

# Numbers Chapter 14 v 10 - 45

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we're going to pick up then from that very verse of verse 10, page 150, Numbers 14, verse 10. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites.

The Lord said to Moses, how long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me in spite of all the signs I performed among them?

I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them. But I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they. Moses said to the Lord, then the Egyptians will hear about it.

By your power you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, Lord, are with these people.

And that you, Lord, have been seen face to face. That your cloud stays over them. And that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

[ 1 : 04 ] If you put all these people to death, leaving none alive, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath.

So he slaughtered them in the wilderness. Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared. The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love, and forgiving sin and rebellion.

Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation. In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.

The Lord replied, I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times, not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors.

No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.

[ 2 : 30 ] Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow, set out towards the desert along the route to the Red Sea. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, How long will this wicked community grumble against me?

I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So I tell them, As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say.

In this wilderness your bodies will fall. Every one of you twenty years old or more who has counted in the census and who has grumbled against me, Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand, to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But you, your bodies, will fall in this wilderness.

Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. For forty years, one year for each of the forty days you explored the land, you will suffer for your sins, and know what it is like to have me against you.

[ 3 : 50 ] I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this wilderness. Here they will die.

So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it, these men, who were responsible for spreading the bad report about the land, were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord.

Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly.

Early the next morning, they set out for the highest point in the hill country, saying, Now we are ready to go up to the land the Lord promised. Surely we have sinned. But Moses said, Why are you disobeying the Lord's command?

This will not succeed. Do not go up, because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will face you there.

[ 4 : 58 ] Because you have turned away from the Lord, he will not be with you, and you will fall by the sword. Nevertheless, in their presumption, they went up again towards the highest point in the hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp.

Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormar. Now either somebody's taken the mick, or they've forgotten the glass, or I meant to drink.

This is like one of them big things in Germany, isn't it? In the beer festival. Do us a big favour, would you get us a glass, Joel? You're going to get one, Barry. Thanks. It's a hint, you see.

Either I've got a big mouth, a great thirst. Just before, turn back to that Numbers passage, as you do, Numbers 14. As you do, I mentioned this morning that starting a small group, a home group, on a Monday for the next few weeks, for people who are either very relatively young in the faith, or new to the church, or people who are still finding out about Christianity.

It's going to be something almost like an overview of the Bible, the overview of the story of the Bible, over the next few weeks. And that's going to be on a Monday evening in our home.

[ 6 : 31 ] Several folk said they're going to come along. But if you think it may be something helpful to you, or you'd like to come along, have a word to me this evening, and we can go from there.

That's great. Thank you very much. So we're in John and chapter 14. No, we're not. We're in Numbers and chapter 14.

And these verses, verses 10 and following, I've given a little bit of a background to the situation. And now we're going to really hear from the Lord. As I said last week, we sort of divided it into two parts.

Not along the lines of the chapters, but along the lines of, in one sense, the change. Man has had his say. The spies have had their say.

The people have had their say. Even Joshua and Caleb have their say. Now it's time for God to have his say. For God to speak. And right at the most important moment, isn't it?

[ 7 : 31 ] As I saw, as you see there in verse 10, he is the whole assembly. They are so angered and upset against Moses, who was in one sense the speaker, the mouthpiece of God, that they were going to stone them.

And Joshua and Caleb as well and put them to death. But now God speaks. I wonder if you've got your CV up to date.

If you know what a CV is, it's Latin. It's curriculum vitae. It's for those, particularly all of us, at some point, will have had to write one or maybe will have to write one.

You need it for a new job or a new position. It is a sort of a history. It's sort of a description of yourself. The important elements that make you you. Put down the academic qualifications that you've gained, whether it be O-levels or A-levels or GCSEs or degrees and so on.

And you put down your work history, what you've been doing, the jobs you've sort of been involved with, but also your personal life situation, whether you're married or not, children, family, interests, hobbies, and so on.

[ 8 : 42 ] But there's another part as well and probably the most difficult part of a CV is putting down what you think are your strengths, your qualities, the things that make you a good choice for any employer.

