

# **“Jethro or Korah – Support or Subversion?”**

**By Chris Ulrich**

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You may be seated. It's good to see everybody this morning, and that kind of reminded me of, in Acts chapter two, where it talks about a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2). It's not an out-of-control thing, I mean, the Bible says let all things be done in decency and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), but there is such a thing as a time to worship God, and that's pretty much any time. That's pretty much any time. It's good to see everybody this morning, and, like Parrish had talked about, our theme for the month is “Men's Month, Be Valiant.” But, I'd like to take a moment, here, to welcome back a brother and a sister: Henry and Lena Finch. They've been traveling the last couple of weeks. Is there anyone else who's been traveling, who's been out of town recently, that just got back? Okay. Okay, well, definitely a welcome back, Henry and Lena. And, I also want to say, this is kind of funny, I think this was last week, but these overhead fans weren't working, and—is Bianca and Nancy, are they here today? Okay, well, they attend church, here, but they also work here, and, joking around with Bianca a little bit, I said, “You know, we have the fans working when it's ten below, but, when it's eighty-five degrees...” She said, “I know, I know.” So, thank them, and thank the Park District here for getting the fans up and operational.

I also want to say that I appreciate that song that you did—not the one that we just finished up, but, “Your Presence Is Heaven.” I know it's a newer song, and it really blessed my heart. I would have to say I like it a lot. It really gives us a taste of what God's Heaven's really going to be, because that's our ultimate goal. It's not just something here—Heaven's not a place on Earth—but God will give us a taste of it, God will give us glimpses, and God's presence is real, but, it's a matter of accepting Him in our life, being born again.

So, this morning, I'm going to start, right off the bat, with the title of the message, because I actually told a couple of people, earlier, so I figure that maybe the word got around a little bit, but, the title of the sermon today is, “Jethro or Korah—Support or Subversion.” And we'll get into who they are and what the meaning of that is in a little bit, and there's really just two parts:

1. Subversion
2. Support

## **Part 1 – Subversion**

I know “subversion” is not an extremely common term, some may know what it means and some may not know what it means, but, I just want to start out by giving a brief definition. It means undermining the power and authority of an established system. A quick example would be if I went to a school, and started telling the students about how bad the teachers were, about how bad the curriculum was, about how bad the faculty was, and, it could be in a private way or in a public way. I know our sister Abby teaches at a school; would you say that's an example of subversion? So, it's something, it's just a matter of undermining authority; it doesn't necessarily have to be in a school, but, unfortunately, it's very common in our society today, certain segments of our society today.

But, the truth is that our human nature is to always second-guess, to think we have the best ideas, to believe that we can fix the problem with the best solutions, and that we know better than our parents, or our teachers, or police, or elders, or military, or our bosses, and any other authority figure that you can think of.

And we're going to be spending some time in the Old Testament today. There's a few passages that we're going to be reading, and, we're going to be a little heavy on the reading in the middle part of the message today, but it's going to be wrapped around some commentary, but, in Proverbs twenty-one, verse two, it says:

**Proverbs 21:2** *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts.*

So, I have a question for everybody: How many has ever done something that you didn't want to do? Everybody should be raising their hands. If not just everybody in the room, along with everyone in the hallway, and in the parking lot; just anybody within earshot should be raising their hands. We all do things that we don't want to do, and some might even think, "Hey, that's the story of my life; I'm always doing something I don't want to do." Okay, I don't think that should be that heavy on the sacrifice, but, sometimes, that's the case, and, other times it's not. But, I venture to say, we're all going to wind up, at some point, doing something, whether we like it or not, that we don't want to do. And that might be for personal gain, and there's nothing wrong with that, but it also might be for something where there's a bigger picture involved, where there's a lot to be gained for family, or co-workers, and there's nothing wrong with that, either, but, we should consider making sacrifices that will benefit God's ministry, as well. That's not always an easy thing to do either.

