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Satisfied With God, Pt. 2

Numbers 20:2-13

God's people were in Kadesh-barnea, and Moses struck the rock with his staff in order to bring water from it. Recall, that this is at the tail end of the Wilderness Wandering in which God's people spent forty years travelling in the wilderness (south of Palestine) waiting for the generation that came out of Egypt to die.

Throughout these forty years of Wandering, there seemed to be a least two constants:

- The people of God who came out of Egypt truly lived in the flesh, without faith, such that they constantly attacked, ridiculed, and persecuted Moses.
- Through it all, even when his own brother and sister attacked him (Numbers 12), Moses was able to bring it all to the Lord and entrust Him with it- as he possibly¹ wrote in...

Psalms 91:1-2, “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!’”

Clearly it was this that got Moses through the forty years of trial where God’s people ceaselessly attacked and ridiculed him!

Yet all that changed after forty years of humble trust in the Lord, Moses rebelled — which, personally, is quite understandable. Yes, throughout the forty years of Wilderness Wanderings God’s people ripped and attacked Moses; BUT here in Numbers 20 it represents a new low in their rebellion.

Here they expressed regret that they were NOT part of Korah’s rebellion (v. 3). For if they had been, they *thankfully* would have died when the earth opened up and swallowed their rebellious countrymen!

Moses did nothing here which he had NOT already done previously in obedience to the Lord. When God commissioned Moses, recall God gave him as an aid in his ministry, a staff.

Exodus 4:17, God told Moses, “And you shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

Accordingly, it was with this staff that Moses was commanded years before to strike a rock so that water might come forth for the people.

Exodus 15:5-7, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’ And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

With this in mind we are shocked to read that it was Moses whom the Lord chose to discipline here! Why NOT the people who clearly were in sin? Because they already were under the discipline of the Lord — that is what the Wilderness Wandering was all about! Truly, the one out of character in this text was Moses and so he is the one whom the Lord disciplined.

Moses' Sin, Numbers 20:10.

Numbers 20:10-11a, "And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, 'Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly..."

While the precise nature of Moses' and Aaron's disobedience is in dispute, three things stick out:

Moses Took the People's Complaint Personally, Numbers 20:4, 5a, 10.

Notice the people's accusation and Moses' response:

Numbers 20:4, 5a, 10, "4 'Why then have YOU brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? 5a 'And why have YOU made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place?...' 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, 'Listen now, you rebels; shall WE bring forth water for you out of this rock?'"

Clearly, Israel blamed MOSES for the lack of water in Kadesh-barnea. And just as clear, Moses took it personally! We see this in his response. "Shall WE bring forth water for you out of this rock?" This resulted in the second thing we observed:

Moses Responded in Anger, Numbers 20:10; Psalms 106:33.

Recall Moses addressed the people:

Numbers 20:10, "...Listen now, you rebels..."

This was NOT a rebuke given in love, BUT one motivated by anger. Moses is angry here, and we see it in Psalm 106 describing this incident.

Psalms 106:33, "...spoke rashly with his lips"

In other words, he "lashed out with his mouth". And so, Moses is angry here; he's not thinking. Daniel Estes wrote of this and put it this way:

Moses may have rationalized his response as righteous indignation, similar to that of Phineas, but it actually was a rash, angry, sinful retort. Rather than staying under control, Moses let his emotions affect his speech. On the whole, Moses's life was characterized by meekness (cf. Num 12:3), but in this case he failed in what was typically his area of strength. (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, pp.

303-304)

So, rather than being satisfied with God's approval as he always had in the past, Moses took the people's complaints personally and so lashed out at the congregation! And why was that? Why now? Why at this time? It was because Moses was dissatisfied with God.

Moses was Dissatisfied with God, Numbers 20:12a.

Numbers 20:12a, "But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel...'"

This brings the whole issue into focus. Moses' sin was NOT simply his failure to observe the finer points of the command of God (as if the essence of his sin was hitting the rock instead of speaking to it)! RATHER, the issue was that Moses here forsook God! He no longer was trusting in/relying upon the Lord!

Believing in God speaks of trust and so reliance. And fundamentally, that is correct. However, it involves much more than this. For, to rely upon the Lord is to rely upon His person *INSTEAD OF* someone or something else. It is to rely upon His:

- Goodness.
- Love.
- Power.
- Protection.
- Purpose.
- Plan.

