

# Exodus 18 Part 2: Subsidiarity

By

Peter Martin

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*“And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. So when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?” And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. “When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.” So Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you do is not good. “Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.”*

*-Exodus 18:13-18*

In this study we will continue our study on the counsel of Jethro to his son in-law Moses. In the previous study we looked at the beginning of this chapter and talked about how Jethro has given himself to the service of the true and living God through the ministry of Moses. As a result, at the end of the chapter, he offers Moses advice on how to govern the people of Israel more effectively. This advice is not religious per se, but it is practical wisdom that Jethro has accumulated in his role as a priest in the tribe of Midian.

We see that after the people of God have made it to Mount Sinai, a toxic form of governance has arisen that threatens the peace and stability of this new nation. Moses, probably in reaction to the disinterested politics of Egypt, has set himself up as the sole arbiter of truth and justice for the nation. While a well-meaning correction, we see here that the opposite of a bad thing is not necessarily good, but usually just a different version of bad. In an attempt to avoid being a disconnected tyrant, Moses has opted to be a tyrant who smothers his people with the attitude of a micro-manager, or a “helicopter parent”

Jethro’s advice then gives the precedent for God giving the law to His people and sets up a form of governance that will lead the people of Israel throughout their history. A system that was created to preserve individual liberty and diffuse power throughout the nation. This principle of governance lays the foundation for the democratic republic that we enjoy in the United States and has also been elaborated on in the Catholic church

through a teaching known as “subsidiarity”. To explain what this principle is, I will quote from a former pope:

*“Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.”*

*-Pius XI - “Quadragesimo Anno”*

When pope Pius wrote these words, it was in the mid twentieth century when fascism and communism were on the rise. This is a side note, but an important one, Christian thought usually develops in opposition to competing ideas that lead us away from God. A good example of this is the doctrine of the trinity. Though the Bible does explicitly teach that God’s being is one and that being is “shared” by three co-equal and co-eternal persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, this is admittedly a complex idea that was not clearly formulated until a heresy called “Arianism” crafted a warped version of this theology that led people away from the true faith.

The church responded by formulating the doctrine that we now call “the trinity” in order to give clarity to the average Christian who wouldn’t be able to formulate this doctrine on their own and would therefore be vulnerable to a clever heresy that sounds close to the truth. Socialism is a similar heresy. It seems to support the notion of “charity” and good-will to our fellow man, but it seriously upsets social order and therefore is a destructive force as opposed to a constructive force.

As such, it was important for the church to respond, and while many Protestant preachers spoke ardently against this ideology, the Papal authority allowed for the Catholic church to speak in a more unified and clear way, which is why in this paper I will be mainly quoting from Catholic sources. This is not a defense of the Papal seat, as a matter of fact I think that the very principle of subsidiarity undermines the principle of the papacy, but that is a matter for another time. But, as we spoke about last week, we can incorporate voices that are “foreign” to our own if we are careful to properly synthesize them with our faith.

And so, what I wanted to focus on is to see the implications of Jethro’s counsel in our current world. This will hopefully give us a better understanding of the toxic nature of our current political situation and help us to break away from this destructive mindset in order to better order our lives in obedience to God.

# Withering Tyranny

*“So Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you do is not good. “Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.”*

*-Exodus 18:17-18*

Before I get into the specifics of Jethro’s statement, I want to point out that the normal bend of the human heart is towards simplicity. Since the type of liberty that God has called His people into is complex, their hearts are crying out for the simplicity of tyranny. This desire has already shown up in the form of the people of God longing for the “simplicity” of slavery in which they had no personal responsibility, and continues in the current chapter. As George Washington warned in his farewell address when he finished up his second term as president:

*“The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position.”*

*-“George Washington’s Farewell Address”*

Tyranny is always simpler than freedom, this is why power tends to pool in a single location over time. Even though God gives His people a beautiful template for freedom, they casually throw this system away over time and demand a monarch in 1 Samuel 8

*“But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.”*

*-1 Samuel 8:6-7*

This principle brings us back to the counsel of Jethro. When Jethro tells Moses “you will surely wear yourselves out.” The literal translation is “Wasting you will waste away.” While the dehumanizing tyranny of Egypt that oppressed the Israelites with an iron boot heel was destructive, the “feminine” tyranny that Moses was falling into would have an equally destructive, yet different effect on the people. Moses’ tyranny, which was born out of a genuine care for the people, wouldn’t crush them, it would “wither” them, it would waste them away and destroy them.

