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Satisfied With God

Man's Dissatisfaction with God

Proverbs 27:20, "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied."

This verse describes our heart's inclination when it comes to the things of this life and God; on account of our sinfulness, we rarely are satisfied.

Ecclesiastes 1:8: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing."

Ecclesiastes 4:8: speaking of the wealthy man, "...his eyes were not satisfied with riches..."

Now you would think that coming to God and being adopted into His family would solve our problem, but even here our hearts rebel. Ezekiel demonstrates this speaking of God's people:

Ezekiel 16:28-29, "Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied [*with Me*]; you even played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied."

And thus it is not a surprise to learn that God uses the difficulties and trials of this life to bring the child of God to the point where God alone is his chief desire and satisfaction.

Hosea 2:5-7: “For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!’”

In the context of redemption, God said,

Micah 6:13-14, “So also I will make you sick, striking you down, desolating you because of your sins. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, and your vileness will be in your midst.”

Psalms 106:15: “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

God wants us, His people, to be completely and totally satisfied with Himself. God is working in and through our lives to create a people who

- Long for Him.
- Rejoice in the Lord.
- Delight themselves in the Lord.

God's plan for His people is to create in them the longing of the Psalmist when he wrote:

Psalms 42:1-2a: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...”

And that is why our passage is so important. It contains the account of Moses who, toward the end of his life, found himself dissatisfied with God. By examining his wayward heart, hopefully we will gain insight into our heart and its need to be satisfied only with God!

Satisfied With God the Historical Context of our Passage

From the Exodus of God's people from Egypt to the time of this passage, much had gone on.¹ If we could have accompanied Israel during this time, we would have witnessed the following from Exodus 15-18 we learn that on the journey to Sinai:

- God's people are without water in Marah, grumble, and are miraculously provided water by the staff of Moses, Exodus 15:22-27.
- Next we would travel with them to the Wilderness of Sin where we would observe the people grumbling for food and God miraculously providing manna and quail, Exodus 16:1-21.
- From the Wilderness of Sin, God's people travel to Rephidim where once again the people grumble for water and God miraculously provided water from a rock via the staff of Moses,

1. After Israel left Egypt we discover primarily three settings in which much of the content of Exodus and Numbers occurred: the region of Sinai, the region of Kadesh, the Plains of Moab. In each of these locations, God revealed Himself to His people in a dramatic way.

Exodus 17:1-7.

- Next we would observe Israel fighting with the Amalekites- this was the occasion when Moses lifted his hands and the people prevailed, Exodus 17:8-16.
- After the war, we read of the occasion when the complaints of the people were too burdensome for Moses that Jethro suggested a system in which Moses could more effectively lead the people, Exodus 18.
- And finally God's people arrive at Sinai where the rest of the book of Exodus (chapters 19-40) takes place:
 - The giving of the ten commandments, Exodus 20.
 - The renewing of the Covenant, Exodus 24.
 - The golden calf, Exodus 32.
 - The construction of the tabernacle, Exodus 34-40.

Now having camped at Sinai for about a year, God's people next travel to Kadesh, the history of which we read in Numbers 1-21. During their travel to and their time in Kadesh (which took about 40 years) we read of

- The numbering of the Israelites, Numbers 1-4.
- The incident of the quails and the seventy elders, Numbers 11.
- The rebellion of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, Numbers 12.
- The sending of the 12 spies into the Promised Land and their unfortunate message of unbelief, Numbers 13-14.
- Korah's rebellion, Numbers 16-17.
- The death of Miriam, Numbers 20:1.

Now in the fortieth year after the Exodus,² we read of the episode described in our text, Numbers 20:2-13- note that this is the second time God provided water from a rock.

The Need, Numbers 20:2

Numbers 20:2, "And there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron"

At the outset, I want you to realize that this isn't as petty as it seems. Recall that God's people now have been wandering in the wilderness for forty years. They have witnessed the death of their loved-ones, specifically their parents — men and women who had hoped for so much when they first departed from Egypt. Now you add this huge "let down" with the fact that Kadesh normally was a well-watered oasis and yet, here God's people find it dry. This was the perfect storm for a national temper-tantrum; which is what we read. When the people arrive at Kadesh and discover that their water supply is gone they rebel.

The Rebellion, Numbers 20:3-5

Numbers 20:3-5, "The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, 'If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord [this is speaking of Korah's rebellion!!!]!"