All of this speaks ultimately of one's SATISFACTION. Is God enough for you? His goodness? Love? Protection? Or must you have something else? Faith says that God is enough; He is all I need!

Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [this a faith act, ultimately referencing a longing for Christ's right-standing], for they shall be satisfied."

What does this mean to be satisfied? The Hebrew (שָׂבַע [saba]) and Greek (χορτάζω [chortazō]) both speak of "fulness"/"completeness" or "being sated". Thus, being satisfied means that you don't need nor want anything other than what you have! Is this NOT the heartbeat of the genuine child of God when it comes to the Lord?

Psalms 73:25, Asaph wrote, "Whom have I in heaven *but Thee*? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth."

Yet, in Numbers 20, clearly that was NOT Moses. At this moment in his life, Christ was NOT enough. God's grace, love, protection, or opinion became secondary to how the people thought, respected, and so reacted to Moses! And so, this leader in anger struck the rock as a public demonstration of His power and ability! Yes, he disobeyed God's command to "speak to the rock" (v. 8). But the transgression ultimately came from a heart Dissatisfied with God. S. G. DeGraaf wrote this:

Moses had always been able to divert these charges from himself and pass on the people's complaint to the Lord. He had always been a true mediator, not standing in the Lord's way. He had always known how to handle the complaints, bearing in mind that they were not his concern but the Lord's. But now he could take it no longer. (DeGraaf, 1977, pp. 359-360)

Christian, what is your ultimate satisfaction today? The answer we want to give is that it is "Christ alone"! Yet the heart is so deceitful; so, how can we know? And what ultimately was the cause of Moses' dissatisfaction? Consider the teaching that is found in Scripture in light of this passage:

[Moses Dissatisfaction Occurred Because He Missed Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.](#)

As a warning to all who might think that their spiritual resume was the basis of God's acceptance, Paul wrote this:

1 Corinthians 10:1-4: "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; AND THE ROCK WAS CHRIST."

At the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians, there was a popular legend in Judaism that the "rock" of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 was a literal boulder which followed the Old Testament Israelites, providing water whenever the people of God needed it.

From the Biblical narrative that obviously was NOT the case. So, why is Paul referencing this legend by speaking of a "Rock which followed them"? He here is clarifying what really happened. A "Rock" did accompany the Old Testament Israelites around in the desert everywhere they went; YET the "Rock" was NOT a literal rock BUT none other than Jesus Christ Himself!

That means that Christ was there and Moses Missed Him! He lost the bigger picture. He forgot the gospel! Truly, Moses' sin had very little to do with striking a rock or speaking to it (as if there was something immoral about striking a rock). RATHER it was a rejection of Christ by which he placed the people's opinion, approval, and praise above that of the Lord's! And by way of encouragement, the Rock which followed the Israelites

still follows God's people, you and me!

the Great Commission ends with this promise from Jesus:

Matthew 28:20b, "...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."- may God give us the grace NOT to forget this, BUT, through the eye of faith, live our lives Coram Deo!

That being said, notice secondly that Moses' dissatisfaction with Christ was reflected in what came out of his heart.

[Moses' Dissatisfaction with Christ was Reflected in What Came Out of His Heart, John 7:37-38.](#)

At the beginning of Christ's third year of ministry, during the Feast of Booths (John 7:2), John recorded these words:

John 7:37-38 "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."'"

Let me give you the background² because it is so important. The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles was one of the three feasts of Judaism in which all Hebrew males were required to participate each year.³ It took place in mid-October and lasted a week.

On each day of the festival, a significant ritual occurred. At a particular moment, a priest would do these things:

- Leave the temple mount carrying a large clay jar.
- Walk to the pool of Siloam- which was in Jerusalem.
- Fill the jar with water and then carry it back to the temple- all the while the people of God sang...

Isaiah 12:3, "...You will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation."

- The priest then would enter the holy place.
- Pour the water in 1 of 2 bowls that had been placed beside the Alter of Burnt Offerings. These were specially designed bowls and stands such that when water was poured into the bowl at the top, it ran out of the base.