In order to understand this counsel, let's look at several areas in which people "wither" under this type of tyranny.

## Withering Liberty

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,[fn] and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."*

*-Galatians 5:1*

When power accumulates in a singular location, the first casualty is individual liberty. In order to be free, you first have to learn personal responsibility. However, in a system that focuses power at the top, the importance of personal responsibility is lost. This very point is made by Samuel when he warns the people of Israel against appointing a king:

*"So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, 'This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. 'He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 'He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 'And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 'He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 'And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 'He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 'And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.' Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No, but we will have a king over us...'"*

*-1 Samuel 8:10-19*

Before the institution of the king, Israel was governed more like a confederacy than anything else. The individual tribes governed their own lands with strong alliances between one another. But in times of crisis, God appoints "judges" to unify the tribes militarily. The Roman republic functioned kind of like this. There were numerous rulers throughout the empire, but in times of crisis a strong ruler could rise up to unify the nation and fend off the invaders. Unfortunately, this system led to tyranny, just as it did for Israel. Samuel, the last of these judges, presides over a major victory for the people of God, but instead of going back to the system that they were accustomed to, they demand a king.

However, Samuel warns that placing this much power in one place will erode their personal liberty. Notice what he mentions, that he will preside over a standing army. Up until that point, there were only local militaries, closer to what the American founders would call a “militia”, that could be unified in a time of crisis. When you have a legitimate “department of defense” this requires people to fill these roles. This could take the form of a draft, or even free enlistment. Either way, the people are no longer free to protect their own interests, they have to invest their children and resources into a system that justifies its own existence through warfare.

More than that, Samuel predicts a palace and bureaucracies that will need many individuals to run it and sustain it. Once again, instead of people providing for their own families, there will be a giant federal government that takes the best talent away from their local communities in order to serve at the pleasure of the king. Finally, he predicts a tax system. Time really is money, and if a chunk of your time is spent working to pay the government tax system, then all that time is spent as a type of slave to the government itself. So while a large central government can provide security and stability, there is a cost to individual liberty when this happens.

This is what Moses is doing to his people. By answering every individual question that they have, he is disabling them from thinking for themselves or solving problems at a local level, which is the main issue that subsidiarity seeks to address. He is allowing power and authority to pool at the top of the society and, therefore, he is setting the stage for a giant centralized government that would erode individual liberty and local stability.

A way that we can understand what the Israelites are doing here is seen in little children. As kids get older, parents try to give them personal responsibility by giving them individual chores. A common example of this phenomenon is when a parent asks their child to do something fairly simple like clean their room. However, when you give your child this task, you have to be prepared for numerous questions. Your kid will most likely ask you where to put each individual item instead of following your more general command. This is an infantile mindset, one that doesn't want to think for itself, but instead wants its hand held. It reminds me of a quote from Alexis De Tocqueville when he explained the great danger that he saw facing American democracy back in the 1800's

*“But it would seem that if despotism were to be established amongst the democratic nations of our days, it might assume a different character; it would be more extensive and more mild; it would degrade men without tormenting them... For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only*

*arbiter of that happiness: it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances—what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?... such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”*

*-Alexis De Tocqueville - “Democracy in America”*

This is why people refer to our current system as the “nanny state”. It coddles the people and seeks to provide answers to every problem that we have. In a speech by the new New York mayor Zohran Mamdani he said *“We will prove that there is no problem too large for government to solve, and no concern too small for it to care about.”*

It may not seem like it, but it is this type of “feminine” tyranny that De Tocqueville warned about. It is the kind that creates tyranny, not through the oppression of a tyrant, but the smothering care of a politician who seeks to solve all our problems for us. Moses is creating just such a “nanny state”. By trying to solve all their problems, he is removing from them the dignity of trying to solve problems locally for themselves. The effect of such a nanny state can be seen in our nation. Not a group of courageous and free people, but instead a cowed and docile population filled with anxiety.

The truth is that power is not supposed to collect at the top, but it naturally pools at the bottom. Think about it this way: the largest amount of authority in anyone’s life is the authority that they have over themselves. The government may have authority over my life in a legal sense, but they don’t have authority over my emotions, my faith, or my aspirations. However, at the family level, my wife and kids do have the right to demand of me, not mere actions, but even to critique my attitude and desire my affection. At the smallest level, how I govern myself, I have almost absolute authority, even the authority and autonomy of my personal thoughts.

