

(Num. 20:1-2) - Once again, we see the glaring sinfulness of the people of Israel. *“There was no water for the congregation”* - They found themselves in need, but rather than turning to the Lord to care for them as He had promised, *“they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.”* Lest we become puffed up and proud in our own minds, thinking that we are better than they, consider that if we are saved and preserved unto glory, it is not because we are better than the people of Israel. It is not because of any goodness or faithfulness in ourselves. IT IS ALL OF GOD’S GRACE IN CHRIST! How many times, even in our lives as sinners saved by grace, have we found ourselves in need, and rather than turning to the Lord, we lean on our own imaginations and works? We are truly the embodiment of the *“wretched man”* who struggles daily with our own sinful flesh. But, thank God that, according to His promise and by His power, He delivers us from this body of death through Christ our Lord (*cf. Rom. 7:24-25*). Thank God that *“there is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (*Rom. 8:1*). As sinners saved by grace, we thank God every day for His grace and mercy in Christ, all based on His precious blood to wash away our sins and His righteousness imputed to give us an unchangeable right standing before our God!

(Num. 20:3-5) - Here is an example of the madness and folly of unbelief. By nature, people see bondage and death as something to be preferred (*Prov. 8:36*). They even claim it would have been better for them to have perished with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram when they were swallowed up by the earth under God’s just judgment, and 14000 others who followed them in rebellion died (*Num. 16*). Had they forgotten the time earlier when there was no water, but the Lord told Moses to strike the rock, and water flowed from that rock abundantly? How we are so prone in the time of present trouble to forget the promises of God to His people, to forget His faithfulness and power to preserve us in Christ, and to forget how He has taken care of us up to now. We are such a sinful people, but our God is rich in mercy and love to save us completely by His grace in Christ.

(Num. 20:7-8) - Once again God revealed to Moses the answer to the problem - *“SPEAK YE 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.”* As we have seen before in *Exodus 17*, the ROCK was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the water of life and who gives life to His people (*1 Cor. 10:4; cf. John 4:14; Rev. 21:6; 22:1,17*). When that Rock first appeared, Moses was commanded by God to STRIKE the Rock with the rod. Moses represented the law; the rod represented the justice of God which fell upon Christ for the sins of His people (God’s elect) imputed to Him. Christ Himself, as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect, was struck down unto death, even the death of the cross. He shed His blood unto death, fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of His people, brought forth an everlasting righteousness by which God is just to justify His people and from which God gives them the water of spiritual and eternal life to every one for whom Christ died and arose again. All of this was accomplished by the ONE DEATH (SACRIFICE) OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE - *“For by ONE OFFERING He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (*Heb. 10:14*). This was all to the praise of the glory of God’s grace in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Who finished the work of redemption.

(Num. 20:9-11) - We can understand how Moses grew angry with the people. They had turned against him and Aaron, and they complained against Moses and against the Lord. At times, they had even threatened to stone Moses. But we are never to act out of our anger in

presenting the truth of the Lord, and Moses, out of his anger for the people, disobeyed God. God told Moses to SPEAK to the Rock. Moses, out of his anger against the people, STRUCK the Rock, not once but twice. The Lord still gave them water out of the Rock, but Moses had committed a great sin - He had misrepresented the glorious character and name of God before the people. Remember, back in *Numbers 20:6*, when the people complained, “*And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and THE GLORY OF THE LORD APPEARED unto them.*”

This shows us that whatever transpires in God’s dealings with His people, whether it be temporally with the nation Israel under the Old Covenant in their physical deliverance, or spiritually and eternally with the spiritual nation of Israel (God’s elect) under the Covenant of Grace in their salvation, THE MAIN ISSUE IS THE GLORY OF GOD. God’s name and God’s ways must be honored. His truth must be told. He will not share or deny His glory. In the salvation of sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s glory as both a just God and a Savior shines forth in the ONE SACRIFICE for the sins of His people whereby Christ finished the work of redemption and accomplished righteousness for His people upon which God has glorified Himself in their salvation (*Isa. 45:20-25; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:3-13*). For God to be glorified, Christ had to be struck down unto death ONE time, not twice. To say that Christ had to do more than what He has done in order to secure the salvation of His people is to deny and dishonor the glory of God and the preeminence of Christ (*Gal. 2:21; 5:1-5*). When men preach salvation is in any way conditioned on the works and/or the wills of men, they deny the glory of God in Christ.

(Num. 20:12-13) - Here we see that anger can sometimes sink down to an act of unbelief. This can happen even in the lives of true believers like Moses and Aaron. As one man said, “The true believer is not in a state of unbelief, but because of the remaining contamination and corruption of the flesh, unbelief is still within the believer.” We who have been so blessed of God and given the gift of faith in Christ must fight the remaining sins of the flesh, even of unbelief (*Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5; Gal. 5:17*). We fight this unbelief by continually “*looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:1-2*). To “*sanctify*” God means to set Him apart in the glory of His nature and works without our hearts and minds and before people when we tell them of our God and Savior (*1 Pet. 3:15*).

God told Moses that because of this act of unbelief, He would not allow Moses to “*bring this congregation into the land*” which He had given them. As we find out later, Joshua was the man who would bring Israel into the Promised Land. This was no afterthought with God. This was God’s purpose from the beginning. We see in this the wisdom and purpose of God to teach us a very great and vital truth. First, we need to see that the fact that Moses was not permitted to lead the nation into the Promised Land does not mean that Moses was not one of God’s true children, saved by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, and brought into the glorious and merciful presence of God when he died. Secondly, in not allowing Moses to bring them into the land and appointing Joshua to do so was one of God’s ways of teaching through types that the law cannot save or bring a sinner into the state of salvation. Only Christ, by God’s grace, can bring a sinner into the state of salvation. Moses represented the law; Joshua represents Christ - “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (*John 1:17*). “*Meribah*” means “*strife*.” And even though the people “*strove with the LORD*” by their unbelief, He was still “*sanctified in them*.” God will be glorified despite the sins and unbelief of men. He will be glorified in the salvation of His people through Christ, and He will be glorified in the damnation of those who live and die in unbelief (*2 Cor. 2:14-17*).