All of this was to commemorate the time when God's people were in the wilderness AND YET survived because God provided water from the Rock as described in Exodus 17

and Numbers 20.

Now, during this ceremony- perhaps even as the water was running out of the base of the stand- Christ stood up and loudly proclaimed these words...

John 7:38, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me [unlike Moses in our text], as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

What occurs in the life of a child of God when Christ becomes their only satisfaction? "From their innermost being shall flow rivers of living water"! in other words, rather than living to receive honor, respect, love, and praise from men, their lives become "living springs of water/life" which bring the refreshment of Christ- His love, His grace, His mercy, His redemption — to all in their midst. In other words, they become blessers rather than takers!

Do you see? In stark contrast, Numbers 20 records a time in Moses' life when "rivers of living water" did NOT flow from him. What came out of his heart was NOT blessing BUT cursing. And so it is when Christ is NOT enough for you and me. Recall, Ezekiel speaking of God's covenant people said this:

Ezekiel 16:28a, "Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied [with Me]..."

The mess that arose from God's people at this time- and it was a mess- was the direct result of God's people "...not being satisfied with God"!

That was Moses! His trust had shifted from the Lord to himself in which he sought to derive satisfaction from "a cistern that could hold no water" (cf. Jeremiah 2:13)! And the result? What came out of His life was NOT blessing BUT cursing! Accordingly, God's people were NOT confronted, rebuked, NOR encouraged to trust and serve the Lord! All they received from this servant of God was his anger!

How do you know if you are NOT satisfied with Christ? It will always be reflected first in the thoughts and attitudes you have when it comes to Kingdom work and then in that which comes out of your heart — anger, resentment, grumbling, depression, harsh thoughts or words, and ultimately quitting/forsaking the ministry God has given you. Consider the words Paul wrote to the Galatian believers:

Galatians 5:19-21a, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these..."

Matthew 7:16a, "You will know them by their fruits..."

So, we can say all day long that we are satisfied with Christ. Yet, any drifting from this will surface in our acts and attitudes!

Now, don't allow this to condemn you. Rather, use this as a diagnostic tool to gauge your heart... as Solomon said:

Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it *flow* the springs of life."

Toward that end, when you determine that you are living for something other than Christ- when Christ is NOT your satisfaction, let me encourage you to consider four things:

- Begin by recognizing how serious it is NOT to be satisfied with God! Recall the words of Jeremiah...

Jeremiah 2:13, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

When it comes to our satisfaction, God wants it to be derived completely and exclusively from Christ. Anything else is a sin. Understand that ALL of us are susceptible to this sin!

- IF Moses, who spoke with God face to face for 40 years and so enjoyed a relationship with God of such depth and richness
- IF Moses who in our text just moments before he struck the rock stood in the presence of God's shekinah glory (cf. Numbers 20:6)
- IF AFTER all of this he still could fall into this sin...

What do you suppose will be something you struggle with the rest of your life? So, don't be surprised or discouraged by this sin. It is something that is common to all in Christ!

- Confess this sin to God, 1 John 1:9.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Lastly, understand what ultimately is up for grabs when we engage in this sin- this is the motivation here, when Moses forsook God in favor of establishing himself, what happened?

Numbers 20:12b, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

This sounds pretty bad... and it is. But don't misunderstand what is being said here. Moses did NOT lose his salvation NOR did he forfeit God's acceptance. RATHER, through his rejection of God, Moses forfeited a greater intimacy with God on this earth — entering the Land where God promised that He would dwell with His people! And such is the consequence in our lives when we fail to derive our satisfaction from Christ in the day-to-day moments! We lose NOT God's approval or favor. RATHER, we lose the privilege of knowing Christ more intimately and so fellowshiping with Him more deeply.

So, in love, reject every cistern of this earth or of your making. In your exasperation when it comes to life and ministry, seek more of Christ! And in time, God will fill your cup to overflowing!

References

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End Note(s)

¹ James Boice wrote, “There are verbal similarities between the two psalms, which has led some commentators to conclude that Psalm 91, as well as Psalm 90, was written by Moses...” (Boice, 2005, p. 747)

² Taken from Edersheim's *The Temple*, pp. 212-221.

³ The other two were Passover and Pentecost.