It is this natural power structure that God is seeking to preserve with Jethro’s counsel. He didn’t want his people to be a bunch of helpless children waiting to be saved by the powerful at the top. He wanted His people to have the autonomy to seek solutions at the local level. In truth the answer to most of our problems are found at the most local level possible.

But, as the state power grows, personal responsibility withers. Now people don’t seek to solve their own problems, but they immediately go to higher levels to solve their

problems. Once again, this is why politics are becoming so fractious and deadly. When people stop taking personal accountability, the federal government becomes a gun that forces our ideals upon others. The government becomes our salvation and our hope. If we don't get our way politically, it is as if the bottom has fallen out of our universe. I say this sadly, but we are now in a time where both parties are encouraging this behavior. Politicians really do speak as if they are our saviors, and people follow them with that kind of fervor.

## Inefficiency

Beyond this, there is an issue with efficiency. If your child has to ask a question for every individual action, the time it will take them to clean is far above the time that it would take you to just do it for them, which is what many parents opt to do when they get frustrated enough. There is a reason why government bureaucracies are so inefficient. They are bloated agencies that are staffed by people that aren't good at thinking for themselves, they are only meant to follow the strict guidelines of the agency. By seeking judgement from one man, the nation has opted to stand in a gigantic bureaucratic line all day waiting for individual judgement, they are basically in a gigantic DMV.

Even their desire to seek wisdom from an impersonal authority figure at the top reflects their infantile mindset. When you stop and think about this system it makes more sense. Moses is so busy answering individual concerns that he has no time to actually get to know any of the people that he is leading. He becomes merely the face of authority and not a real individual. Likewise, the nation becomes an infinite series of interchangeable problems for him to fix instead of a group of people that he could know or have relations with.

Jethro's counsel sets the table for the giving of the law. Instead of Moses being the walking embodiment of the law that gives individual commandments, by Jethro encouraging Moses to diffuse power, he is also making it necessary for the law to be given to the people. With Moses answering every individual problem, the written law is unnecessary, but if leaders are to be raised up to lead the people, the law needs to be disseminated so that it can be read, understood, and taught throughout the nation. This gives the people to think for themselves and understand their own personal responsibility.

## Withering Community

*"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,*

*unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...*

-2 Timothy 3:1-4

In this chapter, the apostle Paul has a vision of the generation that will bring about the “the last days”. A big component of what he sees is that people will cease to be united to their community, but will be radical individuals out for their own good. Hence, they are “lovers of themselves”, “disobedient to parents”, “unloving”, and “traitors”. These are people without any loyalty beyond their loyalty to themselves. It is this type of destructive community that Moses is actually building.

When judgement only comes from a faceless magistrate, judgement is impersonal. It is hard to feel the weight of our decisions when we don't feel responsibility to ourselves or those around us. Suddenly, instead of seeing other people's problems as my own personal concern, they are the concern of “someone else”. The government has taken the place of the local community, we can now step over those who are destitute and dying in our local communities because, “it is someone else's problem”. Quoting from a former pope:

*“When we speak of the reform of institutions, the State comes chiefly to mind, not as if universal well-being were to be expected from its activity, but because things have come to such a pass through the evil of what we have termed “individualism” that, following upon the overthrow and near extinction of that rich social life which was once highly developed through associations of various kinds, there remain virtually only individuals and the State.”*

-Pius XI - “Quadragesimo Anno”

When we see the government as the solution to our problems, we give up personal liberty by surrendering personal responsibility, but we also surrender collective responsibility and therefore we surrender the responsibility to care for our neighbors and our family members. Weirdly, a movie that directly addressed this problem was “The Incredibles 2”. While superhero movies are all the rage, this movie actually pointed out a problem with superheroes. The villain of the movie points out that superheroes make us weak because they teach us to depend on someone else to save us.

It then shows how this attitude negatively affects everyone, including the protagonists. In order for the parents to be superheroes, they start ignoring their role within the home, leaving this role to others. Thus the climax of the movie begins with the kids having to save their parents, and then the parents reconciling with their children.



