

Sanctification And Holiness (Part 2)

Numbers 16

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To begin this sermon, please turn to II Thessalonians 2.

II Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These two verses begin to point out the importance of sanctification. The phrase in verse 13 where it says, "God has from the beginning," implies that from the very beginning of our calling God's intention is to save us unto glory, rather than to condemn us to judgment.

Now "setting apart" or "sanctification" is by means of His Spirit and the belief of the truth on our part, and is what makes the sanctification possible.

During the first sermon in this series we covered the meaning of sanctification and had begun to explore its practical application to us in relation to the church. We saw that the term "sanctification" is used both as a position, as well as a process at one and the same time. Our *position* is that we have been set apart from the rest of humanity by God for His use, and therefore by means of this act we also receive the biblical designation as being *holy*. Also by this act (and here I am just going to use some other terms that are indicated by sanctification and holiness), we become devoted, dedicated, or consecrated for sacred use.

The basic meaning of the word "sanctify," besides also meaning *to cut out* or *to set apart*, also carries with it the implication of cleanliness, of purity, and blamelessness. While we are set apart for sacred use, we are to become more proficient in our responsibility *in fact*. In other words, *actually*, as well as merely in designation or position.

It is within this aspect of sanctification that the sense of process in creation comes to the fore, because this aspect of sanctification involves overcoming in the performance of what we were set apart for. Both the position and the process are begun by means of God's calling, within which God breaks down all barriers of separation, making it possible for us to choose to accept His offer and to follow Him wherever He leads.

In addition to this we also saw that there is a clear and distinct parallel between what Israel was set apart for under the Old Covenant, and what we in the church are set apart for under the New. For example, both Israel and the church are said to be *special*. Both are designated to be a holy nation. Though Israel was called to be a priesthood, the church is chosen to be a *royal* priesthood, indicating a position of *real literal sonship* within the family of God to a degree of intimacy that Israel was not offered. Israel was offered the position, the privilege, of being a priesthood. However they immediately rejected that offer.

There is another term that is important to mark in your mind, and that is the term "drawing near" to God. This too is another indicator, an activity, that describes the closeness of the relationship offered through the calling and the setting apart. In Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 5 you can see that Israel's rejection of the priesthood responsibility occurred because they were terrified in His presence. They drew back rather than drawing near and trusting Him for their safety in His fiery presence at Mount Sinai as Moses did. It was because Israel profoundly felt a sense of unworthiness in the presence of God that overcame whatever level of faith they might have had, and this caused them to draw back from God.

In Deuteronomy 5:28-29 God agreed with their assessment, but at the same time lamented that they did not have the heart to serve Him in that capacity. Then He immediately officially appointed Moses as their mediator between Him and them.

After they did this, all other portions of the covenant remained in place. Even though Israel officially rejected serving as a priesthood nation, it still remained in their consciousness that they were supposed to represent God before the world. Now to assist them in this responsibility, God shortly

appointed the family of Levi to serve as functionaries about the tabernacle, and specifically the family of Aaron, to draw near to Him as priests to serve under Moses, assisting him in teaching the Israelites how they were to perform their witnessing.

Please understand what I am about to say: The priesthood's place of operation is in the presence of God. In order to do that, they *must* draw near to Him in order to perform. This is shown under the Old Covenant in that they performed their duties in and near the tabernacle and the Temple, using their altars, lavers, furniture, and utensils, because all of these are seen as part of God's dwelling place. All of those things are also seen as *holy*— that they are set apart for sacred use only. The priesthood is a position of great honor, of privilege, and responsibility.

In Numbers 16 a very significant event occurs. The whole rest of the sermon, except for a couple of verses that we will turn to here and there, is going to be on Numbers 16. I cannot over-emphasize the value to us in the carrying out of our New Testament responsibility of what happened here.

Numbers 16:1-5 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? And when Moses heard it he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he has chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

Let us get the time setting here. This took place during the year or so following Israel's refusal to go into the land. That took place in Numbers 14. So here we are, only two chapters later. Numbers 14 took place towards the

end of the second year in the wilderness. Now we are sometime then into the third year.

