

CONTENTMENT BRINGS HAPPINESS! Part 1

Scripture: Num. 20:2-5)

Numbers 20:2-5. 2There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled against Moses and Aaron. 3Then the people argued with Moses and spoke, saying, If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! 4Why then have you brought the LORD S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our livestock to die [a]here? 5Why did you make us come up from Egypt, to bring us into this wretched place? It is not a place of [b]grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink!"

Introduction: Volleyball “set up” analogy! Sometimes, we must organize, assimilate, gather information to set up for a good teaching lesson. Often, Word of God contains material, which may appear as though it is not relevant in our modern context. But if we review carefully, we could pick up a lot of wisdom. Chapter 18 and 19 contain some interesting information. I’ll go through them quickly, and then come to chapter 20 and start a two-part sermon. I could have come straight to chapter 20 and excited you with a great story. But we must not look for excitement in life all the time. We must learn to pay attention to more mundane topics of life also. I am saying all this to say this: learn to give attention to all topics, not just the ones you like!

Numbers 18:1,2. 1So the LORD said to Aaron, You, your sons, and your father s household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood. 2But also bring your brothers with you, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, so that they may join you and serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony.

The Levites and priests will bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary and the priesthood if they are negligent or indifferent about their duty. The Levites and priests ought to be working together. In our context, the deacons and elders should be working together! We cannot come and serve the Lord with a reluctant, indifferent heart. We cannot give low priority and become indifferent to God’s ministry. God will hold us responsible for our indifferent attitude. Put your whole focus on doing things for the Lord!

Be focused, don’t be indifferent or negligent!

Numbers 18:5-7. 6Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service for the tent of meeting. 7But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything that concerns the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a service that is a gift, and the unauthorized person who comes near shall be put to death.”

The Levites are a gift to the priests! They are given to the Lord. The Lord has given them back to Aaron. They are to take care of the needs of the tabernacle. They are chosen for Temple Service to the Lord and is a gift from God! But the priests are to take care of the altar and all the items inside the tabernacle. Note, priesthood is a service, and it is a gift from God.

We are not coming to God's temple to just hear a good sermon. Each one of us come to serve the Lord in some capacity. Such servanthood is a gift from God! Let us take the ministry of God very seriously and come rejoicing to serve Him. Don't take the ministry of God as a chore. God does not like that kind of attitude.

Numbers 18:8-10. 8Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, Now behold, I Myself have put you in charge of My offerings, all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel I have given to you as a portion and to your sons as a permanent allotment. 9This shall be yours from the most holy gifts reserved from the fire; every offering of theirs, namely every grain offering, every sin offering, and every guilt offering, with which they shall make restitution to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons. 10As the most holy gifts you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.

Offerings from the people are most holy! Whether it is \$1 from a kid, or million dollars from a rich person. The priests had to receive those contributions reverentially, respectfully! Note: The tithes of Israelites were for all the Levites. But the special offerings brought to the altar are for Aaron and his children. They are most holy. We must also take the offerings of people very seriously and handle it reverentially. God will bless those who bless Him! You bless the Lord with your substance, and the Lord honors His servants with that contribution. Not only He blesses His servants, but He blesses you abundantly, and your giving comes back to you much more.

Numbers 18:21. 21 To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel as an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.

The tithes of Israelites went to Levites, and Levites also had to give 10 percent of their tithes. So basically, everyone pays tithe. When we budget our money, it is a good habit to set aside 10% for Lord's ministry. Even churches should be spending at least 10 percent for missions.

There was tremendous amount of work around the temple, but it did not require thousands of people at any given time. They were rotated every week. But still they were all provided with tithe money equally.

Numbers 18:31. 31You may eat it anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the tent of meeting.

Laborer is worthy of his wages.

Numbers 19th chapter is all about the atonement for the entire congregation. This is different from the day of atonement because this sacrifice could happen any day. In the whole history of Israel, this sacrifice was offered only about 6 times! God wanted them to sacrifice a “red heifer” for the sins of the whole congregation, which means a young red cow! What does red signify? Some say, to signify the blood to be shed for our sins. Others say that it signifies the intensity and seriousness of sin. Usually, a bull is slaughtered. Here a cow, which might bring a lot of grief, sympathy, and grief among people, and thereby heart felt repentance? For us, Christ is our red heifer, who died for all our sins, and there is forgiveness for those who believe in Him.

The rest of the 19th chapter talks about the uncleanness if we touch a dead body. They become unclean for 7 days. It is more like a quarantine for those people. This kind of quarantining is essential so that germs won't spread. We see that clearly nowadays!

