

Treat God As Holy and Trust His Decision to Be Kind

by Bob Jennings

This sermon delves into the story of Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20, highlighting how their disobedience and lack of trust in God's command led to them being barred from entering the promised land. The sermon emphasizes the importance of upholding God as holy, even in moments of provocation or disagreement, and how our speech and actions can misrepresent God's character. It draws parallels to the need for faith and obedience in Christ to enter the ultimate promised land of heaven, showcasing God's justice, mercy, and longsuffering.

Scripture: Numbers 20:12, Hebrews 3:19, Deuteronomy 34:4, Proverbs 17:15, Zechariah 13:1, Ecclesiastes 5:2, Deuteronomy 3:23, James 3:1, Titus 2:10

Topics: "Obedience to God", "The Holiness of God"

Description

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Transcript

A question from what Ken read. This has to do with my sermon, so I want to mention it before I forget it. Hebrews 3, it says, the Lord swore by His wrath in righteous anger.

He swore they would not enter His rest. And then it says they did not enter. And it mentions the specific sin.

What was that sin? What two men? Who are two men that are part of what that verse is referring to? God swore in His righteous anger in response to them that they would not enter. And they did not enter. And the specific sin God says they didn't enter because of was because you did not believe in Me.

What two men? Moses and Aaron. Two men. I never saw that until Ken read that.

It deals exactly with what I'm dealing with. And it dawned on me, Moses and Aaron are included in that. That's specifically what we're going to see happen to them.

Now, just to make sure there's clarity here, obviously, Hebrews 11 says, by faith Moses entered the ultimate rest of heaven. Okay, the promised land and the physical land, it's not this perfect equivalent picture of entering heaven. Moses is clearly justified by the blood of the Passover Lamb who he trusted in looking to that Lamb.

But Moses did not enter the physical promised land. There's a difference there. So don't be confused.

Moses is not lost. That's not what I'm saying. But turn to Numbers 20.

I want to speak to you on God's desire to be upheld as holy. And if you do not, God will then have to prove Himself and show Himself as holy. Numbers 20.

If you compare this with verses in Deuteronomy, when does this happen? This is nearing the end of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness where they're getting to a point where they're having this second opportunity to go into the promised land. If you remember 40 years earlier, they didn't enter. The spies came back.

They gave a bad report. Israel did not enter. They've wandered for 40 years.

And here we're getting to the point where they're going to be re-entering. You could say this is at the end of the race to get to this promised land. Numbers 20, verse 1, "...And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh.

And Miriam died there, and she was buried." So Moses' sister is dead. Verse 2, "...Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

And the people quarreled with Moses, and they said, would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord?" What's that referring to? A couple chapters earlier, the brothers perished. I think it's referring to the sons of Korah. God opened up the earth.

He yanked them down. They perished. They went alive into the earth.

So here these Israelites are saying, would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord. That's a very strong statement. Verse 4, "...Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why?" So they're questioning the leaders.

"...Why have you made us come out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grains or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink." So stop there for a second. Israel? They've let their need be known. We need water.

They're quarreling. They're angry. How's God going to respond? We see Israel.

Now we're going to see God's response. And then we're going to see Aaron and Moses' response. So let's look at our God.

What is the perfect response from our holy, holy God right here in this situation? What does God do that's the perfect response? Verse 6, this is what Moses and Aaron do. "...And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly." So they left the assembly. "...To the entrance of the tent of the meeting, they fell on their faces." So that's a very good response.

The leadership goes and they fall before God in prayer. "...And the glory of the Lord appeared to them. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying..." So this is God's response.

"...Take the staff and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle." Now stop for a second. Is that how you would have expected the Lord would respond right here with how those men were treating the leaders? What type of response is God desiring to happen for the Israelites to see? What would you call that response there? Go speak to the rock and give them water.

The Lord doesn't say something about correcting the Israelites. The Lord's not about to send serpents upon them that they all die. The Lord is simply showing His great kindness and longsuffering to the people of Israel in this response.

Would you not agree? That's a very, very kind response in view of what the Israelites had just been doing. Quarreling with God's two men. And that's the Lord's response.