The only people specifically named were from two tribes: the tribe of Levi, and the tribe of Reuben. There we have the ones that were appointed to be priests, and then Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. The rebellion was against the restriction of the priesthood to the family of Aaron.

I am going to go through this in some detail because the event and what follows gives a very great deal of information about the importance of holiness, as well as the functions and responsibilities of the priesthood. Remember, the New Testament church is a priesthood. It is a *holy* priesthood, and so some of our responsibilities—let us say foundational things—are shown in this chapter and what was being challenged here.

Verse 5 contains the most detailed description of the priesthood's set-apart position, together with some other things we may or may not turn to that bear on each one of these points. The verse shows four elements.

Number One : God was going to make the heart of this issue clear in a miraculous manner. The key is on *miraculous* . Of course part of that takes place a little bit later, but it is not limited to this chapter because the miracles kept coming right through chapter 17. I do not think there are any in chapter 18.

Since God was going to make the heart of this issue clear in a miraculous manner, first of all He eliminated any possibility of election to this privilege by people. In other words, neither Moses nor Aaron nor the Levites were elected by popular vote of the people, or by appointment by Moses, or by self-appointment, by specifically Aaron. That is a big point.

I want you to think about yourself in relation to being in the church and being part of the priesthood. Did somebody out on the street vote you into the church? Did you vote yourself into the church? Absolutely not! You were called, and by God's election and choosing *He* put you in. It was *His* choice to do that. You did not even volunteer, because the words that Jesus used in John 6:44 about people being called actually indicate being *dragged*

into the church by an irresistible force. Remember that. Those of you who have been in the church quite a long time know that every once in a while Herbert Armstrong would get up there, and with jowls shaking would say, "No one here asked you to be here!" That is what he meant. It was **God** who *put* us there.

Number Two : As a result of God's appointment, **they solely belong to God**. This is *very* important to practical application. Remember, all of these things are in verse 5. Do you remember Paul saying, "You are bought with a price" and "You are not your own"? In the Old Testament, the priest was not his own in that capacity, and he did not even technically belong to the nation. He had been put into another group altogether. We know in a practical sense he was a part of the nation of Israel, but the way God looked at it, they were *His*, and completely at **His** beck and call. The priest was to understand that his entire life was given up to the service of God. Again, the Levites had no choice. You are going to see this all over chapter 16.

Number Three : Since the priest was the property of God, like everything else he became holy in a specific way. By everything else, I mean the things that were part of the tabernacle and the Temple. In other words, he was holy in a special category that others were not in.

Number Four : Being holy was the qualification for the fourth element, which is *drawing near to God* as their exclusive prerogative and duty. Nobody else was permitted to do what they did in the service of God. Let me emphasize again. **Nobody else** was permitted to do what they did in the service of God. So strict was God on this that when He established where all the tribes were going to camp, the Levites were camped around the perimeter on the inner circle of the tabernacle. It was their responsibility that if anybody came close to the tabernacle, they were to kill them.

I want you to understand what it means to be a priest, and what it means to be *holy* in this special way. So thus we find a whole tribe, and a specific family within that tribe, called of God, set apart to a specific responsibility different from others who were also holy. Whatever they did in their

function, it was dominated by the fact that they were holy and had to draw near to God to perform their duties. Others were holy, but they did not have to draw near to God, and so all Israelites in that sense were holy.

The Levites as a tribe were holy just like the other Israelites, but they were also holy in a special way. They were not holy in the way the priests were holy. The priests were holy like all other Israelites. They were holy in the same way the whole tribe of Levi was holy, but they were in a category of holiness apart from and different from even those who were part of the tribe of Levi.

The thing about them "drawing near to God" is shown in the Old Testament, which of course symbolically pictured them carrying out whatever those functions were, in and in behalf of the tabernacle.

We are going to look at what happened here up to this point in a much wider context. We are going to look at the whole chapter of Numbers 16, plus a few other scriptures brought in mostly from the New Testament.

In Numbers 16 through 18, God makes very clear that He did not set apart and make holy those presumptuous, insolent, and unprincipled rebels for the priesthood service. I am speaking of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 besides them.