So, what does that really have to do with subversion? What does doing things that we don't really want to do, what does that have to do with subversion? Well, sometimes we might observe somebody that we really think wants to perform a particular task, they want to work on a certain assignment, or they want to lead a particular group, but the reality is that they're really only doing it because nobody else is willing to do it, or because a greater authority has asked them. But we're all thinking all along that they're having the time of their life, while they're doing whatever task that they're doing, or, that they're leading the group that they're leading, and we get envious, and we think, "Well, I could do that better; I want to do that instead. I'd rather do that than whatever it is I'm doing," and, yet, the person that's doing that sacrifice isn't really wanting to do it in the first place. We're going to look at the Book of Numbers; this is an Old Testament passage, and there's going to be sort of a chronology to some of the passages that we're going to look at. But, let's take a look at a great leader of God and evaluate how he really felt about his role. But this is what I'm talking about, as far as that subversive thinking to where we second-guess, we start to get envious, we start to get jealous of whatever it is somebody else is doing, and, yet, the reality is that we don't know that what they're thinking is that, "I don't really want to do this, but I'm willing to do it."

**Numbers 11:10-17** *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.*

Well, it sure doesn't sound like he was having the time of his life, now does it? But, also, keep in the mind that, we're looking at this chapter, Numbers chapter eleven, because what we're going to read next is going to give you an even better perspective because there is a timing aspect to this.

But, it's important for us to understand that Moses was willing to make the sacrifice of leading God's people, but when we analyze it, we can obviously see that it had gotten too burdensome for him. It had gotten to the point where it was what they call it a breaking point, or just burnt out. We've probably all heard that expression, you just get burnt out; you just get to a point where you can't take it anymore, and, whatever the case might be, whether it's work-related; it could even be family-related, it could be travel-related, it could be something—we were at a restaurant last night, celebrating birthdays for a couple of brothers, and I was talking with Pat Kretzer, and, her and Ed are actually going to be traveling out to Seattle here in another month to visit Ed's brother. So, Pat and I were talking about how a brother of her's had said, "Oh, you should come out here and live in Seattle," and, she had asked him a little about the weather, and, those of us that know our geography, know that, Seattle, it just always rains. I mean, it's kind of like a Northern rainforest. So, Pat was saying, "I don't think I could do it. I just, really, I'm really involved in the ministry that I'm part of, and, being able to come out there on occasion, but," we talked about how some people could get cabin fever, where you're just stuck inside, all the time, and you're feeling like, "I don't where there's anywhere I could go." My dad was stationed in the Air Force, he was up in Thule, Greenland for about a year. It was sort of a punishment, I guess, from what he tells me now, but, anyway, that's a very far Northern part of the island of Greenland, and, I think, if I'm not mistaken, it's above the Arctic Circle, but, anyway, he does have some interesting stories, but, one fact is that, for two months out of the winter, you get absolutely no sunlight, just because of the rotation of the Earth, and so-on and so-forth. And, then, in the summer, you get two months of nothing but non-stop sunshine. But, I would venture to say that, in the winter, you're probably more susceptible to getting cabin fever. You're basically dealing with something that, the bigger picture is, "Hey, I'm in the Air Force, I'm making money, I'm defending our country," and, yet, you're thinking, "This is terrible. I don't know how much more of this I can take." And we make those kind of sacrifices, and, yet, sometimes, when we look at other people that are in a position, or doing something, we don't receive that sacrifice, or get that understanding, or, maybe, sometimes have respect for it. I'm not saying here, I'm just saying it does happen; it does happen, and there are Biblical examples, and that's what we're talking about. And, a lot of great leaders are reluctant to lead but they're willing to do it because of the bigger picture that's at stake, and that's part of the beauty in the sacrifice.

