

The Waters of Meribah

Numbers 20:1 - 13

The Faith of Moses

- **Hebrews 11:23-29**

- (his parents in hiding him)
- Choosing to be with God's people rather than Pharaoh's
- Forsaking Egypt
- Keeping the Passover
- Passing through the sea
- "Moses My servant" (Num. 12:6-8; Josh. 1:1-2, 7; Mal. 4:4)
- The humblest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3)
- Jesus "prophet like Moses" (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:19-23; 7:37)

Brief Overview of History

- Delivered Israel from Egypt
- Led them through the wilderness while they complained
- Gave the law at Mt. Sinai
- Led them to Kadesh and sent out spies
- Spies convinced the people not to enter the promised land
- Wander in the wilderness for 40 years
- Back in Kadesh Barnea about to enter the promised land
- Miriam died and was buried in Kadesh

₂ There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. ₃ The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, “If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! ₄ Why then have you brought the Lord’s assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? ₅ 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.” ₆ 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; [Numbers 20:2-6]

7 and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **8** “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.” **9** So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him; **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?” [Numbers 20:7-10]

11 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. 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, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” 13 Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them. [Numbers 20:11-13]

I. God's Specific Instructions Matter

- God has the right to dictate His law however He chooses
- God specified here that Moses:
 - **Take** his rod
 - **Assemble** the congregation together
 - **Speak** to the rock before their eyes
- What Moses did:
 - **Took** his rod
 - **Gathered** the congregation together
 - **Struck** the rock before their eyes

I. God's Specific Instructions Matter

- It wasn't sufficient for Moses to do "most" of what God had commanded
- It didn't matter that God had *previously* instructed Moses to strike a rock for water (c.f. Exo. 17:1-7)
- When God gives a specific command, the only acceptable response is to do exactly what God commands.

2. There Are No Excuses for Sin

- Previous obedience did not excuse the sin
 - Moses had been extremely faithful
 - Moses & Aaron had done almost everything right even in this situation
 - Yet, they were punished (20:12)
- The circumstances didn't excuse the sin
 - The people were complaining again (20:2-5)
 - Moses was angry (20:10; Psa. 106:32-33)
 - A place for anger...without sin (Eph. 4:26-31)

2. There Are No Excuses for Sin

- Previous obedience didn't excuse the sin
- The circumstances didn't excuse the sin
- The outcome (ends) didn't excuse the sin (means)
 - God sent water abundantly (20:11)
 - Though Moses and Aaron did not hallow God, He was still hallowed there (20:13)
 - But they were still punished (20:22-26)
- God will not accept excuses (Eccl. 5:1-6; Jas. 2:8-11)

3. The Seriousness of Sin

- Man likes to minimize or justify sin
- God viewed the sin of Moses and Aaron as:
 - Not believing Him (20:12a)
 - Not hallowing Him (20:12b)
 - Rebelling against Him (20:24; 27:12-14)
- Sin cannot be overlooked and separates us from God (Rom. 6:15-23; Isa. 59:1-2; 1 Jn. 1:5-2:6)
- Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1-8) (Heb. 4:1-13)

4. The Lord is Merciful to Forgive

- Though Moses was punished and not allowed to enter promised Land, He was forgiven and still useful to God!
 - Moses was active in appointing Eleazar (20:25-28)
 - The Lord heeded his prayer for the serpents (21:7-9)
 - God still delivered nations into Moses' hand (21:33-35)
 - He appointed and trained Joshua to take his place in leading Israel (27:12-23)
 - No prophet like him (until Jesus) (Deut. 34:9-12)

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I. God's Specific Instructions Matter

II. There Are No Excuses for Sin

III. The Seriousness of Sin

IV. God Is Merciful!