So now what do Moses and Aaron need to do? If you get a clear word from God, and you're the messenger, what does the messenger now need to do? You take the word, and you do exactly as the message was. You say it exactly as God said to do. Because God has a purpose behind them conducting themselves in this way in showing mercy and kindness to the Israelites.

God's wanting to display Himself at this moment as a merciful and a kind God to the Israelites. And so He gives them this response. Go do this.

So, verse 9, Moses took the staff from before the Lord as He commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to the rock..." No. So right here, Moses has already gone astray.

"...He said to them, Hear now, you rebels! Shall we bring water for you out of this rock? Or some of your versions render it in the literal, must we bring water for you out of this rock? Must we bring water for you out of this rock, you rebels?" Verse 11, Moses lifted up his hand and he struck the rock with his staff twice. And water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their livestock. So Israel got the water that God desired them to have.

But now here you have a point where you have these two servants of the Lord. They did not obey the specific command of God. They did not rightly represent God to the people of Israel.

Does His character demand that He do anything in response? Yes. And look what the Lord does. Verse 12, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, because you did not believe in Me... that's what we see in Hebrews 3. Because you did not believe in Me, you did not trust in Me, in order to uphold Me as holy, to show Me, to treat Me as holy in the eyes of the people before them, because you did not do this.

That's what I desired to happen. Because you didn't, therefore, you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them. He's swearing to them, you're not going to enter the rest.

These are the waters of Meribah where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord. And through them, He showed Himself holy. Meaning by God's response, He proved to Israel, I am holy, I am separate, I am distinct.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, I pray that You would give me Your gracious, kind help to a weakling like me. Lord, that I might rightly present these truths to these precious saints here.

Lord, that it would grip our hearts. That we would see more of You. Lord, allow this, cause this to make us worship You more for who You are.

Lord, we thank You that You are holy, holy, holy. You are set apart, set apart, set apart. You are distinct.

You are different than anyone else. Lord, there is none like You. There's none like You.

In Jesus' name, Amen. So Moses' example. One way to look at it is this is an example of a positive warning to us that we not end up like him.

Right? These things are written for our instruction, Paul says, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Moses tripped at the finish line of getting to the physical promised land. And we can learn from his mistake.

But more importantly, we're going to see something about God. And that's what we want to see. We want to see our Lord.

We want to see His character displayed to us. Now to understand this passage, for you guys to understand it, for me to understand it as I studied it, we need to understand the precise sin that Moses and Aaron were committing. We see the precise punishment, right? The precise punishment, you see that in v. 24.

What happened to Aaron right after this? Aaron was gathered to his people. He shall not enter the land that I have given to the people because you rebelled against My command. And they take v. 25, Aaron and Eliezer, his son, they brought him to the mount.

They stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son. And then look at v. 28. Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, put him on Eliezer, his son, and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.

Then Moses and Eliezer came down from the mountain when all the congregation saw that Aaron had perished. Aaron perished for what he did, what he took pardon with Moses. All the house of Israel wept for Aaron 30 days.

So that's pretty clear. We see the precise punishment. You know, often you hear about someone, the punishment they received.

What's that tend to make you think? Wow, what crime did they commit? What crime happened to deserve this type of punishment? You ask that question. But you've got to remember, this is not an earthly courtroom that we're thinking about. This is not a Bexar County judge in Texas.

This is the holy, holy God. His standard is infinitely higher than anything that this world has. He considers the very thing of unbelief as a sin that's punishable by this.

So let's think here about the precise sin. What was the precise sin of Aaron and Moses? Because if we understand that, I think it will help us see something about God that we want to see. We're not going to get the most out of this passage.

So let's first think, what are three ways the sin is described? Look at v. 12. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, because you did not believe in Me. That's one way God describes their specific sin.

You did not trust Me. So we ask the question, what did they not trust the Lord about? What did they not trust God in regards to? We need to think about that. The second way the Lord describes the sin, v. 24, He says there, because you rebelled against My command.

Okay, so what command that God gave did they oppose and rebel against? Because that's how their sin is described. It's described as that. Or v. 27, it says there, you rebelled against My Word.

What words and what commands did they defy to obey? Okay, third way this sin is described. In Psalm 106. Maybe keep your hand in numbers 20.