I'm going to ask you, now, if you could turn with me now—this is a very lengthy account—I'm not going to read the entire chapter; it's going to be the first eleven verses from the Book of Numbers, chapter sixteen. Again, keep in mind, we had just read from Numbers chapter eleven, so, as far as, how many years later, or months, or, whatever the time-frame was, what we read in Numbers eleven about Moses basically bemoaning his situation, but, justifiably. It wasn't as though he was thinking, "I just don't want to do it, absolutely, no doubt about it," he was willing to do it, but it was wearing him down. So, from the Book of Numbers, sixteen, verses one through eleven; I'm going to read through this a little bit quickly, I know these are a couple of rather lengthy passages:

**Numbers 16:1-11**      *Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: [Keep that as a highlight, because we're not talking about—I thought about, "Okay, so these guys are just a bunch of bums." Which is not the case. Which is not the case. They were people of esteem, people of renown. So, verse three:] And they gathered themselves*

*together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy [which is a lie], every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?*

And, again, these weren't people that had just come off the street, or had recently attached themselves to this band of wandering people, which is, at this point, what was happening; they were wandering around in the wilderness. And there was people that came along, strangers, as the Bible refers to them as. And I know it's a lengthy passage and, I would say, in the interest of time, I would suggest reading it, the rest of this chapter, on your own, but suffice it to say that the bad guys meet an unfortunate end. Let's just put it like that. The Earth opens up, swallows them up, there's a plague upon Israel, and Moses is the one that stands in the gap, and makes intercession for the people. Because, there were people that had joined themselves to Korah, and said, "Yeah, we'll just go join them, because they sound like they've got it going on. They know what they're talking about. Yeah, Moses, who is this guy? What's up with him? I mean, he *does* take too much upon him." And people get slayed by every wind of doctrine or something that sounds good that comes along, and, yet, that's not the case. And, that might be trite way of saying it, that they meet an unfortunate end, but the entire story isn't always an easy one to tell.

And, I know we didn't reference it but there's also a passage in Numbers 12 that says that Moses was the meekest man upon the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3). Which means he had a tremendous humility, and yet Moses was a man to be feared, and he was a man to be reckoned with, and wasn't a pushover by any stretch of the imagination. That's the way God's men are supposed to be. That's what we're talking about this month. Willing to tolerate a lot, long-suffering to be sure, always a gentleman, but everyone has their limits and then there's going to be a fight. And I'm not talking about necessarily a fist-fight; I believe in self-defense, but I'm talking about the Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and evil and darkness (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible talks about fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12), and that was a point you made last week, Parrish, in the message, about fighting for God's blessings regardless of how long it takes to get there. That blessed me a lot, because, I have to admit, there have been times where I have given up on something, and then I wondered, "Well, why didn't I ever get it?" Well, obviously I had given up on something. I'm not saying everything, and I'm not saying in the faith, either, I'm just saying that there's times when, if something takes longer, or much longer, or an incredibly amount longer than we had anticipated, if we just give up on it, this is to the end! This life—the Bible talks about, in Ecclesiastes, there's no discharge in that war (Ecclesiastes 8:8), and it's something that we endure to the end (Matthew 24:13), the same shall be saved.

## Part 2 – Support

This is going to be the last passage that we're going to read; it's going to be commentary, afterwards. But we're talking about subversion, and, now, we're talking about support. Now, before we read, this is about Jethro, which was Moses' father-in-law.

**Exodus 18:13-17** *And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.*

Just stop for a minute, right there, I want to make a quick highlight: One of the most interesting aspects of this passage, and probably one of the biggest take-aways here, if we just stopped at verse seventeen, and we heard his father-in-law say, “The thing that you do is not good,” and we make our judgment just from that, then we'd be in error, because we're judging the situation before he completely tells what he's going to talk about.

