



"You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist."
—Indira Gandhi

15-Jul-16

Truth and God's Governance (Part Three)

As the last essay concluded, we saw that a second principle relating to the reality of God's governance maintains that unrighteous anger, hostility, and temper contradict the reality of God's sovereignty. Anger, a passionate response to a stimulus, is nearly always self-centered. It is usually a reaction to something that did not go as we expected.

The reality is that the inducing incident happened. How will anger help solve the problem? Can it help? [Satan](#) believes that it does, because he wants to control, to compete, to devour, to get the upper hand. He wants to triumph, to win. Consider, though: Do we really need the anger, which will drive us to manipulate or to punish? Why not just start working on a solution without the anger, knowing full well that our contentious emotions are often destructive, sinful, and damaging to relationships? In a way, it is all very logical, but our feelings get in the way.

In Aaron and Miriam's criticism of [Moses](#), we can see this denial of reality. The account in Numbers 12 does not specifically say that their tempers flared or that they were angry, but they clearly acted with a measure of hostility toward Moses. They denied the reality that [God](#) is in control, a denial that manifested itself in hostility and self-promotion. We can see it

displayed in their trying to take Moses down a notch so that they could rise a notch. Their attempts to control demonstrated that they did not [see God](#) as able to take care of things.

Another aspect of reality, then, is that God puts people where He wants them and gives them the responsibilities that He desires them to fulfill. That was true for Israel, just as it is true for the Body of Christ ([I Corinthians 12:18](#)). Within those God-appointed positions, people can be faithful leaders, like Moses, or they can be unfaithful leaders, like some more recent church leaders. Undoubtedly, *God put unfaithful men in top positions* in our former church affiliation because He knew how their unfaithfulness would manifest itself. He used their unfaithfulness to accomplish His will, and it has been—and will be—for the ultimate benefit of the Body of Christ.

This same God allows tares to remain with the wheat ([Matthew 13:28-30](#)). He also put unrighteous kings in place over Israel and Judah, knowing full well what they would be inclined to do, using their proclivities to accomplish His will. This forces us to reconsider our perception of reality, underscoring that God acts in ways and for reasons that we often do not understand, except perhaps in retrospect.

Even though Moses was faithful and is accounted as the pinnacle of humility, he, too, had a brief [affliction](#) of reality narcolepsy, which cost him dearly:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not

believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." ([Numbers 20:7-12](#))

God corrected Moses and Aaron because they made a poor witness to the people. As God says, they did not hallow Him. They were supposed to set the example in upholding God as holy, but they failed because they focused on a lesser reality. Truly, the Israelites were rebels, always murmuring, and always convinced that God would not provide for them. This was the reality of their spiritual condition.

God had said far stronger things to and about the Israelites, and He said them far more often. It was not, then, a matter of God and Moses having dissimilar thoughts. God, though, had not told Moses to castigate the Israelites or strike the rock. In fact, He told Moses to *speak to the rock*, not to the Israelites! But Moses, focused on the lesser reality of the Israelites and their rebellious attitudes, sinned.

Moses and Aaron momentarily allowed this reality of the failings of others to overshadow what God was working out, and this temporary denial of God's reality manifested itself in anger—anger that was destructive (they forgot God's instructions), sinful (they disobeyed), and damaging to their relationship with God. In fact, God identified it as "unbelief," saying, "You did not believe Me." Unbelief is another way to describe denying the reality of God. [Hebrews 3:19](#) says that Israel could not enter the land because of unbelief, and we see in this instance that the verse applies to Israel's leadership just as much as to the common man.

[Jesus Christ](#) came into [the world](#) to bear witness to truth ([John 18:37](#)), which indicates the reality of God's governance. It is inextricably linked with Christ being the [King of kings](#), as God has delivered all things to Him. This fact undergirds everything else that is real.

Those who hear and obey His voice—those who are children of the Kingdom—will humbly submit to that reality, even when they do not understand all that He is working out. Those not of that reality will diminish, overlook, or even reject the fact that God is in control, and they will try to control things themselves, perhaps with anger or even hostility. Moses and

John the Baptist, even though they were not perfect, received commendations because the reality of God stayed in the forefront of their minds, forming the basis of nearly all their evaluations of lesser realities.

What does this mean for us? Plainly, it means that we should follow the examples of Moses and John the Baptist, living each day with the reality of God's sovereign control fixed in our minds. Even the smallest of events, like the falling of sparrows ([Matthew 10:29-31](#)), come under God's governance, especially as they affect God's chosen people. We can, then, act or react in humility and patience—and not in anger—and live in harmony with the greatest Reality of all.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Loyalty and Submission \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The radical feminist hatred of men and the institution of marriage rampant in our country today were graphically and accurately described in Isaiah 3:4. Radical feminists angrily equate marriage with concentration camps, rape, slavery, and prostitution, and seek to end marriage as an institution, the institution directly created by Almighty God. The feminist homosexual leftist liberal agenda wants to replace marriage with same sex or homosexual unions and every other perversion under the sun, denying the existence of any moral absolutes. As God's called-out ones we must, against the treacherous popular currents of modern media, be loyal to God through righteousness and devotion to duty, making sure that our thinking is not polluted by the Liberal Feminist-homosexual agenda. In marriage, loyalty, trust and subjection are demanded of both partners. If we are not loyal to God and life, we are automatically subject to Satan and death. We need to follow our Elder Brother's example in John 8:29 of placing ourselves under the Father, realizing that Jesus has been placed over us. We (both men and women) have been instructed by Christ and the apostles to be loyal and subject to human authority including family and civil government. To be

subject to God the Father and Jesus Christ (paradoxical it may seem) produces in us the attributes of leadership.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Living by Faith and Humility](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

People resist God because of their pride, but pride can be neutralized by humility, a character trait that allows a person to submit to God and have a relationship with Him. John Ritenbaugh provides many examples to reveal that God wants us to evaluate ourselves and recognize our dependence on Him, which draws God's attention and favor.

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