

Numbers 11:24-29

If Only All God's People Would Prophesy Jan 22, 2012

Moses, was one of the great leaders of the history of God's people. A humble man and gifted, Moses was the one the Lord sent to lead God's people out of Egypt on to the brink of entering the Holy Land.

One day the Lord told Moses to assemble with the 70 elders at the tent of meeting, which is the tabernacle, the traveling temple. But for some reason two men, Eldad and Medad, did not come when summoned.

Someone came to Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Joshua had been Moses aid since he was a young man. Since Eldad and Medad were summoned to Tent of Meeting and did not go Joshua said, "**Moses, my lord, stop them.**"

It was then Moses said words that are well worth meditating on, "If Only All God's People Would Prophesy."

God wanted to meet with Moses and 70 elders at the tent of meeting so that the Lord would have Spirit rest not only on Moses, but on the 70 elders. If the elders are going to lead God's people, if the elders are going to proclaim God's Word to God's people, meeting with the Lord at the Tent of Meeting would be pretty important. 68 went. Two did not. We are not told why they didn't. But we are told that the Spirit already rested on them and so they prophesied.

Then someone told Moses that Eldad and Medad were still in the camp and already prophesying.

Joshua wanted Moses to stop them, but Moses said, "**Or you jealous for my sake?**" We don't normally think of jealousy as a good attribute. We think of lusting after things, items that don't belong to us, like position or possessions.

But jealousy is can be a good thing. After all, our God is a jealous God. He does not want to his praise to anyone else. Since he is the only God who exists no one is to worship anyone or anything but him.

But God's people are jealous for the right reasons. Jesus put it this way, "**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**" (Matt. 6:33). Normally, it would not have been bad for Joshua to be zealous for Moses' authority, after all, he was God's representative. But the Spirit was already on Eldad and Medad, and they were proclaiming God's Word. And Moses wasn't the one who would provide food and water in a desert for 40 years. Moses wouldn't keep the people's sandals from wearing out for forty years. Moses wasn't the one who made Pharaoh let the people go. Moses wanted the people to focus on God. "**Are you jealous for my sake?**"

How did we get to this point? The Israelites are wandering in the wilderness and the Lord is providing for his people. And even though the people are provided for, they started complaining. It gets so bad that Moses begins to grumble against God. Moses decides he would rather die than continue as the Lord's representative.

So God told Moses: they will have food and not just meat, along with the manna, but so much meat that they are going to complain that it is too much! They will have so much meat that God said it would be a stench to their nostrils. God would give them too much meat because they grumbled and complained about having too little.

The Lord told Moses that he was going to get help. Seventy of the elders were to come to the Tent of Meeting and they were to stand around the tent. The Lord took the Spirit that was on Moses and he had it rest on the 70 elders. Rather than Moses carrying so much of the burden of leading Israel, the seventy elders would help.

Would Moses be diminished in the eyes of the people because Eldad and Medad were now speaking God's Word to God's people? "Are you jealous for my sake?" Moses asked Joshua. But since the Holy Spirit is the one who uses the Word of God to God's glory, this would not be an issue. And this isn't about Moses.

If a candle is lit, and that candle lights another candle, then there is more light. There was light coming from Moses—as God spoke to him, he spoke to the people. And as God would put his Spirit on the 70 elders, it would be easy to spot the light.

What happens when the Spirit rested on the 68 who were there? They prophesied, but they did not do so again. Something else happened. Eldad and Medad, the two elders who remained in the camp starting prophesying. And they caused a bit of commotion. **"Moses, my lord, stop them!"**

One of the questions Luther asked when reading the Bible was, *"How does this show my sin?"* Perhaps this doesn't point out something specific I've done, or you have done. But Joshua's misguided zeal reminds me of the times when people in the church look too much at themselves. I'll seek the first the kingdom and everything else as long as it fits my idea of what the church ought to be like. I'll get involved in the ministry of the church as long as it goes in the easiest possible direction. Paul said in Phil. 2:21, . **"For everyone looks to his own interests, not those who Jesus Christ."**

So think now of Jesus. Think of how he gave up his life. Think of how he gave up everything and died on the cross.

I'm reminded of the many times I've heard people in the church say, "We have got to grow. The more people we have, the more money we have. The more money we have, and the more people we have, the more secure our future is." Is this what God wants? God goes after the one sinner so he can repent: the church needs money? People want to grow in numbers to feel better about their ministry. Is this what God wants? He wants us to be humbled so he can be raised up. This is very hard for us because the way God thinks, and the way God wants us to think, goes against our sinful nature. Our sinful nature has us look out for ourselves rather than our fellowman, for ourselves rather than God's kingdom.

We think of the disciples. When Jesus went to Jerusalem, they didn't want Him to go there. They didn't want Him to be put to death, but that was what was needed to further God's kingdom. They listened to that and they forgot to listen to Jesus when He said He would rise on the third day. It became so bad that Jesus warned Peter to get behind Him because he (Peter) had in mind the things of men not the things of God.

"If only all God's people would prophesy." Moses would have been happy if there would have been more than 70. He wanted everyone to prophesy because that's really what God wants. If only all the Israelites would have said to one another, *"Stop your complaining. The Lord has provided he promises to provide."*

If only every Christian father would be an active part in the spiritual lives of their children. If only every Christian father would represent the Lord in the home. What would that home be like? If only every Christian husband didn't wait for his wife to be the spiritual driving force in the home? What would that family be like?

If only every Christian would witness to their friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors. If only every Christian would offer comfort when other Christians are down spiritually. If only every Christian would do the work of going after the one sheep who goes astray.

If only every Christian would apply the law to a Christian who needs to be brought down

low. And if only every Christian would apply the gospel to someone who God wants to be brought up with the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

It is God's will that all people prophesy. We have been **called to declare the praises of him who us out of darkness into his wonderful light**. Jesus said, **"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth."** Jesus died and rose again that we might declare his praises publicly, together, and to the world.

The gift of prophesy. Not everyone is called to prophesy in an official capacity. And some people have been blessed by God to prophesy beautifully. But, each one of us who believes in Jesus, is given the privilege and responsibility to share God's Word with others. **"If only all God's people would prophesy."** It is the Lord's will that all people prophesy. Amen.