that stood between them and possession. But they saw God. They started with that vision, and saw everything else in its light. Therefore the enemies were "as bread" for them; their defences were removed, if indeed Jehovah were with them. Yet these men also saw that there was a condition and they named it in the words: "If Jehovah delight in us." In these words there was surely the recognition of a fact, and the statement of a responsibility. The fact was patent. Jehovah did delight in them. He had ransomed them from slavery, brought them to Himself, provided for all their need, promised them this very land. What further proofs could they have of His delight in them? Nevertheless, they were in danger of placing themselves outside the benefits of that delight, by their rebellion and their unworthy fear. These things were surely written for our learning. Every call of God to His people is a call to those in whom He delights. Therefore they should know that no difficulties need daunt them. They are not called to meet them in their own strength. He will be with them in the path of obedience.

Chimp Eden

If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. —Numbers 14:8

Today's Scripture: Numbers 14:1-10

Eugene Cussons rescues chimpanzees. Orphaned by those in the business of bush-meat trade and taken from the jungle as infants, many have lived their entire lives confined in a space smaller than a prison cell. When Cussons arrives to take them to the game reserve he calls "Chimp Eden," he often finds them hostile and untrusting.

"These chimps don't realize that I am one of the good guys," Cussons says. When he tries to put them into a smaller crate for the trip to their new home, they put up quite a fight. "They don't know that I'm going to take them back to Chimp Eden and give them a life so much better."

On a much grander scale, God's offer to liberate us from the slavery of sin is often met with resistance. When He rescued the children of Israel from Egypt, God took them through difficult places that caused them to doubt His good intentions. "Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" they cried (Num. 14:3).

On our journey of faith, there are times when the "freedom" of sin that we left behind is more appealing than the restrictions of faith that lie ahead. We must trust the protective boundaries found in God's Word as the only way to get to the place of ultimate freedom.
By: Julie Ackerman Link

Sin's lure may look like freedom But in its grip we're bound; It's when we're bound to Jesus Real freedom will be found. —D. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Obedience to God is the key to freedom.

Trouble Ahead

Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land; . . . the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. —
Numbers 14:9

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:25–14:9

Inevitably, trouble will invade our lives: A bad report from a medical test, the betrayal of a trusted friend, a child who rejects us, or a spouse who leaves us. The list of possibilities is long, but there are only two options: forge ahead on our own, or turn to God.

Flying solo into the face of trouble is not a good idea. It can lead to bad behavior patterns, blaming God, and retreating into defeat. Like the Israelites, we may spin out of control and into despair (Num. 14:1-4).

When the majority of the spies brought a report of intimidating giants and dangers ahead, they used the pronoun "we" seven times with no reference to the Lord (13:31-33). The Israelites were on the cusp of the ultimate blessing that God promised to them. They were eyewitnesses to the miracles in Egypt and their feet had walked the dry bottom of the Red Sea in jaw-dropping victory. God's faithfulness had been amazingly evident. What short memories! What disappointing faithlessness! Sadly, they turned their backs on God and left the blessing behind.

Caleb and Joshua, on the other hand, opted to turn to the Lord with this confidence: "The Lord is with us" (14:9). When your giants show up, what will you do? By: Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

In this world of sin and trouble

Where so many ills are known,
If I shun the ways of evil,
I am kept by Him alone.
—Smith

God's presence is a life preserver that keeps the soul from sinking in a sea of trouble.

Seeing God

The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. Numbers 14:18

Today's Scripture & Insight: Exodus 34:1–9

Caricature artists set up their easels in public places and draw pictures of people who are willing to pay a modest price for a humorous image of themselves. Their drawings amuse us because they exaggerate one or more of our physical features in a way that is recognizable but funny.

Caricatures of God, on the other hand, are not funny. Exaggerating one of His attributes presents a distorted view that people easily dismiss. Like a caricature, a distorted view of God is not taken seriously. Those who see God portrayed only as an angry and demanding judge are easily lured away by someone who emphasizes mercy. Those who see God as a kindhearted grandfather will reject that image when they need justice. Those who see God as an intellectual idea rather than a living, loving being eventually find other ideas more appealing. Those who see God as a best friend often leave Him behind when they find human friends who are more to their liking.

God declares Himself to be merciful and gracious, but also just in punishing the guilty (Ex. 34:6–7).

As we put our faith into action, we need to avoid portraying God as having only our favorite attributes. We must worship all of God, not just what we like. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I worship You. You are holy, just, kind, and loving. You are God alone.

God is God alone.

Numbers 14:18 (Read Exodus 34:1-9)

Caricature God

Caricature artists set up their easels in public places and draw pictures of people who are willing to pay a modest price for a humorous image of themselves. Their drawings amuse us because they exaggerate one or more of our physical features in a way that is recognizable but funny.

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God declares Himself to be merciful and gracious, but also just in punishing the guilty (Ex. 34:6-7).

As we put our faith into action, we need to avoid portraying God as having only our favorite attributes. We must worship all of God, not just what we like. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
Oh, Thou blessed Trinity:
One in essence, yet three persons—
Thou, our God, we worship Thee.
—D. De Haan

All-powerful, merciful, wise, and just is the God in whom we trust.

Wholehearted!

Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. Numbers 14:24

Today's Scripture & Insight: Numbers 13:26–32; 14:20–24

Caleb was a “wholehearted” person. He and Joshua were part of a twelve-man reconnaissance team that explored the Promised Land and gave a report to Moses and the people. Caleb said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it” (Num. 13:30). But ten members of the team said they couldn’t possibly succeed. In spite of God’s promises, they saw only obstacles (vv. 31–33).

Ten men caused the people to lose heart and grumble against God, which led to forty years of wandering in the desert. But Caleb never quit. The Lord said, “Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (14:24). Forty-five years later God honored His promise when Caleb, at the age of 85, received the city of Hebron “because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly” (Josh. 14:14).

Centuries later an expert in the law asked Jesus, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment” (Matt. 22:35–38).

Today Caleb is still inspiring us with his confidence in a God who deserves our wholehearted love, reliance, and commitment. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, may we love You wholeheartedly today and follow You every day of our journey on this earth.

Commitment to Christ is a daily calling.

Numbers 14:24 Do You See Giants?

My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land. —Numbers 14:24

Today's Scripture: Numbers 13:17-30

The 12 spies who were sent out by Moses scouted the land of Canaan for 40 days. When they returned, all but Joshua and Caleb gave this pessimistic report: “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 13:33).

These faithless ones saw only difficulties and defeat. Yes, the giants were great, but wasn’t their God greater? How could they so easily forget the way God led them through the wilderness?

The 10 spies who were filled with doubt died in the wilderness. We know that Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. But what about Caleb? God blessed him and brought him into the land too because he had a different spirit and followed Him wholeheartedly (14:24).

Think for a moment of two balloons. One is filled with carbon dioxide and cannot rise. The other balloon is filled with helium and immediately goes up. So too, if our hearts are filled with doubts and fears, we will not be able to rise in faith to do what God wants us to do.

We need more Calebs—willing to follow the leading of the Lord because they are filled with His Holy Spirit. Are you a Caleb of faith, or are you among the doubters who always see the giants of difficulty? —Henry G. Bosch (ODB Editor 1956-1981) By: Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, "It shall be done!"
—Anon.

Fear sees the obstacle; faith sees the opportunity.

Numbers 14:26-35 So Near And Yet So Far

Back in Canada’s early days, pioneers were taking shelter in Fort Babine. When supplies were nearly exhausted, Victor Clark and a young guide left the fort and walked to the town of Hazelton to get food.

On their way back to the fort, snow began to fall. Soon the two travelers were chilled to the bone by a stinging wind and were unable to follow the trail in the darkness. Forced to stop, they built a fire and spent a miserable night. Then as light slowly dawned, they saw the fort with its warmth and comfort—only a few hundred yards away from where they had stopped. So near and yet so far!

The Israelites were at the very border of the Promised Land (Numbers 13). Caleb and Joshua, the two courageous spies, had brought back the lush foods of Canaan and encouraged the people to take possession of the land (vv.26,30). But the people doubted and condemned themselves to 40 years of wandering and death in the desert (14:28-30). They too were so near and yet so far away!

Have you heard many times about Jesus' love for you but remain uncommitted to Him? Are you near yet so far away? Choose now to cross over into the "promised land" of salvation found in Jesus.

A Prayer

Dear Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness.

I believe that You died and took my punishment.

I trust You as my Savior and Lord.

Now is the time to choose the Lord—later may never come.

Numbers 14:11-16, 26-38

Today in the Word

Without faith it is impossible to please God. - Hebrews 11:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

When families get together on long summer evenings, it's not unusual for someone to start telling stories. Children like to hear about how their parents and grandparents got into trouble when they were young. Somehow, acts of mischief from forty or fifty years ago don't sound so bad around a family cookout in the backyard. Such stories can even be funny if told the right way.

Moses probably spent some long evenings with the Israelites there on the east side of the Jordan River, delivering the messages that form the Book of Deuteronomy. He had a story to tell the people about their parents, but it wasn't a harmless tale of youthful mischief. The exodus generation had provoked the anger of Almighty God.

We're back to the historical section of this biblical documentary focusing on obedience and blessing. Yesterday we read Moses' brief summary of God's anger toward Israel. Today's verses take us back to the scene itself forty years earlier.

Israel's great liberator and lawgiver had said, 'When the Lord heard what you said, he was angry' (Deut. 1:34).

How angry was God? Angry enough to consider wiping Israel off the map and beginning over again with Moses! Angry enough to declare that an entire generation would fall in the desert. And angry enough to judge the ten spies who brought back the report that caused the people to cower in fear on the edge of Canaan.

These are the consequences of disobedience the very opposite of the blessings that come from obedience. God said that Israel would learn what it was like to have Him against them (Num. 14:34), an experience none of us would want to repeat.

But we can't leave this passage without also noting that God mentioned Caleb and Joshua by name two men who obeyed and reaped God's blessing.

You have to love what God said about Caleb. This man had 'a different spirit' and followed God 'wholeheartedly' (v. 24). God promised Caleb his place in the Promised Land, and Caleb's descendants also benefited from his obedience and faith. Two men out of an entire nation was not a very good percentage, but God never overlooks those who please Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In verse 30, God said He had sworn 'with uplifted hand' to give the land of Canaan to His people. He would simply give it to a later generation, since the earlier one had proved unworthy.

Here's that truth we talked about yesterday: Human disobedience and lack of faith do not alter God's eternal plan. Think about that for a few minutes, and you'll want to praise God for His sovereign purpose and power. He is still firmly in control of His creation. On this Lord's day, let's thank Him for that reassuring truth

Numbers 14:1-45

How long will they refuse to believe in me? - Numbers 14:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

After fleeing from Egypt, God's people encamped in the Desert of Paran. The Lord commanded Moses to send twelve men to explore the Promised Land of Canaan (Numbers 13). The scouting trip lasted forty days. The explorers returned with a mixed report (13:27-28). They roused the whole Israelite community to fear the people in the land and distrust the Lord. Only two men, Joshua and Caleb, sustained confidence in the Lord's plan. This is the context of our passage today.

Verses 1 through 12 recount the heightening tension between the people and the four faithful men (Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua). Notice the emphasis that everyone is grumbling and rebelling: "all," "whole," and "entire" are used seven times (vv. 1-10). The people speculate about alternatives (vv. 2-3; cf. Gen. 3:1-6). They question God's trustworthiness and take matters into their own hands. Despite Joshua and Caleb's attempt to change their hearts, the Israelites remain obstinate, and the Lord intervenes (vv. 10-12).

Moses mediates and seeks God's restraint (Ex. 32:11-13). First, he appeals to God's reputation among the Egyptians (vv. 13-16). Then, he evokes the Lord's promise by referencing the declaration of his name (vv. 17-19; Ex. 34:4-7). The Lord is gracious and compassionate and forgives them (v. 20). Yet, He does not leave the guilty unpunished (vv. 21-35). God declares that everyone who is 20 years old or older and grumbled against Him will die in the desert and not see the Promised Land; the scouts who kindled the rebellion are killed immediately. This passage also illuminates what it means that the Lord punishes the children for the sin of the fathers (v. 33).

When the people realize that their heavenly Father is serious and true to His name, they change their tune. They try to repent, but it is too late (vv. 40-41). Moses warns them that the Lord will not go with them (vv. 42-43), but "in their presumption" they attempt to redeem what they have broken—and are defeated (v. 45).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - At the heart of the people's contempt was their refusal to believe God (v. 11), to trust that He knows best, and to surrender to His plan, despite perceived difficulties along the way. Have you ever thought, "Isn't there a better way, Lord?" or "I know where you are calling me, but it is dangerous with potential for failure and suffering." Let the Spirit search your heart for these kinds of thoughts in your current circumstances. Repent and ask the Lord to quicken your heart to trust Him like Joshua and Caleb did.

Numbers 14:13

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Egyptians shall hear it.

What a noble concern for the credit of God! Here was a great opportunity for Moses. God was testing him by the proposal, that, the entire nation of Israel being cut off as a judgment for their repeated shortcomings and transgressions, Moses should become the slip or stock of the Hebrew race: "I will disinherit them, and make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they." This was not the settled purpose of God; but a suggestion to test his servant, who would not entertain it for a moment. All thought of the honor to be done to himself was submerged in his great eagerness for the Divine credit.

"The Egyptians shall hear it: the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able..."

The Egyptians are always around us, watching and listening. They can only judge of God by our behavior and the course of our experience: and are only too ready to catch up anything which they may interpret to the discrediting of the Eternal. How careful we should be in all our life and conversation so that the ungodly may have, not lower, but loftier conceptions of our God. (See **notes** Colossians 4:5; 4:6; cf. Ephesians 4:29)

When tempted to anything which is not perfectly noble and honorable; when inclined to murmur and complain of God's dealings with you (see note Philippians 2:14); when an opportunity comes, as it did to Moses, to make gain at the expense of others; then remember the name of God (see **Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary**), and the urgency of need that exists, to maintain it unsullied and untarnished. We should be restrained by a double fear: first, lest we should grieve God; second, lest the Egyptians should have a handle against Him, and should be prejudiced against religion.

Go Fever

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Psalm 37:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: Numbers 14:39-45

On January 28, 1986, after five weather-related delays, the space shuttle Challenger lumbered heavenward amid a thunderous overture of noise and flame. A mere 73 seconds later, system failure tore the shuttle apart, and all seven crewmembers perished.

The disaster was attributed to an O-ring seal known to have vulnerabilities. Insiders referred to the fatal mistake as “go fever”—the tendency to ignore vital precautions in the rush to a grand goal.

Our ambitious human nature relentlessly tempts us to make ill-advised choices. Yet we are also prone to a fear that can make us overly cautious. The ancient Israelites demonstrated both traits. When the 12 scouts returned from spying out the Promised Land, 10 of the 12 saw only the obstacles (Num. 13:26-33). “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are,” they said (v. 31). After a fearful rebellion against the Lord that led to the death of the 10 spies, the people suddenly developed a case of “go fever.” They said, “Now we are ready to go up to the land the Lord promised” (14:40). Without God, the ill-timed invasion failed miserably (vv. 41-45).

When we take our eyes off the Lord, we’ll slide into one of two extremes. We’ll impatiently rush ahead without Him, or we’ll cower and complain in fear. Focusing on Him brings courage tempered with His wisdom. By: Tim Gustafson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Before making a quick decision, consider why you want to make it quickly. Consider if it will honor God and what it might cost others. If you are afraid to make a decision, think about why that might be. Most of all, pray!

A moment of patience can prevent a great disaster.

Numbers 14:39-45; Deuteronomy 1:41-46

Today in the Word

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. - Proverbs 14:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

As supreme commander of the Allied invasion of Europe during World War II, Dwight D. Eisenhower was faced with a decision that held potentially overwhelming consequences. He had to decide whether to change the date of the D-Day invasion at the last minute or to let it proceed. Of the decision, Eisenhower later wrote: ‘I knew I did not have the required wisdom... I asked God to give me the wisdom. I yielded myself to Him. I surrendered myself. And He gave me clear guidance. He gave me insight to see what was right, and He gave me courage to make my decision.’

The Israelites could have benefited from a similar attitude of humility on the part of their military commander(s). Someone made the decision to go into battle in the hill country of southern Canaan in defiance of the Lord and the nation paid the price of defeat and humiliation.

Today we’re considering both this historical account and Moses’ later reflection on it. This is a classic case of rebellion and disobedience, and then the insincere repentance that marks those who want to avoid the results of their actions.

We know Israel’s bitter weeping wasn’t coming from repentant hearts for two reasons. First, the people admitted their sin only after God had rejected them. Second, the Lord turned a deaf ear to their cries. He never turns away those who come to Him in sincerity and genuine brokenness.

The two accounts we read today give different details of the story, although either one is enough to tell us what happened and why. Moses said the people refused to listen and acted in ‘arrogance’ in trying to undo the damage of their disobedience (Deut. 1:43).

There are two key elements in Numbers 14 that tell us that the army of Israel was heading into a disaster. ‘Neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord’s covenant moved from the camp’ (v. 44). Both God’s appointed leader and the symbol of His presence and covenant promises were absent when the troops went up to fight.

The people came back again beaten and in tears, but God once more turned a deaf ear. Their rebellion had crossed the line, and God had pronounced judgment. This is a lesson we can’t afford to forget if we want God’s blessing.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Many people say ‘I’m sorry’ after they get into trouble. This kind of after-the-fact confession is a trademark of our culture. But God

honors only one kind of confession: sincere sorrow and repentance for sin. Trying to do 'damage control' doesn't get us anywhere with Him. Has the Holy Spirit brought to your attention a need for confession? Seek God's promised forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9), and you'll put yourself in line for His blessing by your obedience.

Extremes

Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned. —Numbers 14:40

Today's Scripture: Numbers 14:39-45

The pendulum in our hall clock ticks off the seconds with dependable accuracy. Under the pull of gravity it swings freely from one extreme to the other. But the fixed point from which it hangs gives it the control to convert its motion into useful energy.

In today's Scripture, we read how Israel swung from one extreme to the other but without stability and control. They had lost connection with their fixed point, which was God Himself. After spying out the Promised Land, Joshua challenged the nation to obey God and invade. Instead, they listened to the fearful report of the 10 spies and held back (Num. 13:26-14:38). Then, after God judged them, they rushed ahead without His approval (14:40).

We often exhibit those same tendencies. Fear either keeps us from moving forward in faith, or self-reliance leads us to make rash decisions without seeking God's direction.

Jesus experienced a full range of emotions just as we do (Mk. 14:34; Jn. 2:13-17), but His responses were never out of control. He always held to the fixed point of His Father's will (Mk. 14:35-36; Jn. 6:38).

We must learn from Jesus' example to obey God's Word, trust His promises, and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance. Only then will we be kept from un-Christlike extremes. By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said—
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
—Anon.

To give your life stability, hold to God's Word.

Numbers 15:1-41

I am the Lord your God. - Numbers 15:41

TODAY IN THE WORD

It's known in the legal world as the "Twinkie Defense." In the 1970s after two high-profile murders, Dan White received a big break, escaping the death penalty with the lesser conviction of voluntary manslaughter. His winning defense? He had a diminished mental capacity after eating too many Twinkies. Due to his "sugar high," the prosecution was unable to prove White's intent.

In today's reading, intent made all the difference in the world, and one man received a verdict that modern minds would find even more outlandish than the "Twinkie Defense."

Nestled amidst the decrees regarding sacrifices, unintentional sin, and remembrance we find a brief account of a sinner sentenced to death. Compared to a double murder, the sin of gathering wood on the Sabbath appears relatively mild. But in the context of the passage, we can deduce that this man knew he was directly, intentionally defying God's command. It was the responsibility of the entire community to carry out the death penalty. If the punishment seems severe, considering the placement of this story will help you see God's abiding grace. First, God had just given instructions for dealing with intentional sin when this man was found. The actions of even one person is God's community matter, and had to be addressed. Second, the Lord gave Israel these commandments to be carried out in the Promised Land. His instructions implied that they would indeed enter, even after deliberately doubting and disobeying Him. The forty-year period of wandering had just begun, but God was directing their eyes to the place of rest awaiting them at the finish line. Israel was rebellious and deserved punishment, but they received infinite mercy and relentless love.