What you definitely, of course, don't want to do is to write down your failings and faults. You're not meant to be that honest. So what you should put down are things like I'm a team player, I work well under pressure, and I use my initiative.

If these things are true, you mustn't put them down. Usually late for work, can't take instruction, finds inventive excuses for not getting work done.

And those are things you mustn't put down on your CV, just the positive things. Now God is perfect. God has no faults, he has no failings. If he is totally and completely honest, he still does not have to

describe anything about himself which is to his detriment.

He is altogether good. And the Bible, in one sense, is God's CV, if I give it that way. The Bible is the history of God's work, but especially it's his revelation of himself.

[10:03] If we want to know what God is like, he's told us what he's like. We aren't left guessing. We aren't having to look to some particular person or other to give us a description of God. God has described himself for us in the scripture.

But, there are some people who think that there are some aspects of the Bible, God's CV, which he shouldn't have included. Particularly, we might say, some parts of the Old Testament.

Because to those people's thinking, the Bible seems to be separated. The Old and the New Testament. And the God of the Old Testament is a different God to the God of the New Testament. He's portrayed in a different way. And, the question really ultimately is this, is this true? Is God different in the Old Testament to the New?

Has there been a change, a transformation in him? Or even, is it a different type of God? A different person? Well, here is one of those places in Numbers 14, particularly, where we witness God's response to the contempt, the unbelief, and the wicked grumbings of the Israelites.

[11:16] And, perhaps we might think, as we've read even there, that this God of the Old Testament seems so different to Jesus in the New Testament. Is this one of those passages which shows God up in a bad light, in an unpleasant way?

And, as I said, all of this chapter is virtually taken up with God speaking to Moses. So, it's God's words. It's not second hand or third hand.

This is from God's very own mouth. And, what Moses hears from God is that which is in keeping with what he knows of God by his own experience.

And, I'm sure that as I read through, particularly verses 18 and following, in your heads a little bell was going off where Moses says, the Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion and so on.

If it was ringing in your head, then it may well have reminded you that this is exactly what God had told Moses about himself back in Genesis sorry, Exodus in chapter 34 when the Lord reveals himself to Moses and tells him exactly the same words.

[12:36] Here they are in Exodus 34 while Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the law. The Lord passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness.

rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

So how does these events here that we have in Numbers 14 line up with God's revelation of himself to Moses and what Moses repeats here about him in verses 18 through to 19 and with what we know of God's revelation to us in the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Is God as good as his word? A friend of mine back in Honiton, he would say a man is only as good as his word.

And he, bless him, if he'd said he was going to do something he would move heaven and earth to do it. even if it cost him something, even if it meant difficulty for him there was no way that he would ever keep from fulfilling what he said he would do.

[13:58] God is even greater than that. So let's look at what Moses reminds the Lord reminds us and the Lord what he's like in verses 18 and 19 see how that plays out how that's revealed particularly here and how indeed we see that this one God in Old and New Testament is the same God.

First of all verse 18 the Lord is slow to anger. Well that's certainly been the case if you've been reading through numbers with us over these past weeks God has been exceedingly patient and that's the sense isn't it?

Exceedingly patient with the Israelites over and over and over again in fact God says to Moses later on in verse 22 they have disobeyed me and tested me ten times.

Now I haven't gone back and looked at exactly which were those times God was referring to but certainly we can see when we look through how God brought the people out of Egypt just in the space of one year how they've tested him again and again and God has continued to be faithfully patient and long suffering with them.

Remember what happened at the Red Sea in Exodus in chapter 14 Moses had just led the people out just a few days before they get to the Red Sea Pharaoh and his armies are coming behind and suddenly what do we find?

[ 15 : 24 ] The people immediately start to complain and to moan and say why don't you just leave us alone? Why don't you just leave us in Egypt? It would have been so much better rather than dying here. No faith in God.

Again in Exodus in chapter 16 the people complain to God because they had no food to eat they were getting hungry and so they again complain why didn't you leave us in Egypt?

