

November 24, 2019

GOD LEADS

Numbers 9:15-23

INTRODUCTION

From the wilderness to the Promised land. What a journey, filled with all kinds of twists, turns, deaths and demonstrations of His divine glory. We know that the children of God were wandering in the wilderness as a result of their own sin. But how would they get to Canaan having been so disobedient? Would it come through a mustered up, strapping up their boots type of obedience? The answers are within the activity of God among His people. The essence of this portion of the book of Numbers is to show that the Lord Himself will lead them and get them to Canaan in His own time and in His own way. He will lead them and, in the difficult days as well as the beautiful ones, they (and we) must simply trust that He is good and gracious and powerful enough to fight our battles to get us home. Let us follow His lead at all times by focusing on the realities below.

THE PRESENCE (Number 9:15-16)

The presence of God was everything for the people of God. It was more than a mere experience or sentimentality. It was His very presence abiding, in power, protection and guidance over His people in their journey. The presence of God was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15 as the certainty of God's promise that He would fulfill His word regarding the promised seed in the person we would come to know as Isaac (Genesis 12). In a mysterious yet powerful ceremony where God *passed between the pieces* He was, in this act, confirming to Abraham He and He alone would bring about the promise inspite of Abraham's doubts. The visible expression of this assurance was the smoking fire and flaming torch (Genesis 15:17) which would later, in this text in Numbers, come to symbolize His presence with His people. This fire would come over the *tent of meeting* which and transform ordinary materials into the very Holy Sanctuary of God. The main point is this: God is with His people, moving and advancing them towards His chosen and purposeful ends. They can be certain that they will get to the promised land because His presence is the assurance that He is with them and will bring it about. Today, as Christians, the presence of God is something of an extraordinary reality. His presence does not merely abide with us, but by way of the Holy Spirit, His presence is *within* us. As J.D. Greer has stated, Jesus inside of us is better than Jesus beside us! We can have assurance of glory, not by looking to ourselves, but by trusting His powerful presence within us, sanctifying and preparing us for that very day!

THE PRACTICE (Number 9:17-22)

Being in relationship with the sovereign Lord is a wonderful reality, yet it is also taxing when one thinks about what it means to be obedient to Him. It is often nerve wrecking to follow the Lord because we are always *certainly uncertain* that we should do such a thing and not do such a thing. We often times feel like moving for Him is the right thing and, at the same time we ponder whether being still is best. As the leader guide states, "*Neither doing something nor waiting is always the right response*" (page 16). Confusing? Yep! But here is the point: following the Lord means following *His* leadership and leadings, trusting singularly and exclusively His timing and provisions. The people of God did not move until He moved or the cloud lifted. If the Lord's presence abided over the tent, they stayed put. The life that the Lord was calling them to was one of sensitivity to His presence and obedience to His command. Whatever they felt was right to do did not dictate what they did. They only did what God did and moved when the Lord moved. That was the way in which they practiced of righteousness and holiness. So too, today, is that the way the people of God should move. But we often exhibit the combination of

anxiousness and impatience as well as *hesitance and reluctance*. How shall we then move? When the Lord prompts us to move! They had the physical presence to guide them but we now have the presence of God within us. We will only know to move or to stay when we are saturated with the Word and filled with the Spirit of wisdom, walking as His temples in holiness (1 Corinthians 6:19). For “no one knows the mind of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

THE PRINCIPLE (Number 9:23)

In a short, concise statement, the principle is this: ***Only God is in charge!*** Sounds simple and yet we often are pressed to press the limits of our thinking, rationale and position. The reason this principle is of great importance is due to the implication of what takes place when we live contrary to it. When the people of God take control where we have no right, authority or business, it is always prompted by idolatry and ends in even greater idolatry! The golden calf incident in Exodus 32 is an illustration of what happens when we forget the principle God is in charge. Believing they knew how best to handle the absence of Moses – thus the absence of God – the people decided to play religious and bring about spirituality where there seemed to be none. They knew better than God it seems. The result was the impending wrath of God, abated only by one *who had not* forgotten that the Lord was in charge. Thus, how we live, worship, gather as a people, treat others, handle our finances, spend our time, etc., are all situations in which we are prone to act as if we are in charge. But since God is in charge what we do with our lives and everything else is always to be dictated on the basis on honoring Him with it and seeking His pleasure in all that we do. The people did not move if God did not lead them to move. May the sovereign Lord continue to help us, His Bride, to remember we are under theocratic rule: The Lord is in charge!