If you want, you don't have to turn there. Psalm 106, it briefly mentions what takes place here. It gives us some more light.

Psalm 106, v. 32, They angered God at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses, for their sake, or on their account. For they made His, God's Spirit, bitter with what they did. And Moses and Aaron spoke rashly with their lips.

They spoke unadvisedly with their lips. Okay, so three ways the Bible at least describes their sin. They didn't trust the Lord.

They didn't obey His command. And they sinned with what they said. Okay? So we've got to know that in order to think what precisely is the sin.

Now let's ask another question to try to figure this out. What was the Lord seeking to do? What was the Lord seeking to do? I think the answer's pretty clear. V. 12, You did not believe in Me, and here is God's purpose here in why He wanted them to do what He commanded them to do.

Uphold Me as holy in the eyes of the people. God wants, as some versions render it, to be treated as holy in the eyes of the people. God wants to be shown clearly for who He is before people.

God does not want to be misrepresented. He wants to be accurately represented and that's why in this case, He told them a specific thing to do. By them not doing that, they misrepresented God.

And they get punished for it. So the Lord wants to be upheld. He wants to be shown as holy.

It's different. It's separate. It's set apart from all the false gods, from the world.

God wants to be seen clearly. It's different. It's separate.

So, let's think of this. What is the precise sin? Maybe ask this question as you try to think about it. If they would have specifically obeyed God's command, what would have happened? If you're an Israelite, and you were there, did you get your water? Right.

But what impression did you get of what God thought about you as you got your water? That God's really, really angry? I mean, we must do this? You can't even get the impression that is Moses the one bringing the water out? He puts the focus on Himself? If they would have specifically obeyed God's command, they would have got water, and they would have seen what about God? That God is angry with them? Or at

that point, they would have seen what? God's long-suffering. They didn't see that. Because Moses and Aaron did not obey God's command.

They didn't see God as long-suffering right there. Because these two messengers altered the message because they thought their discernment of a response for the situation was better. So let's think here.

If Moses and Aaron would have obeyed God's command in God's way, then God would have displayed Himself as separate and different by His incredible long-suffering and mercy. Giving quarreling people water they do not deserve speaks of God's kindness. And you've got to remember, we have been given water that we do not deserve.

And that water is the fountain of the blood of Christ that has been opened to us. So we should be incredibly thankful for this truth of the Lord. So how do we describe this precise sin? So first, they opposed a command.

What command was even given? Verse 8 says, give Israel water. Well, Israel got water. Is that the command they opposed? No, Israel got water.

Okay, the next question you ask is what? Well, is the way the water came out? They clearly disobeyed the means to get the water. They didn't speak to the rock. They struck the rock.

Right? But is that what the Lord is pointing at when He says you didn't believe in Me? Is the Lord saying you didn't believe Me that you could just speak to the rock and water would come out and in unbelief, you struck the rock with a staff? Is that what God's hitting at? No. I don't believe so. Moses disobeyed at least in two ways.

He spoke rashly to the people. He hit the rock twice in his anger. Is this what God is referring to? The commands and words they opposed, is that it? Verse 6, notice in verse 6, when they went to pray, it says they went from the presence of the assembly.

So it's not as if Israel even heard the way in which the water's going to come from the rock. And God had previously commanded Moses to strike the rock. So we don't get an idea that Israel even knew how the water was supposed to come through speaking to the rock.

That doesn't appear to be in their database there. Second, in the past, Moses was commanded to strike the rock, so that was not unusual. But let's think, what is the other way that this sin is described? Yes, he wrongly hit the rock.

Yes, he wrongly spoke. But the text indicates a deeper wrong and a deeper opposition. Moses, on a deeper level, was opposed to something.

Moses wasn't opposed to the means of getting the water from the rock. You see, that wasn't his issue. Moses wasn't bent out of shape about, well, I need to speak to the rock rather than hit the rock.

What was Moses actually upset about? What was Moses actually not trusting God in regards to? What did he not trust that led him to do what he did? These outward actions. This is what I'm going to put forward to you as the answer to that question. Moses and Aaron did not trust God's decision and God's will to show those rebels the kindness that He did.

Moses and Aaron did not believe. That means they did not trust the Lord with His response to those people. Therefore, they altered it with their own response because that's what they believed the people deserved.

