

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## THE GAINSAYING OF KORAH

Roy H. Lanier

**“Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah”** (Jude 11).

In Numbers 16, we have an interesting story to which, undoubtedly, Jude refers when he mentioned the gainsaying of Korah. The reader will do well to refresh his memory by reading the chapter before continuing this article. There are several things connected with this gainsaying of Korah, and the lesson would be incomplete without mention of them along with the gainsaying. So it is my plan to study them in that order which I feel will be most profitable.

The first thing which claims our attention, after learning the whole story of what happened, is the jealousy on the part of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They were jealous of those who were in power. It is said they rose up and assembled themselves together against Moses and Aaron and said: **“ye take too much upon you, ... wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah”** (vs. 1-3). Moses and Aaron had been appointed by Jehovah to their respective places, and were in authority by right of the divine appointment. But these men were jealous of the distinction and honor which Moses and Aaron enjoyed over them, and they set about to advance themselves to a position of honor and authority equal to that of Moses and Aaron.

Jealousy is a bad disposition of mind. It will lead one who entertains it to do anything vicious and vile. James says where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. That does not mean that one who is guilty of jealousy is also guilty already of every vile deed, but it does mean that if one allows jealousy to stay in his heart long enough to become his master, he will stoop to any vile deed. There is no deed too vile for the jealous-hearted. Jealousy will lead one to stoop to the vilest. Our only hope to keep from stooping to such vile deeds is to refuse to allow jealousy a place in our heart. Fight it as you would the deadliest poison.

Next, Korah was willing to divide the people of God that he might have some under his leadership. It is said there were 250 princes of the congregation under his influence. That would make a sizeable congregation in our day. And it is sad, but true, there are men who have such a love for power and position that they are willing to divide the body of Christ that they may have a group of people under their leadership. Sometimes the issue is made one of doctrine. They would not dare say to the people that their love of leadership causes them to divide the church; that would defeat their purpose. But they champion some doctrine as the rallying point.

It was said of Diotrefes that he loved the preeminence, receiving whom he would and casting out whom he would (3 John 9). So Korah and his assistants were not satisfied that they had been appointed to the service of the tabernacle of God, but now wish to take over the priesthood also (vs. 8-11). And those who have no more regard for the unity of the church than to attempt

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**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder  
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to gain power and position by dividing the people of God will perish with Korah.

In the next place, Korah was as human as people today in that he based his actions on false charges. By this means he tried to justify himself in his wrong doing. He said Moses had brought the people out of a land flowing with milk and honey, exposing them to death that he might have a people over whom to rule (vs. 12-14). It is a peculiar thing that people who try to gain power and position by foul means usually accuse those already in power of the very sin of which they are most guilty. Korah and his sinful crew coveted the power of a ruler, and now they accuse Moses of bringing the people out of Egypt merely to have a people whom he could rule.

When a brother begins to criticize the elders of a church for being lords over God's heritage, it will pay to watch him; it is entirely possible that he covets the place of a ruler himself. Elders of churches are human, and they will make mistakes; but all who love God and the church will be sympathetic in their criticisms and efforts to remedy the mistakes and do better in the future. But those who are harsh in their criticism and who magnify the mistakes actually made and invent charges from their imaginations are too much like Korah to escape the wrath of God.

The next lesson we learn from this affair is that one cannot oppose God's appointed leaders without opposing God Himself. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had gathered their sympathizers and laid their charges against Moses and Aaron, Moses said: "**Therefore thou and all thy company are gathered together against Jehovah**" (v. 11). Everyone who actively engaged in this uprising was considered as being against God and treated as a rebel against God. God has always demanded that people respect those whom he has chosen and placed in authority. David respected the office which Saul held by power when it rightfully belonged to David; he refused to kill Saul, because he was God's anointed. Paul apologized for speaking harshly to the high priest of his day, though he knew the man was doing wrong (Acts 23:2-5).

Many people today have entirely too little respect for men who serve as elders. They bring railing accusations against them with never a thought that they are speaking so of God's appointed leaders, overseers. The decisions of elders have no more weight with some church members than that of a Methodist quarterly conference. No one can set himself in opposition to a scriptural eldership without opposing God, and it is dangerous to

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depend too much on your presumptions that the eldership is unscriptural.