**Exodus 18:18-22** *Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.*

Think back, for a minute, to the passage we read previously from Numbers 16, and, if we make a judgment, or a comparison, between the two, Korah and Jethro basically said the same thing up to a point, and that was, “The thing that you're doing is not good.” But then there was a difference; the difference is what was said afterwards, as far as what Korah did, and it was an attack, and it was accusatory, whereas, what Jethro did was show support. And that is a big difference, because, then, when we look at it from a standpoint, how is it that we're looking at leadership? And, it doesn't necessarily have to just be here. This is—we're a church, obviously, we're part of this ministry, but, it could be on our job, it could be in other aspects, in other parts of our life.

But, getting back to the ministry, I want to ask this question: What are we doing when we see the men of God under duress? And I want to give the definition of duress because I know that's not a real common term, either; it's probably used a little bit more in a crisis or a war-time situation. It basically means “Threats, violence, or other action brought to bear on someone to attempt to cause them to do something against their will or better judgment.” So, when somebody's in a difficult, challenging situation, and they're under duress, and there's a threat that's made against them, how is it we're looking at them, now? How is that we're esteeming them? They're in a situation where it could be a life-or-death; it could be something where somebody's spiritual life is hinged upon just a visitation. It could be on—the Bible says in Proverbs, that life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs

18:21). We might not think, "Oh, well, I just blurted something out," or that there's no power in the things that we say, but there is. Christ talked about that He has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). If there was no Bible written, how would we know what to go by? There is something to be said, and, getting back to being under these difficult situations, when we see them, are we second-guessing, are we thinking we could do better? Are we thinking that we wish we were in their shoes to make that judgment? Are we quick to jump to conclusions about what the seemingly best decision to be made could be? There's nothing wrong with seeing a troubling situation and offering our assistance, because that's what Jethro did. And I know this is Old Testament; there's relevancy, here, though, if you hear it. Because, even in Ecclesiastes, it says there's nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). It's not a matter of, "Oh, we live in the modern day; we've got cell phones, we've got computers. We've got all this stuff that, it's all outdated; the Bible's outdated." Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). It's always going to be relevant; it doesn't matter what anybody else on the outside, or second-guesses it, or, as they say, pooh-pooh's it. If they want to feel that way, go ahead. It doesn't matter to me. All of us know what it's like to be on the outside looking in. All of us know what it's like to not know Christ, and, then, to have our sins washed away, like you shared, Parrish. I mean, talk about a relief. Talk about lifting of a burden. So, that's basically what Jethro did; he wasn't undercutting Moses' authority at all, nor was he attempting any kind of takeover. And we've had that happen here. We've seen situations like that arise, where somebody second-guesses what Parrish and Andy do, or other people here do, and it's like, "Just let them live; just let them lead."

We're going to get into that a little bit more, but I want to ask: Are we praying for our spiritual leaders and expressing our concern? Proclaiming our support? I've never shared this before from up here—maybe even some of you were there and remember it, but, this was, probably, close to thirty years ago, we used to have a fellowship dinner on Saturday nights, and, there was this one particular instance where we had a good turn-out, and a lot of it was customized toward the military, and that was a good thing. So, this one particular night, there were different people that were actually serving the meal, and Pastor Paine happened to be one of them. Now, there was a guy, not from the military, he was actually just from the local area, and he was just as contrary, and interruptive, and argumentative as he could possibly be. He didn't like the hot dog that he got. I mean, he got a hot dog, "I don't want it. I don't-- Just get it away from me." And I'm like, "Oh, my God. Just get over it." So, "I want another one." "Okay." I'm, like, watching this, and, this was close to thirty years ago. So, Pastor Paine was like, "Okay, okay." So, he goes back in the kitchen, brings the guy another plate, and he never blew his stack. I mean, he never flew off the handle.

