

(Through the Bible) Numbers 11-20

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the themes of complaining, God's grace, and the importance of spiritual leadership in the context of Numbers 11-20.

Duration: 1:28:16

Scripture: Exodus 17:5-6, Exodus 34:6-7, Numbers 11:25-26, Numbers 14:17-19, Deuteronomy 9:6, Acts 21:11, 1 Corinthians 10:6-11

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Divine Mercy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the lessons that can be learned from the history of the children of Israel as recorded in the book of Exodus. He emphasizes the importance of not lusting after evil things, not murmuring against God, and not turning back in unbelief when God promises a life of fullness and richness. The preacher also highlights the story of Moses and Aaron bringing forth water from a rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites. He discusses how Moses, in his frustration with the rebelliousness of the people, struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had commanded. Despite this disobedience, God still provided water for the people. The sermon concludes with a plea for the power and mercy of the Lord to be great and for forgiveness for the iniquities of the people.

Transcript

This time, let's turn to Numbers chapter 11. In reading Numbers 11 through 20, I see a pattern emerging, a pattern of chronic complaining, as the people are now complaining against the Lord. Inasmuch as God is in control of the circumstances of our lives, any complaining against the circumstances of our lives is complaint against the Lord.

If I'm a child of God and have been called according to God's purpose, then I must believe that all things are working together for good, because I love God. And He promised me and He told me that all things are working together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. So, if I start murmuring and complaining about the things that are transpiring around my life, I'm really murmuring and complaining about those things that God has brought into my life.

And thus, murmuring and complaining is really against the Lord. And God looks upon it as such. He looks upon it as a complaint against Him.

And thus, as the children of Israel would murmur and complain, God would become angry with them. And on several occasions is ready to obliterate them. And we find Moses coming in and interceding again, always falling on his face before the Lord, pleading, God, don't destroy them.

In God's abundant grace, being demonstrated His forgiveness over and over again. We are certainly taught through these passages the long-suffering of God. And that is one of God's characteristics that's part of His nature, which is actually a characteristic of love.

In its true sense, the agape love suffers long and is kind. And it is demonstrated no better place than God's dealing with the nation Israel, the patience and the long-suffering of God with these people. They can be thankful, I'm not God.

I surely wouldn't have had the patience and the long-suffering with them that God did have. Now, as we go through these chapters again, it is important that we keep in mind that God is sovereign. And He is over all of the circumstances.

And there seems to be points where God is just wanting to wipe the people out and Moses is reasoning with God and comes up with good reasons that causes God to change His mind and not wipe them out. As you read the text, that seems to be what is happening. That seems to be the obvious kind of a thing.

God says, stand back, I'm going to wipe them out. I'll create another nation and all. And Moses said, Lord, if you wipe them out, then all of the Egyptians are going to say, look what kind of a God they have.

Took them out of the wilderness and wiped them all out. And the people are going to think that you're a horrible God. So, don't wipe them out, Lord.

And so, the Lord says, alright, you know, and He doesn't wipe them out. Now, I must believe that one of God's characteristics as being God and being divine is that of His immutability, which means that God doesn't change. Now, this is a characteristic of God's nature that is taught in the Scriptures.

God said to the prophet, behold, I am the Lord God, I change not. Again, we read that God is not a man, that He should lie nor the Son of Man, that He should repent. Hath He not spoken and shall He not make it good? So, we know from the Scriptures that God doesn't change.

We know from the Scriptures that God doesn't repent, which means to change, to change of heart, change of mind. Therefore, in the reading of these passages, where there is an apparent change in God's attitude towards the people, we must realize that in these senses, God is not the bad guy and Moses the good guy. And God is wanting to wipe them out and Moses intercedes as a good guy.

True prayer always begins in the heart of God. And God touches my heart with His purpose and with His desires. And as I begin to understand the purposes and the desires of God, I begin to express them in prayers.

You see, this world is in rebellion against God. The world system is in rebellion against God. The whole universe is in obedience to God except for one little part, this little planet swinging around the sun down here in the corner of the Milky Way galaxy.

And this planet is in rebellion against God, but God is seeking to bring the planet back into harmony with Him that He might bless it and do for it what He's been wanting to do. And in order to bring this planet back

into harmony with Him, God has captured certain lives, brought them into fellowship and into a relationship with Him, and seeks through those lives to touch other lives. In other words, your life becomes God's bridge hold in this rebellious planet.

And now God is seeking through you to reach out and to touch other lives. And so He lays upon your heart His will, His purpose, which you express to Him in prayer, which opens the door for Him to do the things that He is wanting to do, but will not do in violation of our free will, which He respects. So, actually, the inspiration for Moses' prayer came from God.

That intercession of Moses, that whole inspiration behind it was that of God. And it allows then God, in justice, He should have wiped them out. They deserved it.

But He wanted to show His mercy and His grace, and He needed that excuse. And thus He lays upon the heart of Moses the intercession, which opens the door and gives God the opportunity to be gracious, to demonstrate His long-suffering and His love. So, chapter 11 begins with a cycle that we're going to be repeating through the next few chapters.

And when the people complained it displeased the Lord, and the Lord heard it, and His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses, and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched. And He called the name of the place Burning Taberah, which means burning, because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

Alright, you think they learned their lesson. When did you? They complained. God's fire burns among them.

Some of them are destroyed. They cry unto Moses. He prays.

God quenches the fire, and now surely you'll learn not to complain. No. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting.

And the children of Israel also went again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. Now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.

And so, the mixed multitude that came with them out of Egypt began lusting, desiring after the things of Egypt, after the old life. The mixed multitude were not really full covenant people of God. Part Egyptian, part Israeli.

