

**TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON  
AND LIVING HIM IN AND FOR THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

**Being Fully Reconciled to God  
and Enlarged in Heart to Represent God Rightly in His Economy**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 6:11-13; 10:8; 12:15; 13:4, 10

**I. In order to represent God in His economy, we need to be fully reconciled to God—2 Cor. 5:20:**

- A. The ministry of reconciliation is to bring us back to God fully, thoroughly, completely, and entirely—v. 18:
  - 1. The ministry of reconciliation is not merely to bring sinners back to God but, even the more, to bring believers absolutely into God—vv. 19-20.
  - 2. Until we are wholly one with the Lord, being in Him and allowing Him to be in us absolutely, we will need the ministry of reconciliation.
- B. Two steps are required for us to be fully reconciled to God—vv. 19-20:
  - 1. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 it is the world that is reconciled to God, but in verse 20 it is the believers, who have already been reconciled to God and are to be reconciled further to God.
  - 2. The first step of reconciliation is to reconcile sinners to God from sin—v. 19:
    - a. For this purpose Christ died for our sins that they might be forgiven by God—1 Cor. 15:3; Luke 24:46-47; 1 John 2:12.
    - b. This is the objective aspect of Christ's death; in this aspect He bore our sins upon Himself on the cross that they might be judged by God for us—1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:11-12; Heb. 9:28; Col. 1:22; Rom. 8:3.
  - 3. The second step of reconciliation is to reconcile believers living in the natural life to God from the flesh—2 Cor. 5:20:
    - a. For this purpose Christ died for us—the persons—that we might live to Him in the resurrection life—vv. 14-15.
    - b. Because we are still separated from God and because we are not fully one with God and altogether in harmony with Him, we need the second step of reconciliation.
    - c. The subjective aspect of the death of Christ needs to be applied to our situation and to our natural life—Rom. 6:6; 8:13; Gal. 5:24; Matt. 16:24:
      - 1) In order that we may be reconciled to God in full, the Father exposes our natural life and unveils our real situation to us—1 John 1:5, 7:
        - a) As a result, we condemn our natural being and apply the cross subjectively, and this application of the death of Christ crucifies our natural life.
        - b) As our natural man is crossed out, we experience the second step of reconciliation; in this step the veil of our natural man is rent so that we may live in God's presence.

2) Instead of taking place once for all, the second step of reconciliation is continuous.

4. By the two aspects of His death, Christ fully reconciles God's chosen people to God—Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:19-20.

## **II. Being fully reconciled to God causes us to be enlarged in our heart—v. 20; 6:11-13:**

- A. How large our heart is depends on the degree of our reconciliation to God.
- B. Narrowness of heart is a strong indication that we have been reconciled to God only partially and that the percentage of our salvation is quite low—v. 12; Rom. 5:10.
- C. In order to be strict with ourselves and not with others, we need to be enlarged; those who are constricted are usually narrow as well, and thus they need to have their heart enlarged—2 Cor. 6:12-13.
- D. Wisdom and largeness of heart are two aspects of one thing; the secret of wisdom is to have a large heart—1 Kings 4:20, 29.

## **III. When we have been fully reconciled to God and have been enlarged in heart, we can represent God rightly in His economy—2 Cor. 5:20; 10:8; 12:15; 13:4, 10:**

- A. Because the apostle Paul had been fully reconciled to God and enlarged in heart, he was qualified to be an ambassador of Christ, representing God—5:20:
  - 1. An ambassador of Christ is one who represents God, the highest authority in the universe:
    - a. God has given all authority in heaven and on earth to Christ—Matt. 28:18.
    - b. Jesus is the Christ—the Lord of all, the King of kings and the Lord of lords—the highest authority—Acts 2:36; 10:36; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16.
    - c. The Lord needs some ambassadors on earth who are qualified to represent Him—Matt. 28:19.
    - d. A new covenant minister is one who has been authorized with the heavenly authority to represent the highest authority—2 Cor. 3:6; 5:20:
      - 1) The apostles were commissioned to represent Christ to accomplish God's purpose—Matt. 10:40; John 13:20; Gal. 4:14b.
      - 2) All the members of the Body are representatives of the Head, His ambassadors—Acts 9:6, 10-17; 22:12-16.
  - 2. As an ambassador of Christ, Paul was “the acting God”—2 Cor. 1:3-4, 12, 15-16; 2:10; 10:1; 11:2:
    - a. Paul was one with Christ to be the acting God in comforting the believers—1:3-4.
    - b. Paul conducted himself in the singleness of God, for he was an imitator of the simple God, and he lived God—v. 12.
    - c. Paul's coming to the Corinthians was the coming of God as grace—vv. 15-16.
    - d. Paul forgave a particular matter in the person of Christ—2:10.
    - e. Paul entreated the believers through the meekness and gentleness of Christ—10:1.
    - f. Paul was jealous over the saints with the jealousy of God—11:2.

