

Series: Questions

Title: Is the LORD's Hand Waxed Short?

Text: Numbers 11: 23

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There were some in the congregation in Israel that simply did not believe God. As they complained in their unbelief, unbelief began to sweep through the whole congregation.

- Verse 4: the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting:
- Verse 4: and the children of Israel also wept again,
- Verse 10: Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent:
- And Moses also fell into unbelief

Unbelief had taken the whole congregation. And the murmuring of those unbelievers greatly kindled the anger of the LORD: one, because by their unbelief they despised the LORD—they wanted flesh rather than the manna from heaven; two, because by their murmuring they sowed discord among brethren—and God hates that. (Pro 6: 19)

One thing Moses did which was far better than what the congregation did—Moses expressed his displeasure to God rather than men. Unbelief is best taken to our Savior in prayer. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. (Mk 9: 24) Otherwise, it will feed the unbelief of our fellow brethren and cause much discord.

So Moses made his complaint to the LORD. His two chief complaints were these:

1) Numbers 11: 13: Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

2) Numbers 11: 14: I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

So the LORD promised Moses help with his two chief complaints. Now notice, Moses asked first for flesh to appease the people and secondly for help to relieve his burden. That shows Moses concern was more for his brethren than for himself. But the LORD would provide for Moses in order of importance:

First, the LORD told Moses—**Numbers 11: 16: Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17: And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.** He was not taking the Holy Spirit from Moses. He was simply adding the Spirit to those men as well.

Secondly, the LORD said, **Numbers 11: 18: And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19: Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; 20: But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?**

The LORD promised Moses he would perform a spiritual miracle and a temporal miracle. Moses did not doubt that God could do the spiritual. But, his unbelief, made him doubt God's ability to do the temporal—**Numbers 11: 21 And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. 22: Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?**

So the LORD asked Moses this question, **Numbers 11: 23: And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short?**

Try to picture God's hand stretched out. But it is not quite long enough to reach his people. God asks Moses, "Is the LORD's hand waxed short?" Note the word "waxed." It signifies that Moses, once thought the LORD's hand was mighty to save but that it had now shrunk.

That is the question we will answer from this passage: Is the LORD'S hand waxed short?

Proposition: We will see through this whole passage what Isaiah 59: 1 declares, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

I. GOD'S HAND IS NOT WAXED SHORT TO RESERVE MERCY FOR HIS CHILD OF GRACE.

The LORD said the ungrateful, unbelievers were saying verse 20: "ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" Verse 10 says, "and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly;"

Sin & Grace

It is easy to understand Moses great burden—he is leading 600,000 people. But were Moses' words less full of sin and unbelief or worthy of anything less than God's anger? Moses accused God of afflicting him and of not showing him favor—**Verse 11: And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?** Moses was so overcome he even went so far as to say this—**Numbers 11: 15: And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.**

Brethren, Moses did the same thing as the unbelieving rebels did. Those whom God was angry with are an example of what Moses, and me and you, and every sinner is—an example of what we will do if left to ourselves. And the judgment God pours out on them is the justice that you and I, believer, deserve from God.

Yet, listen to God's answer to Moses--**Numbers 11: 16: And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel...18: And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh.** There is not a single mention of the sinful, unbelieving things Moses just said God answered in a most kind and tender manner declaring he would give Moses the two things he needed to relieve him of his burden. Even when Moses doubted God's ability to give them flesh for a month, God simply asked him this question, **verse 23: Is the LORD'S hand waxed short?**

God provided a blessing for Moses but judged the others. Why? It was not because Moses deserved better—far from it! The only difference between Moses and those unbelieving rebels is that God chose to be gracious to Moses before the foundation of the world.