Moses' reaction to the rebellion was exactly right. "When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." [Verse 4] He showed neither arrogance by lashing out, nor was he apologetically defensive either. He was righteously indignant. He did obeisance to the One he belonged to. When he arose, he declared in verse 5 that tomorrow was "High Noon." That is what he said. "Tomorrow we will see."

I want you to understand that these 250 men, plus Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were not rude, impudent ruffians, but were credible public leaders. The Bible describes them as "esteemed men of rank," but it also shows them to be covetous and discontented. (Remember those sermons on covetousness and discontentment, that they go hand in hand.) These men were covetous, and they were discontented with the privileges already given to them, and now they wanted more.

This was not a casual momentary uprising. Verse 3 says, "They gathered themselves together." In modern translations it says, "They came as a group," meaning that this was a well-thought-out organized conspiracy accusing Moses and Aaron of a power grab, and that Moses and Aaron had arrogated too much to themselves.

The legal basis of their rebellion was the argument that *all* are equal, because *all* were holy. That is in verse 3. They insisted that God was in the midst of the whole nation, and therefore the emphasis here in reading this has to be on the word "*all*," and I will tell you why. It was because the assertion they made was true, except that it was a distorted application of God's intent.

Part of the purpose of God recording this is to show that not everybody set apart is holy in exactly the same way. Let's go back to the New Testament and we will see an application that Paul made of this.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; [We are going to see that those 250, plus the three, thought pretty highly of themselves.] but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

That is already beginning to give indications that God has not dealt the same way to every person.

Romans 12:4-6 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office [or function]: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

And then Paul goes on. It is the principle that I want to get there, because here is a New Testament application of the issue that is involved in Numbers 16. It is Paul's admonition given to instruct all who are in the church in regard to our conduct in the church.

All of us are going to face two dangers regarding the use of our spiritual gifts, and they are extremes of course. We *overestimate* ourselves and attempt to exercise a gift never given to us, or we *underestimate* ourselves and *never* exercise a gift given to fulfill God's will for ourselves and for the good of the entire congregation. What Paul is indicating when he mentions "dealing soberly," is that if the righteousness of God is in us, it will motivate us to conduct ourselves in humility.

Referring back to Numbers 16, the problem for these men was that they were not being submissive to God's intent. This is where the distortion of "*being holy*" came in. In fact, the context there indicates that they did not see God in it at all. Their accusations were all against Moses and Aaron, were they not? It was clearly a carnal approach. But Moses *did* see their approach as a contemptuous action against God, against His sanctification of the priesthood.

The real bottom line in Numbers 16 is the absence of faith in God and His will in those men. **Did they see God?** The answer to this is "No." In their lust for position, all they saw were men—Moses and Aaron, and the other Levites.

The Expositors Commentary on this series of verses—1 through 5—is really interesting. They say, in this section, "They [meaning Korah, Dathan, and Abiram] appear to be arguing for the democratization of the divine privilege."

God does not operate in a democracy. The privilege that was given to Moses and to Aaron, and to Aaron's family to serve in that capacity was not democratic. God's pattern of leadership is theocratic, mediated through a divinely sanctioned regent. In this case it was Moses, and then under him was Aaron. The answer to their claim that, "Well, we're all holy," is that indeed God is present with all His people, but this section is showing leaders have more privilege in some areas than others. The privilege also brings with it responsibility. Jesus clearly said in Luke 12:48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

I want you to reflect on Moses in regard to the privilege and responsibility that he was given. Later on, after this, Moses paid dearly for a momentary

loss of faith when he struck the rock. That was an infraction that God might easily have passed over in someone less gifted and privileged. As Richard said last week, God would have cut that person a lot of slack, but not Moses. I also want to remind you, that despite Aaron's appointment as high priest, he too was not allowed into the Promised Land because of his failures. *They paid.*

So one thing that we must all learn is that God's appointments are not even-handed, as we might view them. God indeed judges everybody fairly, but He does not deal with everybody in an even-handed way. Sometimes does He not say that He sets up the basest of men over a nation? Just witness our past president. And so we had to deal with that and know at the same time that God put that man on the throne.