Not a real commitment to the purposes of God, not a total commitment, but actually coming along for the ride, coming along for the adventure, the excitement. As so many people, there's something happening, and they'll just jump in to become a part of it, sort of on the bandwagon kind of a thing. And now they begin to remember Egypt.

Oh, we had so much fish, and those cucumbers, and melons, the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. I'm getting so tired of this bland diet of manna. Tastes the same.

And he goes ahead and describes what the manna was like here, like a coriander seed, and it had the color of beryllium, and they would grind it up, and make little wafers out of it, and it had an oily taste to it.

No doubt extremely nutritious, but very bland to eat. And they began to desire after the things of Egypt.

The appetite of Egypt was still in their heart. Now, Egypt represents the world, the life of the flesh, which always leads to bondage. And so you remember the bondage that they had in Egypt.

The horrible taskmasters that were over them. The tremendous burdens that were laid upon them. Their backs were bent continually under the load.

In fact, one of the things God said when He brought them out, you'll no longer be bent over, but you're going to stand up straight. Because they've been bent over with the labors of Egypt. Many of the great monuments in Egypt were built by slave labor.

And so, they forgot the horrors of slavery. And they were only remembered the excitement of their flesh being satisfied with fish, melons, cucumbers. The taste of Egypt was still in their mouth.

There are some people who have come to Jesus Christ, but they have what is classified by Christ as a lukewarm relationship, which is the same as the mixed multitude, for lukewarmness is actually a admixture of hot and cold. People who still, though they have come to Christ, have the taste of the world in their lives. Longing still for some of the things of the flesh.

They have not yet denied themselves, taken up their cross to follow Jesus. They are seeking to follow Jesus apart from the cross, apart from self-denial. And yet, there's so much of Jesus in their lives that they can't be fully happy in the world, and too much of the world in their lives to be fully satisfied in Jesus.

A mixed multitude in the church with a nominal commitment, a surface commitment to the Lord, and yet within their heart the taste for the world. I always worry when a person testifies of the world, his past life, the things he used to do within the world, and there's sort of a smack of the lips, there's sort of a... Well, you can just tell by the way they're testifying. They're relishing the memory of the things that they did.

Rather than looking upon them with horror, and abhorring the things of the flesh, and the old flesh life. There's still sort of a desire. Jesus said, I would that you were hot or cold, but because you're lukewarm, I'm going to spew you out of my mouth.

I can't stand lukewarmness. He doesn't want your life to be in a mixture. He wants your life to be fully committed to Him.

And ye which are His have crucified the flesh with the desires, the lust thereof. Know ye not that the old man was crucified with Christ? Paul tells us that we've been redeemed, and therefore we are not our own. We're to glorify God in our body and our spirits which are His.

And yet so many Christians, still the taste of the world within their mouth, and the desire for the things of the world are still there. There hasn't been that total, complete commitment of your life to Jesus Christ. The mixed multitude fell a lusting after the things of Egypt, and they began to spread their discontent among the camp of God.

It's amazing how the carnal Christian can spread discontent in the whole body of Christ. No longer are they satisfied with just the Word of God, Jesus Christ, that bread from heaven. Now they want more entertainment within the church.

And it's tragic the things that the churches are doing today to entertain people, appealing to their flesh, the very thing that God abhors. My old flesh nature, my old flesh life. And as they spread the discontent among the camp of Israel, all of the Israelites began to stand in the tent doors weeping as Moses passed through, heard all this wailing and weeping by these people.

And Moses came in before the Lord, and he was really upset. Moses heard the people, verse 10, weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent. The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly, and Moses also was displeased.

And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all these people upon me? Have I conceived all these people? Have I begotten them that thou should say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father bears a sucking child into the land which you swear to their fathers? Where am I going to get flesh to give to all these people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. Lord, I can't take it. I'm not able to bear all these people alone.

It's too heavy for me. And if you're going to deal thus with me, just kill me. Wipe me out, Lord.

I'm through. I've had it. I'd rather be dead.

And he really was at the end of his rope. But imagine, walking through the camp, and the people cry, Give us flesh to eat! Moses said, Where am I going to get flesh to feed them? Ridiculous people. Lord, I can't take it.

I can't stand it anymore. They're not my kids. I didn't conceive them.

Why are you laying them on me? The burden's too heavy, Lord. I can't carry it anymore. I'm through.

If this is what you want, then wipe me out. I've had it. And so the Lord said unto Moses, Gather me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know 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, 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 you not bear it thyself alone. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against the morrow, and ye shall eat flesh. And ye shall eat flesh, for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt, therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

But ye shall not eat for one day, or two, or five, or ten, or twenty, but flesh for thirty days, until it comes out of your nostrils, until it comes out of your ears, until it becomes loathsome to you. My wife thinks that God might be a choleric in His reaction to the people's desire for flesh here. Ah, you want flesh, alright.

And Moses said, Lord, how in the world are we going to give them that much flesh to eat? Do you want us to kill all of the cattle and all of the flocks to feed these people? Lord, are you going to just empty the sea of fish and lay them all here? How are you going to do that, Lord? Why should I go tell them that? How are you going to do it? And the Lord said, Hey, is the Lord's arm waxed short? Hey, that's a good question. Is the Lord's arm waxed short? How big is your God? Isn't it interesting that so many times we do limit God to our own mental capacities? I'm always trying to help God figure out His program, so that I can advise Him on the best way to do things. And so often, I know what God wants to do overall.

How's He going to do it? Well, I don't know. Well, if He did this and this and this, then it could happen, maybe. So, I got it all figured out now in my mind how God ought to work, so my prayers now become direction prayers instead of direct prayers.