Christ our Surety

Christ stood as Moses Surety. While Moses was saying to God, verse **12: Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?**

While Moses said that, Christ stood between Moses and God the Father, saying, "Father, I have conceived this child, I have begotten Moses. I am carrying him in my bosom, as a nursing father; this is my sucking child. I will bring him unto the land that you swore to his father Abraham. I'll take all his sins, not only these in this event, but all of his sins throughout his whole life, I'll bear all the wrath of divine justice that he owes Father. Pour out your

fury on me and let him go free.” Therefore, the LORD said, “What a loving prayer my child has prayed to me. I will be gracious to Moses because of my Son.”

The same is true of you and I to whom he has been gracious. Brethren, praise Christ Jesus for God’s unchanging, indestructible grace! Despite our unbelief, despite the murmurings in our hearts against God—still His ear is not too heavy to hear Christ intercede for us and his arm is not too short to reserve mercy for his child of grace for Christ’s sake.

Lamentations 3:22: It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Malachi 3:6: For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

II. GOD’S HAND IS NOT SHORT TO OVERCOME OUR UNBELIEF AND TURN IT INTO FAITH.

We have seen time and again that God’s question to sinners is to convict us of our sin.

Numbers 11: 23: And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD’S hand waxed short?

Mighty to Grant Repentance

Moses must have heard, “Moses, when I slew a lamb in place of all the firstborn in Egypt, passed over you, when I saw the blood, then you thought my hand was mighty to save.” Brethren, when God revealed Christ in you, when he made you see that he had carried all your sin away, when you saw him bear divine justice, when you saw him satisfy himself and redeem you, then you thought his hand was mighty to save. “Is the LORD’s hand waxed short?”

“Moses, when I divided the Red Sea, delivered you over, drowned Pharaoh and his army then you thought my hand was mighty to save.” Brethren, when you beheld Christ triumphing over sin, death and hell for you then you thought his hand was mighty to save. “Is the LORD’s hand waxed short?”

“Moses, when I turned the waters of Marah from bitterness to sweet so you could drink then you thought my hand was mighty to save.” Brethren, all the times the LORD has turned us from our bitter sin and made us drink sweetly of his Spirit then we thought his hand was mighty to save. “Is the LORD’s hand waxed short?”

“Moses just yesterday when I was consuming the rebels in fire and you prayed to me so that I withheld my wrath then you thought my hand was mighty to save.” Brethren, just last night we thought his hand was mighty to save. “Is the LORD’s hand waxed short by this morning.”

Oh, the power of unbelief! After beholding God perform many mighty works, unbelief made Moses forget all God’s works. Quickly! Unbelief is a great power that you and I have no way of overcoming.

Mighty to Give Faith

But thankfully, God’s hand is mighty to turn our dead unbelief into living faith once again.

Numbers 11: 23:...thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

When God says “thou shalt see now”—immediately thou shalt see! His word turned Moses from unbelief to faith. How do we know that?

Numbers 11: 24: And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

We saw the same thing with Joshua last week. God makes his servant believe God so that he declares the words of the LORD to God's people. That is what Moses did because God made him believe his word.

Ephesians 2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God

Now, brethren, beholding this miracle of grace—God able to speak and turn Moses to believe him—do you think the LORD's hand will be able to bring to pass what he promised? Sure he will.

III. GOD'S HAND IS MIGHTY TO PROVIDE PASTORS AFTER HIS OWN HEART—Numbers 11: 25: And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

God Promised It

The LORD promises to provide his people pastors and the Lord's hand is not waxed short, he is still able to do so.

Jeremiah 3:15: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding....23:4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

Isaiah 30:20: And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:

Christ Does It

Christ as the Man who is God, as Head over his church, gives us pastors. Ephesians 4: 10-11 says that.

Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Christ shall continue to provide faithful pastors.

Ephesians 4: 13: Till we all [all God's elect] come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: [until every member of Christ's body is called and his body is full.]

Irresistible Grace

If God has written a man's name down to be his pastor, God will find him and separate him for this work no matter where the man is.