Another practical lesson is the fact that God punished all the people who sympathized with Korah (vs. 41-50). When the earth opened and swallowed up Korah and his 250 men, many of the people murmured, saying: **“Ye have killed the people of Jehovah.”** Then God told Moses to get from among the people that he might consume them in a moment. But Moses and Aaron worked that they might stay the plague and make atonement for the people. Fourteen thousand seven hundred died as a result of this sympathy for those who rebelled against God.

When a church exercises discipline now, it is common for at least a strong minority to take sides with the one being disciplined. This makes it impossible for the Lord to accomplish His purpose in the life of the wrongdoer through righteous discipline; it divides the church, placing

a group against leadership, and so against the Lord Himself, as we have seen above, and it exposes those who sympathize with the wrongdoer to as severe punishment as the wrongdoer deserves. About the only criticism God ever made of Samuel was for mourning over Saul after God had rejected him. Samuel loved Saul and found it hard to give him up; and though he went to see him no more, he still mourned for him until God rebuked him for it.

It seems second nature for people to take up for the underdog, and it is easy for us to allow this sympathy to array us against God and His constituted authority. When the church takes action against one in sin, it is the duty of every member of the church, and all other congregations, to respect that action and enforce it. To do otherwise will defeat the purpose of discipline, encourage the wrongdoer in his sins, and array ourselves with those who oppose God. —Deceased

## MINISTRY OF AFFLICTION

G. K. Wallace

Every day we read and hear about death, pain and sorrow. Summer is scarcely here until the cold winds of winter bear down upon us. In our anxiety and fear we may ask: Why is it that we do not have all summer and no winter? Why is the world not made up of perpetual joy without pain? Why did an all-wise and powerful God permit sorrow and tears to enter one's life? We may explain a smile, but why a tear? We may explain life, but why death? We may rejoice in prosperity, but bow our heads and ask, “Why trouble?” In the midst of Job's troubles, he cried out and said, **“Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble”** (Job 14:1).

### Trouble Keeps This World From Being Too Attractive

If we never had any trouble in this world, we would have no desire to leave it. No one desires to move unless he finds better conditions. After we have been buffeted by the storms of life, we will be ready to say: If there is a house where the roof does not leak, I would like to live in it. If there is an atmosphere somewhere that does not distress the lungs, I would like to breathe it. If there is a society where there are not tattletales, gossipers, I would like to be a part of it. If there is a home where the circle cannot be broken, I would like to be in that home.

It is a known fact that the book of Revelation has a distinctive appeal to those who are old. Young people like

to study about origins. They want to know from whence they came. The book of Genesis to them is a strange and romantic book. Youth is thrilled with the conquest and action of the book of Acts. But the old get more consolation out of the statement in Revelation that says, **“I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”** By the time one is old he becomes tired of this world and especially longs for the new world. Job was perfectly happy until he was worn out with bereavement, sick with carbuncles, and taunted by a pest of a wife. Then he cried out, **“Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bare me?”** (Job 3:11, A. V.).

### Affliction Makes Us Depend On God

The prayer of a man will sometimes indicate whether or not he has known trouble. Before one has had trouble and sorrow in his life, his prayers tend to be poetic. He will often begin with the sun, moon, and stars and inform God all about the mysterious world of space. Then he will come down to earth and close his prayer with a boisterous amen. Have you ever heard an earnest man pray? Did you ever listen to the prayer of a dying man? The action and prayer of Christ in great sorrow was neither dramatic nor poetic. The record says, **“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”** (Mat. 26:39). In the hour

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of great trouble we realize that we are entirely and wholly dependent on Jehovah, our God.

#### **Affliction Makes Us Sympathetic**

A grandmother knows how to sympathize because she has known trouble. Perhaps she once buried a beloved child. Too, she has outlived her devoted husband. She has witnessed sickness and sorrow in her family. She knows what it means to stand by and see a home broken. She has been cold, hungry, and friendless. Having had all these troubles, she knows how to sympathize. Only those who have experienced life are in a position to counsel the young who are beginning and living life.

In this world of trouble we have the consolation that **“the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”** (Deu. 33:27). Jehovah said to Isaiah, **“Fear thou now: for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”** (Isa. 41:10).

Jehovah not only promises to sustain his children during the hour of trouble but to go with them through the valley of the shadow of death. **“Yea, if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”** (Psa. 23:4).

—Deceased

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