

## Depressed Servants (1) - Moses

There were times when great men of God went through periods of depression and despair. Times when they felt like David in Ps 55, *"Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest."* Moses experienced a day like this, a day when **'he lost his confidence in God'**. When God had called Moses the promise given was Ex 3 v 12 *"Certainly I will be with thee"*, but in Num 11 **'he lost his confidence in God'** and said *"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me...kill me, I pray thee"*. The burden of leadership weighed upon him and at this point it became too much. Moses had forgotten what Paul knew Phil 4 v 13 *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

**Read – Numbers 11 v 1 – 15** – circumstances that led Moses to **lose his confidence in God** and **Numbers 11 v 16 – 18, 23, 31 – 33** – the response of the Lord.

**The Cause v 1 – 9** – The sin of the people v4 *"the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the Children of Israel also wept again"*.

**The Incident v 10 – 15** – The despair of the man of God v14 *"I am not able to bear all this people alone"*.

**The Outcome v 16 – 35** – The answer of God v23 *"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"*

### The Cause:

In chapter 11 the Children of Israel are at their first camp after Sinai. At the close of chapter 10 the people leave Sinai guided and protected by the Lord. They were journeying to the promised land. How dreadful therefore, to read 11 v 1 *"And when the people complained"*. Could this be said of us? Believers in the Lord Jesus journeying to the promised land. Are we among those of whom it says *"the people complained"*? The reason for the initial complaint in v1 is not given, but the Lord moved swiftly in judgement. The law had been given, the covenant made and Heb 2 v 2 *"every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."* Note the danger of being on the fringe of Christian life, the judgement came upon them that were *"in the uttermost part of the camp."* This suggests that the complaining originated here, with people on the fringe, not really involved. The people cried to Moses, Moses prayed and v2 *"the fire was quenched."*

However, the lesson was not learned and within a short time v4 *"the mixt multitude...fell a lusting: and the Children of Israel also wept AGAIN"*. In Ex 12 we learn that when the Children of Israel left Egypt *"a mixt multitude went up also with them"*. It was with this 'mixt multitude' that the discontent began, but it spread through the camp. What was the reason for the discontent? Firstly there was an attraction, a desire, for that which had been left behind v5 *"we remember... which we did eat in Egypt freely"*. They remembered, as Heb 11 says *"the pleasures of sin"*, but forgot the bondage and sorrow. The second reason for the discontent was a lack of appreciation and satisfaction with the bread from heaven, God's provision. The people were discontent and they blamed Moses, the one who had led them from bondage in Egypt. What can we learn from this? First, beware of the company you keep 1 Cor 15 v 33 (NIV) *"Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character."* The discontent began with the 'mixt multitude', those who were not the Children of Israel, but spread through the camp. Avoid company that will discourage and unsettle your Christian life. Secondly, as a Christian 'old things are passed away' ....but are they in our daily lives? Are we satisfied with Christ?

### **The Incident:**

Moses was aware that v10 *"the people weep"* and God also took note. What God saw and heard resulted in *"and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly"*. God is ever aware of the activities of his people. He had guided, protected and provided and now so soon after Sinai there was complaining and discontent in the camp. God had been wronged and rightly his anger was kindled.

For Moses it was all too much, the burden and responsibility of leadership was weighing him down. He was aware of the demands of the people and was conscious of his own failures and lack of ability. He takes his problems and feelings to the Lord and says v11 *"thou layest the burden of all this people upon me"* and v14 *"I am not able to bear all this people alone"*. Moses' depression and despair was so great that he looked for death as a means of escape v15 *"kill me, I pray thee...let me not see my wretchedness."* He had lost his confidence in God. God had promised to be with him, but in this situation Moses forgot and felt he carried the burden alone.

What can we learn from this experience of Moses? Notice Moses took the problem to the Lord; he did not complain or show his despair in front of the people. Is this our first port of call when things go wrong? Another lesson to learn is from the cause of Moses' despair. A great man of God is brought low due to the behaviour, the attitude, the pressure of the people of God. Does our behaviour and attitude support and encourage the leaders and guides of God's people, or add to the pressure and burden they carry?

### **The Outcome:**

The response from the Lord is immediate v16 *"And the Lord said unto Moses"*. The Lord is always near and ready to help. In v 16 -23 the Lord answers the despair of Moses (see v14, 15) and the demand of the people (v4 *"Who shall give us flesh to eat?"*). In v16, 17 help is to be given to Moses. Selected men, *"elders of the people, and officers over them"*, would be enabled by the Lord that v17 *"they shall bear the burden of the people with thee"*. Compare the incident in Acts 6 where it was said by the apostles *"look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom"*. Seven men were selected to help the apostles, to relieve some of the burden. Note that men selected to be used by God, even in seemingly simple tasks had to be men of character.

In v 18 – 23 the Lord states *"the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat."* The provision promised would be bountiful v21 *"that they may eat a whole month."* Moses is amazed and his faith fails as he considers what the Lord has promised. Like the disciples, as they considered 5 000 men plus women and children to feed, Moses looks at the extent of the need – v21 *"six hundred thousand footmen"* – and the resource required – v22 *"Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them?"* Moses considered the problem from a human standpoint and forgot about God. The Lord teaches Moses a lesson that we should hold on to today v23 *"Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."*

At v 24 *"Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord"*. Time spent with God had lifted the despair and he leaves the presence of the Lord to carry out the will of the Lord. From v 24 – 30 the seventy men are selected and enabled by the Spirit of God. Moses enters the camp, but now with helpers to bear the burden v30 *"he and the elders of Israel."*

In the last few verses of the chapter (v 31 – 35) God provides as He had said. In a miraculous way God provides 'flesh to eat', but the judgement of God came as well. As the quails fell, the people did not repent, or stop to give thanks, but began to eat v33 *"And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people"*. Psalm 78 (see also Ps 106) says *"he gave them their own desire"*. Their demand was answered, but v34 *"there they buried the people that lusted."*