The practice of using tassels as reminders of God's commands reveals the heart of the matter. Israel was to follow God's rules, not their own fleshly desires. God's declaration, "I am the Lord your God," told Israel exactly who was in charge. If they could remember that, obeying the rest of the commands would come naturally.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Although we aren't stoned when we sin, obeying God is no less important for us today. We have the Holy Spirit to guide us; how much easier should it be for us to be faithful! It might help to have a visual reminder—perhaps a piece of jewelry, a keychain, or a notecard—anything that can cue the simple thought, “I am the Lord your God.” Use the reminder of His commandments to help deny your selfish desires.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 15:25

Numbers 15:37-41

The Color Of Blue (See also following devotional “Holy Blue”)

Our Daily Bread

The children of Israel were to make tassels on the corners of their garments with “a blue thread in the tassels” (Numbers 15:38). The tassels reminded them to “do all My commandments, and be holy for your God” (v.40). The blue thread—the color of the heavens above—spoke of His immeasurable power and saving grace.

We still need reminders today. In the fuss and frenzy of our busy lives, we easily forget God and His passion for us. We forget that He lives within and around us and loves us with eternal affection. It helps to have something to signify His presence. Blue can be one of those signs.

“The first step is to remember,” says Aslan in C. S. Lewis’ *The Silver Chair*. Aslan, a figure of Christ, tells Jill to “remember the signs” he has given her.

If you learn God’s signs—like the significance of the color blue—it will be easier to remember God’s love. Blue can remind you of the invisible realm above and all around, unseen and yet as real as anything you can see. A mountain lake, a glacial crevasse, an alpine forget-me-not, a cerulean sky—all remind us of heaven and God’s unfathomable love.

When you see blue, think of God’s love, and especially His love for you.

This is my Father’s world!

He shines in all that’s fair;

In the rustling grass I hear Him pass—

He speaks to me everywhere. —Babcock

Holy Blue

Our Daily bread

In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don’t set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn’t enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life. The Lord wants His people to keep themselves separated from the filth of this world at all cost. In (Nu 15:38,40) the Lord told the Jews to put a blue thread on the borders of their clothes. When they saw the blue, they were to remember God’s holy purpose for their lives and to keep a distance from sin. Do we remind ourselves often of our high and holy purpose for living? The best way to live in the world is to live above it.- Henry G Bosch

Heavenly Father, help us now

At Thy feet to humbly bow;

Take away all thought of sin,

Make us clean and pure within. --Bartels

"Oh worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness,

Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim,

With gold of obedience & incense of lowliness,

Kneel & adore Him, the LORD is His name.

---J. S. B. Monsell

Daily blessings are daily reminders of God.

Numbers 15:37-41 Look at the Tassels

Remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them. —Numbers 15:39

Best-selling author Chaim Potok began his novel *The Chosen* by describing a baseball game between two Jewish teams in New York City. Reuven Malter, the book's main character, notices that the opposing players' uniforms have a unique accessory—four long ropelike tassels that extend below each teammate's shirt. Reuven recognizes the tassels as a sign of strict obedience to God's Old Testament laws.

The history of these fringes—known as *tzitzit*—began with a message from God. Through Moses, God told His people to create tassels containing some strands of blue thread and attach them to the four corners of their top garments (Num. 15:38). God said, "You may look upon [the tassels] and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them" (v. 39).

God's memory device for the ancient Israelites has a parallel for us today. We can look at Christ who consistently kept the whole law in our place and obeyed His heavenly Father (John 8:29). Having received His work on our behalf, we now "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14). Keeping our eyes on God's Son helps us to honor our heavenly Father. Dear Jesus, thank You for being my spiritual role model. Help me to walk in Your steps so that I can honor and obey God with the Holy Spirit's help.

If Christ is the center of your life, you'll always be focused on Him.

INSIGHT: The book of Numbers is part of the opening segment of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is book four of the five-book Pentateuch, referred to in Judaism as the Torah (the Law). These books were written by Moses as a record not only of the beginning of time and life (Genesis), but also the beginning of the nation of Israel (Exodus through Deuteronomy). This book received its name because of Moses' order to number the population of the tribes. Jewish names for the book of Numbers include "and the Lord spoke" and "in the wilderness" (both names coming from Num. 1:1).

Numbers 15:38-41

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. - Psalm 51:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

Human minds and moods are greatly affected by visual cues. A restaurant decorated with bright colors can raise diners' energy levels and shorten their visits, while more subdued colors and softer textures promote relaxation and the desire to stay put. Decreased exposure to sunlight can cause Seasonal Anxiety Disorder in many people, while the display of festive Christmas decorations can lift people's spirits. What we see dramatically affects how we feel and what we think.

God was not unsympathetic to the plight of the Israelites and their need for visual reminders of a God they could not see. To remind them of His guidance, He led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). To remind them of His presence and holiness, He instructed them to make a tabernacle where He would dwell (Ex. 25:8). To remind them of His provision and protection, He had them celebrate three annual festivals (Ex. 23:14-16). And, as we read today, He told them to stitch reminders of His commands into the very fabric of their clothes.

The logistics were fairly simple. A blue cord on the corner of their garments would remind them of God's commandments. But the importance of this custom had nothing to do with fashion and everything to do with the spiritual well-being of God's people. One of the most dangerous threats to Israel lay in their own desires that would lead them into unfaithfulness. God didn't want them to do whatever they felt was right in their hearts (see Judges 21:25). He wanted them to remain pure.

And purity was not without reward. By obeying God's commandments, Israel would be consecrated unto God, His holy people (v. 40). God's demand for faithfulness showed the significance of Israel's relationship with Him. It was more than an example of God saying, "Obey, because I said so." It was based on relationship: "Obey, because you are my people, and I am your God."

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you keep visual reminders of God's Word around you at all times? It helps to have Bible verses posted where you can see them,

to carry around a packet of Scripture references, or (for those who spend a lot of time on the computer) on your desktop. Even a more subtle cue (like the once popular What Would Jesus Do? bracelets) can be extremely helpful in reminding us that we belong to God and we need to obey Him, especially when our eyes and hearts are tempted by worldly desires.

Numbers 15:38

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

A cord of blue. (r.v.)

Throughout their generations the Israelites were bidden to wear it. It is the symbol of depth, of love, of Heaven. The azure sky, the glacier-rift, the deep lake, the far horizon, the eye of the hopeful, buoyant, tender nature — all tell the same story of deep and constant love, which mirrors below God's heaven of love above. Therefore to wear this cord of blue was to be kept in mind of the eternal and unseen. No outward symbol is needed by us. The very best, after awhile, becomes time and commonplace. We get so accustomed to it that it ceases to stir our thoughts. But if we will entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He will teach us all things, and keep us always in mind. He is the blessed Remembrancer, whose mission is to bring Christ to our thought and keep Him there, the prominent object of our soul's vision.

The object of this cord of blue was to restrain the people from going about "after their own heart and their own eyes." We need to be kept from the same, that we may walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In our resolutions, our energies, our acts of consecration, our Christian activities, we are all too apt to go at the dictates of our heart and eyes. May God forgive us! It has been the source of our perpetual failure and defeat. There is a more excellent way. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to keep the blue cord of the Christ — memory ever before our gaze, that we may become utterly absorbed in his beauty and glory, in doing his will, and in executing his commands. Let us seek to be bound to our Master, who is Love, by that same cord, that we may never for a moment forget the demands of the unseen and eternal.

Related Resource: Holiness Quotes

"Put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners... that you may remember... and be holy for your God." -Nu 15:38, 40

Related Devotional: Holy Blue: In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life. The Lord wants His people to keep themselves separated from the filth of this world at all cost. In ([Nu 15:38,40](#)) the Lord told the Jews to put a blue thread on the borders of their clothes. When they saw the blue, they were to remember God's holy purpose for their lives and to keep a distance from sin. Do we remind ourselves often of our high and holy purpose for living? The best way to live in the world is to live above it.- Henry G Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, 4/21/97](#)) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Heavenly Father, help us now
At Thy feet to humbly bow;
Take away all thought of sin,
Make us clean and pure within. --Bartels**

**"Oh worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim,
With gold of obedience & incense of lowliness,
Kneel & adore Him, the LORD is His name.
---J. S. B. Monsell**

Life Applications

... That they put upon the fringe of each border a cord of blue.—Num. 15:38.

This was a sign for the coming days of wilderness wanderings. The first part of the chapter is occupied with the repetition of certain laws already given, and their enforcement as binding. This repetition and enforcement are explained by the opening words: "When ye be come into the land." In the Divine discipline of the people for their failure in faith, they were about to turn their faces from the land which they might at once have possessed; and in this reiteration of certain laws for their dwelling within that land, there was at once a prophecy of the ultimate fulfilment of Divine intention, and a means of preserving in their minds the principles of the law by which they were to be governed. It would also serve to remind them that even in the wilderness they were to live as those belonging to the land, even though for the time being they were excluded from it. The purpose of this cord of blue was distinctly declared. It was a symbol of the deepest truth concerning their national life. The colour blue was always the symbol of heavenly beauty and thus they were constantly reminded that they were under the direct government of God. It was to help them to re-member the one great fact which they had forgotten, when they had permitted the difficulties of the way to fill them with fear. In the fuller light and glory of our fellow-ship with the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit, such material signs should not be necessary, but it would be a daring thing to say that they are wholly wrong. If some outward sign helps us to remember, then let us use it; only let us ever fear lest we become so accustomed to it, that we forget its true significance.

Numbers 16:1-50

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment. - Romans 12:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Langston Hughes poem, "Harlem," asks the question, "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore and then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?"

For many in Israel, the dream of entering the Promised Land had been deferred, and it exploded in the hearts of 250 leaders, spearheaded by the Levite Korah. Their words to Moses ooze with wickedness. Korah wanted to reinvent the entire system of the priesthood. This appears to be more than just a faction of disgruntled Levites, it included an assembly of leaders from throughout the tribes. Although he preached a message of equal holiness, Korah and his followers lusted after the power of leadership (v. 10).

Moses arranged a showdown of sorts, and the ensuing judgment rolled out in waves. First, the earth swallowed up the families of the rebel ring leaders (including Dathan and Abiram, who were too cowardly to face Moses). Then, God sent out a fire to consume Korah and his 250 co-conspirators, proving decidedly that no one other than Aaron was the chosen high priest. After the rebels had been dealt with, God declared their censers holy and had a memorial to His glory constructed. Finally, rather than repent of their pride and thanklessness, many of the Israelites grumbled even more, triggering a plague from God that wiped out over fourteen thousand more Israelites.

Somehow, Aaron and Moses maintained a spirit of compassion for the people who complained against them, perhaps because they realized that God was the true subject of the people's scorn. Were it not for Moses' pleading for mercy and Aaron's offering of atonement, even more Israelites would have felt the well-deserved wrath of God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The wickedness in today's story is obvious, but we can easily overlook the same attitudes in our own hearts. Christ is our High Priest. Do we maintain a spirit of thankful humility for His work on our behalf? Or do we entertain thoughts of achieving holiness by our own good works? Do you relish the privilege to serve Him? Or do you seize control of your life, trusting in your own wisdom? Humbly offer yourself and all that you have before the Lord today.

Numbers 16

Passing Judgment

"Then the whole congregation ... murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness (Exodus 16:2).

Fred Grimm, a Christian probation officer, told of a father who made a scapegoat of his son by blaming him for family conflicts. Although the man and his wife had been fighting for years, the father told his son, "It's always because of your big mouth that your mother and I fight. If I leave you and your mother, it will be your fault." The youngster's problems were compounded when the father

died suddenly from a stroke and the mother accused her son of having caused his father's death. The boy was devastated.

Blaming others for our problems is not only unjust and cruel, it's displeasing to the Lord. The children of Israel did this in the wilderness shortly after their deliverance from the land of Egypt. When food and water were short, they panicked and blamed Moses and Aaron for getting them into their predicament. They made scapegoats of their leaders. Yet God mercifully overlooked their lack of faith and unfair criticism of His servants in those two incidents. Later, though, when the Israelites committed the same sin again, He judged them severely (see **Numbers 16**).

Scapegoating can do great damage. Instead of looking for someone else to blame for our problems, we need to analyze our situation, acknowledge our failures, and ask God for forgiveness and help.—H. V. Lugt

We won't get closer to God by passing judgment on others.

Numbers 16:1-40

Among those who approach me I will show myself holy. - Leviticus 10:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book, *God in the Wasteland*, David Wells laments, "It is one of the defining marks of our time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal, but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests on the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable."

The "weightlessness" of God in our age is like the refusal of the Israelites to treat God as holy, recorded here in Numbers 16. What was apparently a showdown between rival leaders for Moses' and Aaron's positions—a conspiracy motivated by self-ish ambition and pride—was at its core a rejection of God's authority.

By the time we get to Numbers 16, the Israelites had already received revelation regarding the construction of the tabernacle and the duties of the Levites and priests. Korah and other descendants of Kohath were given important responsibilities in the tabernacle. They were assigned the task of transporting on their shoulders holy articles used in the rituals of worship and sacrifice (cf. Num. 7:9). They were not, however, direct descendants of Aaron and could not, therefore, assume priestly duties such as offering the sacrifices or burning incense to the Lord.

Despite God's explicit instructions, they rebelled. And Moses was clear to say to them that they were not rebelling against human leadership but against God Himself. They had no fear of God, no regard for His holiness. If they had, they would never have had the audacity to offer incense to the Lord as Moses proposed.

We've so often seen Moses in an intercessory role when God threatens judgment against His people. Time and time again he pleaded with God to overlook sin and show mercy, and he did so even later in this chapter. However, with Korah and the other dissidents, Moses prayed for God's judgment upon them. His anger didn't result from feeling personally offended or accused. He recognized that what was at stake was regarding God as holy.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In many places of the Bible, including the Psalms and the prophetic books, we hear the people of God cry out for judgment against evildoers. Psalm 109 is one such example. When we read words like, "May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow," we're forced to wonder if such ideas should really be in the Bible. What Moses' example teaches us today is that when God's holy character and reputation are threatened, we can and should pray for God to judge and oppose such evil.

Our Daily Bread Numbers 16 Passing Judgment

Numbers 16:5

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Lord will show who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him.

It was on these words that the Psalmist founded his exclamation,

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee." (Psalm 65:4 - see [Spurgeon's note](#) or see "Related Devotional by Spurgeon" immediately following)

This is what we all need. We often endeavor to approach unto God, but meet with many disappointments. Thomas Welsh said, on one occasion, that he had been wrestling to obtain access from six in the morning until nine! There is something better. If you are his, you may humbly count on God to cause you to come near; believing his promise: "Draw nigh to God, and God will draw nigh to

you.”

In your morning prayer, or at any other time which you set apart for devotion, let this be the cry of your soul: **My God, cause me to come near.**” When for long you have been dwelling afar off, and the distance threatens to become chronic or permanent, let this again be your petition: **“Cause me to come near.”** And throughout the rush of daily life, let your dependence be on Him who alone can cause you to come near so that you may dwell in his courts.

But God cannot do this unless the soul is utterly surrendered to be his; for “if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” We must be unanchored and unbeached if the tide is to bear us on its bosom. We must be free from the touch of other hands if we are to respond to his. We must sit loosely by the things of the earth to feel the drawing of heaven. This is, in part, the meaning of holiness. “Who are his, and who is holy?” Those who have experienced separation to God and sin. Give us this, O Lord; then draw us near to Thyself, and we will run after Thee!

Related Devotional from Spurgeon: Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee. After cleansing comes benediction, and truly this is a very rich one. It comprehends both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship. First, we are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. Furthermore, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house, and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God. May both writer and reader be such men.

That he may dwell in thy courts. Acceptance leads to abiding: God does not make a temporary choice, or give and take; his gifts and calling are without repentance. He who is once admitted to God's courts shall inhabit them for ever; he shall be

**"No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."**

Permanence gives preciousness. Terminating blessings are but half blessings. To dwell in the courts of the Great King is to be ennobled; to dwell there for ever is to be emparadised: yet such is the portion of every man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto him, though once his iniquities prevailed against him.

Num. 16:5

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The Lord will show who are His, and who is holy- Num. 16.5.

This chapter gives the account of a strong and organized opposition to Moses and Aaron; and in these words we have the appeal which Moses made for a Divine decision. The attitude taken up by those who organized the movement was plausible and popular. It was democratic in its expression: "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them." It was a plea for equal rights, and for independence of action. Moses chose the only method of reply to such an attitude. It was that of calling for the submission of the case to God, Whose authority was called in question. The answer was immediate. When presently the censers of the offending men were beaten out into a covering for the altar, a provision was made for a perpetual witness to the danger of intruding upon service in any other way than that of the Divine appointment. The whole story serves to show how false may be the most apparently popular movements. The voice of the people is by no means always the voice of God. The declaration that all men have equal rights may be entirely false. It is fundamentally true that all men have an equal right to direct dealings with God, and to receive the law of life from Him. But within that law are provisions which give to each man his service, and no man has any right to serve in any way not directly appointed by God. We have no right to choose the place or character of what we shall do. Therefore we sin against God when we rebel against the exercise by any man of an authority which has been given him by God.

Numbers 17:5

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud. (r.v.)

There was deep significance in this method of indicating the man of God's choice. Too many have taken God's election as referring exclusively to their enjoyment of God's grace and their preservation to his heavenly kingdom. Here we are taught that one of its chief results will be, and must be — buds, blossoms, and fruit. "The rod of Aaron budded and bloomed, blossomed and bare ripe almonds." It would almost seem that spring, summer, and autumn; the promise, maturity, and fruit — were simultaneously present in that marvellous rod. So should it be in those who have been chosen in Christ to be holy.

The bud of spring. — There is a perennial freshness in the true saint. He may be old in years, but his leaf is green with vernal tenderness, and there are the budding promises of richer and better things than he has yet attained. The youths faint, and are weary; but he renews his strength. The outward man decayeth, but the inward renews his youth like an eagle's.

The blossom of early summer. — There is exquisite beauty in the blossom of orchard and garden. No painter has ever yet learned God's secret of mixing his colors. Such is the beauty of the character of the believer. Men say involuntarily, "How attractive, how beautiful!"

The fruit of autumn. — That we should bear fruit is the end of Christ in our redemption and discipline. We can only do it in fellowship with Himself. He must bear it through us. "From Me is thy fruit found." "I have chosen you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit (see word study on **fruit = Karpos**) should remain."

Num. 17:5

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud.-Num. 17.5.

Thus a supernatural sign was given to the people in vindication of Aaron's right to the position which he held. The reason for this was clearly stated in the words: "I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the children of Israel which they murmur against you." Mark well the form of this statement. The murmuring of the people was against Moses and Aaron, but God saw that it was murmuring against Himself. The sign was efficacious; for while the spirit of rebellion manifested itself subsequently in other ways, it may safely be said .that any complaint against the rights of the God-appointed priesthood ceased from this time. The blossoming and fruit bearing of Aaron's rod undoubtedly resulted from the direct and super-natural action of God, but it was in itself a most suggestive sign. It taught both the people and the priests that their prevailing mediation was due, not to anything inherent in themselves, but to the direct action of Jehovah through them. As the rods of the other princes were unable to bud or blossom or bear fruit of themselves, so also was that of Aaron, apart from this Divine action. The proof of authority was this manifestation of Divine appointment in life. The principle still obtains. All our fruit is from God. Its absence proves that we have no authority. Its presence proves that we have, but also that the authority is finally His, and not our own. Fruit-bearing will ever give us a sense of authority and deep humility of spirit.

Numbers 18:1-32

Everything in Israel that is devoted to the Lord is yours. - Numbers 18:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

The old cliché says to "save the best for last." That might be our natural inclination as people, but when it comes to giving to God, the best should always come first. That was what God demanded of Israel. As the chosen servants of God, the Levites received that offering, the very best, as their own.