They opposed God's kindness that He was going to show to the Israelites. They disagreed with this. It says in v. 24, you rebelled against My command.

What command did they oppose? The command of giving water to Israel in this way of being kind rather than rebuking the rebels. And that bothered Moses and Aaron. And they spoke ill-advisedly.

They said, you rebels. And then they said that amazing phrase, must we, shall we give you water? Kind of like they're forced to do it. Go clean your room.

Must I go clean my room? Must I do this? Shall I do this? His heart was not in God's command to show kindness to the Israelites at this specific point when they had rebelled. Moses rather wanted obviously punishment. In the end, Moses is the one who got punished.

Moses got punished here. It says in Psalm 106, Moses, in a way, he scolded the people. He was exasperated by the people.

And he said, hear now, you rebels. And this, as Psalm 106 said, is him speaking rashly with his lips. He's frustrated in his heart.

Must we do this? So how did they not trust the Lord? How did they not uphold the Lord as holy? They did not trust God's judgment to show His dedication to Israel by freely giving the quarreling Israelites water and to do so without giving them a rebuke. They didn't doubt God's power. They doubted and did not trust God's specific desire at that point.

Do you guys get what I'm trying to point out here? If you say, well, that's not right, okay, what's the big deal here? Striking a rock rather than speaking to a rock? Calling them rebels when God told you not to say anything? The bigger picture here is not the outward means of what Moses did. The bigger issue is what goes on in a man's heart. And as we know in our New Testament, out of the abundance of a man's heart, his mouth speaks.

Moses' comments of you're rebels and must we get you the water comes out of a heart that's upset with God's decision to show them kindness when they do not deserve that. And the Lord's response is, you did not believe in Me. And another word for believe is the word trust.

You didn't trust Me. And by not trusting Me with this decision and doing as I commanded, you did not uphold Me as holy before the people, and I was misrepresented before the people, and so I have to respond. And in v. 13, the Lord responded and He showed Himself holy by banning them from entering the promised land because they did not trust God at that point at that decision.

To me, that's incredible. It reminds you of Jonah. Jonah went to Nineveh.

He was angry at the mercy of God. But the Lord said, should I not pity Nineveh? The Bible constantly magnifies to us the kindness, the long-suffering, and the mercy of God. It shows us this is how patient the Lord is.

And it's the patience that we lack. We often do what? We speak ill-advisedly. We become impatient because we don't agree with this act of kindness that we're called to give.

And we might even follow through with it and give the person the water, but our heart is not in it. And that's where unbelief happens. It's an internal thing.

He says, you did not believe in Me. You did not trust Me. And they were punished for this.

So you could put it like this. In his unbelief, Moses exalted his own discernment above God's. He thought he knew better than the Almighty.

Let's think for a moment about the sin he committed with his speech. Verse 10, he says, Here now, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock? Very brief comment he makes. Now, was it uncommon? Did the Lord Himself ever call the Israelites rebels? Yes.

Just a few chapters earlier, the Lord called the Israelites rebels. Numbers 17.10, it said, To be kept as a sign for the rebels, that they may make an end of their grumbings against Me lest they die. So why is it wrong for Moses to now say this? What's wrong with Moses doing that? For one, obviously, God didn't command him to go and speak to the people.

God commanded him to speak to a rock and tell it to give water to the people without scolding them and reproving them. So obviously what's wrong is not that they have not been rebels. What's wrong is Moses' heart behind it.

And it's somewhat ironic, because Moses says, here now, you rebels, but look at verse 24. Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel because you rebelled. Moses says, look at those rebels.

And God takes the finger and points it at Moses and says, you rebelled. They're opposing you. This is what I want to do.

And you're opposing me in what I want to do and show to these people. God calls them rebels. They rebelled.

Moses' speech was irritated, ill-advised, because in his heart, he did not trust God's command to show mercy and kindness at that moment to those who had just quarreled at him. Moses, you could say, he wanted punishment. But what was shown was grace and mercy and kindness.

Incredible. That's our God. Let's look now at a moment.

Remember, the Lord was seeking to show Himself as different and set apart. Right? That's what it says. It says, you didn't trust Me.