This is what the government has done to us. We no longer see ourselves as members of a local community, but instead, as Pius XI put it we only see individuals and the state. In Israel this happened through Moses taking the authority of solving all local problems at the highest possible level, but this plays itself out in our modern world in various ways. I think one of the biggest ways is through the welfare system. Here is a quote from a more recent pope, John Paul II:

*"In recent years the range of such intervention has vastly expanded, to the point of creating a new type of State, the so-called "Welfare State"... Here again the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbours to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simply material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need. One thinks of the condition of refugees, immigrants, the elderly, the sick, and all those in circumstances which call for assistance, such as drug abusers: all these people can be helped effectively only by those who offer them genuine fraternal support, in addition to the necessary care. Faithful to the mission received from Christ her Founder, the Church has always been present and active among the needy, offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting their dignity as persons."*

*-John Paul II - "Centesimus Annus"*

I couldn't have said it better myself. By delegating the responsibility of helping the unfortunate around us to the state, we have lost local accountability. I don't feel the need to help out my family or those in my community struck by hard times, I instead feel as though it is the government's role to solve that problem. This fills our nation with uncaring, bloated, bureaucratic systems, and it also removes true help from people.

As he said, poverty is often a symptom of another deeper problem, not always, but oftentimes it is. This means that a system that is only geared towards assisting people monetarily is not geared to helping people with underlying issues. This helps us understand a large misunderstanding about the early local church:

*“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”*

*-Acts 2:44-45*

Some have said that this sounds like modern socialism, but nothing could be further from the truth. This is a *local* redistribution of wealth in a religious community. This is not a governmental redistribution, but a small-scale redistribution handled in a small community of new believers who all opted to live together in order to learn from the apostles.

This is another principle of subsidiarity, things that work at a local level don't always scale upwards. In my own home for instance, there is a redistribution of wealth. I am the sole provider for my home and so I “redistribute” my wealth to my wife and kids according to the needs of the family. Me and my wife also dictate family responsibilities to our kids without their vote or consent. Therefore, my home is a type of socialistic oligarchy. And yet, at the family level, this system works quite well, mainly because we love one another, live with one another, and depend on one another. This same system would be disastrous if we tried to scale it up to even a local community level, let alone a national scale.

In the same way, if I decide to make all the final judgments for our home, this would work quite well, but this does not scale up to a national level. Charity was always supposed to start at the most local level and then move up as needed. Meaning that if I am having financial problems, I should immediately seek solutions for myself. If I can't provide for myself, for one reason or another, then my family should help me, if my family can't help me, then my local community can step in, and if all else fails, then the government can step in to help. This system develops social bonds as opposed to eroding them which is what our current system does.

## Withering Morality

*“...having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”*

*-2 Timothy 3:5*

Finally, Paul warns that this system will erode goodness itself. Strangely though, he says that this immoral generation will have a “form of godliness”. This is what our modern system does. We seem like a virtuous nation because we are providing for our poor and destitute, and yet at an individual and communal level we are incredibly selfish. This is the result of centralized power.

Take the Israelites for an example. Since Moses is giving them judgement, from the outside it would seem like these people are really wise since they are making all the right decisions. In reality Moses is the only wise one, everyone else is merely dependent upon his wisdom. In the same way, if the government is responsible for charity, it removes morality from the populace. We aren't actually virtuous, we are merely subsisting on the "virtue" of a bureaucratic system. And if that system is threatened, we fall apart. When the issue of church charity is brought up, this is what Paul says:

*"But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*

-1 Timothy 5:4-8

Notice first that Paul encourages the family to take care of their own that they might "first learn to show piety..." Charity within the home trains the soul to true virtue. If I learn to take care of those I am responsible for, those who I actually know and love, it helps grow my piety and my virtue. If the church, or worse, the government takes this responsibility from me it has removed the very thing that would train me in piety and virtue.

Second, Paul warns that the church helping someone could lead to their laziness, entitlement, and even debauchery. Why? If I know and love the people who are helping me, I respect their sacrifice, if I don't, it is much harder to take seriously what they are doing for me. Think about moving and this might make more sense. If you have to move from one house to another you basically have the choice of hiring movers or asking friends and family. If you ask friends and family, it should strike your conscience to be as faithful as you can to help in the process. You will probably only call them to be there when it is absolutely necessary and you will do a lot of the work with them. But if you hire unknown movers, there is less incentive to be as conscientious.

There is another component to this that doesn't get stressed enough nowadays, virtue is not natural to us, it is something that can only be grown through discipline. This means that a lack of discipline can actually shrink virtue and create vice. Think about your physical body. Strength and endurance are the bodily equivalent of virtue in the soul. The only way to attain strength and endurance is to strain your body and work it out. When you don't do this you lose strength and endurance.