And I'm giving God directions on how to do His business. But the problem is, He doesn't always follow my directions. And then I get upset.

I say, Lord, what's the matter here? Can't you see? That's the wrong way to do it. Why aren't you listening to me, Lord? And He responds, My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord. My ways are beyond your finding out.

And yet, I'm always trying to find them out. I'm always seeking to know the unknowable. Always trying to figure out how God can do His business.

Because as long as I can figure out how God can do His business, I can rest fairly comfortable. It's only when I can't figure out how God's going to do His business anymore that I really get shook. If I can't figure it out, how can God? I don't see any way it could ever happen, you know.

And I get despairing and discouraged. And through I've had it, I don't see how it could ever happen. Well, it isn't necessary that I see how it can happen.

It's only necessary that I know it's going to happen because God said it's going to happen and His Word can't fail. But how is He going to do it? I don't know. If I could only realize it, that's not my problem.

I don't always realize that though. And thus I carry this burden of trying to figure out the ways of God. God said, hey, is my hand whacked short, Moses? I said I'm going to do it.

Now you go out and tell Him I'm going to do it. Don't have to worry about the processes. Is my hand whacked short? Is the arm of the Lord whacked short? No way.

So Moses gathered together the 70 men of the elders of Israel. And they gathered into the tabernacle. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon these 70 men.

And they began to prophesy. That is, they began to speak forth the Word of the Lord. Prophecy is not always predictive.

The New Testament gift of prophecy is not necessarily predictive. It can be predictive, but for the most part, it is just speaking forth the Word of the Lord to the church for edification, for comfort, for exhortation. It can have a predictive element to it as Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound himself and said, so is the man who owns this girdle to be bound when he goes to Jerusalem.

Predictive element. And whenever God speaks, there always can be a predictive element because God does know the future. And in those prophecies where there is a predictive element, it's an easy way to test the prophecy to find out if it were really from God because if it comes to pass, then it was God speaking.

If it doesn't come to pass, then God didn't speak. But it is speaking forth God's Word. And so these men began to prophesy.

Now, there were two of the elders who did not come into the tabernacle. They were still out in the camp, but the Spirit of God came on them out in the camp. And they began to prophesy in the camp.

And some young fellow came running into Moses and said, Moses, Eldad and Medad are out there in the camp prophesying. You're not in the tabernacle here. And Joshua said unto Moses in verse 28, he said, My Lord Moses, forbid them.

And Moses said, Are you envious for my sake? Hey, I wish that every one of them were prophets and the Spirit of God was upon them all. Oh, he would like to see God's Spirit fall on the entire camp of Israel and make his job so much easier if they were all walking in the Spirit. He could foresee how glorious it would be if the whole company of God were walking in the Spirit.

Now, the prophets did foresee that day. It shall come to pass, saith the Lord, in the last days I'll pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. In the Old Testament, it was limited.

Certain men at certain times had the anointing of the Spirit upon their lives. Within the camp of Israel, it was limited to the 70 men. Would to God His Spirit were upon them all.

In the Old Testament period, the Spirit of God was with them. But Jesus said, I'll pray the Father, he'll give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that he may abide with you forever, whom the world cannot receive. For it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you.

There's coming a day when the Spirit's going to dwell within you. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the Spirit descended upon the church, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And Peter said, This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, when he said, In the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And upon my servants and handmaidens will I pour out my Spirit in that day, saith the Lord.

Moses could foresee how glorious that day would be. He didn't see the day. He could only conceive of how glorious that day would be.

How glorious the church when all the people are walking in the Spirit. Man, how few the problems, if we all just walked in the Spirit all the time. Wouldn't it be fabulous? If we all just walked in the Spirit of love, in every situation, at all times, we walked in the Spirit.

And so, Moses could foresee the advantage of such a thing. And he did not forbid them. Actually, there are people who like to pattern God and to confine the way that God is going to work.

You know, God only works in the sanctuary. God only works through ordained ministers. You've got to be ordained to serve communion.

You've got to be ordained a baptizer. Men like to make rules, but God likes to break man's rules. He likes to show that He isn't subject to man's rules.

He can work however He wants, whenever He wants, through whomever He wants. And you don't have to be an anointed apostle or anything else to be used of God in a mighty work. Paul the apostle was baptized by some guy by the name of Ananias.

And whoever he was, we don't even know. He was just a member of the body of Christ in Damascus. And it was through him that he laid his hands upon Paul that Paul might receive his sight and be filled with the

Holy Spirit.

And baptized Paul, some unknown brother in the church in Damascus. Oh, but who authorized him to do that? Jesus Christ. A lot of people are still like the Pharisees.

Who gave you authority? They said that to John the Baptist. Who gave you the authority to baptize? They said to Jesus. Who gave you the authority to do these things? And they're still coming around today.

Who gave you the authority? A bunch of Pharisees still existing. Because they like to confine it to their own little group. We're the only ones with real authority.

But it's glorious to have the authority of the Lord. The same one who authorized Paul. The same one who authorized John.

The rest of them have authorized us. So, there came forth a wind. And it started bringing in the quail about 3 feet high.

And the children of Israel went out. And they began to knock these quail out of the air. Covey after covey after covey of quail flying in.

And all day long, all night long, all the next day, they were batting these quail out of the air. Until those families that gathered the least amount had gathered about 850 gallons of quail. Killed them, plucked them, spread them out in the ground to dry.

And began to just indulge their flesh. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people. And the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.

And He called the name of the place Kibroth-Hattabah, because there He buried the people that lusted. Kibroth-Hattabah is the graves of lust. And how many people have been buried in the graves of lust? What an ugly sight it is.

