

## Spiritual Arteriosclerosis

Scripture Reading: Numbers 20.1-13

We are not surprised to hear of the brashness of youth, but the social problem of the neglectfulness of the aged is just as real, people who have been there and done that, and for whom the freshness and challenge of living has jaded a little. Old veins clog up and the cold eats into old bones, muscles wear out and our mobility is impaired. Better to stay in than be out and doing. Wait for a nicer day. Consequently, we are content to let things go. Socially and for family it is inconvenient, personally it can be unhealthy or even life threatening. Spiritually it can be just as problematic. It can make us neglect our time with the Lord every morning and we enter the day without prior spiritual connection. We lose the firmness of our grip on God's word. Zeal flags and we are content to allow someone else pick up the loose ends of our ministry. We can easily get out of touch and out of sorts. In our relationships with others we get as short and snappy as an old dog. Is this what happened to Moses? After all, forty years is a long time to be Prime Minister. And he was by now 120 years of age, almost double the rebel's three score and ten.

**Let's examine what happened.**

They also provoked *Him* to wrath at the waters of Meribah, so that it went hard with Moses on their account; because they were rebellious against His Spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips. Psalm 106:32&33.

The translators of the NASB have capitalised 'His Spirit' because the psalmist is writing about the trial that the Hebrews were to God. This thought comes down from v21.

The long history of complaint and contention against God and anger against Moses himself, and the recent loss of Moses' sister, caused him to lose his edge. It was more than a slip, it became a test of faith and of obedience:

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me ..." v12.

**A Similar Situation.** Consider:

Although it is now 40 years later, they are again at a Kadesh, a different Kadesh on the border of Edom.

The people are again thirsting for water and complaining.

Moses is commanded to take his staff again, after forty years, and go to a rock for water.

He was to do this before the people.

He was to also call this location 'Meribah', or contention.

Moses was running on experience, instead of living by the leading of the Holy Spirit. 'Been there, done that. This is what we do.'

Now experience is a wonderful thing. It gives confidence and efficiency to any work of the Lord and is not to be depreciated. However it can get in the way of Divine guidance when the servant of the Lord is not constantly in touch. God clearly gave Moses His guidance v8, but Moses was not listening to Him.

**A Different Situation.** Consider:

*This was a new generation.* The former had all but passed on. These people had only the stories of their fathers and perhaps vague memories of Egypt. They were not steeped in its philosophies.

*God was beginning again* in His plan to bring the people into their inheritance. This generation needed to be taught the lessons their fathers had rejected. This lesson was a confirmation of God's ability to provide, just as the people's later passage through the Jordan was a

confirmation of God's ability to deliver. The deliverance from Egypt under blood is a picture of our deliverance from the old life of slavery to sin, whereas the conquest of the land of inheritance is a picture of our possessing the fulness of life in Christ Jesus. For the former the Lord is the smitten Lamb, in the latter the Lord is our Intercessor.

This rock is not the same as that rock. Both are respectively a type of Christ. In Exodus 17:6, 'rock' is the word *tsur* and stems from the idea of sharpness. It is rock split or broken. In Numbers 20.10 it is *sela* meaning a cliff face or bed rock, the foundation lying under the soil. Psalm 78:15&16 Both words are used:

He split the rocks (*tsur-ym*, plural) in the wilderness and gave *them* abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock (*sela*, singular) And caused waters to run down like rivers.

This language is not just poetic. It is also descriptive of the events. Later Hebrew writings can give us more information of earlier events because their authors wrote using records which do not exist today (e.g. Num 21:14, Joshua 10:13). Formerly the rocks shattered, opening a subterranean basin; the later rock a spring, supplying a copious stream.

For regenerative cleansing we need an ocean to bury our many sins. For daily living we need a steady ever flowing life giving river. Hallelujah! Our Jesus is both!

**What was the sin of Moses?**

We might think that Moses sinned by pride, that he assumed he held God's power in his shepherd's staff. This is

because we read of him saying: ... shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock v10?

Pride is a bad thing in leaders. However we must look further. In v10 the 'we' is not a personal pronoun in the Hebrew, but is a word the translators adopted to aid us in our reading. We ought not to put too much emphasis upon it.

The Lord told him to speak to the rock before the eyes of the people as a witness to them. Moses spoke to the people and struck the rock. Now we do not, or ought not strike our intercessor. We ought to speak to Him and tell Him our needs. Nothing happened. So he struck the rock again. This time water gushed out!

**What are we to learn from this?**

First, this act lacks faith. It does not seem to be so. However, God says so v12.

Moses did not trust God to bring water out of the rock by speaking, so he did what he knew would work. Obedience is always better than sacrifice (self effort). Second, water flowed - despite Moses' disobedience. Learn the lesson. The gifts and callings of God are a permanent gift to His servants to enable their ministry Romans 11.29. Results in our ministries are not essential proof of spirituality. It is required of a steward that he be found faithful. If you are walking with the Lord and not getting results, speak to the rock and be faithful to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB.

Welcome

**Glen Park Gospel Church**  
 Lower Road, Eltham North  
 Sundays 10.30 am

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