- B. We need to learn a serious lesson from the one time that Moses failed to represent God—Num. 20:2-13:
1. In striking the rock twice and in calling the people rebels, Moses did not sanctify God in the sight of the people of Israel—vv. 10-12:
    - a. To sanctify God is to make Him holy, that is, separate from the false gods; to fail to sanctify God is to make Him common—v. 12.
    - b. In being angry with the people and in wrongly striking the rock twice, Moses failed to sanctify God—vv. 10-11.
    - c. In being angry when God was not angry, Moses failed to represent God rightly in His holy nature, and in striking the rock twice, he did not keep God’s word in His economy—vv. 10-12.
    - d. Moses offended both God’s holy nature and His divine economy; he condemned the people as rebels, but he was the one who rebelled against God’s word—vv. 10, 24; 27:14.
  2. In all that we say and do concerning God’s people, our attitude must be according to God’s holy nature, and our actions must be according to His divine economy.
  3. If we do not sanctify God in our attitude and actions, we rebel against Him and offend Him.
- C. A person who represents God rightly must have the following qualifications:
1. He must submit to authority—Matt. 8:8-9.
  2. He must realize that in himself he has no authority—28:18; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10.
  3. He must know God and God’s will—Eph. 1:9; 5:17.
  4. He must be one who denies the self—Matt. 16:24.
  5. He must be one with the Lord and live in constant and intimate fellowship with Him—1 Cor. 6:17; 1:9; 1 John 1:3.
  6. He must not be subjective and not act according to his own feeling—2 Cor. 3:5.
  7. He must be kind and gracious in dealing with others—Luke 6:35; cf. Rom. 5:15-16; 1 Cor. 2:12.
  8. He must be a person in resurrection, living in the resurrection life of Christ—2 Cor. 1:9; 4:14; Num. 17:1-10.
  9. He must take a lowly place before God—14:5; 16:3-4, 22, 45; Matt. 11:29; Rom. 12:16; Luke 14:7-11; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.
  10. He must be able to bear offenses—Exo. 16:7; Num. 14:2, 5, 9, 27; Matt. 6:14-15; 1 Cor. 4:6-13.
  11. He must have a consciousness of his inability and unsuitability—Exo. 3:11; 4:6-7, 10; 2 Cor. 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:10.
  12. He must be one who represents God properly—Exo. 32:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:18, 20; Eph. 6:20.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE BREAKING OF THE FLESH**

The veil, the flesh, was the factor that made the one tabernacle two tabernacles. This is true even today in our experience. Doctrinally speaking, the flesh has been crucified on the cross by God. When Christ was crucified, the flesh was crucified also. This is indicated by the tearing of the veil in the temple from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). Although the flesh was

riven when Christ was crucified, experientially our flesh may still be whole. It may not yet have been cleft, or torn. The reason we may still be in the soul, the first tabernacle, is that our flesh has not yet been broken.

It is quite possible that in doing spiritual things, our flesh may still not be broken. We may call on the Lord in an outward way in the flesh instead of calling from deep within in the spirit. Sometimes when a brother and his wife are arguing, one of them may say, "Praise the Lord!" However, such an utterance in this case may not come from the spirit but from the flesh. Thus, we may be in the flesh not only when we are gossiping and criticizing but even when we are calling on the Lord and praising Him. The reason that as New Testament believers we remain in the soul, in the Old Testament age, is that our flesh has not been broken.