People giving themselves over to unbridled lust. The ugly sight in Israel is the people were giving themselves over to unbridled lust. Now this is what the Scripture spoke about in Psalms 103, where it speaks of the experience in the wilderness.

He gave them the desire of their hearts, but leanness of soul. They desired flesh, He gave them the flesh, but there was a leanness in their experience. This is what Paul was referring to in 1 Corinthians 10, when he said, These things all happened to them as examples unto us, that we would learn not to lust after evil things.

After the old life, after the things of Egypt. That we would learn not to lust after the things of the life of bondage and sin. Now in chapter 12, Mariam, the sister of Moses, and Aaron began to murmur against Moses.

He had taken an Ethiopian wife, which means that she was probably black-skinned, and they began to find fault and criticize Moses for this, his own sister and brother. And they said, Hath the Lord only spoken unto Moses? Hath he not spoken also unto us? Don't we have just as much right to speak the word of the Lord to these people as Moses has and all? And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses and Aaron and unto Mariam, and he said, Come the three of you unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And the three came

out.

And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words.

If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the prophets, and God spoke to the prophets as a rule by visions or by dreams. But God said concerning Moses, My servant Moses is not so who is faithful in all mine house.

With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches and not in the similitudes of the Lord, but shall he behold. Wherefore, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Now here they were speaking against the man that God had anointed and the man that God had called. God's servant.

Now God said, Look, with prophets, in their manners of prophet, I usually speak by visions or dreams, in similitudes, in dark sayings, in forms that oftentimes need interpreting. But with Moses, plainly, face to face, apparent, direct speaking with Moses. And in as much as I have spoken to Moses this way, how is it that you were not fearful to speak against him? In other words, they should have respected his position as God's servant and the anointing of God that was upon his life.

One thing about David is that he had a high respect for the anointing of God that had been upon Saul even after the anointing had left Saul. The fact that he had once been anointed, David wouldn't touch him. He had a high regard and respect for the anointing of God.

And I think that God appreciates our having a high respect for his anointing. And so because of the sin of Miriam and Aaron, they were smitten with leprosy. Miriam became leprous, white as snow.

Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not this sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb.

And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. So his sister became leprous. Aaron, of course, the high priest, recognized it immediately.

Pleaded with Moses, and Moses in turn pleaded with God, O God, heal her, I beseech thee. And the Lord said unto Moses, Under the law of her father, if it had been in her face, she would be unclean for seven days. So should she not, because of what she's done, be unclean for at least seven days, let her go out of the camp, and in seven days, go through the purifying, and she can come back in.

And so Miriam was ostracized from the camp for seven days. And while the period of this ostracizing was taking place, they did not move. They stayed in that same area there at Hazeroth.

Now in chapter 13, we get the story now, as they come to Kadesh Barnea, and they are now on the border, ready to enter into the promised land. They had been about two years, a little over two years now, in the wilderness. And now they've come to the place of entering in and possessing the land that God had promised to them.

And coming to the borders of the land, Moses thought it would be wise to send spies into the land in order that they might travel through the land, look at the cities, look at the crops, just sort of size up the land, the fortifications of the people and all, and to come back and bring the report, and bring back some fruit from the land. And so they chose from each tribe one man to go in, and thus there were twelve spies that entered into the land. And in the first part of the 13th chapter, it lists those that went in.

Two of them are important to us, of the tribe of Judah in verse 6, Caleb, and then of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshiah, in verse 8. Now, at the end of the listing, we are told in verse 16 that Moses called Oshiah, the son of Nun, Jehoshiah, or Jehoshua, which was later contracted to Joshua. Oshiah means deliverer or salvation. And Jah is the contraction for Jehovah, the name of God.

So the name Joshua is one of the compound names of Jehovah, which means God is salvation, or the Lord is salvation, or the Lord our salvation. The Greek word for Joshua is Jesus, so that when Joseph was debating what to do with Mary when she was pregnant, and the angel of the Lord came to him and said, Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, and she shall bear a son. Thou shalt call his name Jesus, or the Hebrew Yahshua.

Why? For he shall save his people from their sins. The name implies the mission. Jehovah is our salvation.

So, Jehoshua, later Joshua. And so they went in to spy out the land. And they were in the land for forty days.

And they spied out the land. And Joshua and Caleb on the way back stopped by the brook of Eshkol. And there they cut a bunch of grapes that they carried in a staff between them.

In other words, it was so large that they just had a stick on their shoulders and tied the grapes in the middle to show the people the huge bunches of grapes. How big were the bunches of grapes in the land. And so they came back to the camp of Israel.

And Joshua and Caleb gave their report. And they said there in verse 26, they brought to the congregation and showed them through the land. And they told him, We came into the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it.

Nevertheless, the people are strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. And we saw there some of the giants, the sons of Anak. And the Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are in the mountains, and the Canaanites are by the sea in the coast of Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it. Oh, this guy Caleb. He says, Let's go for it.

We can do it. Let's go up and possess it at once. It's a great land.

Problems there, sure, but wow. Let's go for it. But the men that went with him said, Oh, hey, we're not able to go up against those people, for they're stronger than we are.

And they brought an evil report unto the people, telling them, Oh, the cities are huge and the walls are high, and there are giants. We were like grasshoppers in their sight. And they'll eat us up.

In chapter 14, all of the congregation lifted up their voice and cried. And the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron and the whole congregation.

They said, Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt, or would to God we had died in the wilderness. Why has the Lord brought us unto this land to fall by the sword that our wives and our children should be of prey, were it not better for us to return to Egypt? They said, Let's get a captain who will lead us back to Egypt. And Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, they tore their clothes.

