

5. Jealousy, pride and judgment

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It can be a root of a quarrel, divorce, and even domestic violence within marriage. It can happen in the workplace, school, home among siblings, and anywhere and any time with anyone. I am talking about jealousy.

Grant that our God is a jealous God. Does it mean God has a tantrum with a typical human jealousy? No, absolutely not. He does not share our love with anyone, any idol, or anything for that matter. But it is not because He is an insecure God, rather He knows what would happen to us at the end if we put our allegiance with the ungodly. God is not jealous of us, He is jealous for us – our safety, and our eternal future. God's jealousy is love in action.

But when it comes to human jealousy, it can turn into quite a nasty drama – false accusations, endless envy, deeply rooted pride, and selfish drive to get what a person wants at any cost. Pride is one of the main reasons for jealousy.

Because satan is alive and busy doing his worst through a sinful human nature to fight against the holy will of God.

Galatians 5:16-17 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were a team sent by God to help lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt. He used Miriam to save her younger brother Moses' life and she was also a prophetess who led the Jewish women in praising the Lord after they crossed the Red Sea in Exodus chapter 15. Aaron was the oldest son of the family, appointed by God not only to assist Moses in confronting Pharaoh, but also to serve as the first high priest of Israel. Everybody in Israel knew that Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were God's chosen servants, but Moses was the leader of Israel.

But that idea came to a screeching halt when Miriam and Aaron who were driven by jealousy and pride decided that they wanted to be as important as Moses in the eyes of the people of Israel. God's immediate judgment threw cold water on their self-appointed leadership.

A. PETTY AND PERSONAL ACCUSATION

Numbers 12:1-2 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it.

Three pieces of evidence lead to the conclusion that Miriam was the leader in this family rebellion:

- 1) She is mentioned first in v1.
- 2) The Hebrew verb "spoke" is feminine in form.
- 3) Miriam alone was disciplined by the Lord.

Miriam didn't begin her assault by accusing Moses of undeserving authority but by differing with him over his wife. Most people who accuse God's servants rarely give real good reasons for their disagreements. I myself was a receiving end of several

petty and personal attacks rather than any heresies I might have taught in last 11 years of our church. As far as I know, I haven't taught any heresies.

Please remember that Moses lived for 120 years. I wouldn't be surprised if he out-lived his first wife Zipporah who was a daughter of Jethro from Midian. In Scripture, "Cush" usually refers to a people who lived near Egypt. But the KJV incorrectly translates the Hebrew word "Cush" to Ethiopia.

In v2, Miriam finally revealed the true reasons for the revolt:

- 1) Was Moses the only spokesperson for God?
- 2) Didn't Miriam and Aaron also have the right to declare God's Word?

In questioning Moses' authority and God's will, Miriam and Aaron were acting just like the people of Israel. However, Moses didn't answer them or try to vindicate himself. He left his defense to the Lord. This was one evidence of his meekness and humility.

Challenging God's authority and authenticity of His Word was the first deception from Satan to the first mankind Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Satan put a doubt in Eve's heart by twisting what the Lord said to them. This still happens. People, immature Christians and unbelievers pick and choose the portions of Scriptures to justify their carnal behaviors.

Once we start to ignore the total and complete authority of the Word of God, there is no limit what people can and are willing to do to gratify their carnal desires.

B. THE MOST HUMBLE MAN

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

V3 is a bridge verse between v2 and the rest of the chapter. Moses had no problem with pride. Quite the contrary his accusers were the ones with a pride problem.

One can wonder how a humble man could possibly call himself the most humble man on the face of the earth. I wouldn't be surprised that it was written by someone else other than Moses, like Joshua who knew him very well. But even if it was written by Moses himself, it should not be an issue to us, because the Word of God is wholly inspired by the Spirit of the Living God.

If you remember the first 40 years of Moses' life as an Egyptian prince, he did not start as the most humble man, rather during the 40 years of the Midian desert, he learned to be humble.

One of my favorite authors A.W. Tozer wrote, "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply."

Our waiting time is the time of character building for good or bad. If we are submissive to our Lord during this time, we learn to have more godly characters that the Lord wants us to have; or we can turn into distorted, mean, jealous, and grouchy people who constantly fight against God's will as if they can win against Him.

