

Ministry of Grace Church

Numbers Chapter 16 – Speaker Notes

For several months now we have been following the children of Israel as *Yahweh* led them out of slavery in Egypt. They have witnessed miracle after miracle from *Yahweh* which have demonstrated two things: how much *Yahweh* loves and cares for His chosen people, and how powerful He is, nothing is able to thwart His purpose.

Last time we looked into chapter 14 of the book of Numbers. There we saw the Israelites react to the report of the 12 spies sent in to evaluate the land that *Yahweh* was giving them. Unfortunately, ten of the spies were only looking with their physical eyes. As a result, they saw a land that flowed with milk and honey, just as *Yahweh* had promised them, but they also saw giants and well-fortified cities. The children of Israel believed the false report of the 10 spies, but they refused to listen to the report of Caleb and Joshua who said that the land was, indeed, a land that flows with milk and honey. But, in spite of the giants and their fortified cities, they urged the people to immediately go in and conquer the land.

Had the children of Israel been looking with their spiritual eyes, remembering all the things *Yahweh* had done for them, especially what He had done for them when the odds had been heavily stacked against them, they would have recognized a situation where *Yahweh* excels in protecting and providing for His chosen ones. So, because of their lack of faith, the people only saw with their physical eyes and decided to choose a new leader to replace Moses so they could return to Egypt. The people picked up stones to kill Moses, but when they did, the glory of *Yahweh* appeared at the Tent of Meeting and He announced that He was prepared to kill all the people of the children of Israel and to make a new nation with Moses as its head.

After Moses interceded for the people, *Yahweh* agreed to pardon the sin of the people. But – He said that none of the people 20 years old and above would enter the promised land. He told Moses that they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until everyone 20 years old and up had passed away. Then, as punishment for the 10 spies who brought the bad report, *Yahweh* brought a plague that killed the 10 spies. Here's how Korah and his compatriots responded.

Numbers 16:1

Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men.

From Exodus chapter six we know that Moses and Aaron were the sons of Amram, the eldest son of Kohath. Korah was the son of Izhar, the second born of Kohath. Just before leaving Mt. Sinai, Moses was instructed to number the Tribe of Levi. At that time Elzaphan, one of Korah's younger cousins, was identified as the leader of the families of the Kohathites:

with Elizaphan the son of Uzziel as chief of the fathers' house of the clans of the Kohathites.
(Numbers 3:30)

It is possible that Korah felt slighted by having his cousins Moses and Aaron leading the Israelites and by having been passed over as the leader of the Kohathites. By the laws of primogeniture, he (Korah) should have been identified as the head of the Kohathites after Moses and Aaron.

Also, from **Numbers 26:8-9** we know that Dathan and Abiram were descendents of Reuben, the first-born son of Jacob (Israel). And, in **Genesis 49:3-4** we read that Jacob cursed the line of Reuben because of his sin against his father. From this point on, we find that Judah was lifted up to be the line of promise

and eventually the line through which the Messiah would come. Since Dathan and Abiram were of the family of Reuben, they may also have been jealous because their family had been skipped over so many years before.

A man by the name of On was also one of the leaders of this revolt. Like Dathan and Abiram, he was of the tribe of Reuben. However, after this mention of his name he is not referred to again throughout Scripture. Some scholars believe that On separated himself from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram after he heard what Moses said to them.

It is also interesting to note from Numbers chapters two and three, the encampment of the Kohathites was directly in front of the encampment of the Reubenites.

Numbers 16:2, 3

And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men. They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”

Our text says that these rebels “rose up” before Moses. This is a slang expression in Hebrew that persists to the present day. It means that these people stood up to Moses, they confronted him, and they resisted his leadership.

These 250 chiefs of the congregation are referred to as, “well-known men.” This is from the Hebrew word that means, “a name” or “a title.” The implication is that these men had made a name for themselves. That is, they were well known and respected. These who joined themselves to Korah were not the rabble of the mob, they were upstanding and respected leaders of the children of Israel.

