



"There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily."

—George Washington

08-Jul-16

Truth and God's Governance (Part Two)

In Part One, we saw that [Jesus](#) links truth—or more correctly, reality—with His own kingship, saying to Pontius Pilate in [John 18:37](#): "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into [the world](#), that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." This is true because nothing is more real than God's sovereignty and governance. Everything else is less real.

We also considered the first of two principles regarding the reality of God's governance: that a humble person submits to reality—most particularly, the reality of [God](#). John the Baptist is a stellar example of this kind of humility, realizing and graciously submitting to the fact that God in His sovereignty had sent Jesus to both succeed and outshine him ([John 3:27](#), 30).

A second example of humility shown as submission to reality can be found in the person of [Moses](#). [Numbers 12:3](#) says of him, "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." Moses, of course, was perhaps the greatest leader of Israel, yet the Pentateuch clearly perceives no contradiction between great leadership and humility. In fact, they go hand in hand; the best human leaders will be those

who recognize that they are not the ones running things. Exceptional leaders submit to the reality that God is intensely active when it comes to governing and managing His physical and spiritual creation.

A good leader, then, is a humble person who willingly seeks and follows God's direction rather than his own. If he allows God to lead, rather than trying to work everything out himself, he becomes a conduit for God's outworking. When that happens, truly great things can be accomplished because God, not the man, is doing the work, for His ability to bring matters to pass far exceeds what any man can grasp.

The parenthetical statement about Moses' [meekness](#) in [Numbers 12:3](#) appears in the context of a family dispute involving Aaron and Miriam over who should be in control:

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. ([Numbers 12:1-2](#))

Moses knew that no one had greater authority in Israel at that time than he, but he did not defend himself against this spiritual insurrection. Instead, God defended His servant. Moses knew that since God alone had put him in that position, only God could remove him from it. While Moses remained silent in the face of his accusers, God stepped in and taught Miriam a very public and humbling lesson, striking her with leprosy ([Numbers 12:10](#)).

The identified point of contention was Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian woman, but it was not really the issue. The paramount issue in Aaron's and Miriam's minds was Moses' position, and they used the lesser matter of Moses' marriage to insinuate that Moses was not all that great and that God should have taken his marriage into account when handing out positions and responsibilities.

Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian woman was a reality; he really was married to her. Because they were trying to use it against Moses, the context suggests that Aaron and Miriam thought it was a [sin](#). Their problem, though, was that

the reality of Moses' marriage mattered more to them than the reality of God's governance. Aaron and Miriam, just like the rest of us, were blinded by the way they saw things and by what they chose to focus on. What they focused on was reality—it was true, a fact—but it was *less real* than all that God was working out.

Notice that God's defense of Moses does not even mention the marriage:

Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. ([Numbers 12:6-9](#))

God never mentions whether He was for or against the marriage nor whether it was a sin or an acceptable marriage in His eyes. Instead, He addresses the larger issue of whom He had put in charge. From this we can conclude that the reality of God's governance of Israel through Moses was more important than the reality of Moses' marriage. This is the lesson that God taught to Aaron and Miriam.

Every human leader, save the Son of God, has had and will have flaws, foibles, sins, and biases—another reality. But the reality of a leader's humanness is greatly overshadowed by the reality of God, His Kingdom, His sovereign control, and His work through that leader. When God needs to rebuke or correct, He will. Miriam thought Moses needed to be taken down a notch, and instead, she was the one who faced correction.

Later, God corrected Moses when he was out of line. Part of the reality of God's governance is that He will do the fixing—if indeed a thing or a person needs to be fixed—and He will do it in the time and the way that is best. Since it is humanly impossible to anticipate how and when He will act, our best bet is to make sure we are in alignment with Him so that when He does act, we can see which way we need to go and humbly submit.

The second principle concerning the reality of God's governance features the other side of the coin: Unrighteous anger, hostility, and temper deny the reality of God's sovereignty. As John Ritenbaugh explains in his sermon, "The Spiritual Mark of the Beast" (April 1, 1999):

Hostility is very frequently simply a denial of reality. People do not have a temper as though it was something that was born in them. Angry tempers begin to be created in childhood. Angers are allowed by the parents to burst forth, and each time it bursts forth, it becomes easier—and the next time, and the next time, and on and on until it is ingrained in the personality.

Anger is nothing more than a passionate response to a stimulus, and it is almost always a self-centered response. It usually flares when we believe that things have not gone our way, and conflict arises. In addition, anger does not have to be rage but can be either strong or weak or anywhere in between. The important point is that the anger is a selfish response to the greater reality of God's sovereignty over our lives, the church, or the world.

We will delve into this principle more deeply in Part Three.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Anger \(Part One\)](#)

by Martin G. Collins

The world is becoming angrier. Anger, whether explosive or smoldering, can lead to high blood pressure, migraine headaches, or can ultimately lead to our spiritual demise. God gets angry with the wicked every day, but is solution oriented. Jesus had anger toward the Pharisees for the hardness of their hearts as well as for the money changers defiling the temple. We ought to have indignation and anger at our own sin with righteous or godly sorrow. If we love God we must hate evil motivated by a hopelessly debased,

reprobate mind. While we are commanded to be indignant or angry, we can not be angry in a sinful manner, allowing ourselves to become provoked or irritated, seething with rage. Anger should not be nursed until it becomes an entrenched condition. We parents dare not provoke our children to wrath, discouraging them. Several wrong ways to deal with anger are to try to bury anger, to bottle it up, or to ventilate it. We must ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to remove uncontrolled anger.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Fruit of the Spirit: Meekness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Meekness is not a virtue that people consider valuable or even desirable. But Jesus lists it as a primary virtue of one who will inherit His Kingdom, and Paul numbers it among the fruits of God's Spirit. Is there something to meekness that we have failed to grasp?

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