To hear the complaining from the rebellious Levites in yesterday's study, one might think that the Levites were mistreated and that Aaron had improperly assumed and abused his authority over them all. But today's passage paints an entirely different picture, one that leaves us scratching our heads about how the Levites could be unhappy.

First of all, the Levites enjoyed a distinguished role. They were God's gift to Aaron. There should have been no confusion on Aaron's authority over them; instead they ought to have appreciated the fact that God had claimed them for His service.

That service was part of their unique responsibility. No one else in Israel could come so close to the Lord's dwelling as the Levites. They were given the opportunity to care for and handle the holiest, most revered dwelling in the whole land. They were employed in the service of the Almighty.

God blessed them with material gifts as well. In exchange for their service to God, the Levites received the tithe offered by the entire

community, the best that Israel had to offer.

For any among the Levites to have been unhappy, they must have been deceived or deluded about their stance with God. The proper response to all that He had given them was to give Him a tenth of what they received—not just any part of it, but the very best of the best. Instead, they demanded more. People who are not satisfied with the best, can never really be satisfied.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you realize that, as a servant of Christ, you are a servant of the High Priest? Peter calls you part of a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). In Romans 15, Paul calls declaring the gospel a priestly duty. Are you aware of your role in the priesthood? Are you satisfied with the opportunity to offer spiritual sacrifices and to proclaim the gospel by which the unsaved can draw near to God? This is no small task and no greater privilege. Rejoice in it today.

Num. 18:7

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

I give you the priesthood as a service of gift.-Num. 18. 7.

This chapter moves in the same realm of thought, that of the Divine appointment of the priesthood. The reason for these repetitions and re-emphases is explicitly stated in the words: "That there be wrath no more upon the children of Israel" (verse 5). A reference to the closing verses of the previous chapter (12 and 13) will show how the recent events had produced a spirit of dejection almost amounting to despair in the minds of the people. Such a mental mood was wholly healthy, for it proved that the people had profited by the severe judgment that had fallen upon them. To this troubled condition of mind these words were now spoken, and through them there runs the repeated affirmation of the fact of the Divine appointment of the service of the priesthood. Among the rest these words, "I give you the priest-hood as a service of gift," emphasized again the fact that these priests, and these people had done nothing to merit the provision. It was wholly one of grace, a gift from God. Therefore it was not less, but more, important that they should recognize its sanctity. This is ever so. Love demands a loyalty more thorough than anything else. To hold in contempt any provision of the Divine Love, is a most heinous sin. Whatever service is ours as a result of the giving of grace, is the most holy and sacred service, and therefore to be rendered with the uttermost devotion.

Numbers 18:20-24; Deuteronomy 18:1-2

Today in the Word

I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. - Numbers 18:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

The life of George Mueller is a picture of complete dependence upon the Lord. Burdened by the plight of England's numerous orphans, Mueller opened a children's home in Bristol in 1836. So sure was Mueller of God's ability to provide all the material needs of the orphanage, he resolved to bring every need to the Lord in prayer. For the remaining 68 years of his life, the Bristol children's home, as well as others built later, were completely run by faith. Some of these homes continue to operate today. In many respects, the Levites were to have been a similar "object lesson," illustrating to the rest of the nation a life completely dependent upon the Lord. A little background is helpful here.

Early on, the Levites had been set apart for the priestly office (Ex. 32:26–29). The direct descendants of Aaron were priests, while the remaining descendants of Levi assisted them. Together the priests and Levites were entrusted with teaching the Law, maintaining the sanctuary, and offering sacrifices--in short, they were to foster and ensure proper worship.

When the promised land was allotted, a portion was given to each of the tribes of Israel (Nu. 26:52–56)--each tribe, that is, except the Levites (Nu 18:20; Deut. 18:1). Although the Levites were not to receive land, they were to receive the tithes (Nu 18:21, 24) and offerings (Deut. 18:1) from the people, and special cities (Num. 35:28).

Most importantly, however, the "inheritance" of the Levites was God Himself (Num. 18:20; Deut. 18:2). Thus the Lord used the Levites as a picture of several important spiritual realities.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God still uses tithes to provide for those set apart in a special way for His service. Although we're all in His service, some are called to ministries in which they are dependent upon the body of Christ for their support.

Numbers 18:8 Leviticus 7:22-38

All the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion and regular share. - Numbers 18:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

What did God value most in the Old Testament sacrificial system?

Samuel knew: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). David knew: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:17). Solomon knew: "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Prov. 21:3). Isaiah knew: "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me... Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed" (Isa. 1:13-17). Hosea knew: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6).

Offering sacrifices was not just some ritualistic observance. The Israelites understood that God was looking for worshipful hearts and righteous actions, including justice and mercy. That's important to keep in mind as we wrap up Leviticus' rules for sacrifice today.

Among these miscellaneous rules was a prohibition against eating fat or blood. We've already mentioned why not fat (see July 3), but why not blood? We'll discuss this in more detail on July 17, but for now notice that blood symbolized atonement and life. To eat blood would have dishonored life in general and spiritual life in particular.

These rules also highlighted that one purpose of the sacrifices was to feed the ministering priests. Their share—including what they could eat and when—was mentioned earlier, and is detailed here with regard to the fellowship offering. As in the New Testament, God's people show respect for Him by supporting those who serve Him in vocational ministry (1 Cor. 9:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God's worthiness to be worshiped was the center of the Old Testament sacrificial system, and we need this truth to hit home with us as well!

Numbers 18:20

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance. (r.v.)

We are God's portion, and He is ours. The Lord's portion is his people; Israel is the lot of his inheritance; and He says to the soul, I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance. We, with all we have, for God; and God, with all He has, for us. "Heirs of God." (see note Romans 8:17)

We are like settlers on the fringe of their estate.— The emigrant to the Far West has a plot of land allotted to him: but how little does he know of its contents! — There may be coal, or iron-ore, or rivers full of fish, or a rich soil; he settles on the outskirts, but every year he pushes his fences further back to take in more of the land, which is all his, but it is not yet brought into use, or under cultivation. So each year we should increase in the knowledge of what God is, and of what He is willing to be to us. Not as though we were already perfect; but we follow on to apprehend that for which we were apprehended, and to be filled full with his grace and heavenly benediction.

Our possession of God will largely depend on his possession of us.— There are some who wonder that God is so much more to others than to them. Is not the answer to be found in their withholding so much of what they might yield up to his occupation and use? If you would have all from God, you must give all to God. Your enjoyment of God will be in precise proportion to the deepening and widening consecration of your life.

Why should any of us be poor, or strengthless, or fearful, when all the Godhead is stored in Jesus, and awaits our appropriation? Go up and possess his infinite continent that flows with milk and honey; watered by the rain of heaven; and rich in treasure.

Numbers 18:20, Lam 3:24

Our Daily Walk

F B Meyer

THE PSALM OF INHERITANCE

"I am thy portion and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."—Nu 18:20 .

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."-- Lam 3:24 .

IT IS a wonderful thing when we can look upon God as being our portion, when we can lay our hand upon all His nature and say there is nothing in God which will not in some way contribute to my strength and joy. It makes one think of the early days of the settlement of emigrants in the Far West of Canada or Australia. The settler and his family would slowly travel forward, with their implements and seeds, till they reached the plot of ground allocated to them by the Government. At first the family would encamp on the edge of it, then they would prospect it, and go to and fro over its acres with a sense that it all belonged to them, though it needed to be brought under cultivation. In the first year, within the fence hastily constructed, the farmer and his sons would begin to cultivate some small portion of their newly-acquired territory. This would yield the first crops; next year they would press the fences farther out, until at the end of a term of years the whole would have been brought under cultivation.

So it is with the mighty Nature of God. when first we are converted and led to know Him for ourselves, we can claim to apprehend but a small portion of the length and depth and breadth and height of His Love; but as the years go slowly on, amid the circumstances of trouble and temptation and the loss of earthly things, we are led to make more and more of God, until the immensity of our inheritance, which can never be fully explored or utilized, breaks upon our understanding. No wonder that the Psalmist breaks forth into thanksgiving in Ps 16:6-7 , and Psalm 91.

The devout soul rejoices in God as his great Inheritance. When He is always present to our mind, when we are constantly making use of Him, when we find ourselves naturally turning to Him through the hours of the day, then such quiet peace and rest settle down upon us that we cannot be moved by any anxiety of the present or future. Death itself will make no difference, except that the body which has obscured our vision will be left behind, and the emancipated soul will be able more fully to expatiate in its inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading (1Pe 1:4-5).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O Lord, that all things are ours in Christ, working for us, co-operating with us, and bearing us onward to that glorious destiny for which Thou art preparing us. AMEN.

Num. 19:9

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

A water of separation.—Num. 19:9.

This is a very interesting chapter, because it gives us the account of a new and special provision made for these people during the time they would be moving about from place to place. When in the course of such movement the camp was not pitched, and therefore the ordinary methods of the ceremonial law could not be observed, provision was made for ceremonial cleansing. This water of impurity was water with which ashes, specially provided, were mixed. With solemn ceremony and most minute care-fulness, a red heifer was sacrificed. The whole of it was to be burned, and as it burned, cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet were mingled with it. The ashes from this burning were those appointed for mixture with water in order to prepare this special "water of impurity." Without attempting to deal with all the details of the suggestiveness of the sacrifice and the burning, we note this special provision. It emphasized the need for constant cleansing, but it also revealed the fact that there need be no postponement of such cleansing in times when the duly appointed place and method were not available. In the course of our reading it reminds us of the wonder of God's fulfilment in Christ of all thus typified. For us, there are, or should be definitely appointed times and places for confession and the claiming of cleansing; but we need not carry the burden and pollution when, for any reason, we are unable to avail ourselves of these. The infinite worth and merit of our Lord's redeeming work are available to us at all times, and in all places. Let us never fail to apprehend this truth, or to appropriate this grace.

Numbers 19:17

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

For the unclean, they shall take ashes. (r.v.)

It was very easy to become unclean without realizing it. To touch a corpse, to be in the same room as the dead, to stumble over a

grave, was enough to defile the Israelite, and excommunicate him from the Tabernacle with its holy rites. Could anything more graphically set forth the contagiousness of sin? We cannot be in contact with those who are dead in trespasses and sins, or breathe air defiled by their filthy speech, or read books which contain their thoughts, without suffering in some way by it.

This is the reason why, at the end of the day, we often feel unable to pray, or hold fellowship with God: we are excluded from the Most Holy Place, because of this defilement. Indeed, there is only one way of escaping it, and that is in being covered, hermetically sealed, by the Spirit of God. "In whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (see **note** Ephesians 4:30 - (Click word study on redemption - apolutrosis) (See also Spurgeon's sermons [Particular Redemption](#), see Spurgeon's other sermons [Plenteous Redemption](#), [Full Redemption](#); [Redemption Through Blood, the Gracious Forgiveness of Sins; Bought With a Price](#)) (Click similar thought by John Piper)

For this reason also, we should perpetually seek fresh cleansing in the precious blood of Christ. He is represented in this heifer without spot, slain in its prime, whose ashes were mingled in running water to testify their perpetual efficacy and freshness. If the ashes of an heifer availed for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences! Ask perpetually for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, that you may have access with confidence into the Most Holy Place. The red heifer of Numbers answers to John 13. Let us apply the ashes and the water of purification to each other. Jesus said: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Numbers 19:20 Leviticus 13:1-59

If an [unclean] person does not purify himself, he must be cut off from the community, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. - Numbers 19:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

If you think issues of uncleanness are limited to the ancient world, consider this cover story headline last year from an issue of U.S. News & World Report: "The Future of Water: Costly • Dirty • Scarce."

The article began with an account of dirty water in Atlanta, where in some neighborhoods it had been flowing brown from the tap. From time to time, "boil water" advisories had been issued to let residents know the water was not safe to drink. The situation may grow worse as 700,000 miles of aging pipes and mains throughout America decay and reach the end of their life spans. One federal official called clean water "the biggest environmental issue that we face in the 21st century."

Such health concerns help bring the world of Leviticus closer to home. For example, our readings for today and tomorrow deal with the problems of infectious skin diseases and mildew.

Some Bibles translate infectious skin disease as leprosy, or Hansen's disease, as it is called today. But the Hebrew word used here is a general term, and the symptoms don't seem to fit leprosy. The word for mildew is similarly a general term, and can also refer to mold or fungus. These two health or hygiene issues may be paired here because they were seen as parallel problems—one affecting living things, one affecting inanimate objects.

The Law prescribed several practical responses to these problems, including careful diagnosis, various forms of quarantine, and thorough washing. Why were the priests responsible for this? Perhaps because diseases and such, while not sin, were still consequences of the Fall and thus results of sin. Additionally, the priests were the community's guardians of purity, no matter what kind of purity was involved.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today, we are going to leave this application portion of the devotional open for the Holy Spirit to direct you. We recommend that you pray for a specific application for yourself based on the principle of purity, modernized for today, and personalized for you. To begin, you might review "Today Along the Way" for the past two days, both of which dealt with the question of purity.

Numbers 20:1-13

Are You Listening?

Our Daily Bread

He was frustrated. He was angry. He was tired of being blamed for everything that went wrong. Year after year, he had gotten them through one disaster after another. He was continually interceding on their behalf to keep them out of trouble. But all he got for his efforts was more grief. Finally, in exasperation, he said, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10).

That suggestion might sound preposterous, but it wasn't. Forty years earlier, the previous generation had the same complaint: no water. God told Moses to strike a rock with his staff (Ex. 17:6). When he obeyed, water gushed out—plenty of water. When the grumbling started again so many years later, Moses did the thing that worked before. But this time it was the wrong thing to do. What Moses told the Israelites to do—to listen—he himself had not done. God had told him to speak to the rock this time, not strike it.

Sometimes in exhaustion or exasperation, we don't pay close attention to God. We assume He will always work the same way. But He doesn't. Sometimes He tells us to act; sometimes He tells us to speak; sometimes He tells us to wait. That is why we must always be careful to listen before we take action.

Lord, help us to obey Your Word,

To heed Your still small voice;

And may we not be swayed by men,

But make Your will our choice. —D. De Haan

Listen—then obey.

Numbers 20:1-13

Danger: Explosives

"The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." Proverbs 19:11

A man from Michigan had an idea for removing a tree stump from the yard of a friend. He decided to use some dynamite he had stored away in his house. It did the trick. The explosion turned the stump into an airborne missile that traveled 163 feet downrange before crashing through a neighbor's roof. The stump opened a 3-foot hole in the roof, split the rafters, and pushed through the ceiling of the dining room.

If we are honest, we can see ourselves in the actions of the dynamite user. We have used explosive words and actions to try to solve problems, which only made things worse. We get action, but we leave much damage in our wake.

We are not the first to let anger make trouble for us. It happened to people in the Bible too. Moses, for instance, became extremely frustrated with his murmuring followers (**Numbers 20:10**). So, instead of speaking to the rock to get water, as the Lord had instructed him, he angrily struck it twice (**Numbers 20:11**). He did get water from the rock, but there was a problem—Moses had disobeyed God. Because of this, God told him he could not enter the Promised Land (**Numbers 20:12**).

Anger, like dynamite, is explosive. Unless it is handled with wisdom and self-control, it can do great damage. —M R De Haan II

Angry words take just one moment
And bring forth a flood of tears,
But the wounds they have created
Linger on for months and years. —Stairs

When a person's temper gets the best of him, it reveals the worst of him.

Numbers 20:1-13

You did not trust in me enough. - Numbers 20:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the heat of an election, negative campaign ads abound, accusing politicians of outlandish views and despicable acts. But gone are the days of the anonymous slander ad. The people who make the claims in an advertisement are required to identify themselves. In some ads, the candidates themselves make the statement, "I approve this message."

Aaron and Moses directed some harsh criticism toward Israel, and it might have seemed justified. But God didn't approve the message.

We're not even two thirds of the way through the book of Numbers, but this event probably took place near the end of forty years of wandering (cf. 33:36-38).

God indicted Moses for not trusting Him enough to honor Him as holy, and scholars debate exactly what this means. Here's what is clear: Moses struck the rock when God told him to merely speak to it. Moses also issued a rebuke that didn't come from God and that He didn't authorize.

Moses usually pleaded with God to have mercy on the murmuring Israelites, but in this case Moses issued his own wrath when God displayed no anger. His disobedience combined his own actions and opinions with an act of God's provision. So in the eyes of Israel, Moses' anger brought on God's miracle. It sent the false message that Moses had the right to proclaim his own judgment and the power to bring water from a stone. Moses' act portrayed him as a partner with God rather than a servant. But as intimate as God's relationship with Moses was, God was still holy—distinct from and completely superior to Moses.

The fact that God included Aaron in the punishment shows that he probably shared in Moses' loss of trust in the holiness of God. Both men acted as though God's plan of action was insufficient. So neither man would enter the Promised Land. The Lord preserved the image of His holiness by showing that no one, not even the most righteous leader Israel had known, could claim equal footing with Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We have a phrase today to describe people who pass their own judgment on others: holier than thou. To adopt such an attitude is a mistake. We should be offended by sin because it violates God's standard, not because it violates our standards. Before looking down on someone else's sin, first of all, examine yourself for the same problem. Second, humble yourself before God prior to confronting the other person. Never pretend to be on the same level with God.

Numbers 20:1-13

Today in the Word

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. - Luke 12:48

TODAY IN THE WORD

Among the many legends that surround the life of Abraham Lincoln is

the story of how Lincoln, as a young attorney, was defending a man accused of murder. Lincoln's defense was that the man had been provoked and that under enough strain any person could be driven to a desperate act. The prosecutor disdained Lincoln's suggestion, but the story holds that during the trial Lincoln so severely goaded his opponent that in a rage, the prosecutor grabbed the unloaded gun on exhibit and tried to shoot Lincoln.

True or not, the story illustrates a point. Part of our sinful humanity is our proneness to react angrily when provoked. This is sinful because we are still responsible for what we do, even when provoked. Still, most of us know what it's like to be pushed beyond our endurance.

Moses succumbed to the same pressure the day he struck a rock at Kadesh and provided water for the grumbling Israelites whom he had led for forty years.

It may not be obvious from the text, but this story takes place not at the beginning of Israel's forty-year trek in the desert, but near the end. The 'first month' was the first month of the fortieth year after the nation had refused to enter Canaan and was commanded by God to turn back into the desert.

This means the event we read about today and Moses' mention of it in Deut. 1:37 were not that far apart. On this occasion the nation again passed through Kadesh, which was normally a well-watered area. But it was dry now, and so a familiar scene began to unfold. The people complained, Moses went before the Lord, and the Lord provided an answer.

But in the process of dealing with God's people, Moses lost his temper. He called them rebels and furiously struck the rock twice, although God had told him to speak to the rock. The water came out anyway because God is gracious, but Moses lost the blessing he had anticipated for many years entrance into Canaan.

Why the harsh sentence? Today's verse helps to explain the Lord's response. Moses was the leader of the covenant community. He carried the Lord's authority, so when Moses angrily asked, 'Must we [Moses and Aaron] bring you water out of this rock?' (Num. 20:10), he dishonored God in the sight of His people.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Moses' failure at Kadesh reminds us that our ultimate confidence must be in God, not in people. We can praise God for every

spiritual leader He puts in our lives. But we cannot expect anyone else to carry us spiritually, even though our tendency sometimes is to cling too tightly to those who are around us. Are you depending on someone you admire for the spiritual strength that only God can give you? This is worth thinking about.

Numbers 20:1-13 Danger: Explosives

"The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." Proverbs 19:11

A man from Michigan had an idea for removing a tree stump from the yard of a friend. He decided to use some dynamite he had stored away in his house. It did the trick. The explosion turned the stump into an airborne missile that traveled 163 feet downrange before crashing through a neighbor's roof. The stump opened a 3-foot hole in the roof, split the rafters, and pushed through the ceiling of the dining room.

If we are honest, we can see ourselves in the actions of the dynamite user. We have used explosive words and actions to try to solve problems, which only made things worse. We get action, but we leave much damage in our wake.