“all in the congregation are holy” – This is a clue as to what Korah’s rebellion was all about. It appears that he was not rebelling against Moses’s leadership but against the fact that Aaron had been named the High Priest. After all, had not *Yahweh* declared in **Exodus 19:6** that the entire nation was a holy nation and a kingdom of priests?

There is a lesson that we can learn from this. The practice of taking scripture out of context has been going on for millennia. What do I mean? Look at this verse along with the verse just in front of it.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ ...” (**Exodus 19:5, 6**)

Notice, there is a condition placed upon the Israelites being declared a holy nation and a kingdom of priests; “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant.” They hadn’t, therefore they weren’t.

Numbers 16:4-7

When Moses heard it, he fell on his face, and he said to Korah and all his company, “In the morning the LORD will show who is his, and who is holy, and will bring him near to him. The one whom he chooses he will bring near to him. Do this: take censers, Korah and all his company; put fire in them and put incense on them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You have gone too far, sons of Levi!”

We see, once again, that Moses natural reaction to any problem was to humble himself before God before reacting to the attacks of his detractors. His response to Korah and his confederates was that God chooses who is holy and who He will allow to approach Him. Once again, we see the battle between

man's choosing for himself and God's choosing. This was not a democratic process nor was this a democratic nation. This was a theocratic process and a theocratic nation. God was, and is, the leader of His people and He chooses whom He wishes to serve Him. In this case, God had chosen Aaron as the High Priest during the time that Moses was with *Yahweh* on Mt. Sinai (in spite of Aaron's leading the people into false worship).

“Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. (Exodus 28:1)

“Take censers ... put fire in them and put incense on them before the LORD” – The offering of incense was the only way that the priest was allowed to approach the holiness of *Yahweh*. Not only did it present a sweet-smelling aroma to God, but it also produced a cloud of smoke as a separation and a protection between sinful man and the Holy *Yahweh*. Also notice that there has already been a demonstration to the children of Israel of what happens when this act is performed based on self-will rather than the instruction of a Holy God. Right after Aaron and his four sons had been consecrated as priests of God, two of Aaron's sons (Nadab and Abihu) offered incense before God out of self-will rather than *Yahweh's* direction. (see *Leviticus 10:1-3*)

Using their own words against them, Moses then reprimanded the rebels who were trying to exalt themselves instead of allowing *Yahweh* to exalt whom He wishes. He said, “You have gone too far, sons of Levi!”

Numbers 16:8-11

And Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, and that he has brought you near him, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? And would you seek the priesthood also? Therefore it is against the LORD that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him?”

Moses then reminded Korah and his allies that *Yahweh* is in control and that He has already set apart the entire tribe of Levi to serve as a priestly tribe (see Numbers chapter 3). But that was not enough for the Korahites even though they were the ones who were responsible for the care and transportation of the articles in the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle (including the ark of the covenant). (see *Numbers 3:29-31*) And, Moses made it very clear that Korah and his allies were not challenging him and Aaron, they were challenging *Yahweh*.

Moses made it very clear that the Korah's complaint was not Moses's leadership, but Aaron's position as High Priest when he said. “What is Aaron that you grumble against him?”

Numbers 16:12-15

And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and they said, “We will not come up. Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also make yourself a prince over us? Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up.” And Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, “Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed one of them.”

Though co-conspirators with Korah, Dathan and Abiram were not willing to confront their adversaries face to face. Instead, they decided to murmur and complain, causing dissention among the people. This

more insidious course of action served to display their own cowardice in the face of Moses's humble obedience to *Yahweh*.

They did, however, make it very clear that what they were upset about was not the fact that Aaron was chosen over them. They were not against the High Priesthood of Aaron. They were against Moses! They accused him of poor leadership, first, because of his taking the entire nation of Israel **out** of a land flowing with milk and honey (**you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey**). This sarcastic accusation is so devoid of fact as to be laughable. In Egypt the Israelites had all the leeks, garlic, and fish they wanted, but Egypt clearly was not a land flowing with milk and honey. And - what riches the land of Egypt did have were reserved for the Egyptians, not the Israelite slaves. Secondly, they accused Moses of failing to bring them into a rich and prosperous land.