Turn now to I Corinthians 12 where we see Paul making another application of the same principle that is involved here. He did it here in Corinth because there was a problem that touched on this in the church there.

I Corinthians 12:11 But all these work that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing [or distributing] to every man severally [individually] as he will.

We are to understand that it is God who apportions the gifts of His spirit as He wills.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body as it has pleased him.

It is His church. We have been bought with a price, and He has every right to set people in the church and "gift" them, as He sees fit.

I Corinthians 12:28 And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

So even within the church, everything is not as we might look at it carnally. Let me give you another example from Jesus' teaching. Did He not use a

parable in which He shows that some are given five talents, and others are given two talents, and others are given only one? That is a warning right there that we have a responsibility to bear up under whatever it is that God gives to us.

At the beginning of verse 18, where it says in the *King James*, "But now . . . ," a modern translation very likely will have that translated, "as a matter of fact." What Paul was doing there was stating a brief conclusion to what precedes this verse by giving a practical spiritual example of what he means. That is that God has designed and is creating the spiritual body—the church. The church then is the example that God has not dealt with everybody in an even-handed manner as it might look to us carnally, but He does judge everybody according to what they have been given and how well they have used and developed what they have been given.

Even as God has set the particular parts in the human body where it pleased Him, so He is also placing people in the spiritual body as it pleases Him. Members are thus given gifts enabling them to carry out their function in the body. Gifts are given according to function. That is a clear principle.

One of the most obvious examples in the Bible of this is in Exodus 31 which shows God giving gifts to those who would build the tabernacle. God gifted Aholiab, Bezaleel, and then all the men and women who were going to be the artisans and craftsmen working on the tabernacle. Each was given gifts appropriate to their function in preparing things for the tabernacle.

This begins to go pretty far afield maybe, but I want you to see what is involved here. What happened in Acts 9? Paul was converted. Paul himself is an obvious example in that he had absolutely no awareness that God was going to choose him and gift him to be His apostle to the Gentiles, and to Israelites as well, for he was an enemy of the church, and was persecuting the church. Paul said in another place, "Nobody has received as many gifts as I have." This was completely and totally God's choice.

I can personally say, in my own case, that regardless of which ordination to and within the ministry, I never knew that they were going to occur. When I was ordained as a local elder in Pittsburgh on the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 1966, I was sitting there, and they called out my name. There had

been absolutely no communication in regard to this between me and anybody. I was just called out of the congregation.

This same thing occurred in 1969 when I was ordained as a preaching elder. It happened at the Feast of Tabernacles in Squaw Valley. Evelyn and I attended a ministerial lunch. That is all it was. After the lunch was over, somebody came over to me (I did not even know who it was) and said for me to go upstairs. Evelyn and I went upstairs and I had hands laid on me by Garner Ted Armstrong and by Norman Smith, and they ordained me a preaching elder. Gardner Ted said something in the prayer that I have never forgotten. He said, "I don't know this man from Adam." But **somebody** moved *them* to ordain me.

And then in 1982 at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jekyll Island, I was ordained as a pastor. Les McCullough was up there, and I had no idea that he was going to ordain me. He just called me up and laid hands on me and ordained me as a pastor. Again no conversation had passed between me and anybody regarding any of those ordinations. But that is very frequently the way God does something. I did not leave the Worldwide Church of God to start this organization, either. It just sort of "fell in my lap" kind of thing.

In I Corinthians 12:28, Paul arranges those offices named in a hierarchical order. He gave them *ranking*. None of this implies "better than." It is not the purpose of this chapter, as verses 21 through 25 show. Let us read that.

I Corinthians 12:21-24 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacks.

Nothing here in any way implies that somebody who is more gifted is better than somebody who is less gifted. Each is judged by God fairly, and each is held responsible for carrying out that which is within his function and his

gifts. It does imply that within the New Covenant church/family/nation /priesthood, gifting is according to function.

Go back now to Numbers 16. I do not want you to lose track of what I am attempting to do here. I am attempting in this sermon to show you the importance of sanctification, of holiness, giving you descriptions from the scriptures showing variety within the overall setting apart, and showing some New Covenant applications as well.

