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Moses, Aaron and Miriam

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Nehemiah 12:31-44; Exodus 15:20-21; 16:6.

"For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." (Micah 6:4)

You notice in Micah 6:4 Moses, Aaron and Miriam are linked together and in a sense are equal and that the special connection of their being so related here is that of leading the Lord's people, in a matter of the Lord's people being led on. "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam", so it is the advance and progress of the Lord's people which is in view with this threefold element to carry them on, to lead them on. If we could just get the significance of these three names or persons we should see three of the great things by which the Lord brings His people on, and they are to be mentioned quite briefly, quite simply.

Moses always represents *authority*. Aaron represents *priestly ministry*. Miriam represents *prophetic influence and praise*. Now you see you have in a nutshell a very great deal of truth which it would be quite profitable to explore very much more fully than we shall do now, but what we want to take special account of is this, that all these elements are gathered up in the Lord Jesus Himself and very much accentuated.

You see you have the prophet, the priest and the king in principle here. To put it the other way and in other words, you have authority and priestliness or priestly ministry, and you have praise connected with the prophetic influence. Now we are the Lord's spiritual Israel and we are being, I trust, led by the Lord. I suppose the prayer of all of us is "Lead me in Thy way", there is not one of us who probably very often expresses our hearts desire in some terms like that, that we might be led by the Lord, led on by the Lord, that He would bring us on, lead us forward in our spiritual life.

Now, how does the Lord lead? By what means? Into what? Well, simply into what He is Himself, that is all. The whole of our progress is in Christ and it is more and more inward into Christ. It is within the compass of Christ, it is to discover what is included within the compass of Christ, it is finding out the inward, spiritually what the Lord Jesus is, coming into the fulness of Christ. And so these things represent what Christ is and what is in Christ for us spiritually as that in which we are to make our progress. If we are going to make spiritual progress it will be along these two lines, which are only two phases of one thing, firstly into Christ as Lord, as Sovereign, as the One Who has all authority. He leads by reason of His authority.

Now, we have been dwelling much upon that, the absolute transcendence and victory and triumph and power of our Lord Jesus. We have dwelt much upon the early part of Ephesians, "God raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand far above all rule and authority, every principality and power, every name that is named not only in this age but in that which is to come". Well, it is because the Lord Jesus is Lord, has all power and all authority that He can lead His people on in victory. We have to come on by reason of a faith union with the Lord in His victory. A faith link in what He is, and where He is in absolute ascendancy. Now, that is easy to say and easy to hear, but it is not always quite so easy to work out when it seems that the Lord Jesus is not Lord but anything else is lord, circumstances, the enemy and what not. But this faith link with the Lord in His absolute triumph, power and authority is the way of spiritual progress upward and onward.

But there is the other phase also with which we have been occupied so much, the latter part of the Ephesian letter where we not only believe in the Lord as Victor, as having all power, but where we come into the heavenly position in Him to share that authority, to stand in it experimentally and to function in the authority of the Lord Jesus. Now, these are two phases of one thing: the authority side of the Lord Jesus is the way in which the Lord would lead us on, and all that I stay now to say on that is by way of interrogation.

Are we going on in that? We are familiar with the truth. You know when the Lord teaches people He does not just give them information. The Lord, when He teaches His children, brings them personally into relation to the thing that He says, and that is the meaning of discipline. And the wilderness aspect of things is simply the discipline of the Lord to bring us into the truth with which we are mentally familiar.

Now are we making progress in this connection? How much progress have we made in the last week? It is very real and blessed progress beloved, when we come to a settled faith in the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus through all conditions and circumstances, and perhaps it is something more than that when we come to the position where we stand in that authority over situations and conditions. Where the thing that is true in Him is made true in measure in us; the ascendancy position. Now, that is very nice for meetings like this, but what about going back tomorrow to the office and to the shop and to the every other place, to the home perhaps - are we going to make spiritual progress there? Have we been making progress in that connection in the ascendancy of

Christ as a fact for us and as a reality in us? And it is very necessary that it should be so. The glory of the Lord for us is bound up with that. I just put it to you, how much real progress in the Lord in this matter have you made? I do not want you to be in glory without glory. You may be saved alright, but an abundant entrance is another thing.

The next thing is the Aaron side of the Lord Jesus in priestly ministry, and that is usually related with love. Aaron is the affectional side. Moses is the authority, Aaron is the prayer, he represents the heart principle because the Lord said to Moses that when his brother Aaron saw him he would be glad in his heart, and Aaron brings in the heart side of things. Love in priestly ministry. Now the Lord Jesus is exercising priestly ministry for us and the letter to the Hebrews says that Christ is greater than Aaron in priestly ministry.