And, I would have to say that you would think, "Oh, well, Pastor Paine, what a pushover. I can't believe he just let that guy just run over him like that." Or, I could think, "What is that guy even doing here in the first place? The guy that's so demanding. I mean, he shouldn't even be allowed to be in here, if he's going to act like a jerk." And, the thing about it is, we get so worked up in our emotions about what the right judgment should be, and, under duress, in a situation where it looks like there's a soul at stake. Okay, it was just a hot dog. I mean, I thought, "What would I have done?" That's it, right there, is the second-guessing aspect of it. I would have been like, "Get out of here, or, just eat it and enjoy it, and, if you don't like it, throw it away, and leave!" Now, that's why I'm not the pastor. I have to say, it's incredible when I think, because I have observed that, and I think about that every now and then. Not constantly, but, I believe it's relevant to this message. And I remember, like I said, as quite a younger man, it left such a great impression on me, and I've never told Pastor Paine that. I've never said, "Yeah, do you remember when you delivered a hot dog to that guy?" "No, I don't," most likely. Maybe he would remember, if I started bringing in some of the details, and the name of the person, and so-on and so-forth, but... Does anybody else here remember that? I knew it. Bob's got his hand up. Good. I'm glad somebody does. They're my witnesses.

But, you know what? our leaders aren't always going to make the right decisions and aren't always going to say or do the right things. But they will make some right decisions and they will do and say some right things. And, I would even venture to say that they're going to do a lot more right than not; I'm going to say that. And, I want to share something: I kind of hemmed and hawed in my mind about whether I should share this, and I'm not going to be lengthy, but, it is pertaining to Parrish and Andy. And, this is something that, we have Wednesday night Bible studies at different locations, and, this is something so—not everybody goes, and I understand, everybody's got busy schedules, or they're working, or whatever the case might be. So, we were in a meeting recently, and Parrish was talking about something, and it came—and I hope I'm not trying to spill the beans, or anything, but Parrish has been mentoring some guys on Wednesday night, one on one, spending, really, quality time with them. And, I thought, if the thought that came to mind was, "Where's he at on Wednesday? Where's he at? I mean, he's not here. I mean, what's he doing?" And, that's what I'm talking about, where that subversion, that second-guessing, that always trying to undermine authority, or undermine leadership. And, I want to share something about Brother Andy: This was a couple of years ago, we were at Grandwood, where we have our Wednesday night fellowship gathering, there, and, Lena, your sister Stephanie was there. She was still with us, and, I remember, she stood up and she said, "I want to testify," and, I remember, Andy said, "Not tonight, we're doing some music; we're going to do a few other things." And, the thought comes to mind, "I wonder why didn't he let her testify?" And I'm going to get to what happened. So, it would have been easy to say, "Well, how come he didn't let her come up?" Well, that following Sunday morning, she came up and shared a testimony; shared about the love of God with everybody. And I appreciate that, because I felt like, it's about timing. And, sometimes—if she would have shared that, I mean, it wasn't a huge gathering, but we're talking on a Sunday morning. These are things that, it would have been easy to second-guess some things that they had done, or decisions that they had made, and then time reveals... Let's not be so hasty to just jump to conclusions, or to make judgments about something. I don't know all the answers. We don't always know what everybody else is doing. And, it's better to err on the side of not being judgmental, or not second-guessing. And, you know what? You look at it like, "God will clear things out if it has to be." If it has to be, it's not going to be as though there's some kind of coup, or something where they're trying to take over. It's just a matter of, we have to understand that God's leading, and understanding that there's an order, that there's a structure, that there's an organization, and that God has ordained people for certain places, for certain things in life.

And, these are things that we need to remember whenever we start to think, "Oh, I want to do this," or, "Oh, I want to lead that group," or whatever the case might be. The person taking care of this detail, or leading this group, they might be doing it because nobody else is willing to do it. And there might be a lot more to it than meets the eye. The old expression that says, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence," is true. But 1 Timothy 6:6 says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." We should be content with God's leaders. And being supportive or being subversive is a choice that we make; nobody is forcing us to do either. But, I'll take that, "Godliness with contentment is great gain," over, "The grass is always greener," every day of the week.

God bless you.