If we go back to the root cause of this entire rebellion, we see that it was *Yahweh's* judgment of the people for being unwilling to follow Him into the Promised Land and then refusing to retreat at *Yahweh's* command. So we see that the sinful disobedience of the people has led them progressively into deeper and more willful disobedience. The judgment of death in the wilderness was not Moses's doing (Moses prayed to *Yahweh* to spare all the Israelites), it was *Yahweh's* judgment, but Dathan and Abiram blamed Moses.

We also see here that they didn't like Moses's leadership because they weren't given what had been promised to them. They saw the failure of their self-willed attempt to enter the Promised Land against *Yahweh's* desire as Moses's failure (perhaps because Moses had refused to go with them). This is a supreme example of the people blaming their leadership for their own sinfulness and disobedience. Their eyes have been so totally focused on earthly things and their earthly leader that they have failed to see God for who He is, what He had already done for them, and what He desired to do for them in the future. They have not learned to "lift up their eyes."

We see here that the reason that "**Moses was very angry**" was not because of the affront to himself, but because of the ingratitude toward *Yahweh*, Who deserved praise and glory, not complaint and reproach. These rebels had challenged the authority of *Yahweh* to choose for Himself. How absurd!

Numbers 16:16-19

And Moses said to Korah, "Be present, you and all your company, before the LORD, you and they, and Aaron, tomorrow. And let every one of you take his censer and put incense on it, and every one of you bring before the LORD his censer, 250 censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer." So every man took his censer and put fire in them and laid incense on them and stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron. Then Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

Here we see the final showdown. In the morning, probably at the time of the morning offering, Korah and his confederates were assembled against Aaron and the priests.

Not only did Korah have his co-conspirators with him, he also gathered all the children of Israel. The implication is that he stirred-up the entire nation of Israel against Moses and Aaron. When he had everyone standing in opposition to Moses, we are told that, "**the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.**" Just as He had suddenly appeared to the whole congregation when they intended to stone Caleb and Joshua, the glory of *Yahweh* suddenly appeared here to all the people. The scene here consists of Moses and Aaron, accompanied by the priesthood of Aaron's family, standing against the entire nation of Israel, when suddenly the light of God shone forth. The overwhelming number of people standing against Moses and Aaron might have given courage to Korah ... until God displayed His

magnificent glory. This was probably in the form of His Shekinah glory exploding out of the cloud which resided over the tabernacle. Since the people were all gathered around the tabernacle, the glorious light would have been frightening, even overwhelming the people.

Numbers 16:20-24

And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?” And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Say to the congregation, Get away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.”

God’s message was then directed to Moses and Aaron, although it is reasonable to assume that the entire congregation heard the proclamation of *Yahweh*. The message from *Yahweh* to Moses and Aaron was clear, “Move away from the remainder of the children of Israel so that I can kill them all and leave you alive.” This is now the third time that God threatened to wipe out the entire nation of Israel.

Upon hearing once again that *Yahweh* planned on killing all the Israelites, Moses and Aaron, “... fell on their faces.” This is probably not the response that you or I would have made in such a situation. Here we have the entire nation of Israel opposing Moses and Aaron, intent on defeating them and removing them from leadership. Yet, when God proposes to destroy the people and save Moses and Aaron, Moses and Aaron fall on their faces and pray for forgiveness for the people who opposed them.

As Moses was negotiating with *Yahweh* regarding the rebellion, he said, “shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?” The implication here is that Moses believed the people to be innocent of Korah’s sin, guilty only of following bad advice. It is obvious, however, that *Yahweh* recognized the sinfulness of all the people for He would have killed them all. However, once again, respecting the prayer of Moses, *Yahweh* agreed to execute judgment only against those who instigated the riot in the first place. The entire congregation was told to separate themselves from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Numbers 16:25-27

Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away with all their sins.” So they got away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

Recall that in verse twelve Moses invited Dathan and Abiram to come join the remainder of the congregation at the tabernacle of meeting for the confrontation, but they refused. So, now Moses invites the remainder of the congregation to go with him to the tents of Dathan and Abiram. Once there, Moses commanded all of Israel to separate themselves from these wicked men, which they did. Perhaps the miraculous appearance of the glory of *Yahweh* had already convinced them that Moses was in the right and that Korah and the other rebels were in the wrong. Whether that is the case or not, the people listened to Moses and did as he instructed.