Nepotism is not a very good idea unless the Lord is behind it. Whether you have a profit or non-profit organization, it is the best to stay far away from having your family members and relatives having important positions in your organization. It doesn't look good to the people in your organization and especially to IRS. They will have a field day when they do an audit.

I've seen many Christian ministry leaders put their wives and children in their board of director positions, or to take over the ministries. Ministry is not a kingdom. It is the Lord who appoints one of His choice people, not by a man. You will never see my wife, my daughter, or son-in-law becoming a member of the board of directors, or an assistant pastor.

C. FRONT AND CENTER

Numbers 12:4-5 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. 5 Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.

Many of God's judgments are long in coming because He is so merciful and gives us tremendous opportunities after opportunities to repent from our sins, at least human perspective. But not in this case.

I wouldn't be surprised if Miriam and Aaron thought that God would use this situation to correct Moses, whom they thought was proud and dictatorial.

God heard their words, saw the evil motives in their hearts, and acted swiftly lest their sin spread among the people, because when leaders sin, the consequences can be disastrous.

D. GOD'S VINDICATION OF MOSES

Numbers 12:6-9 Then He said, "Hear now My words: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" 9 So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed.

Why was Moses special? While other prophets receive revelation through a dream or in a vision, the Lord spoke with Moses face to face.

At this point, some people would object those three words "face to face". According to Exodus 33:20, if Moses saw God's face, he would be a dead meat.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

How then could God speak with Moses face to face? Face to face is a figure of speech, telling of great and unhindered intimacy; Moses' face was not literally in front of the literal face of God, rather he did enjoy direct, intimate, conversation with the Lord.

Then you may wonder how I can come up with such a statement unless I have a Bible verse to back it up. As a matter of fact, I do have one:

Exodus 33:11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Miriam and Aaron wanted to have the authority and popularity of Moses, but not the responsibility he had. When they were standing against Moses, they were standing against the One who put Moses in charge of the nation of Israel. Not a very healthy idea if I might add.

Put yourself in Miriam's and Aaron's sandals by now. The Lord's anger was aroused and spoke against them in front of Moses and all the people in the camp. Then He departed from above the tabernacle. I bet that there was an extremely uncomfortable eerie silence for Miriam and Aaron. They were no longer cocky as before.

E. THE IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT FROM THE LORD

Numbers 12:10-12 And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. 11 So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. 12 Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!"

Leprosy was a disease of bodily decay and corruption. It was considered to be a "walking death" – and Miriam had a seriously advanced case of leprosy instantly. At this moment, God caused her body to reflect her heart.

I am so glad that the Lord does not deal with our pride like this quickly and with leprosy anymore. If so, every human being would be a leper.

Aaron seems a man easily swayed – he was swayed by a crowd wanting an idol and came up with the lamest excuse that should have recorded in the Guinness World Records; he was swayed by his sister who was the instigator of this shenanigan; and now swayed quickly back to a humble submission before Moses.

F. THE MOST HUMBLE MAN'S INTERCESSION

Numbers 12:13-16 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!" 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received again." 15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again. 16 And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

Until now Moses didn't say a word through this challenge by Miriam and Aaron, leaving his vindication to the Lord.

This is so important. When a leader is accused with petty, false, or self-motivated charges, the best thing to do is ignore them, and pray to the Lord to take care of them according to His will, and continue in His work as he was called to do by the Lord. Is it easy? No. Do you get vindicated quickly? In most cases, no. But the Lord is with you during the difficult and silent time.

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

It was a prayer for his accusers. It is no wonder why Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth.

While Miriam was cast out of the camp, the people of Israel didn't journey. There is no sin that does not affect the other people in our lives one way or another.

It's a serious thing to be a spiritual leader, because the greater the honor, the greater the responsibility. It's also a serious thing to try to go after the authority God has given to others.

1 Timothy 5:19-20 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Pride is one of the main reasons for jealousy.

2) When a leader is accused with petty, false, or self-motivated charges, the best thing to do is ignore them, and pray to the Lord to take care of them according to His will, and continue in His work as he was called to do by the Lord.

3) The rebellious sinner is always a cause of holding back the progress of God's people.