

“Who Is Indispensable?”—Numbers 11:24-29

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “Who Is Indispensable?”, is Numbers 11:24-29 → *So 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. Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

If you were to take inventory of your life what things would you conclude

are indispensable for living? Certainly the answer to such a question would depend upon the culture in which you live, your standard of living in that place, and your expectations of life itself. Aside from food, clothing and shelter, many in our culture today would consider electricity, a car, a TV, a phone (more specifically a smart phone), a computer and any number of other things as indispensable to living. While some may include relationships with others as indispensable to living, I wonder if the same could be said about God.

People actually face the dispensability of relationships every day. People are treated in a dispensable manner on many different relationship levels: Employees who are laid off or fired with the next person in line ready to take their jobs; spouses who are replaced through affairs and divorce leaving spouses and children feeling dispensable; the leader of a group or organization who is removed or steps down to watch someone else immediately step in and take control. While a person is recognized as important in a position or task he can quickly experience his dispensability.

This happened with Moses and his leadership many times as he led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Whenever things did not go their way they grumbled against Moses, even threatening to dispense of he and Aaron! (cf. Numbers 16:1ff.) Even though the LORD was providing for the people day by day in His miraculous way over and

over again, they grumbled and complained against Moses. Moses was pretty important until their expectations in life were not fulfilled. Suddenly Moses and Aaron were dispensable! No wonder Moses felt the way he did as he prayed in Numbers 11:14 → *I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me.*

These people actually viewed the LORD as dispensable! Grumbling about their situation in life was actually grumbling against God's providence. Their longing for life back in Egypt was actually a denial of God's work of deliverance and salvation in their lives! This is what sinners do when life expectations are not fulfilled. God and His will becomes dispensable because He isn't giving me what I want, when I want it, how I want it! Before you know it, unbelief has set in and people give up the most indispensable relationship of their lives—a relationship with God!

During their wilderness wanderings the LORD was teaching His people to live by **complete** faith and dependence upon Him. Beyond simply keeping His people alive in the desert, it was His way of testing their trust in **and** obedience to Him. Years later Moses would remind them in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 about *the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He*

humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna . . . that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. In other words, God's word is indispensable for obedient living in your life!

In connection to Moses' despair the LORD recognized the importance of using frail sinners to bring His grace into the lives of others. Even during those times when our service seems to be making no impact on others and we feel dispensable—that someone else could do better—God shows His indispensability! After promising to meet the peoples' idolatrous grumbling with gracious providence, God also provided Moses with help overseeing these two plus million people. It is the indispensable help which all of us need as we serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit.

Through all the experiences we face in life we must recognize that the LORD's gracious providence is indispensable **in every way**, not just His providing for our physical needs but also providing for our spiritual needs with His grace in Jesus and His gracious Holy Spirit's power!

As the LORD provided Moses with the help he needed to lead these people it could only come by His gifting them with the Holy Spirit. At His command Moses *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. (cf. verses 24-25) In the midst of Yahweh providing leaders to help Moses He also gifted them with His Holy Spirit so that they would be able to lead **by His gracious power!** God always gifts the called. The Spirit was indispensable to the accomplishment of their leadership!

Interestingly enough, Joshua saw things a little differently. When the LORD placed His Spirit on two of the elders who had remained back in the camp they also prophesied. When Moses was informed about it Joshua said in verse 28 of our text: *My lord Moses, stop them!* Could it be Joshua thought the leadership and presence of Moses was indispensable to receiving God's Spirit. While Joshua apparently viewed their prophesying like a dishonor to Moses, Moses responded in verse 29 → *Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!* His desire was for all of God's people to prophesy—to speak God's Word and Will to others as they serve Him!!

So . . . who is indispensable? Was Moses? Were the Israelites? Are we? Is the LORD? You are so indispensable to God that He kept His promise to save you from eternal damnation and bring you eternal life! He took on human form for you to deliver you from your slavery to sin and the devil in the Person

& Work of Jesus! God's love for you in Jesus it absolutely indispensable!

Functioning in this relationship of grace and love, God also sees us as indispensable for bringing that forgiveness to others. However, it is based upon His working in and through us by His Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is indispensable to God gracious working in the lives of people, both in the giving and receiving of His grace by faith. Likewise, the Holy Spirit will also convict you when you begin to think you are indispensable to His work because of self-righteous pride, so that you will repent and continue the indispensable work of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others in humility.

Actually, the account in our text serves as a reminder to watch ourselves so that we don't fall into idolatry, self-righteously thinking we're indispensable. 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 says: *These things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.* We have the fulfilment of the ages in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ! He gives us His Holy Spirit in baptism and through His Word every single day to empower us to serve the LORD, to be faithful to Him and to keep us standing firm in that indispensable faith! Amen.

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