

September 14th

OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN

“Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, “Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” **NUMBERS 12:1-3**

Racial tension has existed since Bible times. The curse of sin has caused people to look at the color of someone's skin instead of seeing all people as equally valuable because they are all created in God's image. It doesn't surprise us that people struggle with loving people that look different than them. However, what might surprise you is that racial prejudice was a problem even within Moses' immediate family. At least, that's what we find here in the middle of the desert in Numbers 12. It appears that Aaron and Miriam both have a problem with Moses' wife being from Cush (modern day Ethiopia). What does God teach us here in this passage?

As we read this passage, we might be tempted to see that Aaron and Miriam's problem with Moses was jealousy over his position over the Israelites. That's what it looks like if we read over this quickly. But God's Word emphasizes in the first verse twice that Moses' wife was from Cush. Moses tells us right away that that they spoke against him because he had married her. Apparently, Moses' first wife Zipporah (according to commentators) had died, and he had remarried. They didn't like her because she didn't look like them. One key point here before we move to God's response is the response that Moses has to their opposition. Did you catch what he says to their words? What do you find there? It's not a trick question, because he doesn't say anything. He has no response to his siblings. What does seem odd to us is the next sentence: “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” Here, meekness doesn't equal weakness. Moses just shows us that his response shows his strength. Remember, Moses is not a weak man. He's not someone that doesn't say nothing to situations. It's the personal attacks that he doesn't respond to. When God's honor was at stake with the golden calf, he was so angry that he broke the stone tablets of the commandments. He doesn't get angry when he is insulted, only when God is insulted. That statement can pack a punch because we often swap those two around in our day. James Montgomery Boice rightly points out in his “Life of Moses” when he states, “When the honor of God is attacked, we are silent. When people attack us personally, we get very defensive. Moses had it the right way round.” Men, how often are we guilty of defensiveness over our personal attacks and being silent when the gospel is attacked or distorted?

Boice also makes interesting points about God's judgment on Miriam that can be helpful. I'll give you the whole quote, so you have the entire context: “In attacking Moses' wife, Miriam had been saying that she did not want any black person in her family. In his judgment of Miriam, God is saying, ‘Do you think your lighter skin makes you better than the woman Moses married? You want to be white? I'll give you white.’” God shows us here that He takes racial prejudice seriously. He is the creator of all people. In His judgment on Miriam, he shows her the depth of her sin (and ours). How often do we relate to people based upon their appearances? What example are we setting for our children as God's men? How will you be faithful to follow your God today?

Spend some time thinking about how you respond to personal attacks against yourself and against God. Ask the Lord to give you strength to show Christ's character when you are attacked.

For Further Reading: Colossians 3:1-17