2. See Numbers 20:29 and compare it with Nu. 33:38.

Why then have you brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? And why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink!"

These are very interesting words. Notice, first of all, at whom they are directed; Moses!

- It's Moses' fault that God's people are in the desert.
- It's Moses' fault that Kadesh was now in a drought.
- The blame rests with Moses' poor leadership and guidance.

Secondly, the people once again use their "trump card" —

- "If only we had perished!"
- "Listen Moses, death would be a welcome friend in comparison to following you."
- "In fact, would that we were among those who rebelled against God and perished in Korah's rebellion- that would have been more preferable than following you!"
- "You gave so many promises: grains, figs, vines, pomegranates, and abundant water. Where's the money? Where's the pay back?"

This brings us to Moses' and Aaron's supplication.

The Supplication, Numbers 20:6-9

Numbers 20:6-9, "Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them; and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.' So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him"

Now brothers and sisters, God's response here could be a sermon. That God put up with a miserable, grumbling, and complaining people for forty years speaks of His infinite kindness, goodness, patience, and grace. Clearly you must see that the God of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is a God of grace and mercy! And so, we are not surprised to read of the miracle.

The Miracle, Numbers 20:10-11

Numbers 20:10-11, "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, and the congregation and their beasts drank"

As usual, though the people complain bitterly to Moses, revealing their ungrateful and wicked inclinations, God nevertheless graciously provides water for them and that in abundance. And yet, here we are shocked to read of the discipline of the Lord when it came to Moses and Aaron.

The Punishment for Moses' and Aaron's Disobedience, Numbers 20:12-13

Numbers 20:12-13: "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, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' Those were the waters of Meribah [which translated means, "contention" or "grumbling"], because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them"

Now it is these last few verses that prove to be the shocker for most of us. In the context of a national temper-tantrum where the people of God confess their regret that they were not a part of the rebellion of Korah and the consequent discipline we are shocked to read that Moses' rather insignificant alteration of the divine command to speak to the rock- recall that Moses struck the rock with his staff, a staff that was used on numerous occasions to perform many miracles- was the cause of discipline from the hand of the Lord.

Isn't this a little severe? What is going on here? Well, let's look at Moses' sin.

Moses' Sin, Numbers 20:10

Numbers 20:10: "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?'"

While the precise nature of Moses' and Aaron's disobedience is much debated, there is enough evidence to conclude at least the following. Notice, up to this point Moses had been a faithful Mediator. On numerous occasions throughout Exodus and Numbers when the people verbally attacked Moses, he brought their complaints to God. See, he knew that the people's anger toward him ultimately was directed against God; it was God with whom the people were angry!

And yet here, for whatever reason, for the first time; Moses took the people's complaints personally! We see this in a couple of places here.

Numbers 20:10: "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?'"

While it is easy to read over this little word, "We," the text is quite clear that Moses is acting as if HE and AARON were the ones who were going to provide the water, not God. Now you say, "Is Moses crazy? How could he say this having served God so faithfully?"

Psalms 106 seems to give the answer when it describes this incident.

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

Now, maybe it was because the people profess their regret that they had not rebelled with Korah. Perhaps it was because Miriam, Moses' and Aaron's sister had just died.³ Perhaps Moses had finally had enough. Think about it, up to this point Moses had spent forty years listening to the people's grumbling!

³ Compare Numbers 20:1

For whatever reason, it is obvious that Moses here lost his cool. Rather than being satisfied with God's approval as he always had in the past. Moses took the people's complaints personally and thus spoke rashly!

In fact, Moses' sin becomes quite obvious when we look at verse 12 and God's commentary.

Numbers 20:12: "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...'"

The issue here is NOT Moses failing to observe the finer points of the law as if his sin was hitting the rock instead of speaking to it! RATHER, the issue here is that Moses forsook His God! God was not enough for him; he needed the people's acceptance. He abandoned the life of trust and dependence.

When the people criticized Moses, rather than being satisfied with God's assessment he stood before the people on the basis of his own merit; i.e., his ability to provide them with water!

When the people of God asked for a king in 1 Samuel, Samuel interpreted this NOT as it really was- a rejection of God BUT as a personal attack against himself! Truly, the question of Moses' rebellion revolves around the object of his trust! For the first time, Moses stood publicly before the people of God.

- Trusting NOT in God, BUT in himself.
- Defending himself.
- Establishing himself.
- Exalting himself.