The veil within the tabernacle was placed on four pillars...The pillars represent the extraordinary believers, who are the stronger members of the church. The pillars in the tabernacle were stronger than the boards. The boards were flat, but the pillars were thick. Applied to our experience, this means that when a board has been dealt with, it becomes a pillar. Among all the saints in the church, the pillars, the stronger ones, bear the testimony of God manifested in the flesh. No doubt, the leading ones in the church should all be pillars. According to 1 Timothy 3:15, the church must be the pillar of the truth of God manifest in the flesh.

If the flesh of the leading ones, the stronger ones, in the church has not been broken, the entire church will be kept in the first tabernacle and frustrated from entering the second tabernacle. Whether or not an assembly can enter into the Holy of Holies depends on whether or not the flesh of the leading ones has been cleft. Galatians 5:24 says that those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh. If we are Christians walking by the Spirit, our flesh has been crucified. Romans 6:6 says that our old man, the self, has been crucified. Although we cannot crucify ourselves, we can crucify the flesh, and we must do this. If our flesh is crucified, it will become a riven veil as an entrance for the entire church to come into the second tabernacle and have the direct enjoyment of God. By this we see that the situation of the church depends on the breaking of the flesh of the leading ones. This exactly corresponds to what I have observed throughout the years. Whether or not the church in a particular locality can enter into the Holy of Holies depends entirely on the brokenness of the flesh of the pillars, on the brokenness of the flesh of the leading ones. (*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 1170-1171)

**MOSES FAILING TO SANCTIFY GOD  
IN BEING ANGRY WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND  
IN WRONGLY STRIKING THE ROCK TWICE**

Moses failed to sanctify God in being angry with the people of Israel and in wrongly striking the rock twice. In being angry, he did not represent God rightly in His holy nature toward His people. In striking the rock twice, he represented God wrongly in God's action. Hence, he and his brother were punished by God by not being allowed to enter into the good land (Num. 20:12-13, 24; 27:12-14).

In Numbers 20 God was not angry with the people, but Moses was angry with them. He went to God and appealed to Him, but he did not dare to say anything. In this matter Moses was right, for we should not pray when we are angry. Concerning this, we need to remember how Elijah prayed in 1 Kings 19:14. In his prayer Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." Referring to this prayer, Paul said that Elijah was pleading with God against Israel (Rom. 11:2). Elijah's pleading was actually his accusing the people. From the case of Moses in Numbers 20 and the case of Elijah in 1 Kings 19, we learn that we should be careful whenever we pray to God concerning His people.

“Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the sight of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12). God blamed Moses and Aaron for not believing in Him and for not sanctifying Him before the people. Because Moses was angry when God was not angry, he did not rightly represent God. In his anger, Moses might have thought that the time had come for God to consume the people. God, however, realized that the problem in Numbers 20 was caused by the people’s thirst. Just as a mother is not angry with a child who cries because of thirst but instead cherishes the child, so God was not angry with His thirsty people but rather assumed the responsibility of supplying them with water.

According to God’s view of His people in Numbers 20, there was nothing wrong with them. The situation was similar to that in chapters twenty-three and twenty-four. Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, but instead of cursing there was blessing. Unable to curse him whom God has not cursed (23:8), Balaam said, “He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel” (v. 21). In 24:5 Balaam went on to say, “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!” According to Moses’ view in chapter twenty, there was much trouble and iniquity among God’s people, but in God’s view there was neither trouble nor iniquity. This means that although Moses was usually one with God, in this instance there was a great discrepancy between him and God.

In his dealing with the matter of water, Moses was wrong. He was God’s representative and had the position to represent God, but here he represented God to the people in a wrong way. At this juncture, God was not angry. This is indicated by the fact that He told Moses to speak to the rock that water might flow out of it. But Moses was offended and could not tolerate the situation. Having gathered the congregation and being angry with the people, he said, “Listen now, you rebels.” By speaking to the people in this way, Moses wrongly represented God. His mistaken speaking made God common; that is, it did not sanctify God, did not make Him separate from all other gods. Therefore, in His word to Moses in verse 12, God seemed to be saying, “Moses, you did not rightly represent Me. You gave the people a wrong impression concerning Me. In your anger you gave them the impression that I was angry with them when I was not angry. You did not sanctify Me. You did not express Me as the One who is particular and separate from all other gods. You did not present Me to the people as a God who is full of mercy and grace.” The God whom Moses represented was not angry; therefore, Moses, His representative, should not have been angry either.