They spake to the company of the children of Israel and said, The land which we pass through to search it is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delights in us, then he will bring us into the land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bred for us.

Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Fear them not. And all the congregation of Israel grabbed stones, and they were going to stone Joshua and Caleb.

Here is the tragic failure of the people. God had brought them right to the borders of entering in to the full blessing, the abundant rich life. It was there.

All they had to do was go in and possess it. God had already promised, I will drive out the inhabitants from before you. I'll send hornets and all before you and drive out the inhabitants.

You just go in and take the land. And God brought them right to the border, right to the entering in of this land of blessing and promise and fullness. And the people at this point failed to enter in because they allowed fear to dominate their hearts instead of faith.

And whenever you allow fear to dominate your life instead of faith, the fear brings unbelief, and that unbelief will rob you and keep you from that which God has already made available for you and is just laying waiting for you to pick it up. There are so many Christians today who have failed to enter in to the full rich life that God has for them. They are living sort of a yo-yo Christian experience.

They're high one day and down the next. And you never know what kind of a mood, spiritual mood, they're going to be in. Sometimes, oh, they're just really floating, and other times they're just dragging the bottom.

And their whole Christian experience is one of such great vacillation. They've never entered in to the full abundant life of the Spirit that God wants for His children. They live their whole Christian experience in Romans chapter 7, and they never enter in to chapter 8. Their life is one continued battle with the flesh, a constant roaming and wandering in the wilderness, and never entering in to possess that full rich land that God has promised for them.

Even as Egypt represents the old life of bondage in sin, and passing through the Red Sea represents the baptism and coming into Christ and into a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and the wilderness represents the normal growth of the believer, so the promised land represents the full rich life that you can have in Christ now. Unfortunately, our hymns have made the promised land a heavenly thing, and they've made Jordan dead. And so in our song, Swing low, sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan. What did I see? A band of angels coming after me, coming forth to carry me home. And Jordan represents, you know, I won't have to cross Jordan alone, and the chilly waters of Jordan

represent death, you know, and then I enter into heaven the glorious promises of God.

No, not so. Because once they had crossed over Jordan and come into the land, they were still battling. You're not going to have any battles in heaven.

Once they had crossed over Jordan and come into the land, they were even defeated a time or two at Ai. They were deceived by the Gibeonites. You're not going to be defeated in heaven nor deceived.

Jordan represents the death of the old man, the old nature, my reckoning of myself to be dead with Christ. And the land of promise is that life that I can now enjoy in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and walking after the Spirit, and knowing now the victories in Jesus Christ. In the wilderness, though they had battles, they never gained anything of permanent value.

It was not until they began to enter in and possess the land that there was the gaining of things. They were actually now possessing their possessions. It is tragic that so many Christians spend their entire Christian experience in the wilderness, roaming, wandering in the wilderness.

And thus, their Christian walk is sort of just a continual endurance rather than an enjoyment. God wants you to experience now the richness and the fullness of His blessing and His love. And it's there.

God has provided for you in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit a life of victory, a life of blessing, a life of fullness. And it is unbelief that keeps so many people from entering in. The ten spies inspired fear.

And the people were dominated by fear so that when Joshua and Caleb began and sought to encourage the people with words of faith, the ten spies said, Hey, they're giants. We were like grasshoppers in their eyes. Joshua and Caleb said, Hey, they're bread for us.

The ten spies said, We can't do it. Joshua and Caleb said, Let's do it now. We are well able to do it.

But the people dominated by fear failed to enter in, even ready to destroy the two prophets of God, Joshua and Caleb, who were encouraging them. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? How long will it be before they believe Me? There's the key. It was a lack of faith that kept them from what God had for them.

And it's a lack of faith that keeps you from receiving. Entering in by faith. You see, our problem is that we think that we've got to enter in by works.

Oh, if I could just be good enough so God could bless me. If I could just be sweet enough and kind enough so that I could be worthy the blessing of God upon my life. And it was the lack of believing and trusting God that kept them out.

It wasn't a thing of worthiness at all. It was just the lack of faith. And that's what keeps you.

The lack of faith. Nothing more. And so God said to Moses, Stand back, I'm going to wipe them out.

And Moses interceded for the people. And in verse 17, he said, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of Thy mercy as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.

Lord, You've gone this far with them. Let's go all the way. All the way from Egypt, You've forgiven them.

And talking of the longsuffering and the great mercy and the forgiveness of God. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to Thy word. God wanted to pardon them.

And He answered the prayer of Moses. And then I love this verse, but as surely as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Hey, that God is declaring just as sure as He lives.

That's going to happen. As surely as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. I can hardly wait.

What a glorious day that is going to be. And God has declared it with an oath. As surely as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

I want to be here when that happens. I expect to be here when that happens. I'm going to be here when that happens.

I have God's promise. Oh, how glorious is that anticipation of the whole world being filled with the glory of the Lord. Alright, let's go for it, God.

Because all of these men, those men which have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, they have tempted me. Now these ten times, and I'm not hearkening to my voice, surely they shall not see the land in which I swear to their fathers. Neither of them that provoke me shall see it, but only Caleb, because another spirit was in him, and he has followed me fully.

I'll bring him into the land wherein he went, and his seed shall possess it. And now turn. Get away back into the wilderness toward the Red Sea." God said, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me? I've heard their murmuring of the children of Israel.

They murmur against me. Say, as truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Now they said, Hey, God brought us here, you know, to kill our little ones and all, and our carcasses lie in the wilderness.

