

Series: Questions

Title: Why Were Ye Not Afraid to Speak Against my Servant?

Text: Numbers 12: 8

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Sunday we looked at a question out of Numbers 11. The next question is in the very next chapter, Numbers 12. And it relates to what happened in Numbers 11. Actually, there are two questions in Numbers 12 that God asked men.

The first is at the very end of **Numbers 12:8:...wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?**

The second question is found in **Numbers 12: 14: And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?**

Title: Why Were Ye Not Afraid to Speak Against my Servant?

I. FIRST, WE SEE THE DEPRAVITY OF FLESH IS UNIVERSAL—Numbers 12: 1: And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were among the distinguished servants of the Lord.

Micah 6:4: For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

All three were greatly blessed of God in Christ.

- Each was chosen of God unto salvation by God the Father before the world was made
- Each had Christ Jesus as their Surety from the foundation of the world in whom they were perfectly righteous.
- Each were born of God the Holy Spirit, granted repentance and faith in God and his Christ.

Like all saved sinners they were saved freely by the grace and work of our triune God in Christ Jesus, not based on any good or evil in themselves.

Even beyond that they were greatly blessed to be used of God. Moses was called to be God's prophet. In that office he was type of Christ the Prophet.

Aaron was chosen of God from among his brethren to be the High Priest in Israel. He was greatly used of God as a preeminent type of our great High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Miriam was chosen of God to be a prophetess—she led the women in song, praising the Lord at the Red Sea. (Ex 15: 20-21) In that office, she was a great type of Christ Jesus our true Prophet who leads his church in praise to God.

Hebrews 2: 11: For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12: Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

But all three were sinners. In that we see that the most used servants of God, like all believers, like all men and women in this world are sinners.

Brethren, all flesh is grass. And you and I as believers are NOT good in our flesh, either.

Romans 7:18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

II. CRITICISIM OF GOD'S SERVANT IS SIN WHICH LEADS TO GREATER SIN.

Follow this progression of sin. First, Miriam was the one who began this, she is mentioned first—**Numbers 12: 1: And Miriam**—this critical heart would have went nowhere else had she kept to herself. But then Miriam spoke to Aaron and Aaron joined her critical tongue against Moses—**Numbers 12: 1: And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.** Next, their critical tongue led them to demean Moses and his office—**Numbers 12: 2: And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses?** Lastly, their critical tongue led them to exalt themselves—**Numbers 12: 2—hath he not spoken also by us?**

Illustration: A mighty horse turned by a little bit in his mouth. A giant ship turned by a little helm, a little rudder.

James 3: 5: Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6: And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7: For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9: Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10: Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be....

Let's get to the source of criticism against a brother or sister. Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Mt 12: 34) Their speech about Moses marrying the Ethiopian woman was pretense. Their real problem was envy and strife in their heart.

In Numbers 11, Moses called the 70 men and God put his Spirit upon them to prophesy. Moses obeyed God. But he did not consult with Miriam or Aaron. That made Miriam and Aaron envious and strife filled their hearts. That is what she and Aaron were truly offended about, "And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?"

Brethren, guard the tongue. And do not hear or read critical talk or gossip, either! Know this, if we are inclined to speak against brethren, or hear or read such, it is coming from our own fleshly heart, not from God above—it is earthly, sensual and devilish according to James 3.

James 4: 11: Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12: There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

III. THIRDLY, AS BELIEVERS, WE SHOULD ALWAYS AVOID GIVING ANYONE CAUSE TO SPEAK AGAINST US—Numbers 12: 1:...And he HAD married an Ethiopian woman.

Indeed, Moses had done exactly what God forbid, what they accused him of. Friends may not say anything to you when they see you commit an offense. What Moses did was old news. Miriam and Aaron had never before brought it up. But as soon as your friends are offended by the gospel, your sin will be the first thing they bring up. Likewise, as soon as Moses obeyed God, it offended Miriam and Aaron, and his sin was the first thing they brought up. And do not imagine your dearest brethren will not do so—Miriam was Moses sister and Aaron was Moses brother.

