

## Let God Be Your Portion

Last week we talked about recognizing distractions and choosing to respond to the difficulties as people of God and not people of the world. We recognized that the people of the world run to their idols to hold them steady in difficult times but that we, as people of God, must choose to run to Him. I encouraged us to recognize that our God is the continuous One, the One who has been, who is, and who will always be. He never changes. And He has told us, the ones grafted into Israel, that He has chosen us and will not throw us away. "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." (Is 41:9b-10, NLT)

This morning, I want us to take a trip back in time to Numbers 18 because God makes a very powerful statement to Aaron and his descendants. And God makes this statement after the rebellion of Korah and his co-conspirators. Those men thought that they should be the leaders instead of Moses and Aaron. In fact, Korah and his men were part of the tribe of Levi, the tribe that had been chosen by God to be the priests and helpers in the tabernacle. But these guys wanted to be the top dogs. So God set up a situation to demonstrate who He had chosen. Ultimately, the outcome was that Korah, his co-conspirators and their families were swallowed up by the earth. Then the very next morning, the people of Israel were again complaining about Moses and Aaron, and God sent a plague that killed 14,700 people.

Then God demonstrated to all the tribes of Israel that He had chosen Aaron and his descendants to be the priests who would stand before the LORD. He did this by having all the tribes bring the staffs that represented their tribes. Aaron's name was inscribed on the staff of the tribe of Levi. Then God told Moses to put all those staffs in front of the Ark of the Covenant and the one that sprouted almond buds would show who God had chosen to be the one who would be the priest. The next morning, Moses went into the Holy of Holies and found that Aaron's staff had budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds. He then brought the staffs out for everyone to see so that all would know that God had chosen Aaron and the tribe of Levi to serve before Him. Anyone else who tried to enter the tabernacle would die.

With that very brief story, we might be prone to think that God would give the tribe of Levi a very large section of land when they entered into the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, if we thought that, we would be very wrong.

Numbers 18:20-23 (NLT) "And the LORD said to Aaron, 'You priests will receive no allotment of land or share of property among the people of Israel. I am your share and your allotment. <sup>21</sup> As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will compensate them for their service in the Tabernacle. Instead of an allotment of land, I will give them the tithes from the entire land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> From now on, no Israelites except the priests or Levites may approach the Tabernacle. If they come too near, they will be judged guilty and die. <sup>23</sup> Only the Levites may serve at the Tabernacle, and they will be held responsible for any offenses against it. This is a permanent law for you, to be observed from generation to generation. The Levites will receive no allotment of land among the Israelites."

(MSG) "Yehovah said to Aaron, 'You won't get any inheritance in the land, not so much as a small plot of ground: I am your plot of ground, I am your inheritance among the people of Israel'....And the Levites – They get no inheritance among the people of Israel, no land-inheritance."

This is in your face, just a downright hard thing to hear from God for a man (Aaron) who has had a very difficult week. You will get no ground. You will have no place to raise animals or plant vineyards. But then God says something that challenges my thinking. The Hebrew says this – "I am your portion and your inheritance." God is telling Aaron that the loss of property and inheritance of "things" is

actually a special privilege. For God is their inheritance. God is their portion. He is the One who will provide for all their needs. He is the One who will give them of Himself.

If we look in Psalm 73, we find Asaph, a Levite from the clan of Kohath, saying this, "My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God is the Rock, the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

If you know something about how the promised land was divided up when Joshua took the people across the Jordan, you know that the Levites were not given any land. They were given cities, but no territory. And now, Asaph is living that reality. In fact, in the first part of that chapter in Psalms, you find that he is frustrated because the wicked are prospering but he gets "nothing but trouble all day long". And in verse 16-17 of Chapter 73, it says, (NLT) "So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! <sup>17</sup> Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked." (verse 21-22) "Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. <sup>22</sup> I was so foolish and ignorant – I must have seemed like a senseless animal to You." Verse 25, 26 "Whom have I in heaven but You? I desire you more than anything on earth. <sup>26</sup> My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever."

All of the bad things are beating me up, Asaph says. In fact, when I got my eyes on the things happening in the world around me, I was troubled. It wasn't until I entered the sanctuary of God that I got a clear picture of what was going to happen. When I had my eyes on this world, I got bitter and felt like I had been pierced with a sword. But those thoughts were really stupid and ignorant. And he cries out "who do I have in heaven but you? God, I desire nothing but you. When my body falls apart and my heart fails, You O God are my Rock, you are the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" What would happen if we chose God to be our portion today?

Let's head over to the New Testament and see what we can find. Look at 1 Peter. Now before you start with a statement that Peter is writing to the Jews who have been scattered all over what is today, Turkey, let's just explore what Peter says. Alford's Commentary tells us that by the time Peter wrote this around AD 64, there is no reason to think that Gentiles were not part of the congregations. And if you look in Chapter 4 verse 3, you find this "You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy – their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols." – It seems clear that Peter is including Gentiles as his intended readers because that is what the Gentiles were known for.

So he says this, in chapter 2 verse 5, "And you are living stones that God is building into His spiritual temple. What's more, you are His holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God." Now, if we understand the reading from Numbers 18 and apply it along with what Peter is saying, we find that we, as followers of Jesus, are spiritually in the same category as Aaron and his sons. They were priests and Peter says that we are priests. And we, through the intercession of Jesus, our great High Priest, offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. If this is all true, and it appears to be so, we are to understand that God is to be our portion, our inheritance.

The ultimate provision for the priests and Levites was the great "I AM" Himself, Yehovah, the One who was, and is and is to come. It is Yehovah who says, I AM your portion. I am everything that you will ever need. And I think God is asking us today, "Will you let Me be your portion?"

I'm not talking about getting rid of everything you own. I'm not talking about taking a vow of poverty. I'm talking about getting rid of what distracts us from God Himself. I'm talking about making a decision that no matter what happens in this messed up world, that God is our portion! That He is

enough! It means that we have to get away from what is taking our time and start seeking Him and spending our time in the study of God's Word and prayer. Maybe no one will ever come to our door and drag us into the street and kill us because we are followers of Jesus. But if it comes to that, will we have focused on our Lord to the extent that we can say to God, "You are my portion. Let them kill me but I will not deny You."?

I have a sign on my office door. Some of you may have seen it. It says, "Am I reduced to just Him?" Am I allowing Him only to be my portion?

This is the day that we celebrate our dads. While we are aware that dads have their faults from time to time, we also must be aware that God has placed them in the leadership role for the family. So I ask you this morning – dad, have you come to the point that you can say with conviction and clarity that God is your portion? Can you say with conviction that you are determined to lead your family, no matter the situation, so that they will rely on God above any and everything else? For if we don't teach our children how to rely on Him alone, choosing Him to be our portion, then when things get even tougher in our world, our children will run to other things to give them comfort. I am totally convinced that the only thing that will hold us and our families tightly, is our focus on our God. If He is our portion, and we live that out – not just say it – then He will keep us in the time of trouble and testing.

I believe that we are quickly coming into the last 7 years. Things are rapidly developing, and we are seeing the vision of Daniel 8 beginning to be fulfilled. We know from reading the prophets, Jesus and Revelation that there are going to be greater challenges. And yet, God is still working overtime to persuade people everywhere come to repentance and follow His Son, Jesus. Will we be able to say, "You, O God, are enough! You alone are my portion?"