We had food to eat in Egypt things were better in Egypt and God as we know gave them manna from heaven and we've seen here just in these last few weeks in Numbers chapter 11 and verse 1 the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord and God deals with them then again just a few verses later the rabble verse 4 with them began to crave other food and again the Israelites started wailing to God and said and here chapter 13 and verse 3 sorry chapter 14 and verse 3 why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword our wives and children will be taken as plunder wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt so again and again and again and again God's patience has been tested by the people and God has been slow to anger but being slow to anger does not mean that God does not get angry it does not mean that God will put up with sin and wickedness and rebellion forever it does not mean that God is always just going to keep on as it were letting things slide letting things slide overlooking sin and wickedness there comes a point as we see here and we'll see in other places where God has to draw a line and say that he will no longer be patient but his anger against sin must be revealed it must be expressed that does not mean that like us

God loses his temper because you know all of us who have been parents particularly or grandparents we have been so patient with our children haven't we and they have been naughty and we have overlooked it and they have been naughty and we have said no that is not right and then it gets worse and worse and what happens is the temperature you can almost see it start there going redder doesn't it in the cartoons you get redder and redder until we blow up and we shout at the kids or the wife and we kick the cat or whatever we do but we lose our temper God never loses his temper and when God deals with people in anger he's doing so justly and fairly and rightly there are times when God must act upon his anger there are times when to act and to respond angrily with sin is the right thing to do in fact it can be just as bad if not worse if we never act and react as it were to wickedness and sin in our own lives and the lives of others and so the Lord

Jesus Christ of course in his own life which people would speak about in Jesus meek and mild Jesus was the one who at the temple when he saw men and women trading and using God's house as some sort of a business a temple takes a rope makes a whip out of it kicks over tables and beats people and chases them out had Jesus lost his temper no but his anger against what was being done must be and had to be expressed dear friends if you're a Christian this evening and even if you're not you have been a recipient of the slowness of God's anger and so have I again and again and again God has been exceedingly patient with you in fact Peter when he writes in 2 Peter 3 9 says the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise he's talking about the return of Christ which we thought very much about this morning the Lord is not slow in keeping his promises some understand slowness instead he is patient with you dear friends isn't it true to say that we are moaners at times and complainers at times and we are untrusting of the

[ 20 : 09 ] Lord at time we don't take his promises to meet our needs as being true and we think he's let us down and God continues to be patient with us let me just say one very brief thing before we move on if you're not a Christian this evening you have been testing the patience of God all your life until this day and God has not removed you he has not judged you but do not think that you can continue to test his patience forever and that somehow you will be okay there is a day coming if you're not a Christian either in this life or certainly when you stand before God in judgment when God's just anger will be revealed therefore let me urge you not to test his patience but rather to respond to his patience and see it as an act of love to you and a desire that you should be saved the reason you're still alive today and you haven't died like perhaps people you know have died even younger than you is because of

God's longsuffering patience with you because he longs for you to be saved let's see what Moses has to say again so we've seen God's patience already with the people the Lord is slow to anger he was slow to anger in the Old Testament he is slow to anger in the New and today and then