The next thing we see is that unlike the penitent people around them, Dathan and Abiram stood proudly against Moses, still believing themselves to be in the right. Note that those who refuse to listen to God will only listen to themselves, to their own detriment. The tragedy of this situation is highlighted by the fact that the families of these godless men were led astray by those who were most responsible for taking care of them.

Numbers 16: 28-30

And Moses said, “Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD.”

Moses, led by the Spirit of God, now makes a bold proclamation regarding the judgment of these rebels. He proclaims that they will be judged for opposing *Yahweh*. But he proposes that if they are judged in any way like others have been judged in the past; by fire from heaven, by plague, by the swords of the enemy, or even any “natural” cause, then *Yahweh* has not sent Moses.

Moses proclaims that if he is judged by *Yahweh* to be in the right, then the rebels will be judged in a new way, a way that had hitherto not been known. And - not only did he announce that they would be killed in a new way, he even prescribed what this new way would be. This type of judgment had never been experienced by the Israelites or anyone else.

Verse 30 makes a theological statement about the place of the departed dead. It is referred to here as “*Sheol*.” This word is sometimes translated as “the pit.” It comes from the Hebrew word that means “the world of the dead.” It is equivalent to the Greek word *Hades*. Though these two are sometimes translated as “the grave,” it is a specific place of torment referred to by our Lord:

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. (Luke 16:22-23)

Notice that the rich man was not in torments in the grave, he was being tormented by flame in Hades.

Moses proclaims, “But if ... the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up ... and they go down alive into Sheol” – This is a key verse in describing exactly where Sheol (Hades) is. It is down inside the earth!

Numbers 16:31-35

And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. And all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up!” And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.

As with the previous appearance of the Shekinah glory of *Yahweh*, the action of judgment against the rebels occurred swiftly, without hesitation. The rebels, their families, and all their possessions were swallowed-up and they “went down alive into Sheol.” They did not simply die and then get ushered spiritually to some other location. They went **down - alive** into *Sheol*!

That this was not the end of the sons of Korah is evidenced by the reference in **1 Chronicles 6:18-22** and **1 Chronicles 9:19** to the sons of Korah having been assigned as gatekeepers of the Temple. It is also commonly believed that some of the descendants of Korah are the ones attributed to having written some of the Psalms. (See **Psalms 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87, 88**)

The people who had gathered around to view the stand-off fled immediately. It is most likely the result of their own guilty conscience that caused them to fear being swallowed up by the earth like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moses’s proclamation of “a new thing” in describing the death of the rebels only

applied to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families. Those who had joined themselves to these rebels, those who presumed to become priests apart from God's calling and anointing, who were still standing in front of the tabernacle, in the presence of the pillar of cloud, were judged by fire from heaven (from the cloud?). These men were "consumed" by the fire, leaving behind only their ashes (see below). Thus, not only were their families spared, but the bronze censers were left behind and would serve as a reminder to all Israel, especially the priests, of the holy office to which the sons of Aaron had been called.

Numbers 16:36-40

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, for they have become holy. As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel." So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar, to be a reminder to the people of Israel, so that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, should draw near to burn incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his company—as the LORD said to him through Moses.

Since Aaron was occupied offering incense before *Yahweh*, and because he could not defile himself by coming into contact with the dead bodies of those who had just been judged, Eleazar his son was given the task. The censers had previously been consecrated to holy use and, having been defiled by the offering of improper incense the censers were now to be beaten into sheets to be laid over the altar.