You didn't believe Me to uphold Me. If they would have trusted the Lord in what He wanted to do, it would have accurately upheld the Lord to the people in a correct representation of what He wanted to be shown at that moment, what His perfect character demanded was the right decision. That's what would have happened.

But that didn't happen. Their refusal to obey His command, it offended the Lord. They didn't treat the Lord as different.

They didn't treat Him as holy. And Israel did not see God's character before them in a true light. And Moses gave, you could say, a bad impression of God.

As one brother said, Moses assaulted the character of God by his decision. He assaulted God's character by his decision to not obey what God wanted him to do in that specific situation. You're wrong, Lord.

This is right. And as we saw, the Lord, He must respond. Look at v. 12 and v. 13.

These are the waters of Meribah where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord. And through them, He proved Himself holy. He showed Himself holy.

So in the end, this entire situation was an opportunity to show God as different to the people. But it came at Moses' and Aaron's expense. Being kept out of the land.

The Lord had to correct Moses' dishonoring of him by misrepresenting him before Israel. And we see this exact same language of the Lord showing Himself holy in the Lord's previous dealings with Aaron's sons. Remember Aaron? He had his two sons, Nadab and Abihu.

In Leviticus 10, we see Aaron's sons presented unauthorized fire before the Lord, which God had not commanded them to do. Do you remember what happened? They did something unauthorized. They didn't have permission.

And God burned them. God killed them. They were burned to death.

In v. 3, Moses explains God's response to Aaron. Listen how Moses explains what God did. This is what the Lord meant, this response, when He said, I will show Myself holy to those who are near Me.

God's wanting to show Himself to those who are near Him of how holy, holy, holy and different and separate He is. And in that case with those two men, it was being killed for doing something unauthorized. In this case with Moses and Aaron, they did something unauthorized as well.

And they were banned from the land. God showed Himself to be holy. You see, God responds when we don't uphold Him as holy.

We don't accurately represent Him. God's character demands He respond in a perfectly just way. Moses and Aaron, they offered something unauthorized.

God commanded kindness. They brought severity. They were not consumed with fire, but banned.

It's incredible. God had to prevent, you could say, unbelief from spreading, so God had to make a massive monument to stick there on the ground with the punishment of Aaron and Moses. God did that.

Because if the Lord did not do something to the two men, a wrong idea of God can be communicated. That's the same idea with church discipline in a way. When we do church discipline and put people out of the church, if we don't respond correctly, it's going to wrongly represent the Lord if we don't deal with people who are living in sin and bearing the name of brother.

So, let's think of this. You know one truth this passage shows us? It shows us that the anger of God is for us. The anger of God is for us.

It's for us. It's for our good. Deuteronomy 1.37, it's speaking about what happened here.

Even with me, the Lord was angry on your account. God was angry with me on your account and said you shall not go in there. Wait, what does He mean on your account? Is He blaming them? God was angry with me because of you? The better rendering, the literal rendering, many of your Bibles have this.

It says this, even with me, the Lord was angry for your sake. Moses is saying God responded in anger by punishing me for your good. And that's exactly what v. 13 is saying.

He proved Himself holy. He showed Himself holy in His response to Aaron and Moses through their punishment. So God's anger is for us.

It's for us. God was angry with me for your sake. For your sake.

The idea is God punished Moses and Aaron for the sake of the people that they might correctly see God for who He is. Their punishment was a just response to their sin in order to defend God's character from a misrepresentation which Moses and Aaron did in their unbelief of not trusting the Lord. God had to act.

Again, the same idea about hell. Why does God throw men in hell? God has to throw men in hell. He's holy.

He can't look upon sin with... He's got to condemn sinners. It's God's justice. That's why hell is there for God to be just.

Punishment must happen. So God's anger is for us, for us to correctly see God's character. Let's think of this.

This will make you respect the Lord more. The Lord shows Himself as very holy and different than anyone else. And you know one way He did it in this passage? By His impartial judgment of Moses and Aaron.

Partiality. You know, you show someone a favor. God doesn't do that.

God judges without any impartiality. 1 Peter 1.17, He judges impartially according to each one's deeds. Think of this.

Let's just think of Moses. Think of Moses leading up to this point. It'll make you amazed that God, to uphold His holiness, punished Moses in the way He did.