In verse 10 Moses called the people rebels. In verse 24 God said to Moses and Aaron, “You rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah.” Here God seemed to be saying, “You did not obey Me. Instead of doing what I told you to do, you did something else. The people were not reviling Me. There was nothing wrong with them. They simply needed water, and only I can provide water for them. The people were not at fault for being thirsty, and they were not rebelling against Me. You condemned them as rebels, but you are the ones who rebelled against My word.”

In Exodus 32 Moses represented God rightly. The people’s worshipping the golden calf offended God to the uttermost, and He said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let Me be, that My anger may burn against them and I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation” (vv. 9-10). When Moses heard this, he prayed to God, saying, “Jehovah, why does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, With evil intent He brought them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your burning anger, and repent of this ill against Your people” (vv. 11-12). Seemingly, Moses was

rebellious against God's word; actually, his prayer was pleasing to God's heart. Here he rightly represented God, but in Numbers 20 he forgot about sanctifying God and wrongly represented Him.

The experience of Moses in Numbers 20 is an important lesson for us in the church life today. We need to learn that, especially when we have been offended by the saints in the church, we should not go to God for the purpose of accusing His people. If in our prayers we accuse God's people, we will offend Him. As a mother is offended when her child is accused and criticized, so God is offended when we accuse and criticize His people. Be careful when you go to the Lord concerning His people. You may think that the saints are not very good and accuse them before God. This will surely offend Him.

A crucial matter revealed in Numbers 20 is that God's nature is holy. To be holy is to be different, to be separate. As the holy One, God is different from all the false gods. The false gods are easily angry with people, but the true God is not. God does not have that kind of nature. In His nature He is full of mercy, grace, love, and sympathy. He is not offended with His people when the lack of water causes them to contend. Even if He must punish His people, He punishes them sparingly. For example, Korah was devoured, swallowed up, by the earth, but a descendant of Korah became a holy man and a psalmist. This indicates that God is sparing in His judgment.

We must not give people the wrong impression concerning the God whom we serve. In order to avoid giving such a wrong impression, we should be careful whenever we are offended by some of the saints in our locality. We should not be angry with them or go to God to plead against them. If we plead against the saints, God may feel that we are accusing them and that we are not sanctifying Him. We should not be hasty in speaking about those who offend us. Rather, in representing God, we need to learn always to regard His holy nature. This is to sanctify Him. All that we say and do concerning God's people must be absolutely according to His holy nature. Otherwise, in our words and deeds we will rebel against Him and offend Him.

Inwardly, God has His nature, and outwardly, He has His administration, His economy, His way of action. God's word to Moses about speaking to the rock that it may flow out water was a word according to God's administration and for His economy. Thus, when Moses, in anger, acted wrongly, he broke the principles of God's economy. This should be a warning to us not to hold on to our anger but to practice Paul's word in Ephesians 4:26: "Do not let the sun go down on your indignation."

Moses offended both God's holy nature and divine economy. He represented God wrongly, and he broke the principles of God's economy. Because of this, even though he was intimate with God and may be considered a friend of God, he lost the right to enter into the good land.

Being careful about the way we speak concerning God's people when we are offended will help us remain in the kingdom of God. Regarding this, I recommend that you consider Matthew 18:1-35, where we see that the best way to be kept in God's kingdom is to forgive others. We should not offend other saints or stumble them. Whenever we are offended or stumbled, we should be forgiving. If we know only to condemn others and have no intention of forgiving them, we will have trouble. In the church life there is the need of forgiveness.

To forgive is to forget. Suppose a particular married couple does not have the practice of forgiving and forgetting offenses. Instead of forgiving there is condemning, and instead of forgetting there is remembering. It is not likely that such a marriage will last. Even if the marriage does last, it will lack joy and happiness. If you want to have a joyful married life, you need to forgive the offenses caused by your spouse and forget them.

