September 27, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **21: The Sin of Moses**

AGAIN the congregation of Israel was brought into the wilderness, to the very place where God proved them soon after leaving Egypt. The Lord brought them water out of the rock, which had continued to flow until just before they came again to the rock, when the Lord caused that living stream to cease, to prove His people again, to see if they would endure the trial of their faith or would again murmur against Him.

When the Hebrews were thirsty and could find no water, they became impatient and did not remember the power of God which had, nearly forty years before, brought them water out of the rock. Instead of trusting God, they complained of Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!" That is, they wished that they had been of that number who had been destroyed by the plague in the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

They angrily inquired, "Why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

"And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts to drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him.

**Moses Yields to Impatience**

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

Here Moses sinned. He became wearied with the continual murmurings of the people against him, and at the commandment of the Lord, took the rod, and, instead of speaking to the rock, as God commanded him, he smote it with the rod twice, after saying, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" He here spoke unadvisedly with his lips. He did not say, God will now show you another evidence of His power and bring you water out of this rock. He did not ascribe the power and glory to God for causing water to again flow from the flinty rock, and therefore did not magnify Him before the people. For this failure on the part of Moses, God would not permit him to lead the people to the Promised Land.

This necessity for the manifestation of God's power made the occasion one of great solemnity, and Moses and Aaron should have improved it to make a favorable impression upon the people. But Moses was stirred, and in impatience and anger with the people, because of their murmurings, he said, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" In thus speaking he virtually admitted to murmuring Israel that they were correct in charging him with leading them from Egypt. God had forgiven the people greater transgressions than this error on the part of Moses, but He could not regard a sin in a leader of His people as in those who were led. He could not excuse the sin of Moses and permit him to enter the Promised Land.

The Lord here gave His people unmistakable proof that He who had wrought such a wonderful deliverance for them in bringing them from Egyptian bondage, was the mighty Angel, and not Moses, who was going before them in all their travels, and of whom He had said, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him." Exodus 23:20, 21.

Moses took glory to himself which belonged to God, and made it necessary for God to do that in his case which should forever satisfy rebellious Israel that it was not Moses who had led them from Egypt, but God Himself. The Lord had committed to Moses the burden of leading His people, while the mighty Angel went before them in all their journeyings and directed all their travels. Because they were so ready to forget that God was leading them by His Angel, and to ascribe to man that which God's power alone could perform, He had proved them and tested them, to see whether they would obey Him. At every trial they failed. Instead of believing in, and acknowledging, God, who had strewed their path with evidences of His power and signal tokens of His care and love, they distrusted Him and ascribed their leaving Egypt to Moses, charging him as the cause of all their disasters. Moses had borne with their stubbornness with remarkable forbearance. At one time they threatened to stone him. {SR 166.3}

**The Heavy Penalty**

The Lord would remove this impression forever from their minds, by forbidding Moses to enter the Promised Land. The Lord had highly exalted Moses. He had revealed to him His great glory. He had taken him into a sacred nearness with Himself upon the mount, and had condescended to talk with him as a man speaketh with a friend. He had communicated to Moses, and through him to the people, His will, His statutes, and His laws. His being thus exalted and honored of God made his error of greater magnitude. Moses repented of his sin and humbled himself greatly before God. He related to all Israel his sorrow for his sin. The result of his sin he did not conceal, but told them that for thus failing to ascribe glory to God, he could not lead them to the Promised Land. He then asked them, if this error upon his part was so great as to be thus corrected of God, how God would regard their repeated murmurings in charging him (Moses) with the uncommon visitations of God because of their sins.

For this single instance, Moses had allowed the impression to be entertained that he had brought them water out of the rock, when he should have magnified the name of the Lord among His people. The Lord would now settle the matter with His people, that Moses was merely a man, following the guidance and direction of a mightier than he, even the Son of God. In this He would leave them without doubt. Where much is given, much is required. Moses had been highly favored with special views of God's majesty. The light and glory of God had been imparted to him in rich abundance. His face had reflected upon the people the glory that the Lord had let shine upon him. All will be judged according to the privileges they have had, and the light and benefits bestowed.

The sins of good men, whose general deportment has been worthy of imitation, are peculiarly offensive to God. They cause Satan to triumph, and to taunt the angels of God with the failings of God's chosen instruments, and give the unrighteous occasion to lift themselves up against God. The Lord had Himself led Moses in a special manner, and had revealed to him His glory, as to no other upon the earth. He was naturally impatient, but had taken hold firmly of the grace of God and so humbly implored wisdom from heaven that he was strengthened from God and had overcome his impatience so that he was called of God the meekest man upon the face of the whole earth.