Moses is the one who was the baby, who was in the basket and in God's providence. He survived Pharaoh's rampage to kill Israelite offspring. Moses is the one who Hebrews 11 says at the age of 40 refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, as in he forsook gaining the world.

Moses chose rather to be mistreated with the people of God. He embraced suffering. Jesus says if you come after Me, you've got to deny yourself.

And then it says in Hebrews 11, Moses did this rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. He forsook the privileges and the pleasures.

By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king. Why? He endured as seeing Him who is invisible. That's the Moses we're thinking about.

And this Moses who's faithfully followed God for these last 40 years and born with a stubborn and rebellious generation. That Moses who in Acts 7.30, when 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in the bush. After those 40 years, at 80 years of age, listen to this experience Moses had.

Deuteronomy 4, for ask now of the days that are past which were before you since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or has ever been heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of a God speaking out of the midst of the fire as you, Moses, have heard and you have still lived? Moses had an experience with God that was unheard of, that had never happened before. This is the Moses who God punished.

Numbers 12, and he said, hear my words, if there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses.

Moses is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth clearly and not in riddles. And he beholds the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? The Scriptures say over 160 times that the Lord spoke to Moses. There's verses that say, I spoke to Moses. I said to my servant Moses.

Deuteronomy 34, 10. And there's not risen a prophet since Israel like Moses who knew the Lord face to face. Exodus 33, 11.

Thus, the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And here God, because of one act of not trusting the Lord and upholding Him as holy before the Israelites, the man who was a friend of God, who He spoke with face to face, he sinned. He didn't trust God.

He didn't believe God's way was right. He sinned in his speech. He sinned in his actions.

And this God had to show Himself holy, and He did so by banning that man at the end of the race from entering the promised land. After 40 years, that was God's perfect, just response. And there is absolutely no impartiality in that.

Because God doesn't. He does not judge impartially or with partiality. God judges specifically according to the deeds.

And in this case, it was the deed of His friend. It was the deed of Moses who He knew face to face. And it was right at the end before going to the land.

And Moses did this act. He rashly, because of what was in his heart, of not agreeing with God's decision to show them kindness, he rashly spoke and in anger struck that rock. And God had to respond.

And even though it was Moses, God did respond. That's something to praise God for because God is perfect in His justice and His holiness. This is different than the world.

The world does not punish someone in such a way who they're so close with for something that seems so minor. But God's not like the world. Moses had such a good track record.

It doesn't matter. That one sin demanded that response from God. Now, turn to Deuteronomy 3. Aaron dies after this.

And this is somewhat a surprising verse. But here you're going to all the more appreciate our holy, holy God. You're going to all the more see the Lord is just.

See, Moses, he tries to get this reversed. Now, Moses had prayed about previous situations where God was going to pour wrath out, and he got the Lord to not do it by praying, right? And that was good and that was just. And it was for the sake of whose name that the Lord did that.

Moses interceded on behalf of the people. And what was his reason? For Your name, Lord. For Your name.

But here, Deuteronomy 3.23, and I pleaded with the Lord at the time saying, O Lord God, You have only begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand. For what God is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan. That good hill country in Lebanon.

But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to Me. And the Lord said to me, Enough from you. Do not speak to Me of this matter again.

Enough. Do not speak to Me of this matter again. Go to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and look at it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan, but charge Joshua in courage and strengthen him.

It goes on. See, isn't that amazing? Moses here, he knew God, and he asked, Lord, let me in. And God got angry.

God could not alter the just decision that he had responded with. This case, asking the Lord to stop, asking the Lord to not punish him, that wouldn't have worked for God's glory. That wouldn't have shown God's honor.

When the Lord did that previously on different occasions, it showed His patience that He didn't kill the Israelites and Moses interceded. And here God says to Moses, who He knew face to face, enough on this matter. No more.

Don't speak about it anymore. God was angry there with Moses. It's incredible.

What a relationship Moses had with God, and yet God without partiality judges Moses. Proverbs 17, 15, He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord. The Lord right here, if He would have let Moses into the land after showing Himself as holy, it would have been an act of an abomination.

