

Miriam Was Not Afraid

Deadly disease

- Nu.12:...10, leprosy
- Nu.12:1, gossip, unjust criticism: even worse than leprosy

Moses, highly respected leader

(11:27-28)

- Son of Pharaoh's daughter: Ex.2:...5, 7-10.
- Instructed in wisdom of Egypt, Ac.7:21.
- God's choice, thus mighty in word and deed, Ac.7:21.
- Gave up earthly acclaim to stand with Israel, Ac.7:23-30.

Moses, highly respected leader

- Returned to Egypt after 40 years (age 80) to beat Egypt with a stick
 - Ten lesson course brought down Egypt
 - Israel witnessed great miracles (Ex.14)
- Ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Law, Ex.19-20
 - 1) He did not desire notoriety; none of these things went to his head
 - 2) He was grateful to share authority, not envious, Nu.11:16...

No one could question Moses' credentials

Wrong!

- Nu.12: Moses encounters another insurrection . . . *from his sister*
- Did she consider Moses' wife a threat to her standing as female leader? ...or jealous of Moses himself??

I. A Critical Habit

Miriam and Aaron (Nu.20)

- 1: Spoke against Moses. Miriam: ring-leader
 - a. She is mentioned first
 - b. “Spoke against” is feminine
 - c. She is singled out for severe punishment
 - d. Aaron is easily influenced by others,
Ex.32

Miriam's attack is smokescreen

- Pull Moses down through his wife
- Moses away 40 years, Ex.3
 - a. Married Zipporah ... (Ex. 18:1-6 ... 13-26)
 - b. If Zipporah had died, Miriam is jealous over his new wife
- Real target: “Only through Moses”? . . .

“only through Moses?...”

- Envy and slander come from pride:
 - Ex.2, she saved baby brother
 - Ex.15:20, she was a prophetess
 - She does not get the credit she deserves
- Pride is never satisfied. Mic.6:4
- “And the LORD heard it.” 11:1. Ps.94

Miriam and Aaron

3: Moses is more humble / lowly / meek, than all men on earth.

- When God's honor was slandered (as in golden calf event) no man as zealous as Moses.
- When his own honor was assaulted, no man more meek ...
- Only one who is led by Holy Spirit could make such a statement about himself, probably against his own natural inclination

God

4-5: Suddenly...God calls a meeting

6-8: God spoke to prophets through visions / dreams

- God spoke through Miriam / Aaron.
- He speaks with Moses face to face...(7)
Moses sees form of the Lord.
- *Why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?* [“Who do you think you are...?”]
- To criticize Moses is to criticize God.

God's anger

9: Anger of LORD... "Only words"??

10: Miriam...leprous...

11-12: Aaron (High Priest) confesses foolish sin.

Pleads for sister's life
from man she slandered

13: Moses could have said, 'She got what she deserves!'

Miriam and Aaron

14: God grants the request with a sharp figure of disrespect. [Lk.18:32]

15-16: all Israel learned of Miriam's sin – she became an object lesson...

- How are the mighty fallen.
- No one is above sin / apostasy.
- The slanderer hurts himself most.

If she could foresee the outcome,
would she have controlled her tongue?

I. A Critical Habit

II. A Childlike Humility

God hears our words.

- Nu.12:8 – the good sense to be afraid
- Mt.12³⁶ But I say to you, that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
 - ESV: for every careless word they speak
- There are no small sins.
- Tongue sins come easy for most of us.

God punishes tongue sins

Mark 7²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man.

James 1²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

James 3

Sin grows

Num.13-14 – Israel slanders God Himself

- Some are slow learners.
 - 40 years of wandering till they die outside of Canaan
- Those who believed the spies' slanders against God deserve same punishment as those who spread the lies.

Sin grows

- Nu.12, Miriam lacked good sense to be afraid.
 - Nu.13-14, Israel lacked the good sense not to be afraid (= trust God)!
- Moses is 80 at exodus. Aaron, 83...

There is no age limit
on sins of the tongue

Moses did not let success go to his head

...misuse his privilege or position.

...boast, or make others feel inferior to himself.

...retaliate, or even answer back.

...sink to the level of his attackers.

Moses prayed for his slanderers.

Moses did not gloat over Miriam's disease.

Take Caution

1. If you look long enough for a flaw, you'll find it . . . even in Moses.
2. If you get no respect, temptation is to pull others down to your size.
3. Miriam saved brother's life, Ex.2
...taught women a song of triumph, Ex.15
...was a blessing to Israel, Mic.6:4.
Nu.12, outside camp, she was a despised leper, in misery and disgrace.

Take Caution

4. Miriam – the day before did not commit this crime. Why this day?
 - Next mention of Miriam – Nu.20:1.