We are not the first to let anger make trouble for us. It happened to people in the Bible too. Moses, for instance, became extremely frustrated with his murmuring followers (Numbers 20:10). So, instead of speaking to the rock to get water, as the Lord had instructed him, he angrily struck it twice (Numbers 20:11). He did get water from the rock, but there was a problem—Moses had disobeyed God. Because of this, God told him he could not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12).

Anger, like dynamite, is explosive. Unless it is handled with wisdom and self-control, it can do great damage. —M R De Haan II

Angry words take just one moment

And bring forth a flood of tears,

But the wounds they have created

Linger on for months and years. —Stairs

When a person's temper gets the best of him, it reveals the worst of him.

Numbers 20:2-13

Not many of you should presume to be teachers ... we who teach will be judged more strictly. - James 3:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon after the Watergate scandal produced a firestorm of criticism. Many Americans wanted to see the former President held responsible. Whether it's a culpable president or CEO, people want to see justice served.

The Bible sets up a strict standard for its leaders. Even as our key verse warns, we shouldn't be hasty in aspiring to leadership positions within the church, for in such roles, we will be held to more stringent standards of accountability.

Moses is one such example. His work was beset with a constant barrage of criticism and opposition. He had to lead an unruly people who chronically fell into despair and doubt. It didn't seem to matter what miracles God performed on their behalf. It never inspired sufficient faith for the next challenge. And when God threatened to utterly destroy them, Moses pleaded for their acquittal. He demonstrated a relentless commitment to these people.

In today's reading, however, all the anger and frustration built up over almost forty years of wandering in the desert caught up with Moses. The Israelites find themselves again without water, not a new scenario for them (cf. Exodus 17). God had already proven that He could provide for the needs of His people.

Moses and Aaron certainly didn't doubt God's provision. Once the grumbling started, they headed for the Tent of Meeting. They had the faith to believe that, as He had before, God had the answer yet again.

But Moses and Aaron committed an egregious error before God, one that likely seems minor to us. Rather than speaking to the rock to bring forth the water, Moses struck the rock with his staff. God charged Moses and Aaron with a failure to trust and honor Him. The punishment was radically severe: neither Moses nor Aaron would be permitted to enter the Promised Land.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Was God's punishment of Moses and Aaron unnecessarily harsh? Believing that God's ways are always true and just, we recognize that God saw this as an appropriate measure of discipline. We need to pray for our leaders who are held to this strict accountability

of which the Bible speaks. We must pray for their perseverance, their obedience, their courage, and their unwavering trust in God. Perhaps our prayers and encouragement are just what they need when their discouragement or anger could lead them into sin.

Numbers 20:8, 11

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Speak ye to the rock; ... and Moses smote the rock twice.

What a miracle of grace is here! Nothing could have been more explicit than the Divine command that Moses should, on this occasion, simply speak to the rock. We cannot fathom the deep reason; perhaps it was because the Spiritual Rock of our salvation could not be smitten by the soldier's spear twice. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Click Scripture chain & chart on **Christ, the Rock, the Stone** = would make a great Sunday School lesson!)

Moreover, we are taught to wait on God each time we perform duties which appear similar, for the ways in which they should be performed may vary widely. It is clear, whatever the reason, that Moses was to speak, not smite.

However, he grievously disobeyed; largely, probably, because he could not believe that mere speech would suffice for the miracle. He thought that he must do something to aid God, not realizing how slight a part man's is in the Divine esteem. No flesh may glory in his presence. God must be all in all. We must believe that a word is enough; and that God will do the rest.

But, in spite of his irritation, disobedience, and unbelief, the water gushed out. The sin of the servant did not annul the love and faithfulness of God. "If we believe not, He remaineth faithful." It is a sweet lesson. We are worthless and unprofitable servants; we fail to believe and obey. But God's grace flows over the bank, and inundates the wilderness with crystal streams. The Psalmist says the waters did not trickle, they gushed out. (see KJV of Psalm 78:20 - [Spurgeon's note](#); Psalm 105:41 - [Spurgeon's note](#)) Oh, miracle of Divine faithfulness! But Moses himself had to pay the penalty in later years. Disobedience in God's servants cannot be condoned. In proportion to the saintliness of their character is the rigor of their punishment.

Num. 20:12

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Because ye believed not in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.-Num. 20:12.

Perhaps there is no story in all the Old Testament more searching for all who are called to lead the people of God, than this of the failure of Moses. There is no honest heart which can fail to understand the action of Moses. What he did was most natural. Therein lay the wrong of it. If that sounds a hard thing to say, let the story be considered. The people murmured against Moses because they were without water; and that, in spite of all the evidences they had received of the Divine care and provision. Moses and Aaron went to Jehovah, and received instructions what to do. These instructions had in them no note of rebuke. Thus assured, Moses went before the people, and, as the Psalmist said, "spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps 106:33). By this manifestation of anger, which as we have said was so very natural, the servant of God misrepresented God to the people. His failure was due to the fact that for the moment his faith failed to reach the highest level of activity. He still believed in God, and in His power; but he did not believe in Him to sanctify Him in the eyes of His people. The lesson is indeed a very searching one. Right things may be done in so wrong a way as to produce evil results. There is a hymn in which in the first two lines we may miss the deep meaning, if we are not thoughtful Lord, speak to me that I may speak In living echoes of Thy tone. That is far more than a prayer that we may be able to deliver the Lord's message. It is rather that we may do so in His tone, with His temper. This is where Moses failed, and for this failure he was excluded from the Land.

Numbers 20:12,24 A Bitter Attitude

Our Daily Bread

Great emphasis is being placed on living longer and better. Advances in medical science are making it possible for more and more people. Yet in spite of this, none of us can avoid growing old. One day aging will overtake all of us, and our bodies will shut down.

What is preventable, however, is an attitude of bitterness and regret as we grow older. Look at the life of Moses. When he was 120 years old, he stood with the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. He could not go with them because he had disobeyed the Lord when in anger he struck the rock in the wilderness (Numbers 20:12,24).

How easily Moses could have slipped into a self-pitying and resentful frame of mind! Had he not borne the burden of a stubborn and stiff-necked people for 40 years? Had he not interceded for them time after time? Yet at the end of his life he praised the Lord and urged a new generation of Israelites to obey Him (Deuteronomy 32:1-4,45-47).

As we grow older, we can dwell on the failures and hardships of our past, or we can remember God's faithfulness, accept His discipline, and keep looking to the future in faith. It's the only way to avoid a bitter attitude.

Though wrinkles and weakness come with age

And life with its stress takes its toll,

Yet beauty and vigor can still be seen

When Jesus gives peace to our soul. —D. De Haan

We cannot avoid growing old; but we can avoid growing cold.

Numbers 20:14-21

Today in the Word

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. - Romans 12:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

It takes a lot of grace to restrain ourselves when provoked or threatened for no reason at all. The human desire for revenge is so strong that the ability to show restraint is one indication that God is at work in a person's life.

The people of God showed remarkable restraint when the king of Edom refused a request from 'brother Israel' to pass through his land. God had warned Moses that the Edomites would be afraid when Israel showed up (Deut. 2:4).

Perhaps the leader of Esau's descendants feared that the Israelites would deplete their water supply. That area was not known for an abundance of rainfall. Or maybe he figured that, given the history of Esau's animosity toward Jacob, the Israelites' request was merely an excuse for them to invade and conquer Edom.

For whatever reason, Israel's offer to stay on the main road through Edom and pay for anything the people ate or drank was refused in a pretty nasty way. Edom's defiance must have been hard to take after Moses had sent messengers to the king with a plea for permission based on Israel's former slavery in Egypt and decades of hardship in the desert.

But Edom's king was not moved by the Israelites' troubles. After he issued a warning along with a show of force, Israel backed off in obedience to God's command (Deut. 2:5).

It's true God had already warned Israel that any attack against Edom would be unsuccessful. But that does not negate the nation's obedience in turning away from Edom's provocation, even though Edom's denial of permission to pass through had made Israel's journey a little harder.

Besides, it wasn't as if the Israelites were about to die in the desert without Edom's help. The people had an infinitely greater Helper on their side, the Lord Almighty.

By yielding in the face of Edom's armed defiance, Moses and the people were demonstrating their reliance upon God. When God is our Provider and Protector, we don't have to respond to every provocation or annoyance that comes our way.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Paul says we need to forego revenge because vengeance is God's job, not ours (Rom. 12:19). However, that doesn't mean we may step aside and say, 'OK, God, let him have it!' Paul said we are to do good toward our enemies so that they may be brought to repentance by our acts of love (Rom. 12:20). Our calling is to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). Is there someone at work, at home, or in your church, who needs your kindness even if such kindness is undeserved? You may not be able to pull that off by yourself, but God can give you the grace to do it. Talk to Him about it, and then obey!

Numbers 21:4-9

Today in the Word

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. - John 3:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Blood transfusions save lives. The American Association of Blood Banks reports that about 40,000 units of blood are needed on any given day. Four million patients receive about 23 million units of blood annually.

Who receives these transfusions? Accident victims, people undergoing surgery, and patients receiving treatment for leukemia, cancer, and other diseases. For these people, a blood transfusion is often the difference between life and death!

In today's reading, the Israelites needed a spiritual "blood transfusion." Their sinful and rebellious attitude had shown itself in impatience concerning a detour, complaints about hardships, ingratitude for manna, and a lack of faith in God's leader, Moses. This faithlessness resulted in a deadly plague of snakes which were killing the people.

The Israelites repented and asked Moses to intercede for them. God's response required them to show their repentance by a simple act of faith. Moses made a bronze serpent, and lifted it up on a pole. To be healed, people had to look at the serpent. If they didn't believe God's words, they wouldn't look up and would therefore die. Only through faith could they be saved.

This episode from Exodus prefigures Christ's sacrifice (Jn. 3:14-15). Those who believed Moses and looked to the serpent were healed. Similarly, those who believe God and look to Christ receive eternal life. God offered His only Son as the sacrifice for sin (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:32).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Like a blood transfusion, or like the bronze serpent in today's reading, faith in Jesus Christ makes the difference between life and death... for eternity.

Numbers 21:4-9

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. - John 3:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Homeopathic medicine is the practice of curing likes with likes. The patient receives diluted doses of substances that, at full strength, cause the same symptoms the patient already has. Shakespeare stated the idea well in *Romeo and Juliet*: "In the infant rind of this small flower, poison hath residence and medicine power."

Homeopathic medicine is prevalent in many parts of the world, though it remains controversial among medical experts. In this instance, God prescribed a similar remedy for Israel, treating snake bites with a replica of a snake. Going a step further, God undid the effects of the plague through an image of the curse itself.

Today's story begins with the people grumbling ... again. It was the same old story: we're dying, we're starving, we don't like the miraculous food, and we're sorry we ever left Egypt. But this incident is unique; this time, the people repented.

In past events, Moses had asked God for mercy on behalf of the Israelites, but on this occasion, his prayers were prompted by a recognition of their sin that Israel hadn't shown before. They realized on their own why the snakes were sent, and they confessed their sin. In that way, this was a spiritual breakthrough for Israel!

If God had followed the formula we've seen so far, we might expect Him to demand a sacrifice of some kind, like a lamb without defect. But the Lord told Moses to put a bronze snake, a picture of judgment, on a pole for all to see. He directed the people's eyes, not to an image of purity, but to a symbol of wrath.

For healing to take place, the people had to close the loop of repentance. They sinned, confessed, and asked for mercy. The last step was to accept God's remedy by faith and follow His instructions.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We often picture Christ as the perfect sacrifice, and that He was. But He also took upon Himself the shame of sin and the full penalty of wrath. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus compared His upcoming crucifixion to lifting up of the serpent in the desert. Let's confess our sins, seek His mercy and turn our eyes to Him, who not only gave His life, but also received our punishment. Thank Him in word and in deed today.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 21:8; Numbers 21:17

Num. 21:9

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived .Num. 21.9.

And that, not because there was any healing virtue in the brazen serpent, but because the look was one of obedience to the Divine command. It was a simple provision, but it touched the deepest facts of life. These people had sinned in their rebellion against the government of God. They were suffering through the Divine action consequent upon their sin, for "Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people"; and that as punishment. The serpent on the pole was there by the command of God, and for their healing they were told to look at it. In doing so, they bowed to the Divine will, and thus made it possible for God to restore them and heal them. The principles revealed are of abiding application. Rebellion always issues in suffering and disaster. Repentance and return ever lead to healing itself. Thus we see how the sanctions of God's righteousness are preserved in the exercise of His mercy. It is so in regard to man's salvation by Christ. The benefit of His atoning work may only be appropriated by return to the government of God. This return consists in repentance and faith, whereby men turn to God from idols, and commit themselves to Him through the One Whom He has appointed. Thus in infinite grace He has made a way back to Himself, and so to healing for all men, which is of the simplest nature as to human action, but which is of the very essence of His righteous requirements.

Numbers 21:17

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Spring up, O well!

This was a sweet song. It must have been a stirring scene, when Israel, in its thousands, sang forth this command to the waters that were under the earth, to show themselves, with the musical accompaniment of the gushing rill.

Spring up, O well, in our hearts. — Too long has the soil been arid and bare. A great drought has smitten it, and devoured every green thing. The flowers wither, the fruit falls. But Jesus promised to open in believing hearts a well, the waters of which should spring up unto eternal life. Not a stagnant pool, but a spring. Not a failing Cherith, but a perennial Siloam. Let that promise be realized in us here, and now; and if we have permitted rubbish to accumulate, or the weeds to grow rank, may we have grace to put them away, that there may be a clear course for the living water to flow through us and refresh the lives of all with whom we come in contact.

Spring up, O well, in the Church of God. — This is a petition with which we may enter the place of worship where we meet God's people. Spring up, O well, today! With this petition, we may plead for distant mission stations, and for the entire Church. Jesus dug the well with the staff of his cross; but we wish that the Spirit, who is as a fountain of living water, fed from eternity and returning to its source, may spring up within it with greater volume and force.

Spring up, O well, in the world. — It is weary with sorrow and sin. Too far and long have the desert sands swept their devastations. Hasten the millennial day, when springs shall break out in the desert and wildernesses shall blossom as the rose!

Numbers 21:21-35

Today in the Word

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. - Proverbs 21:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

John Huss was a Czech reformer who died more than 100 years before Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Huss pastored in Prague and spoke out against church abuses while faithfully preaching God's Word. A council was called to deal with the issues at hand, and Huss attended with a letter promising his safety. But when Huss arrived he was arrested, tried, convicted as a heretic, and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.

In reality, though, John Huss was the victor and not the victim. His courageous stand for truth later inspired Luther to carry out many of the reforms for which Huss had given his life. Since God has the last word in the affairs of nations, the final verdict on a situation isn't always immediately obvious. When God moves His hand those who appear to be the winners can end up the losers.

Consider the Amorite king named Sihon. He had attacked and defeated Moab, stealing the land of these descendants of Lot. That act of aggression tells us all we need to know about Sihon, because God had established the borders of Moab and had warned

Israel not to antagonize the people.

The Amorites had even composed a poem celebrating Sihon's victory (vv. 27-29) an arrogant ode that Moses then turned against Sihon after Israel had defeated and destroyed his kingdom.

The defeat of Sihon and then of Og, king of Bashan, were important milestones in the history of Israel. Tomorrow we will study Moses' review of these battles in Deuteronomy chapters 2 and 3.

But today we make our final trip back into the Book of Numbers to read the historical account. Israel was making its way along the east side of the Jordan River in preparation for the invasion and conquest of Canaan. As the nation approached Amorite country, Israel made Sihon the same peaceful offer it had made to Edom and Moab.

But Sihon arrogantly refused passage to Israel. When he attacked God's people without reason, he was destroyed. Og had no better sense, doing the same thing and suffering the same fate. Sihon thought he was in control when he defeated Moab, and he figured it would be no problem to add Israel to his 'trophy room.' But God overruled this pagan ruler.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's lesson teaches us that while obeying God brings blessing, the blessing may not always be immediately apparent. Even though Israel was being attacked for seemingly no reason, God in His sovereignty gave Israel victory in battle.

That's why it is always too early to give up or to become discouraged in your Christian life. God can turn what seem like blisters into blessings. The writer of Hebrews says: 'You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised' (Heb. 10:36). Why not commit this important verse to memory today?

Numbers 22:1-41

But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth. - Numbers 22:38

TODAY IN THE WORD

The television sitcom Seinfeld amused audiences with offbeat characters, introduced catch phrases into popular culture, and offended countless groups with merciless irreverence. Opinions about the show were varied, but all seemed to agree that it was correctly dubbed, "a show about nothing." Characters didn't develop. Conflicts weren't resolved. Relationships never grew.

The story of Balaam is a fascinating, often comedic part of the book of Numbers. Over the course of these three chapters, very little change takes place—Balaam doesn't curse Israel, and Balak's heart never changes—but we learn a great deal about God and the covenant with His people.

Questions abound regarding Balaam. Was he a man of faith? He certainly believed in God, but he probably tried to commune with false gods as well. He was a prophet for profit but not a fraud, at least not in this scenario. God did speak to him.

Was his heart in the right place? Probably not, considering the angel of the Lord intended to destroy him (v. 34). When Balaam turned away the messengers the first time, he didn't tell them the whole story. He said only that God wouldn't let him go, failing to mention that cursing Israel was forbidden. A godly prophet surely wouldn't have asked a second time for permission to curse His people, but Balaam did.

Balaam showed a desire to complete the job he was hired to do, and God's anger burned against him, tempered by the grace that came through the eyes and mouth of a donkey. Strangely enough, Balaam seemed almost entirely unfazed to hear his donkey speak, responding to her as if she were just another traveling companion. He even spoke with surprising familiarity to the angel of the Lord without the abject fear typical for someone in his position. He was allowed to proceed, where God used this unwilling prophet to bless His people and testify about His power.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We can say this for Balaam—he expected to hear from God and wasn't surprised to see it happen. Are you listening for the voice of God, or have you dismissed the possibility that He would speak? The Lord who opened the mouth of a donkey can use any means to speak to you; don't refuse to listen. Without faith in God's unusual power, your life can become like a TV show where nothing happens.

Numbers 22:1-35

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. - 1 Corinthians 1:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

The popular 1960s television show, Mister Ed, featured a horse who could talk. But Mister Ed would only talk to his owner, often putting the long-suffering Wilbur in embarrassing situations. A talking animal in Scripture also embarrassed her owner. The story of Balaam and his donkey will begin several days of looking at comic characters in the Bible.

The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, and their numbers threatened the Moabites. Their king sent emissaries to Balaam to ask him to cast an evil spell on Israel. Balaam was a spiritual hired gun—willing to bless or curse for a fee. And Balak was offering quite a hefty payment! (v. 17).

Balaam had access to hear a word from God, but he was unwilling to obey what he had heard. His repeated attempts to “find out what else the Lord” would say—after God had clearly told him not to go with Balak’s men—angered God (vv. 19, 22). Balaam knew that his power was constrained by God, but he really wanted to find out a way to get the wealth offered by the Moabite king (see 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11).

Balaam wouldn’t listen to God, so the Lord put him in the position of listening to a donkey. First, his donkey charged off into a field, then she crushed him against a wall, and finally she just lay down in the middle of the path. Balaam, the powerful sorcerer, was being completely humiliated by this animal (v. 29)! And then, the donkey opened her mouth and spoke to Balaam; her words of truth challenged his actions and attitude. In case he had any doubt about who was actually in the right, he or his donkey, the angel of the Lord made it perfectly clear (v. 33).

Balaam thought he was wise; his donkey proved him a fool. He wanted great wealth; he received the wages of sin (see Josh. 13:22). He was willing to curse Israel; God turned his words into blessing (see Numbers 23-24).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Each of us has access to hear the word of the Lord today, through reading and studying Scripture. For us, like Balaam, the question is whether we will obey what we have heard. What distractions or temptations challenge your obedience? For Balaam it was a love of money; for us it might be a desire for an inappropriate relationship, a selfish use of our time, or reluctance to give up a habit. Rather than acting like spiritual fools, let’s resolve to obey the word the Lord has given.