And so He could not do that. He had to have justice satisfied to His servant who He knew face to face. And brethren, this is very obvious where all this points to, is it not? It points to the cross.

It points to Christ. It all goes back to the Lord. The greatest place in all of human history in the world where the holiness of God was upheld is on that cross.

It's on that cross. Let's think about this. Think of this.

A minor deviance, even being provoked by grumblers, and you're kept out of the land. So it is with heaven. One time opposing God's standard and we are condemned.

That's how holy God is. One sin and you justly deserve hell for all of eternity. We need a perfect substitute.

We need a Passover lamb. Moses, he knew God face to face. Christ had perfect fellowship with the Father.

Moses was punished for his sin in order to uphold God's holiness. Christ was punished with our sins and put to Him in order to uphold God's holiness. Israel was shown kindness by being given water to survive.

And we are shown kindness by a fountain being opened through the blood of Christ that we might survive. Zechariah 13.1 On that day, there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. That's what the Gospel does.

It cleans you. It cleans you on the outside. You're a legal problem with God.

It cleans you on the inside. You're in slavery to sin. God gives you a new heart.

So the ultimate example of God upholding His holiness and showing His holiness, it's not with the fire that fell on Aaron's sons for their sin. It's not Moses being kept out of the Promised Land. We see God's holiness and that all of humanity is kept out of Heaven and condemned for their sin.

But God in His love is different than man would imagine. As Jeff pointed out in the first hour, look how different our God is. He's so loved that He sent His only Son and He had His Son take His enemies' crimes and have them laid on His account.

And then God poured His wrath on His only begotten Son that you and I deserve in hell for all of an eternity. And God upheld His holiness and led us into Heaven to be just and the justifier because Christ was justly... unjustly? No, Christ was justly crushed because He had our sins on His books. He was unjust in that He knew no sin.

But God's justice was perfectly satisfied on that cross. He was, you could say, kept out with our sins on Him. He's the scapegoat that was sent out into the wilderness to die.

So thank God for such kindness. The Lord's response to us was not, you rebels, must I give you a blood offering to pay for your sin? God's response is one of mercy, of longsuffering, of grace. Maybe just a few things right here as we close.

I asked my children when I was talking to them about this passage, what surprises you most? What surprises you most from this passage? My daughter's response was that after all that time, Moses would disobey God like that. I thought that's very interesting. We should be surprised.

Moses knew God face to face. If anyone had a reason to trust the Lord and had been trusting Him for that long, it was Moses. That's what makes this sin so grievous.

It was Moses and Aaron. He was not ignorant of God. He was not unknowledgeable in what sin was.

God's response is not an overreaction. If you think it is, you underestimate His holiness and His set-apartness. Another question someone asks is did Moses enter heaven? We already hit on that.

Hebrews 11, by faith, He kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood. The promised land, this physical land that's different than this ultimate land in heaven, we enter by faith. Thank God we enter that land by the obedience of another.

Moses missed out on the earthly promised land due to his own disobedience. But he partook of the heavenly promised land through the obedience of Jesus Christ. And so he was unable to enter the physical land because of unbelief.

But he entered the ultimate land you want to get to by belief and faith in Christ. Why was Aaron also guilty? Someone will ask that. Well, he didn't speak up to Moses.

I mean, he probably wanted to do the right thing. God is not so surface level. God knows your heart.

Obviously, Aaron's heart agreed with the response. It's not just that Aaron didn't speak up. I bet Aaron's heart, he was on the same page as Moses.

Here's another thing to think about. We see here God is the One who has power over death. Listen to this verse.

This is a very sad verse and a very telling verse. Deuteronomy 34, 7. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated.

That is not a positive statement about Moses. The point is, he died in perfect health because God killed him because of his disobedience. He did not die of old age.

Moses died because God took his life. Jeremiah 51, 13. Not referring to Moses, but in general this truth.

The Lord says, your end has come. The threat of your life is cut. God cuts the threat of our life.

We see that here. God made it where all the people in that generation, including Moses and Aaron, had now died. Joshua entered the land.

They did not. Another thing to consider. We see here that we are not excused from our sin just because someone provoked us.

The people were against Moses. They were against Aaron. They quarreled.

Did that excuse their disobedience? No. My sin is my sin no matter how much someone provokes me to sin. Another thing.