1 Peter 4: 14: If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15: But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

Titus 2: 1: But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: 2: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3: The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4: That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5: *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. 6: Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7: In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8: Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Illustration: Holiday Parties are coming up! Remember who you represent—Christ Jesus the Righteous. Remember, God might one day bring those friends to this place, under the sound of the gospel. So do not give them any reason to reject the gospel because of you or to blame you in the future.

IV. WHEN YOU ARE SPOKEN AGAINST ALWAYS DEPEND UPON GOD TO HEAR AND DEFEND YOU—Numbers 12: And the LORD heard it. 3: (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

The LORD heard and Moses, in meekness, kept his mouth shut and depended upon the LORD to defend him. Child of God, know this, God always hears when his child is spoken against. He hears all things, knows all things.

Psalm 94:7: Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8: Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9: He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

Christ himself hears and defends his people. Moses was meek above all men on the earth but not more meek than the Man from heaven—the GodMan. None but the LAMB of GOD himself could say, “Come, learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart.” (Mt 11:29.) Christ depended upon the Father.

Psalm 38: 12: They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13: But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth. 14: Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs. 15: For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

Isaiah 53: 7: He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Not because he was weak but because Christ was meek—meaning he believed the LORD God and trusted in him to hear and defend him—that is what true meekness is.

Isaiah 50: 6: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. [why] 7: For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. [why] 8 *He is* near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9: Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who *is* he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up. [now hear Christ apply this to us] 10...you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light?...trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon...God. 11:...all ye that kindle a fire, that compass *yourselves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks *that* ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Christ was Moses Surety, his Righteousness, his Sanctification, so he was his Shield and his Defender, His Wisdom to keep his mouth shut and to depend on God to hear and defend him. Is it the same with you, brethren? Then be meek and trust God.

As we see the Lord defend Moses, as we hear the great things God speaks of Moses, think of Christ and our unkind words and manners toward our Lord Jesus—the Lord called Moses, Aaron and Miriam to the door of the tabernacle and the LORD came down in the cloud—**Numbers 12: 6: And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7: My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.**

God spoke to Moses in a more special way than the prophets of old. Hebrews 3 declares Moses was faithful as a servant, over God's house, but Christ as a son over his own house, whose house we are.

Numbers 12: 8: With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

That is how God spoke with Christ and it is how Christ has spoken to us and made us one with him.

“Mouth to mouth”—Through the preaching of the gospel—Romans 1:17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed **from Faith to Faith**: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. Christ speaks into the hearts of his servants through the Holy Spirit (Jn 14: 16-17)

“Even apparently, and not in dark speeches”—The Galatian believers did not see Christ crucified but they heard his gospel preached and Christ made it apparent in their heart, not in dark speeches, but by the Holy Spirit speaking in power—Galatians 3: 1:...before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?—same is true of us who believe.

“The similitude of the LORD shall he behold”—Moses saw the similitude of the LORD when he saw his glory from the cleft of the Rock—believer, we have been made to see the express image of God, the fullness of the Godhead in a body, through faith—

2 Corinthians 4:6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, these things are so of every believer that Christ Jesus has saved by his grace. So if anyone ever speaks against one of Christ's people then it must be asked, “wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Art, Scott, Eric?”

Application: Believer, sadly, if we speak against a brother or sister we speak against Christ himself!

Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Doesn't that make us want to put our hand over our mouth! “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

V. BRETHREN, GOD'S CHASTENING HAND MAKES US BEHOLD OUR SIN IN THE LIGHT OF OUR SAVIOR—Numbers 12: 9: And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. 10: And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.

Notice two things about this chastening.

First, Moses' face was made glorious from being in the presence of GOD in communion with God. Now, Miriam's face is leprous because GOD departed.