Aaron died at Mount Hor, for the Lord had said that he should not enter the Promised Land, because, with Moses, he had sinned at the time of bringing water from the rock at Meribah. Moses and the sons of Aaron buried him in the mount, that the people might not be tempted to make too great ceremony over his body, and be guilty of the sin of idolatry.

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **22: The Death of Moses**

MOSES was soon to die, and he was commanded to gather the children of Israel together before his death and relate to them all the journeyings of the Hebrew host since their departure from Egypt, and all the great transgressions of their fathers, which brought His judgments upon them, and compelled Him to say that they should not enter the Promised Land. Their fathers had died in the wilderness, according to the word of the Lord. Their children had grown up, and to them the promise was to be fulfilled of possessing the land of Canaan. Many of these were small children when the law was given, and they had no remembrance of the grandeur of the event. Others were born in the wilderness, and lest they should not realize the necessity of their obeying the Ten Commandments and all the laws and judgments given to Moses, he was instructed of God to recapitulate the Ten Commandments, and all the circumstances connected with the giving of the law.

Moses had written in a book all the laws and judgments given him of God, and had faithfully recorded all His instructions given them by the way, and all the miracles which He had performed for them, and all the murmurings of the children of Israel. Moses had also recorded his being overcome in consequence of their murmurings.

**Final Instruction to Israel**

All the people were assembled before him, and he read the events of their past history out of the book which he had written. He read also the promises of God to them if they would be obedient, and the curses which would come upon them if they were disobedient.

Moses told them that, for their rebellion, the Lord had several times purposed to destroy them, but he had interceded for them so earnestly that God had graciously spared them. He reminded them of the miracles which the Lord did unto Pharaoh and all the land of Egypt. He said to them, "But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which He did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it." Deuteronomy 11:7, 8.

Moses especially warned the children of Israel against being seduced into idolatry. He earnestly charged them to obey the commandments of God. If they would prove obedient and love the Lord and serve Him with their undivided affections, He would give them rain in due season and cause their vegetation to flourish, and increase their cattle. They should also enjoy especial and exalted privileges, and should triumph over their enemies.

Moses instructed the children of Israel in an earnest, impressive manner. He knew that it was his last opportunity to address them. He then finished writing in a book all the laws, judgments, and statutes which God had given him, also the various regulations respecting sacrificial offerings. He placed the book in the hands of men in the sacred office and requested that, for safe keeping, it should be put in the side of the ark, for God's care was continually upon that sacred chest. This book of Moses was to be preserved, that the judges of Israel might refer to it if any case should come up to make it necessary. An erring people often understand God's requirements to suit their own case; therefore the book of Moses was preserved in a most sacred place, for future reference.

Moses closed his last instructions to the people by a most powerful, prophetic address. It was pathetic and eloquent. By inspiration of God he blessed separately the tribes of Israel. In his closing words he dwelt largely upon the majesty of God and the excellency of Israel, which would ever continue if they would obey God and take hold of His strength.

**The Decease and Resurrection of Moses**

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Deuteronomy 34:1-7.

It was not the will of God that anyone should go up with Moses to the top of Pisgah. There he stood, upon a high prominence on Pisgah's top, in the presence of God and heavenly angels. After he had viewed Canaan to his satisfaction, he lay down, like a tired warrior, to rest. Sleep came upon him, but it was the sleep of death. Angels took his body and buried it in the valley. The Israelites could never find the place where he was buried. His secret burial was to prevent the people from sinning against the Lord by committing idolatry over his body.

Satan exulted that he had succeeded in causing Moses to sin against God. For this transgression Moses came under the dominion of death. If he had continued faithful, and his life had not been marred with that one transgression, in failing to give God the glory of bringing water from the rock, he would have entered the Promised Land, and would have been translated to heaven without seeing death. Michael, or Christ, with the angels that buried Moses, came down from heaven, after he had remained in the grave a short time, and resurrected him and took him to heaven.

As Christ and the angels approached the grave, Satan and his angels appeared at the grave and were guarding the body of Moses, lest it should be removed. As Christ and His angels drew nigh, Satan resisted their approach, but was compelled, by the glory and power of Christ and His angels, to fall back. Satan claimed the body of Moses, because of his one transgression; but Christ meekly referred him to His Father, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." Jude 9. Christ told Satan that He knew Moses had humbly repented of this one wrong, that no stain rested upon his character, and that his name in the heavenly book of records stood untarnished. Then Christ resurrected the body of Moses, which Satan had claimed.

At the transfiguration of Christ, Moses, and Elijah who had been translated, were sent to talk with Christ in regard to His sufferings, and be the bearers of God's glory to His dear Son. Moses had been greatly honored of God. He had been privileged to talk with God face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. And God had revealed to him His excellent glory, as He had never done to any other.

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **23: Entering the Promised Land**