And so we see that it is not so much WHAT Moses did here but WHY! This passage is a description NOT of Moses the Mediator BUT of Moses the offended leader who rashly forsook his God in defense of Himself! S. G. DeGraaf put it this way:

"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. He became bitter... In his utter exasperation, he did not have proper regard for the Lord's command to call on the name of the Lord. Instead he struck the rock twice with his rod, as though his strength and the rod were supposed to save the day."⁴

Now brothers and sisters, this passage has great implications for us today.

The Implication of this Text in Our Lives

Notice how the Bible makes use of Numbers 20. When this text and its companion text in Exodus 17 is considered from the perspective of the New Testament we discover an incredible application. As a warning to all who might think that their spiritual privilege was the basis of God's acceptance, Paul

⁴ S. G. DeGraaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 1, pages 359-360

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 this passage, the Jews held a popular legend that the "rock" of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 literally followed the Old Testament Israelites around, providing water whenever the people of God needed it. Now don't misunderstand here; Paul is not agreeing with this legend. Rather, he is saying that indeed a Rock did accompany the Old Testament Israelites around in the desert and "appeared" both in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. It is that the Rock that "appeared" was NOT a literal rock BUT a spiritual Rock; Christ Jesus Himself!

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.'""

Now to understand this passage, you need a little of its background⁵ The feast that is referenced here is the Feast of Booths.⁶ On each day of the feast, which lasted a week, a ritual occurred that was rather significant. At the appropriate moment, a priest would leave the Temple Mount; walk to the pool of Siloam, which was in Jerusalem; fill a ceremonially clean pot of water; carry the pot back to the temple while the multitude sang Isaiah 12:3.

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

The priest would then enter the Holy Place, and pour the water in 1 of 2 bowls that were by the Altar. Now out of the bottom of the bowl came a channel such that when the water was poured into the bowl it ran out of the base. All of this was to commemorate the time when God's people lived in tents in the wilderness and yet lived because God provided water from the Rock as described in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.

Now it obviously was in reference to this ceremony that Christ spoke these words.

John 7:38, "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.'"

Do you understand what this passage ultimately is about?

It is NOT

- A leader falling short of the finer points of the law.
- A grumbling people bringing down a good man.

5. Taken from Edersheim's *The Temple*, pages 212-221.

⁶ Compare John 7:2

RATHER, it is about a leader forsaking the Living Water for a food which perishes

- The praises of men.
- The acceptance of people.

Which is worse?

Wandering for forty years in a desert, watching your parents die, being thirsty, and then grumbling?

****OR****

Communing with God face to face for forty years and then abandoning God for the approval of man?

Do not miss the obvious application of this text! When the day came that Moses ceased to be satisfied with God with simply being

- God's mediator.
- God's child.
- God's beloved son.

He forsook his God and went it alone in order to show the world that “following this guy isn't better than death!” And likewise, when the day comes in our lives when God's approval on account of Christ alone isn't sufficient, the approval of man becomes our focus, we live to draw attention to our effort and our work. We serve for any other reason than honoring our King. We have forsaken the faith through which we have been saved and we have testified to the world that God is not enough!

Our Response to this Passage

First we need to recognize how serious the sin of not being satisfied with God is. The ultimate end of all of God's workings in our lives is this confession.

Psalm 73:25-26, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Understand that ALL of us are susceptible to this sin.

- If Moses who spoke to God face to face for forty years could sin like this...
- David- a man after God's own heart- could sin the horrible sins that he committed...

What about us? We need to confess and repent of this sin!

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.”

“Confessing” carries with it a twofold activity. First you must recognize what we have done is sin and secondly you must take responsibility for it.

You must rely upon Christ as...

- Your payment for sin.
- Your advocate.
- Your chief reward.

Recall Numbers 20:12... BELIEVE CHRIST!

Now if we fail here- if we turn a deaf ear- it will cost you. When Moses forsook God in favor of establishing himself, we read this:

Numbers 20:12b: "Because you have not believed Me [because you refused to trust Me]... therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Moses did not lose his salvation- nor God's acceptance. Rather through his rejection of God, Moses forfeited a greater intimacy with God on this earth. And such is the consequence in our lives when we refuse to trust our Savior! We lose NOT God's approval or God's favor BUT the privilege of...

- Knowing Him more intimately.
- Fellowshiping with him more closely.
- Delighting in Him more sincerely.

And what a horrible consequence. If Christ is life then to forfeit just one second with Him is a tragedy!

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word is published regularly.

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

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