These were not golden censers, as some suppose, but bronze censers. These were all taken and beaten into sheets, or plates, of bronze to be laid over the altar on which all future burnt offerings were to be offered. This was a bronze altar and would now have extra layers of bronze sheets laid on it as a reminder to the people and to those who burned the offerings of the holiness of God and that the priesthood was reserved for only those whom *Yahweh* chose.

Numbers 16:41-45

But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." And when the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces.

As incredible as it may seem, the children of Israel now complained against Moses regarding the judgment of *Yahweh* ... the very next day! They had willingly joined forces with the rebels initially, then backed away when Moses pronounced the judgment of *Yahweh*. The type of judgments, the ground splitting open and fire coming down from heaven, were clear demonstrations that the judgment came from *Yahweh*, not from Moses. Nonetheless, the people accused Moses and Aaron of the death of these sinners. They totally ignored the fact that it was Moses's and Aaron's intercession (see verse 22) that prevented *Yahweh* from killing them as well. Their complaint may have been fueled by the fact that the 250 men who were killed with fire from heaven were leaders of the people, famous men, men of renown. (see [Numbers 16:2](#))

Once again, we see God's swift reaction to the rebellion of His people. We also see the anger of the LORD and His intent to destroy all of Israel. This is now the fourth time that *Yahweh* had threatened to

destroy all of Israel. He even displayed a physical manifestation of His anger against the people by projecting His Shekinah glory before them. And once again, we also see the humble intercession of Moses and Aaron placating the anger of *Yahweh*.

Numbers 16:46-50

And Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun.” So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. And Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, when the plague was stopped.

Aaron, the High Priest who the people had only recently rejected, now performs the function of the very office the people sought to take away from him to save the people from *Yahweh's* judgment. Though we aren't told the nature of this plague, we can deduce from the text that not only was it a rapidly spreading plague, but it claimed the lives of its victims with surprising speed as well.

In just a short amount of time, certainly less than a day, 14,700 of the Israelites died. And this was in addition to the 250 leaders, plus Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families who had died the previous day. And – these were in addition to all those who had died trying to enter the Promised Land against *Yahweh's* instructions. The number given here equals roughly 2% of all the Israelites.

So What?

Who is in charge, you or God?

When Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law on the backside of the wilderness, *Yahweh* chose him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Then, when Moses was on Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights, while Aaron was leading the children of Israel away from *Yahweh* and into idol worship, God chose Aaron to be the High Priest of His people. But Korah didn't like God's choice of a High Priest, apparently wanting the position for himself. Likewise, Dathan and Abiram accused Moses of being a failure at leading the people into the Promised Land, and they wanted the position of leadership to be given to others, perhaps themselves. None of these rebels were willing to believe that the people in positions of power and authority were there by God's choice. They wanted to make their own choice. They wanted to be in charge.

We all want to make our own decisions. We want to be the ones to choose, yet according to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Rome, we're no good, we don't seek after God, and we don't even understand the rules, we're unequipped to choose rightly:

as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
(Romans 3:10-12)

But, we want to do good deeds, don't we? Don't we want to do what is right? Not according to Isaiah:

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

So, if we are unrighteous and all our good deeds, which we think as being so righteous, are like filthy rags, how can we possibly do the right thing? Can we even recognize our unworthiness and choose

salvation instead of God's wrath? We chose to believe in Christ didn't we? Paul tells us we weren't the ones who did the choosing:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as **he chose us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (**Ephesians 1:3-5**)

Just as Moses knew that God had chosen him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and had chosen Aaron to be the High Priest, we must recognize that God has chosen us. Moses didn't choose to lead Israel out of Egypt, Aaron didn't choose to be High Priest, and we didn't choose to be saved. God chose us and He adopted us as His children. This salvation that we have is not something that we deserve, it's not something that we have earned, and it's not something we chose. In Ephesians, Paul goes on to tell us:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)

Even the very salvation that we cherish is not something that we have taken for ourselves, it is a gift that has been given to us. Yet, we still want to run our own lives. We still want to tell God the position we should have in this life and how everything should work out. Instead of making demands of God or continually asking favors from Him, we should be on our knees continually thanking God that we won't have to face the Lake of Fire. And, in gratitude, we should accept the place where He has put us, the position He has put us in, and the opportunity that we have to serve Him where He has placed us. We should be continually submitting ourselves to God so that He can use us the way He wants.

