

Step Aside, Please

Taken from Numbers 16-18

Foundation

As you begin today, stop and pray. Ask God to help you change any bad attitudes you might have hiding in your heart.



Do you ever feel it's not fair when others are chosen for a job you believe you could do better?

“You’ve gone too far!” Korah told Moses and Aaron with arrogance in his voice. Being a Levite, Korah didn’t like the fact that although he helped take care of the Tabernacle, he never had any special privileges in it. He didn’t think it was fair that Aaron (the High Priest) got special treatment. “Why do you think you’re above everyone else? We are all holy—every one of us—for God is with us!” Korah challenged.

Why does Aaron get to be High Priest anyway? Korah secretly thought. I could do just as well—if not even better—than him! The only reason Aaron gets to be High Priest is because he’s Moses’ brother, not because he’s the most qualified, he scoffed. Korah glanced at Dathan, Abiram, and On standing by his side. They were from the tribe of Reuben but had readily joined him in revolt. Behind them stood 250 men—well-respected leaders—who had come together in rebellion due to Korah’s influence. Korah had his army, and in his eyes this was a

winnable battle. With a smug attitude, he awaited Moses' reply.

Taking a deep breath and looking at the situation before him, Moses sighed. He knew he and Aaron had their positions because God had chosen them for the task. It didn't mean they were better; they were just being obedient. Korah's rebellion against Moses and Aaron was really rebellion against God. With a steady voice, Moses met Korah's gaze and answered the large group.

"You Levites have taken things far beyond what you should have! Why aren't you satisfied that the Lord has drawn you to Himself by having you do His work in the Tabernacle? You have a very important position ministering to all of Israel. But you're not content, and now you want to be the priests as well! Tomorrow morning, the Lord Himself will make it clear who is holy enough for this position. When Aaron brings his offering of incense before the Lord, you, Korah, and all those who support you are to take your offerings of incense and present them before the Lord as well. It will be the *Lord's* decision as to who is a holy man."

The next morning, Korah and his men assembled in front of the Tent of Meeting. When the Lord's glory appeared to the entire group, His judgment came also. What Korah, Dathan, and Abiram thought would be their moment of triumph was actually a moment of doom.

God instructed Moses to tell the people to back away from the tents of these men and to touch nothing of theirs. Then He caused a great earthquake to split open the ground, completely swallowing up the three men and their families. A great fire then came from the Lord and destroyed the 250 men who offered the incense on the censers (see sidebar). When it died down, nothing but the censers were left in the smoldering remains.

"Retrieve the censers which are now holy," God instructed, "and tell Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, to form them into flat sheets to adorn the altar. Let it forever remind the Israelites that only the sons of Aaron should come to present offerings of burnt incense to the Lord, or else they will suffer the same fate as Korah and those who followed him."

The following day, all of the Israelites bitterly complained. "You've killed people of the Lord!" they accused Moses and Aaron. Already, their hearts were slipping into

an attitude of rebellion and revolt. Seeing this constant rebellion, God began to strike the Israelites with a plague, but Aaron grabbed his censer and stood between the Lord and the people, praying for God's mercy. The plague ended, but not before 14,777 of the Israelites had lost their lives.

Since the problem of rebellion was getting out of hand, God determined to convince the people that Aaron was His chosen person for High Priest. "Tell the Israelites to gather one staff from the leader of each of the twelve tribes," God instructed Moses, "Aaron is also to have a staff to represent the tribe of Levi. Each man's name should be written on his staff, and then the staffs should be left in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Ark of the Covenant. I will cause My chosen leader's staff to sprout, ending this continuous disrespect the Israelites show you." God would settle this matter of who was in charge once and for all.

Moses entered the Tent of Meeting the next day, and went into the Holy of Holies. Before him were all the staffs—just as they had been left the day before. None had sprouted except one. It was Aaron's. Not only did Aaron's staff sprout, itself a miracle, but God caused it to bud, blossom, and produce almonds all in one night! God was leaving nothing for the Israelites to question concerning His choice. Aaron was clearly His choice for High Priest. Gathering up the staffs, Moses brought them out for all the Israelites to see. Each leader collected his own staff, but all eyes were on Aaron's. Not a word was spoken—God's decision was clear. He had chosen, and they knew God was the One who chooses best.

"Censer" literally means "fire pan" and was a bronze container used to burn incense (a picture of prayers being offered up to God). Incense was made from a pale yellow resin (called frankincense), shells from the fragrant mollusk, and two types of gums taken from plants—one resembling the fragrant juice from the myrrh tree.

Footwork

Turn in your Bible to chapter 18 of Numbers and read the first verse. What is God telling Aaron about his job? With privilege comes responsibility and accountability. Now, skip down and read verses 5-7. Pay attention any time you see the word “gift” or a similar word (Hint: It’s in verses 6 and 7). What did God want Aaron and the others to understand?

Fruit

Doing what God calls you to do is very important. So is letting others do what God has called them to do. It’s not a matter of “either serve, follow, or lead;” it’s a matter of choosing to “serve, follow, *and* lead!” *Serve* others; *follow* God’s guidance; *lead* the kind of life that points others to Him. That is the responsibility God has given you—regardless of the job you are (or are not) doing. Sometimes it’s just a matter of saying, “Step aside, please” to your pride and trying to see things from God’s perspective. Fill in the words below, and pray this prayer from your heart:

Thank You, Lord, that I can do (name a task) very well, and perhaps even better than (name of a person). I know, however, You haven’t given me that job right now. As an act of my will, I give this up to You. You gave me the abilities, and You have a perfect plan for how they can best be used. Please keep me from being jealous of others or puffed up with pride. I want to use what I think I’m good at to serve You, not myself. Amen.