We see here the seriousness, honestly, of our speech. Look, if all Moses had was a disgruntledness in the heart and there was no outward action showing he didn't trust God's decision, God still in a way, maybe, would have been upheld as holy. You can tell if someone's mad by their actions.

And maybe just looking that way would have been enough to not uphold. But my point is those words, that speech, Psalms 106, he spoke rashly with his lips. He spoke unadvisedly with his lips.

He spoke with no due consideration about what he was going to say. And look what it cost him. Proverbs 20 says it's a snare to say something rashly and to reflect only after.

Moses had time to reflect on his decision as he sat there and asked the Lord, please, Lord, let me into that land. As he sat and looked to the east and to the west and the north and the south, he was reflecting on his sin. He's not going to enter that land.

Ecclesiastes 5, be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to other word before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.

God was watching there. He saw Moses didn't obey Him. Another thing, Moses partly outwardly obeyed.

But what's more important is what's going on in the heart. Sure, the people got the water. Right? I got them what you wanted.

No, God's main goal there was not water. God's main goal there was being upheld in a certain way to the people. You see, water's not the purpose.

The purpose of it was God being viewed by Israel as being kind, and Moses did not obey that. He chewed the people out. He didn't trust the Lord.

Incredible. Here's another thing to consider. God views sin that is done and known publicly as more grievous.

Verse 8 says it was before their eyes. Verse 12, in the eyes. Verse 27, in the sight of all.

This sin done publicly had a greater judgment because of how it misrepresented God. Another thing to consider, God views the sin of leadership seriously. You know, when you read this passage, you just can't help but think of James 3.1 how it says God judges teachers and preachers with a greater strictness.

And here Moses and Aaron are. Far less of a crime than all the Israelites had been committing. And God had to judge them with a greater strictness because of their position.

And was Moses put out of the ministry for sexual immorality? Moses was put out of the ministry for what he said. Your words. And that even happens today.

People put something on Twitter, and it so destroys their testimony, they're put out. Think of this. If you're lost here today, if you're lost, we see here God's character of patience and kindness toward the grumbling and quarreling Israelites.

And even though the leaders wrongly represented God, even though the leaders were hypocritical, God did something about it. You see, God will act to protect His name and show and prove Himself as holy that He might be upheld in that way. So despite our sins and failures, God is going to act.

He wants to show Himself as merciful. He has done so in Christ. And so, brethren, the last point is this.

Clearly, we should see here that God is very concerned about how you and I uphold the Lord. How are we treating God around people? How do we show and display the Lord to our children, to our lost family members? Titus 2.10, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. How do you wear and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior? Do you accurately represent the Lord? As one brother said in this passage, let me read this quote, when a professing Christian misrepresents Christ by his conduct or spirit, it's what Moses and Aaron did, so as to give the wrong view of the Gospel to his companions, it's a terrible sin in God's sight.

Compare the doom on the man who offends one of the little ones. If you put a stumbling block in the way of someone coming to Christ, it says it'd be better for you if you had a millstone tied around your neck and you were drowned in the depths of the sea. Aaron and Moses.

They could have caused the people to stumble. But God acted because God's holy. God is different.

God is very different. He's very separate. And we should praise Him for that.

Let's pray. Lord, we do worship You. You're so worthy of worship.

God, help us. Help us, Lord, help us to not in our hearts fall into unbelief, to not trust You. Lord, we don't want to hear from You that You didn't believe in me.

You didn't trust me. Lord, we want to trust You and do what is right in every situation. Lord, we want the discernment to know when should we show mercy or when should we show judgment to someone in certain situations.

Father, we want to approve what is excellent. We want our love abounding more and more with knowledge and discernment. Lord, we thank You that You're so different.

You're so holy. You're so set apart. Lord, we thank You that You do not change.

Lord, we thank You. Lord, we thank You. Lord, You had anger towards Moses for our sakes.

And Lord, we look at that anger, that judgment that Moses suffered. Lord, it was for us that we would see You as holy. Lord, show us more how holy You are.

Lord, there's so much in the world that's distorting our view. God, give us more light from Your Word. Reveal Yourself to us in greater ways.

Lord, help us to see You clearly. I pray all these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

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