abounding overflowing in love and forgiving sin and rebellion I put those together now that is witnessed by the fact that we read in verse 20 a little way down the Lord replied I have forgiven them I have forgiven them now what led up to that was this and I wonder if you picked it up there in verse 12 earlier on when God says how long will I put up with these people how long will they test me how long will they treat me with contempt I'll tell you what I do and he offers to Moses a once in a lifetime opportunity doesn't he do you see there in verse 12 I will strike them down that's all the people with a plague and destroy them but I will make you that's you Moses into a nation greater and stronger than they here's your chance you can be the great one you can be the one who all the descendants of my people come from Moses you can have this position that Abraham had as my friend and the one through whom the promises will fulfill what a great opportunity for you now God was testing Moses and that needs to be said God was putting him to the test he was he was giving him in one sense this this opportunity to show really what was in the heart of Moses sometimes God does that he allows us or in one sense puts before us we might even say a temptation and how we respond to that will show what's in our hearts will be evidence whether we truly are trusting God or whether we actually are looking out for number one so God was testing him but at the same time God would be perfectly just if he had destroyed all the people he could have just immediately destroyed them and said right I will start again he did that if you remember with Noah and the ark the people turned away from God and abused one another in terrible ways and God said that's it I'm going to start again with Noah and his family there are times when God's judgment falls God's threats are not empty threats some people think that oh when Jesus talks about hell or the Bible talks about hell it's a bit like you do with your child don't you and you say to them if you're very naughty and you don't go to bed then there's no ice cream for you tomorrow or you can't play in the garden or whatever it may be we don't really mean it we just want them to behave and so we'll pretend that we're going to punish them no that's not the case with God when God speaks of judgment he means judgment when he says speaks of punishment he means punishment God does not empty in his threats when the Bible says to us there is an everlasting hell there really is an everlasting hell to be escaped to be fled from to be saved from no God's threats are not empty yet it is because of God's great love that he is ready and willing to forgive and to pardon in Ephesians in chapter 2 Paul tells us in a nutshell what has happened to us because of God's grace he talks about our sin and the very dangerous situation that we are in that we are deserving of God's wrath in Ephesians 2:3 but then he says verse 4 but because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions it is by grace you have been saved it is because of God's love that you are a Christian this evening it is because of God's love that he has forgiven your sins it is because of God's love that he has pardoned wiped the slate clean not because of anything that we have done or could do so how is Moses going to respond to this offer this opportunity to be a great nation well we know that he prays he speaks to God that's what prayer is it's speaking to God he responds to God so Moses speaks to the Lord and what does he have to say well there we see verses 13 through to 16 he talks about he intercedes for them in other words he stands in the gap between God and the people he speaks up for the people so that [26:29] God will forgive them yes they deserve God's punishment they deserve God's anger but Moses is more concerned with the Lord's name and the Lord's glory and he brings two reasons why God should forgive them at this time two reasons why God should hold back his anger which is just first of all because God's name would be dishonored if he wiped the people out God he talks about how everybody knows that it was God who brought the people out of Egypt God who saved them God who delivered them in a mighty way and so much so that even the people in Canaan people of land that they were going to go into they had heard the stories about what God had done for these people in rescuing them now if God was to wipe them out what would these people think about God what would the Egyptians think about God at the moment they hold him in high esteem as a mighty God who can be known a God who saves a God who keeps his promises but he says imagine if you wipe them out this is what the people would say verse 16 the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath so he slaughtered them in the wilderness in other words people will think that you're a God who can't keep his promises you'll think that you're a God who says one thing and does another all the people around about will not honor you but rather dishonor you that you're a God who's failed that you're a God who isn't mighty who isn't great after all you're a God who breaks his promise but God can never break his promise notice what he said

there the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath the promise that they would have this land to enjoy was a promise that goes all the way back to Abraham hundreds and hundreds of years earlier promise repeated to Isaac repeated to Jacob a promise that Joseph believed and was convinced of and a promise that he renewed whatever God says he will do for his people he will do whatever God promises that he will help he will help nothing in heaven or earth no one can prevent God from doing what he said he will do he is faithful the second thing the second argument in one sense is this argument that we've been looking at about what the Lord has spoken to Moses already and it's strange if you look at verse 17 to me it's a strange way of putting it now may the Lord's strength be displayed just as you've declared the Lord is slow to anger abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion

God's power is revealed in his grace people think well God's power is revealed in mighty things like bringing the walls of Jericho down God's power is seen in destruction or overcoming enemies but here Moses says Lord let your strength be displayed at the true power as it were of God be made known in your love in your forgiveness that's the wonder that's the power of the gospel isn't it surely that's the power that men and women need to witness and experience for themselves the power of God the strength of God is that he is even able to save you and me to forgive you and me to rescue you and me from the judgment that we deserve God is reminding sorry Moses is reminding God of what he has said about himself his true character if all the people were to die this wouldn't be God being true to himself this wouldn't be God being God who God is governs his actions he does what he does because of who he is just as we as Christians must do what we do because of who we are you know some people get that mixed up don't they say well if I'm a Christian