Numbers 22:21-38

The righteous care for the needs of their animals. - Proverbs 12:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

So far this month we’ve studied the dangers of placing animals in too high a position. Eve listened to the talking serpent as an authority figure, even when its message directly conflicted with what God had told her. And we have seen the Israelites make the fatal mistake of worshiping animals. Today we’ll look at a biblical example on the opposite end of that pendulum’s arc: a man guilty of abusing an animal placed under his care—and ignoring its warnings.

Balaam is a peculiar character. He conversed with God as a prophet, yet he hired out his servants to pagan kings. He sought the counsel of the Lord before agreeing to dispense the curses proposed to him, but he also kept the conversation going with his potential business partners even after God made His objections unmistakably clear. (For this context in detail, include verses 1-20 in your reading today.)

Balaam accompanied the Moabite officials, but God had no intention of allowing him to curse Israel. In His anger, God placed His angel as a barricade to Balaam’s progress—yet only his donkey noticed the angelic presence at first. Balaam had no right to mistreat the animal. If he had stopped to consider his circumstances (namely that he was following his greedy impulses despite knowing that God didn’t approve of the task he had agreed to perform) he may have felt gratitude instead of frustrated rage toward the donkey that was sparing his life.

Instead this stubborn prophet beat his donkey twice more. Even when the donkey miraculously spoke to him, Balaam was still slow to recognize what was taking place. Rather than draw back astounded by what had happened, he continued in his anger and voiced his intent to kill the donkey. Not until a second retort from the animal did Balaam see the peril he was in. The angel reinforced what God had told Balaam earlier: he was to deliver the Lord’s message alone, one that would utterly defy the curse Balak had desired to hear (Num. 23:11). Balaam had viewed his donkey as a being incapable of interfering with his plans of greed. Actually, the beast had better sense than its master.

APPLY THE WORD - Cruelty toward animals generally comes from the mistaken belief that they are not significant parts of God’s plan. But God’s creation is valuable to Him. We’ll see example after example of how God uses animals to accomplish His works and communicate His message. And they are His handiwork! Some animal rights campaigns don’t come from biblical worldview. But the

call to treat animals with respect and care is biblical. Honor that in your actions, words, and attitudes

Numbers 22:10-34 Unstoppable

Our Daily Bread

Under it. Over it. Around it. Through it. Nothing will stop me from doing it." I often hear people express this kind of attitude when they get an idea or see an opportunity that seems good or profitable. They devote all of their resources to getting it done.

As evidence that this way of thinking may be flawed, I call as my witness a donkey—a donkey belonging to a man named Balaam.

Balaam was offered a profitable assignment from a neighboring king, and he inquired of God for permission to accept it (Num. 22). When God said no, the king's representatives made a better offer. Thinking God might change His mind, Balaam asked again. God granted permission for Balaam to go with them but with strict conditions. God knew Balaam's heart and was not pleased with him, so He placed His Angel in the way. Balaam couldn't see the Angel but his donkey could. When the donkey refused to continue, Balaam became angry with the animal for blocking his progress.

Balaam's story teaches us that not every obstacle is meant to be overcome. Some are placed by God to keep us from doing something foolish. When our plans are hindered, we shouldn't assume that it's Satan trying to stop us. It might be God trying to protect us.

Let Your wisdom guide me ever,

For I dare not trust my own;

Lead me, Lord, in tender mercy,

Leave me not to walk alone. —Reed

God is always protecting us— even when we don't realize we need it.

Num. 22:18

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.—Num. 22:18.

These words record a truth which Balaam knew. If he acted in accordance with them all would have been well with him. He tried to act in response to the base motive of greed. Hence his disaster. We have no knowledge of who he was, save that he was the son of Beor, and dwelt at Pethor—by the river. He appears first as a man of understanding, and one who realized his limitation by the Divine government, as these words reveal. The story is startling. He was first forbidden, and afterwards commanded to go. The only explanation that is satisfactory is that, while attempting to maintain an external obedience to this supreme will of God, his heart was lusting after the riches offered to him by Balak. That is revealed to us in the words of Peter: "Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrongdoing." In all this we see the working of a perpetual principle. Man is ever compelled to work out what is deepest within him, while all the time God, by that very compulsion, is making possible the change of that deepest thing, if it be evil. Circumstances are ever overruled by God, for the development to outward manifestation of the inward facts of life. This man loved the hire of wrongdoing, and therefore he was compelled to go forward, even though the sin of his action was revealed by the Divine interventions. He was attempting to compromise between loyalty to the Divine government and love of hire, greed, and the deepest motive was this very greed. Thus in the fullest sense, he could not go beyond the word of Jehovah. By that he was held and compelled.

Numbers 22:21-31 The Unseen World

The Angel of the Lord [was] standing in the way. —Numbers 22:23

Did you know that the microbes on just one of your hands outnumber all of the people on the earth? Or that millions of microbes could fit into the eye of a needle? These one-celled, living organisms are too small for us to see without a microscope, yet they live in the air, soil, water, and even in our bodies. We constantly interact with them, even though their world is completely beyond our senses.

The realities of the spiritual world are also often not visible to us humans, as the prophet Balaam discovered. He was trudging along the road with his two servants when his donkey "saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand" (Num. 22:23). To avoid the angel, the animal walked into a field, crushed Balaam's foot against a wall, and lay down with Balaam

still on her back. Balaam was angry and struck the donkey. He didn't realize something supernatural was going on—until God opened his eyes (v.31).

The Bible tells us that a spiritual world does exist, and we may sometimes encounter realities from that realm—both good and bad (Heb. 13:2; Eph. 6:12). Because of this, we are encouraged to be watchful, prayerful, and prepared. Just as God rules the world we see, He also rules the unseen world.

Heavenly Father, help us to be strong in You

and in the power of Your might. Open our

eyes so that we may see the spiritual

realities You have for us.

All that is seen and unseen is under God's sovereign power.

Numbers 22:22

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The **Angel of the LORD**: ... for an adversary against him.

The **Angel of Jehovah** is often referred to as a very present help, and as encamping round about those that fear God; but here, as an adversary with a drawn sword. When we serve God his sword is for us, as for Joshua at Jericho; but when we turn as here from his way to our crooked paths, it is drawn against us. That which seems to be full of menace is, when we look deeper, an angel force seeking to stay our further progress toward destruction.

Look for the Angel with his drawn sword in every pain of body, anxiety of circumstance, or suffering of mind. You were intent on pursuing your own way, and obtaining the rewards of unrighteousness, when suddenly you were stayed in your course. Another step would have brought you to the edge of the precipice; but you were suddenly arrested by that which forbade advance. Do not curse the hindering obstacle. Beneath it is God's gentlest angel, endeavoring to turn you from your evil purpose; and though his sword may be drawn against you, yet he is but keeping you from taking that step which might result in lifelong regret.

Too often our eyes are holden. We fret and chafe against God's kindest providence. Our anger is kindled at the ass which sees the angel, and thrusts herself against the wall. Let this day be one of humble searching of heart. Try to learn the reason why God has frustrated your plans, and blocked your progress. Ask for the opened eyes. Be sure that there is mercy in every broken plan. He sees the end from the beginning. Bow your head, and acquiesce in his appointments. Fall on your face, and bless Him whose kindest angels sometimes assume the roughest disguise.

Numbers 23:1-26

No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. - Numbers 23:21

TODAY IN THE WORD

The U.S. Constitution mandates that the President of the United States deliver a State of the Union update to Congress. These speeches are now given annually, and presidents typically take the opportunity to paint a bright picture of the country's present circumstances under their leadership.

Critics complain that such speeches are overly optimistic and unrealistic. But when God delivered a "state of Israel address" through Balaam's oracle, He projected a picture much brighter than the grumbling, wandering complaints of Israel might lead us to imagine.

The oracles provide a story within a story. As for Balaam, the process he used to bring about a message from God was a pagan one. He likely retreated to one of the "high places" of Moab, showing us that his faith was by no means placed solely in the God of Israel. But again, the significant story of the passage really isn't between Balak and Balaam. The highlight is what God had to say about His people and His character.

When God looked at Israel, He described a people that resembled His plan for them. They were separate from all other nations. Their numbers were impossible to fathom. Their strength was incomparable, and no suffering awaited them. God made it clear to Balak that standing up to Israel was futile, and there was no hope of leveling a curse against a nation protected by a faithful and unwavering God.

The profound blessing was the exact opposite of what Balak had hoped to hear. He definitely wasn't getting his money's worth and even tried to close Balaam's mouth to prevent the flow of blessings (v. 25). But not even a corrupt prophet could block the message God gave him to deliver.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Even when Israel seemed desperate or disappointing, God was always in complete control. He doesn't get overwhelmed by anything, even disobedience. Remember that as your faithfulness waivers or your situation worsens, God's sovereignty remains. When you feel like a failure or threatened by anything at all, know that God's grace is sufficient and His faithfulness is steadfast. Your circumstances will change, but your God will not.

Num. 23:11

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.-Num. 23.11.

This was Balak's word about the prophesying of Balaam; and how true it was is evident as his four messages are considered. They constitute a remarkable unfolding of truth concerning the people of God. The first consisted of a vision of the nation as separated from all others, and its central words are: "Lo, it is a people that dwell alone." It ended with a sigh which shows how profound was this man's conviction of the high privilege of Israel: "Let me die the death of the righteous: And let my last end be like his!" The second prophecy celebrated the fact that the people, being God-governed and God-guided must be victorious. Its central statement is: "Jehovah his God is with him; And the shout of a king is among them." It was after the first of these that Balak used these particular words. After the second he asked that nothing more should be said : but now Balaam insisted that he must utter all Jehovah had to say. The story is a remarkable revelation of how completely a man is in the grasp of God. While Balaam was being compelled to carry out his deepest desires, he was absolutely prevented from uttering a word, which could in any wise harm the people of God. How unutterably futile is that pride of will, which makes men imagine that they can escape the will of God! They may change their experience of the power of God, but they cannot escape from it.

Numbers 23:19 2 Corinthians 1:12-22

God is not a man, that he should lie. - Numbers 23:19

TODAY IN THE WORD

According to a 1991 poll, 32 percent of Americans believe that their pastor has lied to them. Moral weakness among religious leaders has become fairly widespread. In fact, there's a perception among many that clergy are untrustworthy and after people's money. According to Paul's opponents, such a perception perfectly described him. His frequent change in travel plans showed that he was fickle. Even worse, philosophers and religious leaders were supposed to show the way to the good, virtuous life—Paul's sufferings and his apparent change of mind were major strikes against his credibility in Corinth.

This may explain why Paul began speaking, somewhat abruptly, about boasting. This would have hit home in Corinth, where people boasted in their status, wealth, and power. Yet notice how Paul redefined boasting. First, he boasted about his holiness and sincerity. Second, God's grace, not worldly wisdom, was the basis of his boast. Such transparency was unheard of, yet it showed Paul's conviction that he had nothing to hide. Paul was confident that when the Corinthians understood his motives, they too would boast, or have confidence, in him as well.

Paul then began to defend his changed plans. He had originally planned to visit Corinth twice, once on his way to Macedonia, and then again on his return. In this way, the Corinthian church might benefit, or be blessed, two times.

These plans were made with all integrity before the Lord. In fact, Paul's plans were consistent with the Lord's own faithfulness (v. 18). Everything that God promised in the Old Testament is fulfilled, or is "yes," in Christ. This same God was preached among the Corinthians and made them stand firm. This God anointed and sealed them (as a sign of ownership). He also gave them the Spirit, as a deposit guaranteeing what's to come. This focus on God's promises reminded the Corinthians that God could be trusted completely and implied that Paul's changed plans were in line with God's faithfulness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Paul's confidence was rooted in his integrity. His conscience was clear when it came to his conduct among the Corinthians. This is a powerful statement. Little compromises chip away at our confidence. Although we may be misunderstood or falsely accused as Paul was, we still need to do all that we can to ensure that our consciences are clear. As you prepare for another week in the office, at

school, or in the home, pray that you conduct yourself in such a way that your conscience remains clear.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 23:9

Numbers 23:20

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

Balaam would have reversed the blessing into a curse, had he been able. Large rewards were depending on his doing so. But he was restrained. The current of blessing was running too strong for him to stem: the music was too overpowering for him to alter the air. Is not this also the despair of Satan? God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and he cannot reverse them.

The blessing of adoption. — (see **notes** Romans 8:15, Romans 8:23) When the soul believes in Jesus, it is adopted into the family of God; the new life begins to throb within; it is constituted an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ (John 1:12). This position is irreversible. We may be tempted and overthrown, we may go for a season into the far country, we may even bring the family-name into contempt; but Satan cannot untie the knot with which God has bound us to Himself.

The blessing of acceptance in the Beloved. — We are in Him, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (see **note** Ephesians 1:4), risen and ascended and seated in Him in the heavenlies (see **note** Ephesians 2:6); and as our God views us in Jesus, He cannot behold iniquity or see perverseness in Him, and He accepts and blesses us as his well-beloved. This, too, is irreversible by the arts and machinations of the great Accuser (see **note** [Revelation 12:10](#)).

The blessing of the covenant. — (see New Covenant in the Old Testament) (Why the New is Better) (Abrahamic vs Old vs New) God has taken us as to be a people for his own possession. His name is named on us, his character is implicated in our ultimate deliverance from evil, and glorification. If we could be cast away, He would suffer irreparable dishonor. Therefore, though Satan do his utmost to discredit us, as he did the patriarch Job, he cannot reverse the covenant in which God and we are for ever and indissolubly joined.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 23:23

Numbers 23:23; Proverbs 3:5-10

Today in the Word

See what God has done! - Numbers 23:23b

TODAY IN THE WORD

Most of us are not amazed to see someone walking along talking on a cell phone. If we're visiting someone and need to make a phone call, we naturally assume that our host will have a phone.

Today we take phones, faxes, and e-mails for granted. It's hard to think of a time when these things didn't exist. Some people might even have forgotten the name of the individual who launched the age of telecommunications by inventing the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse. Even more people may not realize that the first message communicated electronically was a verse from Scripture!

After a series of set-backs, both personally and professionally, Morse stumbled upon the idea of using electromagnetism to transmit human communication. At first many people laughed. At last he was able to secure some money from Congress to build a telegraph line between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. And the first message that Morse sent, in Morse Code, was the following: "What hath God wrought!" (Num. 23:23).

Morse chose this verse because he wanted all the glory for his new invention to go to God. Throughout his life, Morse seemed to have been directed by the truths contained in Proverbs 3. Centuries before Morse was born, King Solomon urged, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (v. 5). If one would acknowledge the Lord in everything, God would provide direction in life. The truth of this was well-illustrated by the content of Samuel Morse's first telegraph!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The book 101 Bible Verses That Changed the World (see Sept. 9) contains this from Morse's journal about using Numbers 23:23 for the first telegraphic message: "No words could have been selected more expressive of the disposition of my own mind at that time

than these: to ascribe all the honor to whom it truly belongs.”

Numbers 23:23b; Proverbs 3:5-10

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TODAY ALONG THE WAY -The book 101 Bible Verses That Changed the World (see Sept. 9) contains this from Morse's journal about using Numbers 23:23 for the first telegraphic message: "No words could have been selected more expressive of the disposition of my own mind at that time than these: to ascribe all the honor to whom it truly belongs."

Numbers 24:2

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Spirit of God came upon him.

This is a solemn warning for us all. Balaam said truly, but he perished miserably. He heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty; but because he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and taught Balak to cast the stumbling-block of licentiousness before the children of Israel, he was slain in battle by the people whom he had blamed. He wished to die the death of the righteous, but was overtaken in that of the apostate. How near we may come to the gates of salvation, and yet perish miserably without!

Distinguish between unction and union — Hooper, the greatest of English divines, says: "We are not to confuse the grace of union with the grace of unction." It is possible to be united to the Lord Jesus in regeneration, without receiving the endowment of the Holy Spirit for service; and it is possible, like Saul, to be anointed for high office, without being truly regenerate. Official position may be worthily filled, and yet the heart be all awry.

Distinguish between gift and grace. — We may be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have the gift of prayer, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and yet be without love. The most gifted souls are by no means the most gracious. Desire earnestly the greater gifts, if you will; but be very sure that your heart is established with grace.

Distinguish between vision and realization. — To see the fair land from afar, as Balaam did, is not enough; we must place our foot down on its soil, and go into it to possess. It is not enough to have an intellectual appreciation of the blessed life and the way to enter it; not enough to extol or proclaim it. We must make it ours by humility and faith.

Num. 24:2

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

And the Spirit of God came upon him.-Num. 24.2.

In this chapter we have the third and fourth of Balaam's prophecies. After the first and second, he was taken to yet another place of vision, and from the top of Peor looked out over the wilderness. Knowing that it was the purpose of God to bless Israel, he used no

enchancements this time. But he did not seek the word of Jehovah as on the two previous occasions. It would appear as though there was an attempt on his part to speak from himself, and this perchance in the interest of the greed that was in his heart. He could not thus escape. When he did not seek God, the Spirit of God came upon him, and again he spoke only the things which God would have him speak. This third prophecy consisted of a vision of a people victorious and prosperous, a glorious forecast of ultimate conditions. The central words were: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, Thy tabernacles, O Israel." This message aroused Balak's anger, and he bade Balaam be gone. But if he would, he could not. There was yet another word of God to be proclaimed. Its keynote was: "There shall come forth a Star out of Jacob," and it foretold the ultimate victory of God and therefore of His people. While the story of Balaam is full of solemn warning, the account of God's dealings with him and Balak is full of encouragement. The fact that those who desired to curse were compelled to utter only words of blessing, is significant; but even more wonderful were the messages thus delivered, as showing the Divine purpose for His people.

Numbers 24:15-19

Today in the Word

A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. - Numbers 24:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Archaeologists working in the Euphrates Valley made a remarkable discovery in 1933. They unearthed a large ancient city called Mari. Over the next few decades thousands of newly discovered clay tablets helped shed light on cultures as far back as the times of the biblical patriarchs. Mari was home to a large cult of pagan prophets and seers who sold their services. These prophets allegedly had the power to pronounce curses on their victims.

This fact from the ancient world helps to explain the actions of the pagan prophet Balaam, and why God used this evil prophet to utter one of the Old Testament's great Messianic prophecies. It's a fascinating story of God's power to overcome any opposition to the fulfillment of His Word.

Balaam, the prophet "for hire," was from Pethor (Num. 22:5), which was probably near Mari. He was hired by Balak, the fearful king of Moab, to curse Israel after Moab watched Israel defeat enemy after enemy (Num. 22:1-6). Balaam took Balak's money and ran to a nearby hill to curse Israel, despite God's warning.

The prophecy in today's reading was the fourth in a series of oracles Balaam spoke, each prophesying blessing instead of cursing for Israel. Balaam began by confessing that knowledge comes only from the true God, a confession that ultimately did Balaam little good. He later fell under God's judgment (Num. 31:8).

But here Balaam spoke what God wanted him to say, and prophesied the coming of someone in Israel who would hold the scepter of kingship.

This "ruler" would also execute God's judgment on Moab and Edom. These nations were the descendants of Esau and thus related to Israel, but they had made themselves the enemies of God's people.

We believe Jesus the Messiah is the only figure who can fulfill the prophecy of Balaam. The Messiah is clearly seen in the Old Testament as a ruler who wields His scepter with total authority. Prophets also revealed that He came to suffer as well as to reign.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Balaam is another reminder of the fact that God can use any person, or any circumstance, to accomplish His purposes. It's usually easy for us to believe this truth when we read about it in Scripture. But accepting it is usually much harder when we confront a difficult person or an especially frustrating situation. Who or what would be at the top of your "trial list" today? Turn your concerns or fears about it into a prayer, asking God for the patience to be faithful while He works out His purpose through your trial.

Num. 25:2

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

I give unto him My covenant of peace—Num 25:2.