In the remainder of Numbers 16, God makes abundantly clear that He rejects the rebellious proposals of Korah and his 250 noble cohorts, but there is much more here than merely showing God's rejection of their claim to holiness and privilege.

Numbers 16:5 And he spoke unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy.

If you have a modern translation, it may read like this. (There is nothing wrong with this, but it is just a little bit clearer; it is actually turned into a question.) "In the morning let Yahweh make known who belongs to Him." This directly ties into something that is again back in the New Testament in II Timothy 2. The phrase is actually in the verse, but I want to give you a little bit more than just the verse.

II Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are his. . .

That was what Moses was appealing to God. "God, show the rest of these people who it is that really belongs to You."

II Timothy 2:19 . . .The Lord knows them that are his. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Now what kind of a context did Paul put that into? Let us go back to verse 14.

II Timothy 2:14-18 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already: and overthrow the faith of some.

What was going on here? Well, exactly what is going on and has been going on in the church probably since who knows when. It is what we have gone through in the past eight, ten, twelve years in the church of God, with it being flooded by false doctrine. "Vain babblings" is what Paul is calling it, and what did it do to the New Testament church? It did the same thing to the New Testament church as has happened to us in these last ten or twelve years. It blew the church apart.

Now what was happening? In principle, exactly the same thing that happened in Numbers 16 where people who had been fellowshiping with "the *holy*," but were not holy, were trying to take the place of those who *were* holy. Do you understand the principle? And so Paul called upon Numbers 16, and said, "Hey Timothy! There is a lot of confusion going on out there. There are people who are claiming to be ministers, and there are people who are pushing false doctrines. There is vain babbling all over the place. Don't you worry. **God knows who are His**, and He's going to make them evident."

It is interesting that Nahum also used this same phrase in Nahum 1:7. He put a little bit of a twist on it. He said, "The LORD knows them that trust in Him." This also can tie directly into I Corinthians 11:17-19. Once we have experienced what we have experienced in the church these last ten to fifteen years, the New Testament has come alive with what happened to them. They went through the same thing that we are going through. Now it is our turn.

I Corinthians 11:17-19 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, . . .

This is "must" in the sense of "necessary." You can connect this with Deuteronomy 13:1-5. "There must be also heresies among you." You ask, "Why does God permit this?" Well, it tells you right in the verse.

I Corinthians 11:19 . . . that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

We are being put to the test. The outcome eventually will be the same as it was in Numbers 16, when people who are faithful to God will be shown, as Moses and Aaron were. Now we are being tested. Though we are not going to be able to see any miracles like happened here in Numbers 16, the end result is going to be that those who are approved of God, those who God knows are His, are going to be made evident to all, even as Moses and Aaron were.

There are all kinds of heresies floating around out there creating confusion, but understanding that we are being tested and that we are to be faithful is why Paul said that "All those who name the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." That is how we will give evidence as to who really is holy, and who is not.

Go back again to Numbers 16. In verse 5 there is another interesting statement.

Numbers 16:5 Even tomorrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy.

I picked this out of commentary, and I thought it was kind of interesting. The person said that because of the context and the way it is written, that word

"holy" can legitimately be turned into the word "holiest." Let us put this in here. "God will show who is holiest." Very interesting. And if indeed that is what Moses said, it fits, because these men claimed to be holy. Moses did not reject the fact that they were holy, but there are some, if I can put it this way and not offend you, because of God's choice, because of His sanctification, because of Him setting apart, that are in this regard "holier" than others. It is an interesting point, and he may very well have said that.

Why does God have to do this? Well, it has to be done. God *has* to categorize. He has to create organization, because without it things becomes muddled, and confusion reigns, with everybody who has a hankering doing whatever he has a hankering about. Human nature hates to be told that it must do this, or it must not do that, or that this other person is responsible for this, and you are responsible for that.

What we are getting at here is really the very crux of sin. It is very easy for human nature to feel put upon, unappreciated, neglected, and abused. Human nature is by nature touchy, easily irritated, and at the same time very competitive and given to envy. Perhaps the major practical lesson shown here is that if a person cannot govern his spirit, to patiently wait upon God to show His will, or to accept the position that God has set him apart to do within the body, that person will not be in the Kingdom.

