

“Spirit-led Service”—Numbers 11:24-25

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Spirit-led Service”, is Numbers 11:24-25 → *Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

There seems to be an interesting dynamic of life where people have a desire to be a part of something bigger than themselves. It could explain why people flock around celebrities just to see them or get their autograph; why people can tell you specific details about movie stars, musicians or sports players; why stadiums are bursting at the seams to watch a concert or sporting event; why people will give unconditional obedience to leaders, rulers and possibly even dictators.

It could also explain how mobs get started where people are caught up in the “heat of the moment” to cause disruption, violence and bodily harm. Demetrius reacted to Paul’s preaching in Ephesus by leading a mob into rioting, even to the point where Scripture says that some

people *cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.*

(cf. Acts 19:32) It seems that people desire to be led somehow . . . but only to a point. Just see how quickly people will “turn” on their “idol” when she or he does not meet up to their expectations.

Moses, Yahweh’s appointed leader, encountered many struggles leading God’s people out of Egypt, into the desert and to the borders of the Promised Land. They too desired to be led but only to a point. Many times during their forty years of wandering in the desert Moses faced their whining, grumbling and complaining about their food and drink. (cf. Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:3) Then, when they did receive manna from the LORD they grumbled about it! (cf. Numbers 11:4-6) Numerous times the people challenged and conspired against the leadership of Moses (cf. Exodus 32:1; Numbers 12:1-2; 14:1-4; 16:1-3), which was tantamount to testing Yahweh. When Yahweh was about to bring punishment on the people some ten times (cf. Numbers 14:22), over and over again Moses pleaded for mercy on behalf of the very people causing him so much grief as their leader!

How could Moses be so patient? How could he be so kind to these ingrates? How could Moses remain faithful to Yahweh as His servant to these fickle sinners? How could he continue to be genuinely concerned about the well-being of these rebellious people to act for their good? Our text tells us it is because of the Holy Spirit which the LORD had given to

Him and Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that *patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness* flow as *the fruit of the Spirit!*

Our text reveals Moses at a very low point during his leadership. He says to Yahweh in Number 11:14-15 → *I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If You will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in Your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.* Have you ever felt the weight of leadership or service to others so heavily that it feels too great to bear? This is natural as sinners work together with sinners and have to deal with sin all the time. Whether it was Moses, Elijah, Job, Jeremiah or you the burden is actually too great for you to bear alone!

Our text says the LORD had Moses gather *seventy men of the elders of the people.* After he *placed them around the tent,* that is, the tabernacle where they worshiped Yahweh, *the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.* (verse 24-25a) Apparently the Israelites had some kind of leadership structure even in Egypt, focused on *the elders of the people of Israel.* (cf. Exodus 4:29) Soon after leaving Egypt Moses' father-in-law advised him to *look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens* to help him judge the people. (cf. Exodus 18:21) These

seventy elders may be from this group.

The leadership which these men had was derived from the necessity of some organization amongst the people. Moses' leadership was derived from Yahweh Himself. When the LORD *took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on these elders*, it empowered them to act on behalf of Yahweh Himself. Now they were to share in the leadership with Moses on the basis of the LORD's authority. They too were called to Spirit-led service, sharing the burden of God's people along side of Moses.

Such Spirit-led service is of utmost importance when dealing with sinners as sinners ourselves. It actually takes the burden off of you. You see, we sinners too easily take on the burden in our idolatry by being too prideful to ask for help . . . or, even if we do ask for help, we expect them to do it our way and in our time as if they're serving us. We may not ask for help because of our self-righeous attitude that "if you want a job done right, do it yourself!" The Holy Spirit needs to break down such sinful pride and idolatry, bringing us to repentance of such sin so that we can be servants of God's grace—His **undeserved favor** to others! This is why God tells us in 1 Peter 5:5 to *clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Notice what happened when *the Spirit rested on these men—they*

prophesied. This was some kind of extraordinary manifestation of divine power which took place to validate the authority of the seventy elders which apparently, when they left the tent, was no longer available to them. It happened a number of times with Saul, the first king of Israel, when he met a group of prophets prophesying. (cf. 1 Samuel 10:6,10; 19:23-24) It seems to be a validation of leadership established by Yahweh in the presence of His people. This miraculous manifestation of the Spirit was intended simply to give to the whole nation the visible proof that **God had endowed them with His Spirit**, as helpers of Moses, and had given them the authority required for the exercise of their calling.

To reinforce the fact that the LORD was in charge—not Moses and Aaron—two men in the camp also prophesied as the Spirit came to rest on them. Even though they were not in Moses' presence they were still in the presence of Yahweh! They would all know for certain that it was the LORD Who was leading, providing for, protecting and saving His people! Not Moses or any other leaders.

The Holy Spirit has been given to every person who trusts in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. We too feel a burden for sinners to be taken to the Promised Land of heaven and the desire for them all to make it there through faith in Jesus. The promise of Jesus from Acts 1:8 says *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses . . . to the end of the earth*. You received the gift of

the Holy Spirit in your baptism (cf. Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5) and are gifted for service by the Holy Spirit everyday.

You are actually gifted by the Spirit for leadership as well—for leading others to Jesus. 1 Corinthians 12 lists various gifts of the Spirit used in service to God and says: *To **each is given** the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good . . . All these gifts are empowered by one and the same Spirit, Who apportions to each one individually as He wills.* (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7,11) Once again, it takes the burden off of you as you simply function in Spirit-led service to the Lord Jesus in the daily vocations and activities of your life, looking for the Holy Spirit to do His work in His way in His time through you! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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