In the letter to the church at Pergamum we learn that "Balaam ... taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2. 14). This chapter opens with the declaration that: "The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab; for they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." This, then, was the work of Balaam. When he could not utter a curse against Israel, he taught

Balak how to seduce them from their loyalty. The action appeared to be one of

pure neighbourliness, but it was a corrupting of the covenant. The story of Phinehas is that of one man, loyal to God, and jealous for his honour, daring to violate these false conventionalities, and visiting with swift and terrible punishment one daring wrongdoer. That action stayed the plague, and saved Israel. Action like that of Phinehas is not easy. It brings the man who dare take it into the place of grave peril, especially when it is directed against some popular movement. Yet to that man is given God's covenant of peace. That is the only peace which is worth while for man or nation. The price of it may be stern conflict, and a hazarding of all ease and quietness: but it is peace indeed, for it is right relationship with the principles of righteousness, and so with God.

Numbers 25:3

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor.

The margin of the Revised Version gives the alternative, yoked. The people were attracted by the charms of the women of Moab; but what they entered for pleasure, became clasped on them as a yoke. "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (John 8:34, r.v.).

Sin is slavery. — The drunkard loathes his chains, vows not to yield again; but sinks deeper into the mire with every ineffectual struggle. The libertine is bound with passions, his heart is a dungeon, his conscience a scourge. We are promised pleasure and gratification; but when once the syrens have prevailed and got us in their power, they cast off their disguise, and work their horrid will.

The only deliverance is through the anointed priest. — Phinehas interposed, and he was Aaron's grandson, on whom the anointing oil rested. And this illustrates a remarkable expression in Isaiah 10:27, "The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." Is not that the anointing of the Holy Ghost? It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be made free with the freedom of the Son of God. Where He is there is liberty. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

We must die to the sin that enchained us. — There could be no half-measures. Phinehas took a spear. Whatever the cursed thing is which has crept in to enslave, it must be slain before the Lord. Is there some secret evil in your soul, eating out its strength? Ask the Faithful High Priest to deal with it, that your soul may cast off its bondage, and rise into the liberty of the sons of God.

Numbers 26:51-27:23

Not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. - Numbers 26:65

TODAY IN THE WORD

The name of the book is Numbers. The numbers themselves are staggering. Two censuses form bookends for Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Both times the nation tallied only those eligible to serve in the army. And both times, over 600,000 men over the age of twenty were counted. The sobering fact is that every single man from the first census died before the second was conducted (with the exception of the venerable Joshua and Caleb). Forty years, and over a half million deaths. Israel's original army was decimated by their own lack of faith.

The message God sent was clear: you will enter the Promised Land by faith, or you won't enter at all.

Even the leadership changed. Moses' disobedience in the Desert of Zin disqualified him from leading the charge into Canaan. Conversely, Joshua's faithfulness made him the perfect man for the job. But even the nature of the leadership changed, for Joshua would not enjoy the same type of intimate interaction with God that Moses did. He would instead rely on the priest as a go-between for God's direction.

And the priest himself employed a unique device for divining God's will. The Urim and Thummim mentioned in Exodus 28:30 were apparently used like lots for receiving God's answer on difficult rulings. It's worth noting that God offered Israel and its leaders their closest communion with God and the clearest manifestations of His presence during a time of such great discomfort and tragedy. He gave them assurance and guidance when they needed it most.

The daughters of Zelophehad make up an interesting snapshot of God's steadfast grace. Their father died, and they were without a close male relative. This essentially stripped them of social significance in the culture of that day. But God's inheritance was still promised to them. Numbers recounts a time of enormous loss, but also occasions of great provision from God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY -Faith is a must for everyone from every era. The consequence of disbelief is severe, and the entire world is subject to God's judgment. May our hearts be burdened by the sheer volume of people who don't trust in Christ's gift of eternal life. To ignore that need is to be selfish in our salvation. Spend time today in prayer and reflection about the spiritual need of the world, from family members to foreign lands.

Numbers 26:52-56; Deuteronomy 19:14

Today in the Word

Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong. - Proverbs 23:10–11

TODAY IN THE WORD

Most little children have a highly developed understanding of fairness, particularly with regard to allotted portions of dessert! The concept that each individual is entitled to an equal share of the cake rarely needs to be explained or reviewed. Deep down, there is the awareness that life is governed by certain inalienable rules. When these rules are properly adhered to (meaning that everyone gets the same sized piece of cake) dessert time goes pretty well; real (or perceived) disregard to these rules results in discord.

Equitable distribution is also important to God, as today's passage shows. Numbers 26 records the second census taken prior to entering the land. The first census was a military one taken in preparation for the land's conquest. Between that census and the one recorded here, however, was a sad series of disobedient actions that eventually wiped out the original generation that had been led out of Egypt (Num. 26:63–65).

The census recorded in today's passage was taken in preparation of the division of the promised land. Like the first census, this one occurred prior to the actual occupation of the land. An entire disobedient, unbelieving generation had to be rooted out, but God was faithful to His promise to give the land to Abraham's descendants.

The allotment of the promised land was based on the needs of each tribe--larger tribes received more land, smaller ones received less land (v. 54). The actual allotment was carried out by lot. This process may have involved specially marked stones that were thrown, much like dice (Num. 33:54). The use of lots was an ancient means of entrusting the final outcome of decisions or distribution of land into God's hands. Although the land was divided according to tribes' needs, its ultimate distribution was under God's control.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Moving boundary markers directly defied God's wisdom in distribution. Although we probably haven't moved any ancient stones lately, we may have defied God's wisdom by coveting what God has given to others, such as natural talents and abilities, spiritual gifts, a loving spouse, or a good family

Numbers 26:65

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

There was not left a man of them.

Twice Moses numbered the people: on the first occasion Aaron was his colleague, at the beginning of the forty years; on the second occasion Eleazar, and this was at the end of the wanderings, on the threshold of Canaan. But only two had survived, Joshua and Caleb, because only they followed the Lord. God deals with a nation by dealing with individuals. He misses no one.

His love misses none. — The little sick child put her hand outside the coverlet before falling asleep, in the hope that the Good Shepherd would notice it, and not miss her, as He passed down the hospital ward. But there is no need to fear his missing us, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, bringing the light with which they see. He tasted death for every man; He seeks each missing sheep, each lost coin. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

His Spirit misses none. — If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will attract his notice. If thou yieldest thyself to his Spirit, though thy lung be weak and diseased, He will fill it. If thou desirest to be endued with the gift of Pentecost, it will fall upon thy head, though thou art as obscure as the shepherd-psalmist of old.

Death and judgment miss none. — On each of these unbelieving men the Divine sentence was executed. One or two might linger, as autumn leaves on the topmost boughs of stripped trees; but ultimately they shared the fate of their companions. Unless Christ come first, our turn will come. In Adam all die. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each was born alone, must die alone, and alone give an account to the King. Prepare, my soul, to meet Him!

Num. 26:65

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

There was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.-Num. 26.65.

With this chapter we begin what is really the third and last section of this Book of Numbers. In it we have the account of the second numbering of the people, and their preparation for coming into possession of the land from which they had been excluded for forty years. In the census many of the names occurring in the first are omitted, and others have taken their place. Two men only of those who had come to the margin of the land were now to pass over into its possession. These were Caleb and Joshua, the men who constituted the minority, the men who had seen much more than enemies and walled cities, because their vision of God had been unclouded. Loyal in heart to their God and their faith they had shared the discipline of the nation, and had seen the whole generation of unbelieving men pass away. They had been preserved, an elect remnant, and a living link with the great deliverance wrought by the Exodus. Thus we see God's continuity of purpose, notwithstanding the change of persons. It is always so. I may fail to enter in because of unbelief and disobedience, but the day of entry will come. Happy are those who being of another spirit, walk with God, not only through the processes, but into the accomplishment, of His purposes. The secret of such life is always the same, that of a clear vision of God. To lose that, is to see all other things in a false light, and to be either lured by the deceitfulness of sin, or filled with unworthy fears. To see God, is to see everything in the true light, and so to be able to walk without stumbling.

Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13

Today in the Word

With righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. - Isaiah 11:4

TODAY IN THE WORD

James B. Duke, who made a fortune in tobacco, textiles, and hydroelectric power, was committed to philanthropic causes. When he died in 1925, his estate, valued in the hundreds of millions, went to his only child, Doris, who carried on the family tradition of charity by giving away over \$400 million.

Apart from the staggering sums of money, the fact that James Duke left his money to his daughter should not be surprising--after all it's generally assumed that an inheritance will pass to an individual's offspring, even if that offspring is female.

In ancient Israel, however, inheritances normally passed to sons, who provided for their sisters until they married. Today's passage records a surprising new development. A certain man, Zelophehad, died with no sons, but five daughters. Fearful that their family's share in the promised land would be jeopardized by the absence of male heirs, these five daughters brought their case before Moses (Num. 27:1-3).

It's clear that Moses took the daughters' appeal seriously, for he brought it before the Lord, who then "ruled" that the daughters had a right to inherit. Additionally, a new order of succession for inheritance was established (Num. 27:8-11). This "case law" was important, because in ancient Israel the family name was integrally linked to its property. If the inheritance were to pass out of the family, the family name was threatened (v. 4).

Numbers 36 emphasizes how important it was to keep the land within the tribe to whom it had been given. To prevent the land from passing out of the family through marriage, a new stipulation was added to Numbers 27--inheriting daughters were to marry within their own tribe (36:6).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's passage shows that God protects justice, especially in cases where individuals might be overlooked.

Numbers 27:1-11

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure ... is this: to look after orphans and widows. - James 1:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

In Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet has five daughters, and thus, "Mr. Bennet's property ... unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male on a distant relation." The nineteenth-century English custom of entailment, whereby the inheritance passed to the owners' male heirs, forced the Bennet daughters to marry or else lose the estate and become

destitute upon their father's death.

In our passage today, the five daughters of Zelophehad face comparable customs related to land inheritance, with even greater consequences. Upon the death of their father, Zelophehad, the five sisters boldly approached Moses and other leaders to ask for the property that rightly belonged to their father's clan (vv. 2-4). Moses brought their case before the Lord, who said the women are "right." He proceeded to establish the legal requirement for handling such cases in the future (vv. 6-11). At first glance, this may seem to be a stale account of how property rights for women were established among the Israelites in the ancient Near East, but let's look closer.

Land is among God's promises to Abraham (see Gen. 12:1; 13:14-17; 15:7). It's an inheritance of God's children, an expression of their covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Thus, there are theological implications for the daughters of Zelophehad and anyone who might disinherit their land. For their "father's name to disappear from his clan" (v. 4) is to be cut off from the Lord's covenant community. This explains why the five sisters are "right" in their request.

The case of the daughters of Zelophehad sets the precedent for future Hebrew families without male heirs. The Lord's response reminds readers that He is always making a way for women to have full rights to His covenant community and His blessings. God the Father watches over the socially vulnerable and cares for them as His children.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Jesus does what His Father is doing (John 5:19). He cares for the defenseless, women, children, and the poor. When Jesus invites us to follow Him, He calls us to join His mission: "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (14:12). Who are the vulnerable in your area and in the world? Ask the Spirit to guide and embolden you to join Jesus in His world-redeeming mission.

Numbers 27:12-23 Deuteronomy 31:1-8

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. - Deuteronomy 31:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

In many countries, the transfer of power is neither regular nor peaceful. Military coups, civil wars, or dictators who refuse to leave office contribute to unstable or violent conditions. We should not take for granted the peaceful transfer in the United States; every four years in January, the occupant of the White House greets the newly elected President and then graciously leaves.

As the time approached for Moses' death, the transfer of power was peaceful. Joshua was commissioned as Moses' successor by the command of God. He had been referred to often in Scripture as Moses' assistant. He had been at Moses' side at the most crucial times of the Exodus. He had privileges that no one other than Moses had, specifically those that allowed him access to the presence of God. He had met with God at the Tent of Meeting. He ascended with Moses to the top of Mount Sinai. Moses had the confidence to lead the Israelites based on the assurance that God was with him, and this guarantee was now given to Joshua. Joshua had also proven his capacity for leadership. He successfully led the military effort against the Amalekites. He had also shown courage when the twelve spies returned from their exploratory mission to the Promised Land. He and Caleb were the only ones with the faith to believe that God's power trumped the giants in the land. He had seen God act miraculously to bring them out of Egypt, and he believed that God had the power to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land.

These were qualifications that Joshua needed to lead the people. Deuteronomy 31 reiterates that God, not Moses and not Joshua, was ultimately the leader of the Israelites. He was the one going before them, the one who ensured their victory.

But Moses recognized that the people were a hapless bunch of lost sheep, and they needed a shepherd. So God invested His authority in Joshua, just as He had in Moses.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If we are in positions of leadership, one of our most important jobs is to train the next generation of leaders. We need to be investing ourselves intentionally in those promising leaders of tomorrow. Like Moses, we can do this by extending an invitation to come alongside us in the work of ministry that we do. We can also delegate certain responsibilities to others now, while we can yet oversee and guide them. Finally, we can commission them publicly for leadership, conveying our confidence in their call and capacities.

Numbers 27:12-23 Change Of Leaders

Our Daily Bread

Presidential election. Inauguration. Royal succession. Assassination. What do these events have in common? They all lead to a transition of leadership. Some are more desired methods than others, for sure, but they all result in a change at the top.

As the United States discovered in late 2000, the transition isn't always as smooth as desired. But after numerous ballot recounts, new leadership was installed and life went on.

For 40 years, the Israelites had looked to Moses for direction. He had led them from Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land, but God told him that he wouldn't be the one taking them into it (Numbers 27:12-14). But who would? How would the transfer work? What kind of person could lead the masses?

Moses was concerned. He prayed, "Let the Lord ... set a man over the congregation" (v.16). He didn't want the people to be "like sheep which have no shepherd" (v.17), and he wanted his successor to be God's choice.

God answered that prayer by appointing Joshua to succeed Moses (v.18). He knew just what the people needed, so He gave them wise, experienced, and dependable Joshua.

Are you facing a transition of leadership? If so, ask God for direction and then trust Him for His choice. —J D Branon

God's choice of a leader is always the best,

For He knows just what people need;

So when a transition is soon to take place,

Trust God and He'll show who should lead. —Fitzhugh

Looking for a leader? Look to the Lord.

Num. 27:13

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

When thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people.—Num. 27 13.

There is something inexpressibly solemn in the story of Moses. In the plan of God the time was come when it was necessary that the people should go in and possess the land from which they had been excluded so long. Moses was not permitted to enter with them. In a sad hour he had failed to represent God truthfully to the people (Num 20); and this was the punishment of that failure. There was no relaxing of this discipline even in the case of this man. Nevertheless there was great tenderness in God's dealings with him in these closing scenes, and the evidence of his greatness is marked by his perfect acquiescence in the will of God. When this command to ascend the mountain, and look upon the land he could not enter, was given to him, his one anxiety was for the flock of God, that it might have a shepherd. He knew, as no other man knew, their weakness, and the necessity for one to lead them according to the will of God. The request was granted, and to him was given the joy and satisfaction of knowing that the appointed man was one of God's own choosing. The account of his going is given at the end of Deuteronomy, but these words bring the facts before us in this book, which is the book revealing the Divine discipline of failing people; and it serves to keep before us the fact that the most faithful servants of God cannot escape the results of their failures in this life. The compensations of grace are found afterwards, and to this man it was given to stand with glory wrapt around On the hills he never trod, And speak of the strife which won our life, With the incarnate Son of God.

Numbers 27:15-23 Going Out & Coming In

Our Daily Bread

The phrase "at his word" is used twice in Numbers 27:21 to emphasize how God would guide Israel. Joshua was to direct Israel to "go out" and "come in" based on what God told Eleazer the priest.

How often do we make a decision to go somewhere or do something based on our pride, personal ambition, or merely to keep busy? How often do we go only because someone we long to please asked us to go, rather than because we want to please the Lord? When we "go out" to pursue our own desires instead of following God's leading, we will be frustrated in our efforts and left empty and disappointed.

But when we go out at the Lord's prompting and direction, "at His word," He is responsible for the outcome. The result will be fruitful labor, whether we know it or not.

The time to "come in" is also ordered by the Lord. There are times to retreat—to pray, to fill our hearts with His Word, to rest our bodies.

We must come daily before our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, and receive His instruction. If we bow before Him and ask for His guidance, He will help us to know what to do and when to do it.

We need to take the time each day

To read God's Word and pray,

And listen for what He might say

To guide us on our way. —Sper

You can't go wrong if you follow God's lead.

Numbers 27:21

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in.

The emphasis is on the word his. Moses had asked God to indicate a successor to lead out and bring in the people. But Jehovah drew a distinction. Joshua was to receive the Divine direction from Eleazar, the priest, who should enquire of the Lord; and at his word, i.e., God's word through Eleazar, the people were to go out and come in.

Our goings-out should be determined by the Word of God.— We never waste time when we stand before the true Priest, who has the Urim of Divine direction, especially when we are considering some call to duty. Very often we have gone out at the instigation of pride, or emulation, or fussy activity; we have gone out because others have done so, and we were eager not to be left behind. Under these circumstances the out-goings of our mornings have not been made to rejoice; we have encountered disappointment and defeat. When we go forth at God's bidding, He becomes absolutely responsible; otherwise we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, and bring discredit on the cause we would fain serve.

Our comings-in must be determined by the Word of God.— When we should come in to rest, to pray, to fill again our souls with his Spirit, to suffer in secret, or to die, must be left to the determination of his will. It is easier to go out than to come in. Activity is pleasanter than passivity; the stir and rush of the world preferable to lying still to suffer. But our times are in his hand, and as soon as we recognize the decisions of the Urim in the appointments of Divine Providence, the speedier shall we be at peace. If we are fully surrendered to God, both our going-out and our coming-in shall be ordered aright by his Spirit.

Numbers 28:2

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

My food. (r.v.)

God speaks as though He fed, through the sacrificial flame, on the offerings of his people. There can be no doubt that the obedience of the blessed Lord to the death of the cross was very satisfying to the hunger of the Father's heart (Ephesians 5:2); and there is a sense in which our prayers and praises, the offering of ourselves in consecration, the gifts we lay before Him, are, when laid upon the altar of Christ, very pleasing to God. They are his food (Hebrews 13:15–16).

We often speak of ourselves as hungering for God. Do we sufficiently realize that He hungers for our love, our whole-hearted devotion, our fellowship with Him? May it not sometimes act as an incentive to prayer, to reflect that we may be passing from our chamber in the morning leaving God's desire unsatisfied? He was longing for the uplifting of our soul in devotion and praise which was not forthcoming. Still, as of old, in the morning the hungry Lord comes to seek fruit on his trees. Too often there is nothing but leaves. Too seldom does He have the opportunity of saying: "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey."

If we really loved Jesus, we should be eager to give Him food in our prayers, and yearnings, and activities; and we should long with intense desire for Him to be satisfied, though we were not primarily concerned in spreading his banqueting table. It were enough for us to know that his hunger was feeding on the love of saints, or on the joy of new converts, though we were not the medium of the one or the other. Oh for this unselfish love for Jesus, which looks at things from his standpoint, altogether irrespective of ourselves!

Num. 28:2

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

My oblation, My food for My offerings, made by fire, of a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season: Nu 28.2.

In this and the next chapter we have a repetition of the laws concerning the great religious observances of the nation. This repetition is an orderly statement covering the whole year, and thus showing its relationship throughout to spiritual things. It was thus set forth anew on the eve of their entering upon possession of the land, in order that the arrangements for worship might be duly carried out. First we find the religious rites connected with the smaller time divisions, those of the days, and the weeks, and the months (28. 1-15). Then we have those associated with the year, those of the Spring-time, Passover, and Pentecost (28. 16-31), and finally those of the Autumn, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles (29). The words we have emphasized are those which, introducing this section, reveal the value of these rites. The first word, "My oblation," covers the whole ground; the rest interpret. The word here rendered oblation by our revisers is the Hebrew word Korban. It always refers to the present which secures admittance. To-day in the East it is called the Face-offering. Thus we see the meaning of these religious rites. They recognized the relation of men to God, and their need of Him for all life. They need Him every day, every week, every month, every year. Because all time is thus arranged for in Divine relationship so also is all activity. If the time be redeemed, all activity is sanctified.