I will do good things so doing good things makes me a Christian no being a Christian makes me do good things why because my heart has been changed by God because the love of God has come into my heart because he has transformed and changed me living the Christian life is simply being yourself being more yourself than you've ever been before so God's abounding love forgiving sin and rebellion is seen in that he does forgive the people sin as we notice there verse 20 I've forgiven them and God's wonderful love is seen his forgiveness and sin and rebellion is seen in the wonderful salvation that we have received and continue to receive daily but we have the forgiveness of sins even though we still sin we have pardon complete even though we still get it wrong and there's a very important thing

I think that we need to see here as well in the ministry of Moses in the New Testament often we find that Jesus is seen as the perfect Old Testament character put it that way so Jesus like David was the greatest king a greater king than David and that comes out some of the prophecies and also Moses Moses in fact promised one like me will come and in this situation I think we very strongly see how Moses points us to Jesus as the one who stands in the gap between the judgment of God and the wickedness of people Jesus is the mediator the one who goes in between in fact that's exactly what the Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 2 there is one God and one mediator one who stands in between as it were between God and mankind the man Christ Jesus so in one sense as Moses stood up and spoke on behalf of the sinful people Jesus stands up and speaks on our behalf and in one sense acts on our behalf to deliver us from God's anger there is a lovely sentence in John's first letter in chapter 2 in verses 1 and 2 where we're told this if anybody does sin we have an advocate a helper a barrister a defense with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous one he's the atoning sacrifice for our sins not only for ours but for the sins of the world Jesus stands and defends us before God's wrath not because God needs his arm twisting but as here with Moses God's will is to forgive and Moses as it were speaks up for us and gives reasons why

[ 33 : 50 ] God should forgive the people and the reasons why God will forgive you and me first of all Jesus stands up before the Father as our advocate and speaks to him and says this Father forgive them because of what I have done in their place for Jesus came and fulfilled all God's commandments Jesus came and kept God's law Jesus came and lived the perfect human life which we have failed to live he lived it on our behalf and Paul has this wonderful argument in Romans where he tells us that what Jesus has done for us his perfect righteousness his perfect obedience to God the merit of that has been passed over to us the great theological phrase is imputed righteousness what is Jesus belongs to us because we become one with Jesus so all the sinful things the failings are taken away which we'll think of in a moment and the good things that we need to make us right with

God Jesus done for us and are given to us accounted to us put in our bank balance of righteousness and secondly of course Jesus says to the father forgive them because I've been punished in their place for their sins I was put to death there's an astounding exchange that has taken place in the courtroom of heaven as it were whereas Paul puts it God made him Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us in other words be treated as a sinner and condemned as a sinner in your place and mine so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God the perfect obedience that God requires your sin has been given to Jesus and he's taken it away and paid for it and he's given you his righteousness his beautiful goodness and loveliness now so far that sounds great doesn't it so far this wonderful description of

God in his CV is marvelous and we have no real problem with that until we get to this next part in the second part of verse 18 yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation God is slow to anger he is abounding love forgiving rebellion and sin but he does not leave the guilty unpunished so what does the Lord tell Moses he tells him as we read from verses 21 and following that those people who have acted so wickedly in moaning against God rejecting God wonderful gift of the promised land of not trusting him those people who moaned against him and said if only we had died in the wilderness back in chapter 14 verse 2 if only we had died if only God hadn't saved us they will actually eat their own words and they will die in the wilderness so God says to them in this wilderness your bodies will fall verse 29 every one of you 20 years or old or more who's counted in the census who's grumbled against me

I will do the very thing I heard you say those who wished that they had died in the wilderness those who wish that God had never saved them will get what they want getting what you want is not good for you men and women are day and age and live their lives without God they don't want God they don't want his mercy they don't want his love they don't want his truth they don't want his laws they don't want God at all the very sadness is this that God will give them what they want on the day of judgment an eternity without God eternity without his love an eternity without his forgiveness an eternity without his grace but an endless eternal sorrow.