Let me just start a very interesting chapter, chapter 20, as part 1 of my sermon, and complete this story next time I preach God willing.

Numbers 20:1. 1Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there.

Map slide here.

Wilderness of Zin and Kadesh are below Beersheba. Israelites came very close to Palestine southern border, but then they refused to enter. So, they looped around the wilderness of Zin and came to the east side of Kadesh, and stayed there. That is where Miriam died!

What a tragedy! Miriam led the women with singing and dancing, playing tambourines after they crossed the Red Sea triumphantly.

She sang, “Sing unto the LORD, for He is highly exalted;
The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea.” (Exo. 15:20,21).

We all start our Christian pilgrimage joyfully like Miriam, enjoying our salvation, but later, we tend to become very disappointed, frustrated, angry, and totally burned out. Church does not matter anymore. Hearing the Word creates no excitement. Don't feel like talking to the Lord and listening to Him. Don't want to have any fellowship with other Christians! As we get older, we tend to become burnt out Christians! It is sad.

Miriam had a bitter end. She tried to instigate rebellion against her own brother also and was punished by God. She could not enter the promised land in her own time. What a tragedy! Let us not die as burnt out, resentful Christians. Let us not lead a life of

bitterness. Let us always die as evergreen tree, rejoicing in the Lord for His love and mercy for us!

The root of bitterness stems out of discontentment as we see in the following passage.

Numbers 20:2-5. 2There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled against Moses and Aaron. 3Then the people argued with Moses and spoke, saying, If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! 4Why then have you brought the LORD S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our livestock to die [a]here? 5Why did you make us come up from Egypt, to bring us into this wretched place? It is not a place of [b]grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink!"

There was no water for Israelites! Obviously!! This is a wilderness, and there was not supposed to be much water. The Lord was not in a hurry to provide water. Why? To test the faith of Israelites. The Lord knows that no one can survive without water. But He was not in a hurry to provide them water. God wants us to depend on Him totally and come close to Him. Just like the baby cries for the milk, we ought to cry for our needs. But what did the Israelites do? They gathered against Moses and Aaron and started rebuking them! They used sharp, hurtful words like, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD!" These brothers did not die as martyrs for Christ. They did not die naturally. They all died because God punished them for their rebellion, and their death was supernatural horror! Some were swallowed by the earth; most were consumed by fire from heaven!

The Israelites never repented! They were still supportive of their rebellious brothers. Their heart was hardened, and it was full of resentment, anger, and bitterness. They forgot so easily how God redeemed them from slavery. How they were delivered from their enemies! How they were miraculously fed in the wilderness, and how the water came from a waterless land. How God as Father, stayed with them in their camp, how He led them from behind and before them. Israelites forgot all those things too quickly. When crisis hits us, we tend to forget our past blessings, and future promises! All we see is that huge crisis that is right in front of us!

God was providing water all these days. Would He stop giving water for them suddenly? God has provided us paycheck every week. There may be times, He may stop it for a while, but ultimately the blessing will start again. We start panicking when His blessings stop. That is the time to come closer to God, and we should cry unto God for our needs! He is testing us through these circumstances. Let us trust Him even more!

Contentment grows when we really trust in the Lord, and believe sincerely that He would provide, in His time! But when we don't trust Him, our discontentment grows!

Our discontentment grows also when we start comparing our present crisis with the past life. Israelites were discontented! They missed their grain, figs, grapes, pomegranates, cucumber, and of course plenty of Nile water to drink in Egypt. But what they forgot was that they came close to the Lord. They saw the glory of the Lord. They heard Him speak

directly. They received the words of wisdom which is better than any food. Remember, when we suffer, we come very close to the Lord, and experience His love and warmth even more.

When you suffer, don't become discontented, resentful, bitter, instead cry unto the Lord, and He will hear you and answer your prayers. But there are times, He may let the pain continue, so that irritating sand within us may turn out to be a beautiful pearl of faith. Count it all joy! All things indeed work out for good for those who love God!

Be contented in Him always and trust in Him!

Let me summarize everything from three chapters.

Conclusion:

We will bear the guilt if we serve the Lord reluctantly, indifferently in the house of God. Beware!

Our service to God is a privilege, and gift from Him. Serve the Lord reverentially, not reluctantly.

Offerings and contributions from the people are very holy. Don't abuse it.

Jesus Christ is our red heifer who died and rose again for all our sins.

If you are affected by unclean thing, quarantine.

Be contented in Him always and trust Him!
Discontentment brings bitterness.

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