Numbers 29:1, 7, 12, 35

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Ye shall do no servile work.

There was a good deal of work to be done, but it was not servile work. Throughout the seventh month, the work centered around the Tabernacle and the service of God, rather than around the tents and occupations of Israel as at other times. The same distinction is clearly made by the Apostle; our faith and salvation are not of works, lest any man should boast; but we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (see notes Ephesians 2:9; 2:10).

Do not work up to the Cross, but down from it. — We must come empty-handed to the Cross, and receive forgiveness and eternal life; but these will immediately begin to vindicate their presence in the fruits of righteousness. None work like those who have been saved by the grace of God — but their work is not servile work; not that of slaves, but of sons. Many confuse these, trying to work for salvation, instead of receiving it first and then working.

Do not work up to union with Christ, but from it. — We cannot unite ourselves to the true Vine by any activity of ours; our only resort is to lay ourselves at the feet of the great Husbandman, that He may graft us into living union with Jesus. When once that union is consummated, through our yielded nature, the Root begins to pour his mighty energy. Fruit-bearing is not servile work; but easy, natural, blessed.

Do not work up to Pentecost, but out from it. — We cannot win the gift of the blessed Paraclete. No tears, prayers, agonies of soul, can purchase it. It must be received by a single act of faith. But when once He is in us in his fulness, then tears, and prayers, and strivings for the salvation of men flow out without effort. But there is no servility, no strain no restraint, save that of love.

Num. 29:3

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

These ye shall offer unto the Lord in your set feasts, beside your vows, and your freewill offerings—Num. 29.3

Thus, as at the beginning of this section (see previous note), the real value of these religious rites was declared; at its close, stress is now laid upon the fact that all these things are to be done as to Jehovah. The observances which sanctified the year were far more than a recognition of certain religious principles; they were means of positive and direct dealing with God Himself. For that reason all were sacrificial. Not only must the worshippers bring gifts —they must bring gifts which were ordained, and in which the necessity for expiation of sin was perpetually recognized. A glance over the whole ground again will show how an increase in the number of sacrifices, and a growing importance in the religious rites, is marked in the growth of the time divisions. Daily, one lamb in the morning, and one in the evening, was offered. Weekly, that is on the Sabbath, two he-lambs were offered, in addition to the continual burnt-offering. Monthly, two young bullocks, one ram, and seven he-lambs were offered, again in addition to the continual burnt-offering. That increase is most marked in the great yearly feasts. All this is very full of significance. We need God; and to gain what we need, we must condition all our days by approach to Him through the putting away of sin. The one perfect sacrifice is

provided in Christ. We must never begin a day, a week, a month, a year, apart from the appropriation by faith of the value of that Sacrifice. Only thus have we right of access to God; only thus, any hope that life will be what it ought to be.

Numbers 30:2 Judges 11:29-40

When a man makes a vow to the Lord ... he must not break his word but must do everything he said. - Numbers 30:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

In 2004, an outbreak of polio swept through children in northern Nigeria. Vaccinations are used worldwide, and the disease has largely been eradicated. But in the Nigerian state of Kano, rumors spread that the polio vaccine was intended to make the children sterile or even give them AIDS. Despite pleas from neighboring countries and world health leaders, several Nigerian states boycotted the vaccine for several years. Thousands of children paid the price, becoming crippled or even dying from polio.

For the past several days, we've examined stories of children in the Bible that demonstrate God's care for children, especially those in distress, and we've seen how we can trust our God to be faithful. Today we turn to look at several stories that illustrate ways that children pay the price of their parents' decisions.

In today's reading, Jephthah prayed to the Lord to ask for victory in battle over the Ammonites. So far, so good: Jephthah acknowledged his need for divine assistance in defeating these oppressors of Israel. Then Jephthah made a vow to God—if given the military victory, he would offer “whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me” as a burnt offering (v. 31). While this might seem generous, it was unnecessary; the Law didn't require any burnt offering for such an occasion.

Tragically, the first thing from his house to meet Jephthah was his daughter, his only child (v. 34). The price of his impetuous promise would be paid by this young girl. Jephthah's daughter did not argue or beg him to go back on his word to the Lord. She demonstrated understanding that a vow to God is a sacred commitment; God had fulfilled Jephthah's request, and now he had to follow through (v. 36).

Jephthah's daughter paid the price for his unwise oath. But in the larger context, the book of Judges depicts a culture spiraling out of control, becoming increasingly evil, and devastating those who are most helpless, like the young daughter of Jephthah.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The choices made by parents have consequences for their children. Even if you have no children of your own or your children are grown, each of us faces choices that impact the culture around us, sometimes in ways we might not realize. Are we living in a way that promotes spiritual health and life for the children around us? Do we acknowledge our dependence on the Lord? Do we make rash commitments without counting the cost? Ask God to make you a source of spiritual blessing for the children in your life.

Numbers 30:5, 8, 12

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Lord shall forgive her.

If the father or husband disallowed the vow a woman made, it would not stand, nor would she be held responsible for its fulfillment. God would not keep her to a promise which was hindered from execution by causes over which she had no control. This is a profound principle.

You may feel that a certain step is required of you by Christ; that indeed you are bound by your allegiance to Him to take it; nay, you have already promised Him that you will take it; but, suddenly and most unexpectedly, you are prevented from taking it. The express prohibition of those who have a right to determine your action, or the verdict of the physician, or the evident call of duty in another direction, makes it needful for you to relinquish your project. What then: is God grieved and angry? Not so; He understands the whole of the case perfectly, and accepts your will for the deed, and bids you go in peace. This, however, does not affect matters in which conscience is clear in demanding or prohibiting a certain line of conduct.

Sometimes God's silence is consent. You made your solemn dedication in His holy presence: there was no answering voice, or rush of emotion, or witnessing seal; He held his peace from day to day. But in that silence He established all your vows, all your bonds. If parents capriciously forbid their children carrying out solemn resolutions and vows, the burden of blame must rest on their shoulders. They must render their account to God, and give answer for their action. It will go hard with those who put needless hindrances and obstacles in their brothers pathway.

Num. 30:16

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

These are the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between a father and his daughter- Num. 30.16.

This is really a very arresting chapter. At first it may seem to have very little application to our modern civilization. But if it be carefully considered, it will be seen that it consists of a series of enactments based upon a fundamental principle of human society. The chapter is concerned with vows; and principally those of women. Let us state these provisions in other words: The vow of a man is declared to be absolutely binding; from it there is no release. In the case of women this is not so. If a woman dwelling in her father's house take a vow upon her, her father has the power to forbid, and so to release her. If he do not so, then the vow is binding. In the case of a woman dwelling with her husband, the husband has a like power. If he does not exercise it, then her vow is also binding. In the case of a widow, or one divorced, if her vow is made in her widowhood or while she is divorced, it is absolutely binding. If it was made while she dwelt with her husband, and he forbade it, she is released. If he did not forbid it, then it is binding upon her. Now what did these careful enactments mean? They are of the utmost importance, as they reveal the Divine conception of the necessity for the maintenance of the unity of the family. In no family must there be two supreme authorities; and here, as always in the Divine arrangement, the headship is vested in the husband and father. It can easily be seen how, were this otherwise, through religious vows discord and probably disruption in family life would ensue. The measure in which modern society has departed from this ideal, is the measure of its insecurity.

Num. 31:14

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Moses was wroth with the officers of the host.-Num. 31.14.

This is a chapter, of terror, recording an avenging, by the order of God, which was terrible indeed. We have stressed these particular words because they emphasize all the rest. Moses was wroth with the officers, not because of the severity of the judgment they had executed on Midian, but rather because, they had failed to carry out the judgment completely. In order to understand this we must recognize the cause of the wrath. Here we touch again the history of Balaam. He was still living, and from the fact that he was numbered among the slain, we may safely infer that he was still exerting his evil influence. This man, who under Divine compulsion had been compelled to bless when he intended to curse, had yet wrought the most terrible evil in Israel, in that he had been the means of causing the nation to commit fornication with the corrupt people of Midian. The words of Moses show that this had been definite and dreadful (see verses 15, 16). The holy seed was polluted. Therefore the judgment upon the polluting people was drastic. Again we say, this is a chapter of terror; but it is well that we recognize that there is a false pity which is of the essence of cruelty. That is true love which makes no terms with evil, and which is able, in circumstances of stern necessity, to adopt stern measures and carry them out without relenting.

Numbers 31:23

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make to go through the fire.

The great aim of this enactment was to render these articles ceremonially clean. They had been in the use of the Midianites, and required cleansing, before they could be appropriated by Israel. But the cleansing processes were to be determined by their texture. Fire for what would stand fire; water for what could not stand fire.

We must be thoroughly cleansed. — If a man will purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use. Not cleverness, but cleanliness, is the prime condition of service. Jesus will not put throne-water into impure and polluted receptacles. What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?

We shall not be passed through fire, unless we can stand it. — Our faith is too precious to God to be exposed to risk. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able, lest we be discouraged, and make shipwreck. If, then you are called at this time to pass through an unusually searching ordeal, be sure that your Heavenly Father knows that you can endure it. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

We must go through water, if not through fire. — The law provided also that “all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water.” The one is negative, the other positive; the first appertains to John the Baptist, the second to the Holy Spirit. The latter is the best; but be thankful, if you cannot endure it, that there is a discipline more tempered and gentle, which will yet render you meet for the handling of the Holy Savior.

C H Spurgeon Devotional - Numbers 32:6

Numbers 32:1-42

We your servants will do as our lord commands. - Numbers 32:25

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the second half of Numbers we have seen plenty of dissatisfaction from the people of Israel. Even Moses was fed up with the complaining of the Israelites. As his life was drawing to a close, he had no patience for any more unfaithfulness. So when the tribes of Reuben and Gad requested to take their homes before crossing the Jordan, he assumed the worst. As it turned out, at least in this instance, these tribes had their hearts in the right place. They were actually satisfied with what they already saw, and God honored their request.

Moses' reaction is understandable given what he has gone through with Israel. After forty years of wandering and waiting to enter Canaan, a request to not enter the land would have been foolish. Similarly, if Reuben and Gad failed to fight alongside their brother tribes, it would have constituted treachery. But the tribes were merely asking the Lord to provide, not complaining for what they didn't have. And they did prove faithful to their commitment to fight throughout the campaign in Canaan.

For Reuben, Gad, and a segment of Manasseh, the battle began early. They drove out the enemy, an important requirement for faithfully claiming the land. They even changed the names of the cities to remove the stigma of false gods as well as the people who worshiped them.

What Moses originally suspected as a sinful act became a breath of fresh air in the book of Numbers. Where others had complained, these tribes asked from the Lord. Where others served their own interests, these tribes were willing to leave their families in order to serve their brothers. And where others were drawn to false gods and foreign worship, these tribes drove out the enemy. The key difference was faith. These tribes trusted the Lord to give generously to meet their needs, and that faith produced obedience in their hearts and deeds.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Even when Israel seemed desperate or disappointing, God was always in complete control. He doesn't get overwhelmed by anything, even disobedience. Remember that as your faithfulness waivers or your situation worsens, God's sovereignty remains. When you feel like a failure or threatened by anything at all, know that God's grace is sufficient and His faithfulness is steadfast. Your circumstances will change, but your God will not.

Num. 32:6

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Shall your brethren go to the war, and shall ye sit here!—Num. 32.6.

In these words Moses revealed the wrong principle actuating Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They desired to settle and prosper on the wrong side of Jordan in order to escape the responsibilities of war. Moses, by his speech and action, brought them to a confession of willingness to share that responsibility with the rest of the tribes, but the whole story is one of failure. It was a wrong desire on the part of the tribes. The distinctly avowed purpose of Jehovah was that they should go over Jordan. They desired to compromise, and indeed succeeded in doing so. In the case of Moses it is notice-able that we have no account of his seeking Divine guidance, as he had so constantly done in other matters. His own first conviction was against granting the request. He pointed out that in essence it was of the same spirit which their fathers had manifested forty years before, and which had resulted in the long and weary discipline. Urging their plea and promising to cross the Jordan to help in the coming conflict, the desire of these people triumphed, and Moses permitted their settlement. Subsequent events proved the wrong of that decision. The whole event should teach us that no merely selfish desire for early and easy realization of peace and prosperity should ever be permitted to interfere with the declared will of God. No policy of compromise can ever justify a coming short of Divine purpose. Peace-able settlements on the wrong side of the river are the inspiration and causes of conflict in subsequent days.

Numbers 32:23 Jonah 1:11-16

You may be sure that your sin will find you out. - Numbers 32:23

TODAY IN THE WORD

If you use social networking sites such as Facebook, which now boasts more than 400 million active users, you're probably familiar with receiving a request to be someone's "friend." At that point, you have a choice: you can click "confirm" or "ignore." You might later decide to "unfriend" someone, meaning to remove him or her from the list of people who have access to your personal information. Due to the popularity of such Web sites, the New Oxford American Dictionary named "unfriend" its 2009 Word of the Year.

In modern terms, Jonah was trying to "unfriend" God. God, however, is present everywhere, so there was no escape for the prophet (cf. Ps. 139:7-10). There was also no release from his calling and ministry assignment, no matter how unwelcome. Jonah tried his utmost to block God's purposes for Nineveh, but his resistance, no matter how extreme, could never thwart the divine will. When the lot settled on Jonah, he persisted in his rebellion by not repenting or calling upon the Lord but instead asking the sailors to throw him overboard.

Perhaps he had despaired to the point of suicide, knowing how God hates sin. But more likely he clung to an irrational hope that if he were to die, no one could take God's message to Nineveh. In that case, he would "die for his country" and his disobedience could still accomplish something.

The pagan sailors, to their credit, made a contrasting choice. They refused to commit murder and did everything they could to avoid throwing Jonah into the sea. When at last they felt compelled to do so, they cried out for forgiveness. After God miraculously stilled the storm and the "great fish" swallowed Jonah (an event they probably witnessed), they responded in worship, proving the sincerity of their hearts. We don't know whether this was momentary awe or a lasting conversion, but it would be reasonable to assume it was a life-changing event for at least some of the sailors. Even in the midst of Jonah's disobedience, God found a way to reveal Himself to unbelievers and bring glory to His name!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Jesus used Jonah to answer the Pharisees' demand for a sign: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:38-42). They wanted supernatural verification that Jesus really did come from God—but they really wanted to discredit Jesus. Christ answered their question by prophesying His Resurrection, turning Jonah's disobedience on its head for His glory!

Numbers 32:23 Ezekiel 23-24; Ezekiel 24:9-14

You may be sure that your sin will find you out. - Numbers 32:23

TODAY IN THE WORD

Once a lobster is caught by a fisherman, its fate is all but certain—a cooking pot, a garlic butter sauce, and a comfortable bed on the plate of some lucky diner. Fiona, however, is an exception. Fiona is a rare yellow lobster caught in 2009 off the coast of eastern Canada. How rare? One in 30 million. "In 57 years, I have never seen a yellow lobster and I doubt that I will ever see one again," said restaurant owner Nathan Nickerson. Actually a bright orange in color, Fiona will live in a tank in his restaurant, where he hopes she will attract many new customers.

A yellow lobster may escape the cooking pot, but the leaders of Israel had no escape. They could be sure their sins would find them out (Num. 32:23). Today's reading concludes the first major section of Ezekiel—the prophecies preceding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C.

These chapters can be divided into four parts. First is a parable of two sisters who were prostitutes (23:1-21). These sisters stand for Israel and Judah in the days of the divided kingdom. Idolatry and political alliances with pagan nations constituted unfaithfulness to the Lord. The people should have been relying on God alone and worshiping Him alone. Instead, their disobedience is seen in the sisters' lustful, indiscriminate lewdness.

Second is an exposition of God's just judgment on Israel and Judah (23:22-49). The cup of God's wrath was full. The people had no excuse. Knowing full well God's law and character, they chose wickedness. Third is a picture of a cooking pot as a metaphor for God's judgment (24:1-14; see also June 7). This vision came on the exact day the siege of Jerusalem began.

And fourth is the death of Ezekiel's wife (24:15-27). This event took place on the exact day the temple was destroyed. The quiet but deep mourning of the prophet for the heartbreaking loss of his wife reflected at a personal level what the loss of Jerusalem and the temple meant to Israel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Throughout the prophecies of impending judgment, God through Ezekiel continuously urged the Israelites to confess their sins and return to Him. As Christians, we also have this privilege—and we know we need it. If we think we’re walking without sin, we’re kidding ourselves. God’s work of sanctification in our lives is not yet complete; therefore, confession needs to be a regular spiritual discipline. When we confess and repent, we enjoy God’s forgiveness and walk again in His light (1 John 1:5-10).

Numbers 32:23

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

Be sure your sin will find you out.

Sin is like the boomerang of the savage, it comes back on the hand that has launched it forth. The brethren accused Joseph of being a spy, and cast him into the pit; and on the same charge they were cast into prison. King David committed adultery and murder; so Absalom requited him. The Jews crucified the blessed Lord; and they were impaled around Jerusalem till room and wood for their crosses failed.

There is a Divine order in society. God has so constituted the world, that as man deals with his neighbour, so he is dealt with. The consequence does not always follow immediately. There is often a long interval between the lightning flash and the thunder-peal. The sentence against an evil work is not executed suddenly. But though God’s mills grind slowly, they do grind, and to powder. It is impossible to deceive God; for it is his immutable law, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7-8).

When sin comes to find you out, like a sleuthhound on the track of the criminal, be sure that it finds you in Jesus. “That I maybe found in Him.” Nothing will avail to intercept the awful execution of sin’s vengeance, except the blood and righteousness of Jesus. Put Him between you and your sins, between you and your past, between you and the penalty of a broken law. Be sure that only when the blood of Jesus speaks for you through earth and heaven, there can be a cutting off of sin’s terrible entail.

Numbers 32:23

Collision Course Our Daily Bread

My wife and I were driving on an expressway when we saw a driver turn left into a median turnaround that was intended for emergency vehicles only. He was planning to make a U-turn and head back the other way.

Looking to his right, the driver waited for an opening in oncoming traffic, so he failed to notice that a police car was backing up toward him on his left. Finally seeing an opening in traffic, the U-turn driver pulled out and rammed into the back of the police car.

It’s not unusual for us to think we can get away with doing something wrong. After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he too was focused on “getting away with it.” But he was on a collision course with Nathan. His adultery, deceit, and murder “displeased the Lord” (2 Sam. 11:27), so when Nathan exposed David’s grievous sin, the king was deeply remorseful. He confessed, repented, and received God’s forgiveness. But the consequences of his sin never departed from his household (12:10).

If you’ve been trying to get away with something, remember that “your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). Turn yourself in to God. Don’t hide. Instead, seek His gracious forgiveness.

God knows all you’ve thought or done—

From Him you cannot hide;

Confess to Him and He’ll forgive

Through Christ the crucified. —Hess

We have to face our sins before we can put them behind us.

Numbers 32:23 Sourdough Bread

Our Daily Bread

Sourdough bread became popular during the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s. In the 1890s, it was a favorite during the great

Gold Rush in Alaska. Prospectors would carry with them a small portion of sourdough mix that contained a natural yeast. It could then be used as a starter to make more of their favorite sourdough bread.

In the Bible, though, yeast or leaven can have a negative connotation. For example, in the New Testament, “leaven” is often referred to as a corrupting influence. This is why Jesus said: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

Hypocrites put on a show of righteousness while hiding sinful thoughts and behavior. Christ warned His disciples and us that secret sins will someday be exposed to full disclosure. He said, “There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known” (v.2). Because of this, we are to reverentially fear God, to ask for His grace to forsake any sin, and to grow as authentic believers.

Yeast may be a blessing in the bakery, but it can also remind us to guard against the permeating influence of sin in our hearts.

The holiness of God demands

A heart that's pure within,

Yet grace unites with holiness

To purge the heart from sin. —D. De Haan

Be sure your sin will find you out. —Numbers 32:23

Numbers 32:23 What's the Trouble?

