

January 19, 2020

GOD COMMISSIONS

NUMBERS 27:12-23

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever followed another car to a specific destination? Before the days of cell phones (crazy!) I remember once following a friend from Alabama to his home in New York for his wedding. At some point, he must have forgotten that we were following him as he proceeded to weave in and out of traffic – out of sight! It was frustrating to say the least. At one point I thought about turning around but the occasion was too special to turn back. I drove until I saw him waiting for us on the side of the highway waving his hands. I was frustrated but at the moment I was relieved. The one who was leading me was still here and I could safely get to my destination. Israel is on the precipice of entering the promised land. Moses, their leader, cannot go in. He has been leading the way but now he will weave out of their sight. Can you imagine to fear? But God always has a plan.

FACING DEATH (Numbers 27:12-14)

The people of Israel are ready to cross the Jordan and begin the process of taking the land that the Lord had promised. Yet, Moses cannot go. He and Aaron were the only leaders the people knew to this point. Aaron, however, has already died and now, at the brink of a great moment of fulfillment, Moses will die. The Lord allowed Moses to see the land but said *“After you have seen it, you will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was Numbers 27:12,13*). Moses had disobeyed the Lord in the Wilderness of Zin by striking the rock rather than speaking to it (Numbers 27:14). While some might argue *“But this is Moses!”* the decision of the Lord was not arbitrary. Moses, the one who had seen God, acted in disobedience and, therefore, his death was just. What we are taught in this exchange is that the Lord shows no favoritism. The previous generation has slept because of their sin and now Moses, the last of that lot, would experience the same fate. It does not matter who we are or what our position may be, obedience to the Lord is to be primary in all that we do. Moses stood between God and the people in the sin of the golden calf, but none stands between him and the Lord now. What an incredible grace that we, like Moses time and time again, disobey the Lord and do not show forth his holiness, are not consumed. We have between us the Lord Christ, the mediator between God and man such that when we fail we can go to God, through Him, for mercy and pardon. Yet, while grace is ours, discipline in right living is also commanded. Race does not excuse our sin. It empowers our right living. God, still, shows no favoritism.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE (Numbers 27:15-17)

Moses, as a true, humbled leader would do, looks forward to the purposes of the Lord, seeking the Lord for the new leader (Numbers 27:15). The future belongs to the Lord and, therefore, the one who leads into that future must be appointed and approved by the Lord Himself. Too often when we seek for new leadership, especially after a failure, churches tend to work harder to not get the same man they had rather than seeking the man the Lord wants. Moses knows that the health and hope of the people lay in godly leadership. He must choose. The task that awaited the new leader was a bit different than Moses'. The new leader would need to be able to *“go out before them and come back in before them, and who will bring them out and bring them in...”* (Numbers 27:17). The new leader would need to be a military strategist, able to lead them men to battle victoriously. This was not required of Moses, but would be necessary to take the land from its current inhabitants. Yet, like Moses, this new leader would need to be skilled in shepherding the people of God. This would involve ensuring the law was kept and also that

the people would remain separated from those who worshipped other gods. The responsibility of this man was enormous, therefore, he could not be one who “volunteered.” He had to be called, selected and commissioned by God. This is such a great passage for us as we enter a new year (a new decade). Are we looking to the Lord for our future, living according to His commission or are we volunteering for things that “we” want or desire? In this New Year may our future be submitted to Him.

GOD PROVIDES (Number 27:18-23)

The Lord was sought and the Lord answered: *“Take Joshua son of Nun, a man who has the spirit in him and lay your hand on him”* (Numbers 27:18). Joshua was the natural choice. He led in the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17), was one of the scouts who searched out the land (Numbers 13:16) and, perhaps most important, he remained faithful when the other rebelled against Moses (Numbers 14:6). It is imperative in leadership succession that one has proven themselves to be loyal to the Lord (and the established leadership) and faithful in executing the plans of the Lord. Joshua was that man. In as much as God provided, visual approval had to be established as well. Moses was told by the Lord, *“Confer some of your authority on him so that the entire Israelite community will obey him”* (Numbers 27:20). With this conferred authority and the consecration of Joshua by Eleazar, it was obvious and clear to all that Joshua now assumed the role as leader of the nation. Seeking the Lord for leaders or whatever it is that we stand in need of is complex and simple at the same time. Simple in that we must seek the Lord for what we desire. Complex, in that we must be, humbly, involved in the process ourselves. Moses sought the Lord. The Lord provided and then told Moses to get involved. In this year may we aggressively be invested in what we seek from the Lord as aggressively as we seek Him for it