So, let me ask you, "Who do you want to be in control of your life?" Do you really want to be in charge? Or, do you want to submit yourself to the authority of Him who has done all for you, seeking to serve Him wherever He might put you?

How well do you know God?

Time after time the Israelites complained to Moses when things weren't going their way. Time after time Moses humbled himself before God, seeking His guidance and assistance. When the children of Israel rebelled against their God, Moses was quick to intercede on their behalf. When Korah led a rebellion against *Yahweh's* chosen High Priest and Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses's leadership, and - when the Israelites joined themselves to these rebels instead of Moses and Aaron, God was prepared to destroy them all. But Moses and Aaron humbled themselves before God and prayed for their enemies. Then, when the Israelites falsely accused Moses of killing the rebellious people, instead of allowing God to take His vengeance on the people, he again humbled himself before *Yahweh* and argued the case for sparing the lives of the people.

Throughout our study of the wilderness wandering we have seen the Israelites as complaining, self-centered, disobedient, ungrateful sinners. While at the same time we have seen Moses as a humble, unassuming, obedient, faithful servant of *Yahweh*. After two years in the presence and under the guidance of *Yahweh*, seeing His wondrous Shekinah glory and the miracles He performed, the children of Israel did ... not ... know ... their ... God. In fact, they didn't have a clue! Moses, on the other hand, had first-hand, intimate knowledge of *Yahweh*. He spent so much time with his God that he knew how God thought. As a result, he was able to effectively persuade *Yahweh* to retract His judgments against the selfish Israelites. And, even though Moses knew His God intimately, he wanted to know Him even better. Moses asked *Yahweh* to reveal Himself. He wanted to know what his best friend looked like, but God wouldn't let him.

It's a fact that when two people spend a lot of time together, they not only begin to think alike, they actually begin to look alike. Moses spent so much time with *Yahweh* that he began to reflect the very glory of his Master.

So, how about you? How well do you know your Heavenly Father, your Savior, your Teacher, your Guide, your Lord and Master? Perhaps an even more important question is, do you want to know Him better? Do you want an intimate relationship with Him? Or don't you really care? Are you more focused on making your house payment, pleasing your boss, acquiring more "stuff," or becoming more important? Or would you give it all up just to know your God better? Really, would you give up what you have to know God better? Well you don't have to. You only need to give up some of your time. Do you think you could spare an hour a day to get better acquainted with your Savior? How about a half hour? Fifteen minutes? The amount of time you are willing to give Him is a direct reflection of how much you really want to get to know your Heavenly Father.

Too many Christians today want a God who will promise them heaven, take care of them while they're here on the earth, give them an easy life, defend them against their enemies, and make them comfortable. While very few Christians would trade these things for a close relationship with the Holy Creator of heaven and earth. To some, perhaps, God is unapproachable. Others may feel unworthy to seek a relationship with the Mighty One. To most, however, it is simply a matter that we are too busy focusing on ourselves and our "stuff." We're too busy doing our own thing. We're too busy earning a living, doing our job, cleaning our house, washing our car, getting food for our families, or mowing our lawn. Some of us are even so busy helping others that we have no time to spend with God. As a result, when things don't go the way we want, we complain. When God asks us to do something for Him, we complain ... or refuse. When He asks us to give of ourselves and our money to help bring glory to His name, we complain, or worse yet ... we claim we can't afford it or don't have time.

Listen, my friends, God loves His chosen ones, and He wants to have an intimate relationship with us. Think about that. God WANTS to have an intimate relationship with you. He wants you to know Him better. He wants to spend time with you and He wants you to spend time with Him. He wants to show you His glory! But He won't force Himself on you, especially if you don't have time. It's all about priorities.

So ... let me ask you again, "Do you want to know God better? Do you want an intimate relationship with Him?"

If not, why not?

If so, what are you going to do about it?