What is at stake here in regard to the subject of sanctification is the practical acceptance that God rules. It is very easy for us to say, "Yes, I believe that God is sovereign over His creation," but can we accept it when it is applied to us personally, and our nature feels abused or irritated, or put upon, or neglected?

I have no doubt that this was playing in these people's minds, and out of it came an envy for what somebody else (the Levites) had. It was very easy for them to say, "Well, I'm just as good as they are." "I can do that better than he can." "I have more schooling than he has." But that is the way human nature is. It can always rationalize and justify to either reject what God has done, or rationalize that what one desires should be given to one. It takes faith for all of us to accept a position that is not easy to operate in.

Charles and I were talking about some experiences at Ambassador College. He had some experiences with supervisors who were administrating departments that he was involved with, who were very hard to get along with. I have been under pastors who were not the easiest persons to work with, and later they would admit it. One man said, "I made all my mistakes in Pittsburgh." No he did not, because it was not long after that he left the church, and made his biggest mistake. He left the church under a cloud of guilt because of things that he had done. But he was a *hard* man to get along with. He was intelligent, and a very fine teacher, but when it came to practical application of the intent of God's law, it just was not there, and he was hard to deal with.

Now here you are, in the church, and if you happen to be under a pastor who is not easy to deal with, what do you do? Well, these men rebelled. You know that Moses had a temper. That is very clearly shown in the Bible in many places. Did you ever stop to think that Moses had been very difficult to deal with? We will see a little bit later what they called him, and there might have been a measure of truth in what they said, but that did not negate the fact that God had made Moses to be in that position. Right? Right! And so this is where a lot of the problems come from, because even though God may appoint a person to be in a position, a significant position at that it may be, that person brings with him all of the baggage of his life and personality. Despite that, in God's eyes, he is holy, because God has placed him there.

How do we deal with this in practical application? That is what this chapter is about. That is the bottom line. The way to deal with it is by faith that God lives, that God is on His throne, and that God knows what is going on. He knows the problems that you are bearing up under, and He has the solution, but not yet. But do we have the patience? Do we have the faith? We are being tested, and it looks like it is going to go on for a while yet, because now we have had yet another split in the church.

I mentioned that what we are dealing here with is the very crux of sin. Perhaps the major practical lesson shown here is that if a person cannot govern his own spirit patiently, and wait upon God to show His will, or to

accept the position that God has set him apart to do within the body, that person may not be in the Kingdom of God. What is at stake here in regard to the subject of sanctification is the practical acceptance that God rules.

It is very easy to see that once one understands this, the men who were rebelling against Moses and Aaron did not have the faith because they came to Moses saying, "Now here's the way I see it." And they were trampling all over God's grace in giving them the responsibility that they already had. They forgot all about *their* problems of character. They forgot all about what *they* had done in the past, and they were focusing on Moses and Aaron, and were saying, "Well, I'm just as good as they are."

Numbers 16:6-7 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD does choose, he shall be holy: you take too much upon you, you sons of Levi.

That is very interesting because apparently Moses must have turned and faced Korah directly. Korah, remember, was the only Levite among the three. There may have been other Levites in the 250, but apparently this was directed straight at Korah *because* he was a Levite, and he should have known better above the other ones.

Numbers 16:8-11 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, you sons of Levi: Seems it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel has separated you [set you apart] from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he has brought you near to him, and all your brethren the sons of Levi with you: and seek you the priesthood also? For which cause both you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that you murmur against him?

That is the way they saw things. Moses apparently turned away from Korah, who may have been standing a little bit apart from Abiram and Dathan, and he said the following to them.

Numbers 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, . . .

In fact that actually indicates that they might not have been there at that time, but went off maybe to their tents.