Virtue works the same way. In order to learn the virtues of discipline and hard work, you have to work. If money is simply handed to you, this actually removes a lot of incentive to work hard or to see work as a good in itself, instead of as a means to get money. Take this verse from second Thessalonians:

*“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”*

*-2 Thessalonians 3:7-12*

Part of being made in the image of God means being made to work. We do not find fulfillment in “bread alone”, we find fulfillment in purpose and virtue. When the government supplies the needs of the people it might be discouraging people from finding meaning in a job. It might be encouraging laziness and many other destructive habits that have led to poverty. Local communities can give assistance while also upholding the higher aims of virtue, love, and discipline.

## Able Men

*“Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. “And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. “If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.” So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. So they judged the people at all times;*

*the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.”*  
-Exodus 18:19-27

In order for Moses to diffuse power though, he first needs to raise up men who are able to share the load of authority with him. The first qualification that Jethro encourages is that they are “able men”. In Hebrew this phrase literally means, “men of valour” or courageous men. In order to give judgement to others these men must be bold and courageous. They have to risk offending others or making unpopular judgements. While there is a good reason why our founders set up our political system the way they did, it does discourage men of valor. The reason is because the democratic system naturally elevates men who seek power and popularity.

Next, they were to be God-fearing. This goes hand in hand with the first qualification. The way to become bold in giving correct judgement is fearing the opinion of God more than the opinion of others. Being “God-fearing” means more than this though. It also means that their faith is not something hidden, but in the open. These would be men of open and obvious virtue. Men who lead others as an extension of their devotion to God.

This also means that they will be able to speak the truth. A person in authority must value the truth. They can’t play with words to get an advantage over others, and they must be willing to be wrong in submission to higher truth. People need to know that they are getting the honest judgement of this individual, never wondering if they have hidden motives. Once again, in our current political system we seem to expect dishonesty. This is why trust in our institutions and our government is at an all time low.

Finally they are men who hate covetousness. This is interesting because it isn’t enough for these men to simply not be covetous, they must *hate* it. The temptation of those in authority is to use their power for personal gain. This temptation is so strong that someone in this position must have an abhorrence towards covetousness in order to actively fight their temptation. These qualifications are not that different from the qualifications given for elders in the early church:

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful*

*word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”*

*-Titus 1:5-9*

Once again, these are men who have shown themselves to be able to govern themselves and their families, this then trains them to govern those in their community. But what these men ultimately are supposed to be is leaders and examples to their community. This was the largest thing that Moses was depriving his people of. By taking all the authority unto himself, he prevented the men in his community from developing as leaders. I like what the “Pulpit Commentary says about this point:

*“There were in Israel and will always be in every community, "able men," well fitted to take part in the decision of causes. Such men will commonly be very numerous; and if they have no part in the administration of justice, a large section of the community will at once be dissatisfied with the slight passed upon them, and debarred from an employment which would have tended to their moral education and elevation. The jury system of modern states is a recognition of the fact, that judicial capacity is widely spread, and that society ought to provide a field for its exercise. It is important to utilise the powers possessed by all members of the community, both for their own contentation and for the general welfare of the community itself. The world is over-full of despots and monopolists, persons who desire to grasp as much power as possible, and are unwilling to share their office with others. We may acquit Moses of such selfishness; but we cannot acquit all those who follow in his footsteps. It would be well if persons in positions of authority nowadays sought generally to associate others in their work—to call out latent talent, exercise it, and so educate its possessors.”*

*-Joseph Exell - “Pulpit Commentary”*

This is something that we must always remember, men in authority are supposed to point us to the ultimate authority in heaven. Beyond this, they are supposed to be examples to us on how to gain responsibility in our own lives and learn to govern ourselves:

*“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”*

*-Titus 2:1-5*

This is the most shocking thing about the Resurrection. It would make a lot of sense if Christ would have remained on earth and done what Moses attempted to do. If He would sit giving individual guidance to all who approached Him. Instead He gave power and authority to His apostles, and enabled them in this work by giving them the Holy Spirit:

*“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

*-Acts 1:8*

Christ gives of His own authority that men could be trained up in this lesson. That we might learn how to take responsibility in our own lives and give God glory in how we behave.