Brethren, sin, as far as the nature of it, is not something God puts in us. Sin is God removing his presence. That is how Adam became sin after he transgressed. It has a part in—has something to do with—how Christ was wounded when our iniquities were laid on Christ. God did not put something in Christ, but God removed his presence or turned his back on our Substitute. Remember the progression of Christ's soul becoming more and more troubled? It was not even God that strengthened Christ in the garden, it was an angel sent to do so. This turning of his back—or removing of his presence—progressed until on the cross Christ cried out, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me.” I am not suggesting that apart from the Holy Spirit Christ was sin. He was and is holy by conception. But in order to pay what his people owed, due to our iniquities laid on him, Christ bore separation—somehow—from God, which is what hell will be for those who meet God without the Substitute.

Likewise, part of our chastening comes when God reminds us that if he removed his Holy Spirit from us, all we indeed would be is leprous in sin, in our dead sinful flesh of Adam, like as Miriam became when God departed and Christ, represented in the cloud, removed from off the tabernacle.

Secondly, **“and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.”** Aaron was the high priest of God. It was his job to look upon a leper and pronounce them leprous. Imagine, Aaron's shame and how his heart was broken to do that! He partook of the sin. But he was not made leprous. She was in his place. His chastening was to look upon his dear loved one, who he was to blame for causing her to be a leper, while he went free.

Likewise, for us, though we committed the sin, though we deserved the justice, our chastening, is to be brought to look upon Christ, our dear loved one, who we caused to be put on that cross, to be made sin for us, by whom we go free.

By this chastening hand, God brings us to cry out for forgiveness to the very Redeemer whom we have offended, like as they did to Moses whom they had offended—**Numbers 12: 11: And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12: Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.**

You can tell when a person has not been made conscious of their sin by God—they defend themselves and blame others. But when they have—they confess their sins and beg Christ to have mercy on them and their brethren as did Aaron—**“Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead.”**

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

VI. SIXTHLY, CHRIST INTERCEDES FOR US SO THAT OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN BY GOD—Numbers 12: 13: And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

Moses was the one they spoke against, Moses was the one who interceded for them. Christ is the one we sin against, Christ is the one who intercedes for us. Because we have Christ as our Advocate, because Christ is our Propitiation, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin because in Christ God is both just and the Justifier of the believer.

1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

VII. THOUGH GOD FORGIVES US OUR SINS, GOD WILL LEAVE HIS CHASTENING HAND UPON US TILL HIS APPOINTED TIME—Numbers 12: 14 And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.

The LORD is saying what he said in

Hebrews 12: 9: “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”

If her earthly father had corrected her then her chastening would not be over this soon but it would last till she gave him reverence. So shall it be with our heavenly Father.

What correction! To not be able to come into God’s house would be no punishment at all to an unregenerate, unbeliever. But the most painful of all afflictions to a gracious mind is to be debarred from approaching the LORD'S sanctuary. David cried out to do so. So did Jonah.

But that same heavenly Father said, “**after that, let her be received in again.**”

- Not doubted again—**received again!**
- Not to have her sins brought up again—**received again!**
- Not to be chastened again—**received again!**
- Received of holy, holy, holy God! Accepted in the Beloved!

VIII. OUR SIN AFFECTS EVERYONE IN THE CHURCH—

First, the people could not move forward until Miriam’s sin was dealt with by God. **Numbers 12: 15: And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.**

Secondly, our sin makes us go backwards away from God—from Hazeroth it was a straight shot into the promised land—but from there they went further from the promised land to Paran—**Numbers 12: 16: And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.**

Go home remembering this: By God’s grace, by Christ’s blood, by the Holy Spirit applying his blood we are forgiven of all sin, believer. But never take sin lightly. Do not commit sin. Do not uncover sin. Thank Christ by serving him so as never to be chargeable by this world for our sin. And when ye sin remember, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Amen!