Numbers 16:12-15 . . . the sons of Eliab [the two Reubenites] which said, We will not come up: Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land that flows with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except you make yourself altogether a prince over us? Moreover you have not brought us into a land that flows with milk and honey, or 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 wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not you their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

I want you to notice what an ironic and cruel twist that is given by these men. After all the evidence that God gave that He was working through Moses and Aaron, all that happened in Egypt, and all that happened *after* Egypt—the dividing of the Red Sea, water coming out of rocks, manna coming down out of heaven, and God killing all of those people in Egypt—what did these men do? In every case it was Aaron and Moses. I say Aaron first because Aaron was the spokesman who went before Pharaoh because Moses complained he could not talk well, but Moses was there I am sure.

What did these men do? Suddenly in their mind the description of Canaan becomes the description of Egypt—the place of their slavery, the place of their hard labor, the place of their bondage. "You took us out of the land flowing with milk and honey." Can you see how perverted and twisted their rationalizations had come? The level of that charge is ludicrous to the extreme, especially when it is understood that these are the very same people who refused to go into the land two chapters before and witnessed their

fellow Israelites being killed by the enemy—a murder that they escaped because God gave grace to them. God is showing how perverted people's thinking can become when they begin coveting after something that He has not appointed them to.

It is so interesting how the overwhelming majority of those people, who were tares in the church and who were false ministers giving us those heresies, quickly turned upon Herbert Armstrong, and the one that God used to bring them into the church and introduced them to the truth so that they had a choice. Now he becomes the enemy, and he is an evil man. You are living through it. You are living through Numbers 16, and it has happened not as quickly as this happened, but it has happened over the last twelve or fifteen years. People that God used Herbert Armstrong to prosper, to educate, began to call him a senile old man, to call him demented, crazy, a money grabber, evil, and the tool of Satan.

Let us look a little bit more closely, as we close here for today, on what Dathan and Abiram did and said to Moses.

In verse 12 they adamantly refused to appear before Moses. They mocked his words by repeating back to him what he said in verse 9 to the Levites: "Seem it but a small thing. . ." In verse 13 it says, "Is it a small thing that you have brought us up?" See. They are mocking it.

The use of the description of Canaan for Egypt. In verse 14 they accuse Moses of their plight in the wilderness. Here this man has been standing between them and death. How many times did he intervene with God and mediate before God in their behalf, and they blamed him that they were out in the wilderness?

In verse 13 they mock him as a strutting prince prancing about. That is what I meant in saying that maybe he was a little bit difficult to deal with. They said, "You make yourself altogether a prince over us."

They blame him that they do not possess the fields and vineyards of Canaan. They taunt him with a charge of abuse of power, that he attempts to blind others to his faults. That is what they mention when they say, "Will you put out the eyes of these men?" And then they repeat, "We will not come up."

Do you see what God has recorded here? God has recorded here that those who were *not* sanctified to the privilege and responsibilities of the priesthood were giving evidence in their twisted testimony, in their surly attitudes and uncooperative conduct, *that they were not sanctified to it?* But there is even more proof than that which is coming next week. I do not want to start now on the next portion of this because it involves quite a number of verses.

What we are going to see is that first of all I have set the stage for the next time I speak. God performs three miracles in order to show that He indeed, and that He alone, has appointed Moses and Aaron and Aaron's family to the priesthood. We are going to see that He makes sure that everybody understands that it is their sole responsibility. Nobody else is permitted to do what they do.

Do you understand what that means and how significant that is to your life? Nobody on earth has permission to come into His presence except you. It is only those made holy and given the right to do it, because we are a *holy* priesthood.

Now we do not kill those who draw near. We do not have that authority. But God had to show it in some way, because what we are building up to here is we do not have the same sort of circumstance that the Israelites did, in that God acted very visibly and quickly. But for us, these are all things that we learn, come to appreciate, be grateful for, and do by means of His Spirit. What He is doing here is drawing your attention to what an awesome gift, privilege, and responsibility has been given to you and me. It is no wonder that Israel felt unqualified, and why they drew back. Now God did that with a lot of fireworks, and it impressed them. Do you understand? This is important, because we are going to be seeing how important holy things are.

As I mentioned early in the first sermon, this Pentecost thing ties directly to what we are going through, because the only grain that was acceptable to God was what an Israelite put in the ground. No other grain qualified except what one of His holy ones had planted, and we will see more of that as we go along.