Numbers 11: 26: But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

"They were of them that were written." Therefore, God called them to the work. Nothing hinders the Holy Spirit from finding his child and arresting them by resting on them.

Another Example is Saul of Tarsus—the apostle Paul—He was on his way to Damascus to arrest believers. Instead, Christ arrested him.

Galatians 6: 13: For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Pray for Laborers

When it was reported to Moses about these two men preaching in the camp, Joshua said to Moses, "forbid them."

Numbers 11: 29: And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

The Lord's hand is not short that he cannot provide pastors after his own heart. That is such good news for congregations who are praying for a pastor. God is able to provide and shall wherever it pleases him to do so. Let's rejoice with Moses and join those congregations in asking our Lord as Christ said, Matthews 9:38: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

IV. THE LORD'S HAND IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIS PEOPLE TEMPORAL BLESSINGS IN THIS EARTH—Numbers 11: 31: And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

Temporal Blessings

This was what Moses had more trouble believing than the spiritual blessings. Believer, why do we have trouble believing God can do temporal things? God is the power of every law of the universe—from gravity to weightlessness. God is the power of every force and element—from the slightest wind to the power of the sun. God is the power in every creature—God is the health of the healthy, the power of nourishment so food nourishes our bodies, God turns the minds and hearts of men whithersoever HE WILL.

But greater than all of those things combined, is God's power to forgive sin by the blood and righteousness of Christ Jesus, greater than temporal miracles is God's power to create spiritual life within a dead sinner, greater than temporal miracles is God's power to raise the dead and make our vile bodies like unto his glorious body—by the power whereby he is able to subdue all things. If the LORD can do these greater spiritual miracles he can most certainly do the lesser temporal miracles. Christ declared that when he absolved the sins of the lame man then made him to walk.

Matthew 9: 5: For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? 6: But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. 7: And he arose, and departed to his house.

To forgive sins takes far greater work and power than to heal bodily disease. Therefore, since Christ is able to forgive us our sins is able to provide us whatever temporal thing he pleases.

Brethren, do you believe God took human flesh and lived a sinless life? Do you trust that he fulfilled the law and put away the sins of all his elect by the sacrifice of himself? Are you resting in Christ believing that he arose triumphant from the grave to his throne of dominion? Do you believe he was able to send the gospel to you? Was he powerful enough to put a living new man in your dead flesh? Do you believe he remembers your sins no more? I know you do. I see you delight to hear it preached to you. Then let this be settled right here and now for every elect, redeemed, born-again child in this place:

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

God is even able to use our enemies—who cause us grief—to provide temporal things for us.

Numbers 11: 32: And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

But most who did that work, left the quails for others in the camp. God is even able to use our enemies to provide for us.

V. GOD’S HAND IS NOT SHORT TO POUR OUT JUDGMENT ON HIS ENEMIES AND RESTORE PEACE IN HIS CONGREGATION—Numbers 11: 33: And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. 34: And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

Just Reprobation

God gave them what they lusted for not for their profit, but as reprobate men, turned over to their lusts. (Ps 106: 15; 78: 18-33) They despised the presence of the LORD, they complained about having to follow and wait on the LORD, they lusted after Egypt’s fruits and hated angels food sent down from God and they murmured against the power of his hand to furnish a table in the wilderness for their bellies. Due to their own rebellion, God justly removed that very hand they murmured against removed his restraints, gave them over to their lusts. Then after they gathered it all up for Moses and Joshua and Caleb, he slew the fattest of them in judgment and buried them out of sight.

Settled His People

After doing so, he moved his people on to a better place.

Numbers 11: 35: And the people journeyed from the [graves of lust] unto Hazeroth [meaning settlement] and abode [settled.]

As Paul Harvey used to say, Now you know the rest of the story. “His hand is not short that is cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear!” But his hand is mighty to deliver all his people from the “the graves of lust” to abide settled by his grace in faith.

Amen!