

The Spiritual Advantage of Order and Discipline.

Readings Exodus 18 & Numbers 11

It might not seem to us that order and discipline are a spiritual (spirit given) quality, until we remember Paul's comment to Timothy, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is these qualities which enable a soldier to hold his place in a line of fire, the confidence someone who through training and experience is able to overcome not only the enemy without, but also the enemy within, who knows what to do and how to do it.

We have linked these two chapters together because they contain similar themes. They deal with similar questions from different view points. They contain material that is hard to understand and ever harder to accept. Many things in the Christian life fall into this category. However God's ways are not our ways, and that is just as well.

First, the Visit of Jethro. Exodus 18:1-12 He had two names, as did many people in Old Testament times: Jethro, a title of honour, such as, 'Excellency', and as Moses first knew him, Reuel - Friend of God. We read that he was the priest of Midian Exodus 2:15. He was both a priest and a prince, as was Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). We see him attending priestly duty in offering sacrifice in Exodus 18:12. The sacrifice was then shared as a meal with the elders, an evidence of his leadership ability. Jethro was a man of standing, a leader amongst his people. Midian is located in the Arabian desert, and as Moses was travelling through with his charges, it was logical that Jethro should seek him out with some unfinished business.

After his call beside the burning bush, Moses first returned to Jethro and sought permission to leave his employ, but did not disclose the Lord's dealings to him. Jethro, a kindly man, sent him off with a blessing of peace Exodus 4:18. Apparently he did not tell his wife Zipporah, whose name means 'a little bird', but he did request the circumcision

of his youngest son, as is the Hebrew custom, after the Lord further commissioned him along the way. She objected volubly.

The text says: Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Exodus 4:24.

This, it seems obvious, was a matter of discipline by God, but we are short on detail. God does not take lightly our dishonour of Him or His word. For examples, see Joshua 7:14-26, 2 Samuel 6:6-7 and Acts 5.1.

Zipporah obeyed Moses and performed the surgery, whereupon, God accepted this action as compliance, and it seems that Moses then sent the family back home to Jethro. (A new flint was in those days considered more hygienic for circumcision than a metal scalpel.)

Now that Moses (ch.18) had achieved his initial objectives successfully, and they were all just passing by the bottom paddock, the time was right to restore the family to Moses'. He also wanted to hear from Moses just how things had gone.

The counsel Jethro gave Moses his son in law, was to institute a chain of com-

mand to delegate responsibilities to other men. The principle sounds a little like:

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2AV

Moses listened because he knew that Jethro was qualified to speak on the subject. Jethro analysed and identified Moses' problem instantly. This organizational structure is outside our study parameters, but worthwhile for those in leadership. Jethro made his arrangement conditional on the approval and endorsement of God v23.

The Sin of Discontent Numbers 11. The mixed multitude, called in some Bibles a 'rabble' (mixed means 'collected' or 'gathered' was probably some half castes born of Israelites to Egyptians. They were people who had an identity with Israel, but also a stake in Egypt, and they were a thorn in Moses' flesh. We need to be aware of the mixed blood in our own nature, for when we ought to be wholly for the Lord there is something in us that wants to go back and longs for the delicacies of our Egypt. Oswald J Sanders calls this 'the sin of inordinate desire.'

Their discontent transferred itself to Moses v10-15. The fresh outbreak of complaint in the camp pushed Moses over the edge. He asked God to kill him, the punishment for disobedience Exodus 4:24, rather than that he should go on in the tasks allotted to him. The analysis of Jethro proved true. Exodus 18:17. The weight of protracted responsibility had worn him down. This is a common problem in missionary endeavour today.

God's remedy for his failing servant was the same as that of Jethro Numbers 11.16&17, and it is a pointer for those in missionary service today. God told him to select others to share the burden. The Lord then spiritually equipped them to the task. They stood with Moses to help and support him. Team ministry.

Depression and Disbelief. This is a chapter of deep depression for Moses. Depression robs us of faith that overcomes. Giant Despair locks us in his dungeon and it takes real faith to break out. When we read his conversation with God v10-15, we realize just how far down Moses was.

Moses received input from the world around He spoke the Imemy language (I & me) and He was very sorry for himself v10-15 He blamed God v12, and He wanted to spit the dummy v15 He magnified the problems, and He rationalised God's statements v21-23

Moses had one thing in his favour. He told all this to God. God was able to take it, and was able to do something about it

Relief and Retribution. God's answers usually answer several questions at the one stroke. His supply: vindicated his word, answered the people's complaints and longings, taught Moses a lesson and brought swift and selective v34 judgment to the greedy.

The quail was a dump of meat, 10 kilometres across and one metre deep. When we are in the dumps, because of the hardness of the way, we need to remember v23.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB, except where acknowledged.

Welcome **Glen Park Gospel Church**
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 Sundays 10.30 am

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