God said, alright, you've said it. Your carcasses will lie in the wilderness, but your children that you said, oh, God's brought them here to be a prey and all, they will be the ones that will go in and possess the land. And only Joshua and Caleb of the people will be able to go in, because they brought back an encouraging report.

So, the people repented, and they said, Oh, we're sorry, we've sinned. Let's go up and take the land. Moses said, Don't do it.

In that hill there are some of the Canaanites, and the Amalekites, and the Spirit of the Lord isn't with you. Don't try it. But these people are just headstrong.

And they went up anyhow, and the Canaanites and the Amalekites came out and began to wipe them out. Tragic. Now in chapter 15, the Lord's spoken to Moses saying, Speak to the children of Israel.

And when you come into the land, now this is interesting, right after their failure to enter in, it was a point of failure. Kadesh Barnea was a tragedy. They were at the border of entering in, and now they're turned away, and they're to be shut out for 40 years, a year for every day that the spies were in the land, until that

whole generation be passed.

All of those that were 20 years or older who came out of Egypt, their carcasses are to be buried in the wilderness. And for 40 years, they're going to tromp through that wilderness until they've all died. And then the children of whom they were complaining, saying, you know, that God has brought us here to wipe out our children, the children will go in and possess the land that their parents failed to do.

Now, they have just failed. They've just been turned away, and the next thing God says, Now when you come into the land, and He gives them orders for the sacrifices that they are to make when they come into the land. The various offerings, the meal offering, the drink offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, and the sin offerings and all.

And God gives them the commands for these various sacrifices that they are to make when you come into the land. I think that that's neat of God. He just said, alright, you're not going to make it, your children will.

And when they come into the land, this is what they are to do. As He is more or less just confirming the fact that He's going to keep His word and bring them in. Now, He's giving orders.

When you come into the land, this is what you're supposed to do. These are the offerings that you're to make. When you come into the land, whether I bring you, again in verse 18, and the various sacrifices, even for those sins of ignorance.

And it is interesting as it points out that in the latter portion of verse 24 and so forth, the types of offerings that were to be offered for the sins of ignorance, even the sins of ignorance need attending to. You remember Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Sins of ignorance.

But yet they need forgiveness. How many times have we sinned and didn't even know it? Sins of ignorance. I didn't know what I was doing.

It wasn't a deliberate, willful thing. It was just ignorance. And yet it needs forgiveness.

And so verse 32, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. That's a violation of the law. They didn't know what to do.

They put him in jail to get the mind of the Lord. And the Lord said, stone him. And so the man was put to death.

And then the Lord commanded Moses, telling the people of Israel that they were to sew blue ribbon around the borders of their coats. And that blue ribbon around the borders of their coats was to be on the fringes as a reminder to keep the commandments of the Lord. That you do not seek after your own heart or your own eyes after which you used to go a-whoring, but you'll remember to do the commandments of the Lord.

I think that's neat. A blue ribbon around the fringe of your coat. Every time you see it, you're reminded, hey, don't follow my own lust or my own wish, my own heart.

Follow and keep the commandments of the Lord. And so the blue ribbon, it's sort of a traditional thing. In some of their festive days, they have coats still with a blue ribbon and skirts with a blue ribbon around the bottom.

And if you see them, you know now what they stand for. They're reminders to the people. Not to follow after your own heart, but to keep the commandments of the Lord.

Now we get to chapter 16 and this guy Korah, who is brought into mention in the book of Jude, has gotten the conspiracy together. He is of the tribe of Levi. And he said, Hey, Moses, you take too much upon yourself.

You've got the whole thing tied up with your family. You've appointed your brother as the high priest. Look, we're Levites and we have just as much right to offer the sacrifices to the Lord as does Aaron.

And we want to have a part in the service to God more than just carrying this tent around. So Moses said, Alright, you get your little band together, 250 guys, and you get your incense burners. And you bring them with fire in them tomorrow and incense.

And we'll see what the Lord will do. Well, Korah stirred up the Israelites. He gathered a big crowd around.

And the people were all, you know, incensed. Yeah, Moses taking too much upon himself. Whole family deal.

He's just, you know, putting his family in there and all. And they were really gathered against Moses and Aaron again. And Korah, the Levite, was the leader of this insurrection and rebellion.

And there were a couple of other fellows that Moses commanded to come. And they said, We're not going to do it. We don't have to obey you.

Dathan and Abiram. We'll not come up. Is it a small thing that you brought us out of Egypt and you haven't brought us into the land? We're not in a land.

This is a wilderness place. You didn't keep your word. You think we're going to listen to you now? We don't have to come up.

And so there was a real mutiny. Rebellion in the camp. Korah and Abiram and all.

And so, Moses gathered the congregation of Israel together and he said, Okay, you guys. You don't want to come out? You just stand there in your tents with your families and your kids. And all of you that want to go along with us, yeah, just stand over there.

Did this thing be of the Lord? Then let the Lord do a new thing. Rather than you guys going on and dying natural deaths, let the Lord open up the earth and swallow you alive right down into the pit. And the sooner Moses said it, then the earth opened up.

And Korah and the whole rebellious crew went right down into the pit. The earth closed up again. And a great fear came upon Israel.

And all of Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, lest the earth would swallow them up also. And fire came out from the Lord and consumed these 250 guys with their incense burners. These guys that were wanting to offer incense and all, the fire of the Lord wiped them all out.

So Moses said, Alright, now take these little incense burners that were made of brass and flatten them out into plates. And use these brass plates to cover the altar as a constant reminder that no one intrudes into

the office of the priesthood except he be anointed and called of God. And so those brass plates over the altar were a continual reminder to the people that God had anointed and appointed the family of Aaron for the priesthood and no man takes that office unto himself or presumptuously.