The church life should be a forgiving life. Concerning the Bible, we should have a good memory, but concerning others' wrongdoings, we should have a poor memory. This will keep us in the church life. Otherwise, we will have many negative things to say about the saints, and eventually we will forsake the church life. For the church life and in the church life, we need a forgiving spirit. Then instead of condemning the saints, we will forget their mistakes and offenses.

The blunder committed by Moses in Numbers 20 consisted in not having a positive and pleasant feeling regarding God's people. This caused him to make a serious mistake in representing God. He did not sanctify the holy God in His nature, and he did not keep God's word in His economy. My burden in this message is simply to point out the important lesson we need to learn from Moses' failure concerning the people's contending for water.

We all need to realize that the church life is very tender and touchy and that every brother and sister in the church is likewise very tender and touchy. Sometimes we offend others because we do not remember that the church life and the saints are tender and touchy. We may think that a certain brother is very good and that he could not possibly be offended by anyone. Such a brother may be good for many years, but suddenly, because he is tender and touchy, he may get offended by someone and no longer have a positive feeling about the church life. Cases like this remind us that we need to learn always to be conscious of the tenderness and touchiness of all the saints in the church life.

In chapter twenty of Numbers, God did not come in to vindicate Moses; rather, He came in to vindicate His people. This might have been a great surprise to Moses, who probably never expected God to vindicate those whom he considered rebellious. But this is exactly what God did. In this chapter He seemed to be saying, "Moses, you have rebelled against My word. My people are not wrong—you are wrong."

Through our study of chapter twenty of Numbers, we may learn how to behave when others contend with us in the church life. The people were saying to Moses, "Where can we find water? Why did you bring us out of Egypt and lead us to a place like this? This is not a place for seed, figs, vines, and pomegranates." After the people had contended with Moses in this way, he should have gone to the Lord and said, "Lord, what should I do concerning the need of Your beloved people?" In this chapter it seems that God said to Moses, "There is no need for you to do anything. Take your rod, go to the rock, and tell the rock to flow forth water so that My people and their cattle may drink." Uttering praises to the Lord, Moses then should have simply spoken to the rock, telling it to flow forth with water. If we deal with the contending of God's people in this way today, the church life will be glorious.

There is a definite connection between Numbers and 1 Corinthians. When Paul was writing the Epistle of 1 Corinthians, it is likely that he realized that the history of Israel is a type of the church life. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 he refers to the Passover, saying, "Our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed." Then, speaking of the things that happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness, he says in 10:6, "These things occurred as examples to us." In verse 11 he goes on to say, "These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition." This clearly indicates that there are lessons for us to learn from the journeying of the children of Israel. What happened to them may also happen to us.

The lesson we need to learn from Moses' failure in Numbers 20 is that we should be very careful when we speak about God's people. We may think that we are right and that others are wrong. However, God may come in not to vindicate us but to vindicate the ones we condemn.

In 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 we see Paul's attitude regarding judging and being judged. "To me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by man's day; rather I do not

even examine myself...He who examines me is the Lord. So then do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each from God." "Man's day" in verse 3 is the present age in which man judges, in contrast to the Lord's day (1 Cor. 3:13), which will be the coming age, the kingdom age, in which the Lord will judge. Now, in the day of man, man exercises judgment, but in the day of the Lord, the Lord will exercise judgment. In the church life today, we should not condemn others but forgive them and forget their offenses. Do not keep a record in your memory of others' offenses. Remembering offenses is risky, for it may cause you to lose your birthright, to lose your right to the enjoyment of Christ as the good land.

My aim in this Life-study of Numbers is not to teach the Bible merely in a doctrinal way. I hope that from this word on Numbers 20 we all will receive some light and revelation that will help us in our present, practical Christian life and church life. From the type in this chapter, we may learn to have regard for God's nature and for His administration among His people. If we learn this lesson, we will be careful about speaking in a negative way concerning God's people. (*Life-study of Numbers*, pp. 212-219)