Our Daily Bread

There was something wrong with my lawn. I couldn't see what the trouble was, but I knew something was causing damage.

After investigating, I discovered the problem: moles. Those voracious little bug-eaters were crawling around just under the surface of my previously well-groomed lawn looking for food and wreaking havoc on my grass.

The children of Israel also had a problem with a hidden cause (Josh. 7). They were experiencing trouble, and they couldn't figure out why. There was something hidden from their view that was causing serious damage.

The trouble became noticeable when Joshua sent 3,000 troops to attack Ai. Although that should have been a sufficient army to defeat Ai's small force, the opposite happened. Ai routed the Israelites, killing 36 of them and chasing them back where they came from. Joshua had no idea why this trouble had come. Then God explained the hidden problem: One of his men, Achan, had violated a clear command and had stolen some “accursed things” from Jericho (Josh. 7:11). Only when that hidden sin was discovered and taken care of could Israel have victory.

Hidden sin does great damage. We need to bring it to the surface and deal with it—or face certain defeat.

Dear Lord, I don't want anything in my life to

hinder my fellowship with You. You know what's

in my heart. Reveal any areas of my life that are

not pleasing to You and forgive me. Amen.

Confession to God ensures forgiveness.

Numbers 33:9

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

They journeyed from Marah and came unto Elim: and in Elim... (r.v.)

In his enumeration of the halting places of Israel, Moses mentions Marsh and Elim. In the case of the former, he does not dwell on the murmuring of the people over the bitter stream: but in the case of Elim, he loves to dilate on the twelve springs of water, and the three-score and ten palm trees, under which they pitched. Years of weary travel had not obliterated the memory of the refreshment afforded by those seventy palms.

We should remember the blessings of the past.— God has so made as that we soon forget pain; but memory is willing to keep

the fresco-pictures of sunny scenes unobliterated upon the walls of her galleries. Thus we may encourage our faith and comfort our hearts, by musing on the hand of the Lord which has been upon us for good. You have had many hard tracks of desert sand to traverse; but never forget those three-score and ten palm trees. Let their gracious shade and fruit still refresh you. And remember that God will restore them, whenever needed. If not, you can always find your palm trees and wells in Himself.

God does not remember the sins of the past.— There is no word of their murmurings, either at Marsh or Rephidim. It is thus that God deals with us. “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” When God forgives, He forgets. He erases the record from his book, and deals with us as though no sin had been committed. When we get to heaven and study the way-book, we shall find all the deeds of love and self-denial carefully recorded, though we have forgotten them; and all the sins blotted out, though we remember them.

Numbers 33:50-56

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear. - 1 John 4:18

TODAY IN THE WORD

It's customary at the close of a president's term in the White House for every member of the staff to turn in letters of resignation. The incoming Commander-in-Chief has the utmost flexibility to decide who will fill the White House under his watch.

As Israel prepared to advance on Canaan, God made His intentions perfectly clear: the Lord was to be the new ruler of this land, and He wanted Israel to clean house.

The command was total. They were to drive out all the people. They were to destroy all the objects of worship. They were to demolish all the places of worship. God wanted every living person and every trace of false deity removed from the land of His dwelling (v. 52).

The consequence for disobedience was practical. God didn't threaten Israel with His wrath. He merely notified them of the suffering that would naturally spring from leaving any remnant of the enemy in their land: those people would be as unbearable as a barb to the eye! We see in the book of Judges just how true God's prediction was.

The Promised Land was to be Israel's land for the taking. God didn't say, “If you try really hard and fight unbelievably well, then the land will be yours.” Victory didn't depend on their special talent; rather, defeating and driving out the enemy would be the result of faithful obedience to His commands.

When Moses made this announcement to Israel, it would have been particularly reassuring for them. They hadn't even crossed the Jordan River and God was already instructing them how to divide up the land once they had possession over it. It wasn't a matter of if they would conquer Canaan, but when the land would be theirs. Such confidence from a leader can embolden a people. Had all twelve leaders who originally surveyed the land shown such boldness, perhaps they could have avoided forty years of wandering and judgment in the wilderness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY -There are battles in our lives that God has already won for us, including the ultimate victory over sin! If there are recurring sins in your life that seem unbeatable, remember that your God is the God who defeated the Canaanites. Our own ability is not the issue—He requires only our faithful obedience. If you find yourself struggling in some area, consider whether your level of obedience needs a boost. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, giving, and Scripture memory can help us follow Christ more faithfully.

Num. 33:52

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones...and demolish all their high places.-Num 33.52.

This was the distinct command of God to a people whom He had wondrously led and prepared, by delivering them from Egypt's slavery, and disciplining them for forty years in the wilderness. They were now to come into the possession of the land which He had appointed to them. They were His people, and the purpose of their coming into that land was that of the manifestation of Himself, and that of the carrying out of His programme. While their possession was to be in order to the preservation of the nation until the Deliverer of all the nations should come, it was in the first place in order to the cleansing of that land from a people utterly polluted and corrupt. It was necessary that the latter should be utterly dispossessed, and every trace of their worship swept away, wherever found. This charge was accompanied by warnings, uttered in simple terms, and yet of the most solemn nature. No false pity or

selfish motive was to operate in such fashion as to leave any corrupting influence behind. The unequivocal command to drive out all, was based upon the tenderest regard of God for the well-being of the chosen people, and through them, the whole race. To tolerate what God has condemned to destruction, is to retain what in itself will prove to be a source of continual difficulty and suffering. The most solemn words of all are those with which the chapter ends: "And it shall come to pass, that as I thought to do unto them, so will I do unto you." God's elections to blessing are dependent upon obedience to His will.

Numbers 34:13

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

This is the land which ye shall inherit. (r.v.)

It is important that we should know the limits and possibilities of our lives. We must beat the bounds, first to know how far we may go; and secondly where we must stop, in our inheritance.

How far we go. — It is our privilege to know God and the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his indwelling in our hearts, and the power of the Resurrection throbbing within us, lifting us to share the risen life of Jesus. Day by day we may be kept from yielding to known sin; day by day, though keenly conscious of temptation, we may be more than conquerors; day by day, the Holy Spirit may work in us perfect love towards God and man, to the limit of our light; day by day the Lord Jesus may be more perfectly formed within us.

Where we must stop. — We may expect to be blameless, but not faultless, till He present us to Himself to be delivered from temptation, but not freed from its assaults: to be kept in perfect peace, but not secured from the pressure of adversity: to be dead to sin and self, but not daring to say that either is dead within us: to be delivered from this present evil world, as to spirit and temper, though still called to inhabit it as its salt and light. Take possession of every inch of God-given territory in Jesus, but beware of going beyond it.

It is a solemn question to all who have been appointed leaders in God's hosts, whether they are rightly dividing their heritage. We must hold back nothing that is profitable: nor must we shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Let our Preaching and teaching include all God's provision for his children.

Num. 34:13

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot.-Num 34.13

In this chapter we have the arrangements Divinely made for the positive side of the purpose for which the people were to be brought into this land. They were really to take possession of it, and so, to realize its resources and their own national life. Again the Divine care is manifested, in that the division was made by Divine choice and arrangement. A careful examination will show how, as to amount of territory, that division was based upon the comparative needs of the tribes; and as to position, it was based upon the will of Jehovah, which unquestionably was based upon His perfect knowledge of the characteristics of the different tribes. The divisions given were for those who were about to pass over into the land beyond Jordan. Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had no part in this inheritance. Thrice over it is said: "They have received." They had made their own choice, and it was now ratified. Long after, they were the first to be captured and carried away. While the arrangement for division was Divine, human instruments were appointed to see them carried out. They were the priest Eleazar; the leader, Joshua; and the princes of the tribes. Among these, one name arrests our attention. It is that of Caleb. Thus he reaped the reward of his fidelity. How wonderfully this story illustrates the order and beauty of the Divine government, and of the principles of obedience through which we may derive the blessing and benefit thereof.

Numbers 35:1-8

Today in the Word

Joshua 21:1-42

The towns you give the Levites ... are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe. - Numbers 35:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

A proverb about courage attributed to Aesop reads, "It is easy to be brave from a safe distance." The Levites were not afforded that luxury. One might think that the priests of Israel, the Levites, would have been set apart and isolated from the other tribes of Israel, but God didn't plan it that way. They weren't a safe distance away from the people they were supposed to lead spiritually, and as God's handpicked representatives, they were to be close to the Almighty as well.

Several times throughout Joshua we've been reminded that the Levites' inheritance was the Lord Himself; serving Him was their reward. But they still needed a place to live. God provided for them in a unique way, bringing provision from every other tribe in Israel. Consulting a map will show that the Levites were spread so evenly across the land that no one was very far from a city of priests.

This wasn't a last-minute decision. God commanded Moses that the land be shared with the priests in this way. The book of Numbers describes the parameters for the Levite cities, and they include generously sized pastures around each one. God didn't overlook His priests; He was determined to show His provision to them in a way that creatively taught the truth of God with unforgettable permanence and profound symbolism.

God's pattern for sustaining the priests had always been for the people to support them according to each one's possessions and income. The distribution of Levite cities was no different. God commanded the larger territories to yield more cities and the smaller to give up less. This fair and wise method provided ample space for the Levites and even distribution of priests throughout the land. It also rooted all of the tribes in the truth that the land was given to them by God and should be shared generously with His servants.

Six of the Levite cities also became the cities of refuge we read about yesterday. It's interesting to note that God chose priests to be a symbol of protection in times of trouble. "City of refuge" may sound like a military term, but it's men of faith, not weapon-bearing warriors, who provide asylum from vengeance.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY As salt and light in the world, we can't be satisfied living a safe distance from the world.

God has placed you in a position to be a spiritual leader to those around you. Stay close to Him through your personal time with God, and make the most of your place in the world so that the spiritually needy can come to you for help. The Lord will be with you; don't fear those who don't believe. God is greater than the world, and He can give you victory over your own flaws and fears.

Numbers 35:9-34

Today in the Word

Read: Joshua 20:1-9; Numbers 35:9-34

Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land. - Numbers 35:33

TODAY IN THE WORD

Through his character Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us that courage is more than brashly ignoring danger. He writes, "It is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognize danger when it is close upon you." That bit of wisdom applies quite well to the crux of today's reading in a couple of different ways.

For the nation as a whole, it would have been foolish to deny the possibility of tragic deaths, either accidental or malicious, especially now that the people were spread out across a wide array of settlements. Without a plan to handle such a situation, the Promised Land could have closely resembled the chaos of the American Old West. God in His foresight provided Israel with a justice system that would apply to the whole land and could help see to it that patience and truth would prevail over irrational rage.

The quote also applies to the person who causes a death—it would be doubly foolish to think that no punishment would come as a result of costing a man his life. A man in that position no longer needs courage; he needs protection.

The passage in Numbers gives us a more detailed account of the philosophy of justice for murder, and it's much different than what we're used to today. When evaluating the incident, at least two witnesses needed to testify about the death (v. 30); in our society, one eyewitness can be evidence for conviction.

If the accused was convicted of murder, a relative of the victim was permitted to avenge the murder by taking the life of the guilty person (v. 19). Even if he was deemed innocent of malicious, intentional murder, causing a death was still a serious offense, and the offender couldn't leave the city of refuge until the death of the high priest without fearing for his life (vv. 26-28).

We may wonder at this, but God wanted to stress that all life is valuable, and there is punishment for murder and consequences even for accidents. Yet God still demonstrates His mercy by instituting protections in the legal system and by providing cities of refuge.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Hopefully the specifics of today's reading don't come into play in your life any time soon, but there's an important truth in the text that applies to all of us. God places tremendous value on human life. He would do anything to save a life, but He can't ignore justice to do it. Jesus died on the cross to save us, suffering the penalty that sin imposed on all mankind. We need to value human life in the same way; tell someone the good news today. Introduce them to the refuge of grace.

Numbers 35:9-34a

Today in the Word

With the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery. - 2 Chronicles 19:7b

TODAY IN THE WORD

"An earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice," wrote William Shakespeare in his famous play *The Merchant of Venice*. This idea, expressed at a pivotal moment of the play, conveys a truth about the relationship between justice and mercy that is rarely grasped in our day-to-day lives. We often think of God's justice and His mercy as two separate and distinct functions. But in reality, mercy is a property of God's justice; it "seasons" God's justice.

In today's look at the Mosaic Law, we see how God's desire to maintain proper relationships between men, the land, and Himself prompts Him to establish cities of refuge. As He made clear in His covenant with Noah (Gen. 9), God holds life sacred and demands an accounting for all deaths. A family member was responsible to avenge the death of his kin according to biblical law. This strict rule was based on the importance of the land: "Blood-shed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it" (v. 33).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The city of refuge didn't restore even the accidental murderer to the community. Neither does the time prisoners spend in jail now restore their places in the community. Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship says that offenders do not simply need rehabilitation, they require regeneration of a sinful heart. This ministry strives for such renewal by serving inmates and their families in the name of Christ. You can help them by doing anything from writing a letter to buying a Christmas toy.

Numbers 35:9-34 Joshua 20:1-9;

Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land. - Numbers 35:33

TODAY IN THE WORD

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TODAY ALONG THE WAY

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Num. 35:11

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

Ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you.-Num. 35.11

The provision of these cities of refuge was a proof of the mercy and justice of God. These people were naturally fierce and vindictive. The law of God had made life sacred, and the punishment of taking it had been solemnly declared in the words: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Yet it was quite possible that in connection with the taking of human life there might be extenuating circumstances. For premeditated murder there was no forgiveness, and for the murderer in such case, no city of refuge was provided. For killing in haste, under sudden impulse of passion, such provision was made. These cities were not provided that men might evade justice, but that justice might be ensured. It is quite possible to do unjust things in the name of justice. It was against such a possibility that these cities were provided. Further, the fact that a man-slayer reached one of these cities did not ensure him against enquiry and investigation. It provided for the possibility thereof, and indeed made it obligatory. Thus the man had an opportunity of explanation, and the nation the certainty of just action. The wrong of taking human life was marked in the case of the man-slayer who was not found worthy of the death-penalty, in that it was provided that he must remain in the city until the death of the high priest. It is a wonderful illustration of the strict and impartial justice of God in all His dealings with sin. While it cannot be excused, the sinner is never punished unjustly.

Numbers 35:25, 28, 32

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Death of the High Priest.

One after another they passed away. They were not able to continue by reason of death. Their offices, and garments, and ministry, passed from each in turn, as from Aaron, whom Moses stripped with his own hands on Nebo. But their death only brings into greater prominence the encouraging contrast in the case of our blessed Lord, who ever liveth, and hath, therefore, an unchangeable priesthood.

Christ ever lives: what an encouragement to the penitent! — All that He ever was, He is; all that He ever did for others, He is willing to do for thee. The records of his earthly life, with his tenderness for those who were out of the way, are leaves and specimen pages of the diary of his life. Therefore, there need be no hesitation in applying to Him.

Christ ever lives: what a blessing to the saint! — "I am He that liveth." He bent over his fainting apostle, and said in effect, You remember what I was when you leant on my bosom, followed Me to the shore on which I had prepared your repast, and assured you of my never-altering affection. I am all that still; through death I have come to a life which can never decay; because I live, ye shall live also. Let us rest our souls on this sweet word — from his heart there will ever stream to us rivers of incorruptible life. Let us keep all the channels of our being open towards the fountain of eternal life, that there may be no stint or restraint to our reception.

Christ ever lives: what a warning to the Church! — There is no need, therefore, of the human priest to transact matters between man and God. The Son is Priest and King in his own house, in the power of an endless life; and human mediators are no more necessary than flickering night-lights at noon.

Numbers 35:29-34

Bloodshed pollutes the land. - Numbers 35:33

TODAY IN THE WORD

Ellen Lin was willing to lose the \$80,000 deposit she and her family had made on a new house. She simply could not continue with the sale when she learned about the horrific history of her prospective home. The realtor had neglected to inform her that the house had been the site of a triple murder. After such a gruesome act, the property had lost its value forever.

No property was more valuable than the Promised Land, and God commanded His people to preserve its value by making it a land of justice and of peace.

By requiring at least two witnesses to declare a murderer guilty, God created a safeguard against deception and reckless executions. But He also stressed the importance of enforcing a penalty for murder. God was, in essence, forbidding Israel to dismiss the value of human life.

It might be hard to comprehend how God could, in this instance, stress the value of life, when He also commanded His people to drive out the Canaanites and, in some cities, to annihilate all the people living there. How could God condone the destruction of an entire city and then condemn the murder of a single person? How can a God who detests murder also seem to justify capital punishment?

This answer is revealed through the character of God expressed in this passage and throughout the book of Numbers. God's holiness demands justice. But His wrath is not like man's vengeful anger. It isn't anger for anger's sake—His wrath ultimately brings reconciliation. God said that the shedding of a murderer's blood could make atonement for the land (v. 33). In other words, carrying out the justice of God made the land once again acceptable to Him.

Additionally, the land of Canaan was inhabited by wicked people who rejected God and were punished accordingly—but God's ultimate goal was not wrath. He used Israel's conquest of Canaan to bless those who showed faith in Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Faith, as the book of Numbers attests, is not a natural human behavior. Left to our own devices, we fail to follow God. But He has gone to the ultimate lengths to gather us to His holy rest. Make it your prayer today that God would strengthen your faith, draw you closer to Him, and use you as an instrument of His grace. The fruit will be obedience in your life and in those who look to you for leadership, a trait we'll examine in more detail in Today in the Word in the coming months.

Numbers 36:2

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The inheritance of Zelophehad unto his daughters.

From the earliest, the germ-principle of the emancipation of woman, and her right to stand on an equality with man, is recognized in Scripture. These women were heiresses in their own right, and might marry as they thought best. Christianity in this respect, as in so many others, is the fulfillment of the Divine thought in the older dispensation. Ruth was the prototype of Mary of Bethany; Rahab of the Syrophenician woman; Hagar of Lydia.

The inheritance of woman in the nature of Christ. — There are certain qualities in the Sun of Man peculiarly adapted for the heart of woman. Tenderness for her many tears — “Woman, why weepest thou? “Sympathy in her quest for a love that will not fail — “Mary.” An answer to her many questions — “Woman, believe Me.” Strength for her clinging weakness — “Forbid her not.” Hope for her despair — “If thou couldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.” O woman, remember Him who is the counterpart of thy need, and offers thee Himself. “The same is my sister.”

The inheritance of woman in the work of Christ. — She is called to enrich men by bringing to them her inheritance. So the daughters of Zelophehad brought their land to their husbands, and the women bore the tidings of the risen Lord to the disciples. Thus women, receiving much from fellowship with Christ, come to men, steeped in materialism and sense, telling of a purer, fairer life, and summoning them to inherit it. Well is it for the home where this principle is recognized, and where the wife and mother is ever feeding her soul with noble ideals, to correct the false estimates that too much contact with men of the world are apt to induce in those she loves!

Num. 36:7

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The children of Israel shall cleave every one to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.—Num. 36.7.

This word was uttered in connection with the question of the inheritance of women, which had already been raised through the application of the daughters of Zelophehad. It was now opened again by the heads of the tribes. It was possible that these women

night marry men out of other tribes. In that case their inheritance would pass over to another tribe. Therefore it was now enacted that they must only marry within their own tribe. By this law, the Divine purpose that the settlement in the land should be orderly and sustained, was ensured of realization. Thus closes the Book of Numbers. It is essentially the Book of the Wilderness. The nation was on the eve of entering the land. The actual history is resumed in the last chapter of Deuteronomy. It is impossible to have studied this book without having been impressed, first, with the failure of the people. It is a record of long-continued stubbornness and folly. Yet we are pre-vented from thinking hardly of this people by the fact that the book is a record of the unwearying patience and perpetual faithfulness of God. Throughout, the progress of a Divine movement is manifest. It is not of man, but of Jehovah. Indeed, it is hardly a history of the Hebrew people, being far more a revelation of the sure procedure of God toward the final working out into human history of the redemptive purpose of His heart; the first movements of which were recorded in Genesis, the central work of which was accomplished by the Son of God, and the final victories of which are not yet.