That is to just keep men from rising up and saying, Well man, I'm priest over you. Now I'm the spiritual one and the holy one. And I have an inside track with God.

Now in the New Testament, there was to be no priesthood at all. That whole system was abolished by Jesus Christ, who has become our great high priest and who's entered into heaven for us and has opened the door for all of us to have free access unto God through him. And in the church of Ephesus, the Lord commended them in that they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which was the establishing of a priesthood over the laity, which the Lord said, I hate.

To the church of Pergamos, he rebuked them because that which was rejected by the church of Ephesus was accepted by the church of Pergamos. Thou hast there the deeds of the Nicolaitans and the Lord again declared his hatred of it. Why? Because Jesus died to make free access for every one of you to come into heaven and each of you are equally close to God.

God's ear is open to your prayer and to your cry just as readily as he is to my prayer or my cry. I am no closer to God than you. I am no more spiritual than you.

I have no more access to God than you. I have no privileges that you do not have. We are all one together in Jesus Christ, equal privileged, equally blessed, and equal opportunities for each of us to come before God at any time.

That's a glorious thing to me that God has broken down any kind of barriers that would hold men back and away from God. And I feel that it is dangerous in the church to set up a spiritual hierarchy, whether we call it priesthood or shepherding or anything else, where I say to the person, now look, I'll go to God for you and I'll tell you what God wants you to do with your life. Now, don't you trust in yourself.

You trust in me and I'll get God's word and God's direction for you. So, if you want to buy a new car, you come to me first and I'll tell you whether or not you should. Hey, I feel like Moses.

Lord, I didn't conceive all these people. I can't handle all that kind of... I wouldn't want to carry that kind of a load. I don't want to shepherd or lord over you.

I am your servant. I am here as God's ambassador to declare God's love and God's truth and God's word to you. And I'm here to serve you, not to lord over you.

Not to tell you or not to try to direct your life, but to tell you, hey, you seek the Lord. You seek guidance from Him. Because I might tell you something that's absolutely wrong and then you come back and say, you told me to do that.

Man, look what happened. I've counseled too many people who come back and say, man, you told me this and boy, it really messed up. It's just rotten.

That's why I don't like to counsel anymore. Man, I don't like that kind of responsibility. You seek the Lord and you let God guide you.

And so they made these plates and they were a memorial that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron should come near to offer incense before the Lord that they be not like Korah and his company. Verse 40, And on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron and said, you have killed the people of God. Oh, at this point I would have said, forget it! Now they come to Moses and say, oh, you've killed the people of the Lord.

Because the earth had opened up and swallowed these guys and the fire came out and consumed them. Now they're trying to blame Moses. Oh, I couldn't take it.

And so, boy, the anger of God was really kindled against the people at this point. Moses and Aaron went in before the Lord and Moses said to Aaron, hey, get the incense and go out because the plague has already started. The people are beginning to drop like flies and you stand between the living and the dead and make intercession.

So Moses grabbed the incense and he went out and he stood between the living and the dead to stop the plague of God that was wiping out these people for their murmuring. There's a beautiful picture of intercession standing between the living and the dead and we as Christians often do this. Our intercession for those that are lost.

And the Lord is speaking to Moses. Chapter 17 says, Speak to the children of Israel to take every one of them a rod that is one for each tribe. According to their tribe, put the name of the leader of their tribe on it and tonight we're going to bring it in and set it before the Lord in the tabernacle.

And we'll let the Lord declare who is to be the one who serves in the sanctuary. And so they brought, each prince brought a rod for his tribe and the name inscribed upon it and they put Aaron's name on the tribe of Levi. And in the morning they went in and the rod that had Aaron's name on it had budded and blossomed and had ripe olives on it.

I mean, almonds. Almond blossoms, almond buds and all and almonds on the thing. And thus they kept the rod.

They put it then into the Ark of the Covenant as a signifying thing that God had chosen the family of Aaron for the priesthood. In chapter 18, God said in verse 6, I have taken your brother and the Levites from among the children of Israel. To you they are given a gift to the Lord to do the service in the tabernacle congregation.

And he goes on and speaks of the wages that were to be paid to the priest as the people were to give a tenth of what they had to the temple and a tenth of a tenth was to go to the family of Aaron as the ministering priest within the temple. The rest of it was to be divided among the rest of the Levites. And so this form of pay and all for those who were ministering and doing the service of the Lord was ordained.

And that is the whole congregation of Israel bringing a tenth and then a tenth of that tenth going on to Aaron. And then the meat that was to be theirs of the sacrifices that were brought, the meat that was to be given unto Aaron and to his family. And the Lord said, It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

Verse 19, And the Lord said unto Aaron, You're not going to have any inheritance in the land or among the children of Israel for I am thy part and thine inheritance. That's beautiful to me. The Lord said, You're not going to inherit any of the land because I am your inheritance.

And then in chapter 19 this ordinance of the red heifer where they were to bring in a red heifer without spot wherein there was no blemish upon which there had never been placed a yoke. And they were to give it to Eliezer, the priest who was the son of Aaron. And he may bring her forth without the camp and slay her and take the blood with his finger and sprinkle the blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times and then to burn the heifer completely.

And there to take the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. The priest was to wash his clothes and then he was to bathe and come back into the camp and the one that burned the heifer was also to wash their clothes and would be unclean until evening as was Eliezer who had burned it. But a man who was ceremonially clean was to gather the ashes together and they were to somehow make sprinkle these with water and make a water for anointing a symbol of cleansing.