How much are we learning, increasing in knowledge to our profit, to our good, to our enrichment, to our progress of the value and meaning of our Lord's present priestly ministry for us? It would be a very sad lookout for us if He stopped interceding for us. We do not know how much we owe to the intercessions of the Lord Jesus even now. We do not know how much we owe to the prayers of fellow believers. We ask for them constantly, but what are the prayers of believers in comparison to the prayers of our Lord who is making intercession for us in virtue of His own blood? He is carrying on a priestly ministry there. What He is for us in priestly ministry now - are we learning what that means in real value in our lives? Making progress in that priestly ministry in Christ? He would lead us on by what He is, but also lead us on into what He is, lead us on by reason of His priestly ministry, but He would lead us on also in His priestly ministry. Have we been taking up this ministry of intercession? Praying at all seasons for all saints? Do we take them on our hearts? How often do we go round the local company and pray for one another unless there is a very real emergency call for it? How much time are we spending in this matter of intercession? That question is not for you to answer me but before the Lord. How much real intercessory ministry are we fulfilling before the Lord for all saints? That is the way of spiritual development, growth, enrichment; there is nothing lost, but much gained by that.

Miriam, with this double phase of her representation. There is prophetic influence as a factor in spiritual growth. Coming to the New Testament, of course that prophetic element does not necessarily mean the forthcoming of events but the forth-giving of truth. The prophet in the New Testament was not always the man, probably very rarely he was the man, who would forecast things; sometimes he was. The Spirit of prophecy would operate in that way at times, but more generally the prophet was the man who gave out truth. The Lord Jesus is still fulfilling a prophetic ministry by the Holy Spirit, the things of Christ are being taken and revealed to us, not extra to the Scripture, but what is revealed therein or hidden therein. Are we growing, progressing? In the unveiling of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit as the Lord Jesus, so to speak, gives to the Holy Spirit His things for us, are we getting them? Can we say, "Now, the Holy Spirit has shown me that"? In the measure in which that is true we are moving on, we are growing; we do not grow by simply knowing doctrine headily, but we do grow by knowing truth heartily.

What the Holy Spirit reveals to our hearts the Lord Jesus is giving; He would lead us on by His prophetic ministry now. Are we really going on? If it were possible for us to gather up the last five years of ministry with which we have been associated, what a tremendous heap of it, what a heap of these conferences and meetings, it would reach to heaven! But standing alongside of it, how do we measure up? What difference does it make? Blessed be God, most of us can say it has made a difference. Can we all say that? But is the difference commensurate with what the Lord has given?

Are we nearer the end of the Lord for it than we were? The Lord would lead us by His prophetic ministry of giving forth and He would bring us into that, that we in turn might fulfil His prophetic ministry, and you know, giving forth is a great factor in our spiritual growth. Ministering is a great feature in our spiritual growth. Testimony; what a place it has in our own spiritual growth.

My last word is this other side of Miriam: Praise. "Then sang Miriam". She was the praise factor in this leading on. There is a very real progress related to praise. In Nehemiah 12 Nehemiah said he set two bands of those who offered praise. Remember two is adequate or full testimony. An adequate testimony in the realm of praise. I went back with my own Bible to 1 Chronicles 16, and notice it says there it was on that occasion that David instituted the service of praise and appointed Asaph. And you go to Nehemiah 12 and read "the son of Asaph... and the instruments which David the man of God appointed". This continuity of praise, coming back to the first things. It is a blessed thing for us to remember that with all the war that is on in the heavenlies and all the conflict and all the pressure, our Lord Jesus is in the place of praise. "I will sing praise in the midst of the congregation." Now these are the words of the risen Lord and we have been noting that so often the issue of a great conflict did not depend upon the people going out armed and fighting, but their going out praising. I feel there is a place for that in the victory. The Lord Jesus would bring us more into the place of praise. We would make much more progress if there was more praise.

I think sometimes the enemy does frighten us from praise. I have to confess that very often I have thought twice of giving praise lest that praise should be immediately challenged, but if we do really believe in the first thing, the absolute ascendancy of the Lord Jesus, that ought to lead on to the last thing, praise without fear. Now praise is a way of spiritual growth, a way of spiritual progress, and the Lord has laid down that principle in His Word, that when there is praise there is progress, "He that offers praise glorifies Me and prepares a way whereby I may show him the salvation of God." That is an open way of God, to the glory of God. It says here in Nehemiah: "I sent before..." The thought we had at the beginning is being led on by the Lord and the factors used by the Lord for leading on are, authority, priestly ministry, prophetic influence and praise, and praise not by any means the last.

The Lord teach us the value of praise in spiritual growth, in spiritual progress. The value of praising sometimes before we see the issue of the battle, before entering into the fight. If I was giving my own testimony I would have to say how along that line often of late, tremendous conflicts, battles, challenges which have been repeatedly hurled upon us, on several occasions there has been an inexplicable sense of a welling up inside of praise and victory. I did not understand it, did not know what it meant, but one found a few hours afterwards there was some new tremendous issue to be faced, and that was the explanation. It is not something that we do, it is what the Holy Spirit does in us. If the Holy Spirit can get praise into us it must mean He is going to lead us into battle, but He has given us the spirit of victory before we go in. It is no use facing the issue in a spirit of defeat. This thing can only be gone through as we sing our song of victory before we start fighting. That is the way of progress. He would lead us that way into His fulness.