And the things were to be purified by this water of this red heifer that was sacrificed. Now there are those who see in this red heifer analogies to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the washing that we have through his word and through the Spirit. Chapter 20 records the death of Miriam, the sister of Moses.

And she died there in Kadish in the desert of Zim and was buried. And there was no water for the congregation. And they gathered themselves against Moses and against Aaron and the people began to chide with Moses and they spake saying, Would to God that we had died with our brothers before the Lord.

Would to God that, you know, when these guys with their incense things were there, you know, the fire would have hit us and we would have been killed then. Because now we're dying of thirst. It's a horrible way to die.

It's a horrible way to die. It's a horrible way to die of thirst, you know. And they were giving them a bad time again.

And so Moses and Aaron went before the Lord and they fell upon their faces and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them and the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take the rod and gather the assembly together, thou and Aaron your brother and speak unto the rock before their eyes and it shall give forth his water and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock and thou shalt give the congregation and their beast drink. So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him and Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock and he said unto them, Hear now ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he smote the rock twice and the water came out abundantly and the congregation drank and the beast also and the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron and he said, Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of strife because the people strove with God.

Now, Moses went out as God's representative to the people. God said, Go out and speak to the rock. You remember the first time around, God said, Take your rod and smite the rock.

Now in the New Testament we read that this rock was Jesus. Moses gave them water out of the rock and that rock was Christ. So that the rock is actually the symbol of Jesus Christ who said to the woman at the well, All he who drinks of the water that I give shall never thirst again and it will be like a well of living water springing up within.

The rock was Christ. The water of life. Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the fountains.

Drink the water of life freely. Christ the rock. Now, Christ was smitten in order that the water of life might flow forth from Him to all of us.

The shepherd was smitten, but out of the smiting there came forth that water, life-giving water, salvation to all of us. But once smitten, he never needed to be smitten again. So Moses is breaking now the whole analogy.

In the second time around, smiting the rock twice is breaking the analogy because now, once Christ was smitten, all that is necessary is just to speak. All I have to do is come, Jesus said, if any man is thirst, let him come unto me and drink. And all you have to do is ask.

Christ needs not to be smitten again. We don't have to go through the mass. He needs not to be crucified again.

Once smitten was sufficient, the water flowed from the smitten rock. And now all that is necessary is to speak, to ask, and ye shall receive. And so Moses is breaking this whole analogy.

But it's because he's angry. Now he went in before the Lord. The Lord said, Moses, just go out and speak to the rock.

Call the congregation together. And in their eyes speak to the rock and water will flow forth, that they might drink and give their beasts to drink. Moses went on and said, Ye rebels, must I smite this rock to give you water again? And hit the thing.

Now, God is gracious. Water came forth abundantly. God said, Moses, you failed to sanctify me in the eyes of the people.

In other words, you misrepresented me before those people. I wasn't angry with them, Moses. And the rock did not need to be smitten.

You were to speak to the rock. You did not obey. And you failed to sanctify me or to represent me.

It was a misrepresentation of God. And God said, because of that misrepresentation, you're not going to be able to lead this congregation into the promised land. The dream of Moses' life was taken away.

That which he was living for, the privilege of being able to lead these people in the land, the failure to properly represent God, it seems like very stiff punishment indeed. But it shows to us how earnest God is that we properly represent Him. Jesus said, ye are my witnesses.

But what kind of a representation am I giving to the world around me of Jesus Christ? What is their opinion of Christ when they look at me? What kind of concepts are they developing of Jesus Christ as they look at me? How faithfully am I representing Him? And so, Moses was refused the privilege of taking the people into the promised land for his failure to sanctify God before the people. Now, Moses sent messengers unto the king of Edom saying, we'd like to pass through your land. We'll stay on the highways.

We won't take the food out of your fields. But we just need passage through the land. And actually, we're cousins now.

Remember, the Edomites were descendants of Esau. Moses was a descendant from Jacob. They were twin brothers.

So, there's a close relationship. And so, we went down and you've heard of all of the horrible things we endured in Egypt. But now God has been with us and we're coming back and we're going back to our land.

We'd like passage through your land. And the king of Edom refused them passage through the land. He said, no, you can't do it.

And he came down with his armies to forbid them passage through the land. And so, the children of Israel then took a circuitous route going around and circumscribing the land of Edom. And in the latter portion of the 20th chapter, we have recorded the death of Aaron.

The Lord said to Moses, take Aaron up into the mountain and take Eleazar his son in the sight of all of Israel and take the robes of the high priest off of Aaron and put them on Eleazar for Aaron is going to die here. So, Moses and Aaron and Eleazar Aaron's son went up into the mountain in the sight of Israel and Moses took off the robes of the high priest from Aaron put them on Eleazar and Aaron died and was buried there. And the children of Israel continued then their journey.

So, we get the continued journey of the children of Israel and one of the most fascinating characters in the Old Testament, this guy Balaam as we continue our excursion through the book of Numbers. So, next week, we'll continue on in this interesting portion of the history of the children of Israel. And we'll break it up.

We'll go about eight chapters next week and eight chapters the following week. Shall we stand? Again, remember in 1 Corinthians the tenth chapter declares and these things all happened as examples for us that we should learn not to lust after evil things. This whole history of the children of Israel has been preserved by God as an example for you.

Not to murmur against God. Not to lust after evil things. Not to stop or hesitate when God says to go forward.

Not to turn back through unbelief when God has promised to give to you a life of fullness and richness. All of it is exemplary history. May we learn the lessons from history to our own benefit.

May the Lord be with you and watch over you during the week. May His hand be upon you to guide you, to bless you, and to keep you in the love of Jesus Christ.

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