Be careful what you wish for. Be careful what you want. Be careful what you set your heart on. You may get it and find yourself sorely disappointed.

[ 38 : 28 ] But what about this whole thing of the children, punishing the children? That can't be right. That can't be God, surely. But here we see it again, don't we?

This is what it means. Let's understand what the Bible means rather than what we think it means. Verse 31 of chapter 14, as for your children that you said would be taken in plunder, you said if you went into the land, then I would forsake you, and your wives and children would be taken in plunder. It's there in verse 3 of that same chapter. These children will suffer for your unfaithfulness, verse 32. You see, we're not islands, dear friends.

No man is an island. No woman is an island. What we do has effect upon our children, our grandchildren, our neighbors, our spouses, our friends. You see, they had complained that their children would be taken as slaves and would be kept out of the land.

But God was going to give them the land. He was going to bring them in. He promises your children, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you've rejected, but it's 40 years down the line.

[ 39 : 38 ] And for 40 years, they're going to miss out. For 40 years, they're going to suffer for your unfaithfulness and your sin. Is that God's fault, if I can put it that way?

Surely not. Surely it's the consequence of living a life in rejection of God. They would suffer because of their parents' sins.

They would roam the desert for 40 years. We see as well, just there, that God does not forgive in that sense or, as it were, leave the guilty unpunished.

Verse 36, the men who Moses had sent and returned with this terrible complaint against God and caused all the grumbling, there and then their punishment came upon them.

We're told that they died of a plague and only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land. Is this strange?

[ 40 : 36 ] Is this unjust? Certainly not. Is this out of keeping with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in New Testament? No, it's not, because we find again and again in the New Testament God's justice against sin.

In Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira died as God struck them down because they lied and acted in hypocrisy against God and his people.

In Corinth, Paul has to write a letter to the Christians there and to the church there because they were those who were misusing the Lord's Supper. They were acting with selfish and wicked desires.

And Paul says, because of that, some of you become ill and some of you even died. God will punish sin either on the cross or upon the person.

He will punish your sin, dear friend, either on the cross as Jesus takes it for you because you've put your faith in him or you yourself will suffer that just punishment that day of judgment comes and you stand before him naked and bare.

[ 41 : 51 ] There's one very final thing here as we close and you've been very patient. I thank you for that. And it doesn't end happily. God speaks these things.

Moses takes it and takes a message to the people and tells them this is what God has said. This is God's mercy and longsuffering and patience but this is God's justice too. You are going to die in the wilderness.

So what do they do? We're told early the next morning, verse 40, they, that's the people, set out for the highest point in the hill country, that's the promised land, saying we're ready to go to the land the Lord promised.

Surely we've sinned. They try, as it were, to take the land in their own strength. They ignore what God has said and they say no, okay, we realize we've been bad but let's go and sort it out.

Let's sort the problem out. We can resolve it for ourselves. And this confession of their sin in verse 40, it's so shallow, isn't it? It's not repentance.

[ 42 : 49 ] You see, you can feel bad about things you've done. We all feel bad about the mistakes or the things we've said and done. That's not repentance. That's not, that doesn't wash with God, just feeling bad about what you've done.

It's a bit like the criminal, isn't it, who's in the dock, whose lawyer suggests to him, admit the crime and you'll get a lenient sentence. That's what these people are doing. That's what we often do.

Repentance is saying much more than I'm sorry or I feel bad for what I've done.

It's saying to God, I am wrong. I have lived in contradiction to you. I have lived in disobedience. My life is not what is acceptable to you and I recognize that and I turn from that way of living.

I turn away from it. I don't just feel bad and then carry on. That's exactly what they said. Oh, we've done a terrible thing. We've sinned. But we're going to carry on treating God with contempt.

We're going to carry on not trusting him. We're going to sort out the problem ourselves. We find very sadly what happens. They go with an army into the land. God isn't with them.

[ 43 : 54 ] Moses isn't with them. And they are beaten down. We're not told how many died. God is unchangeably, faithfully the same.

He is true to himself. We cannot pick and choose those characteristics of God which we think are more acceptable or palatable to us. Everything about God is good.

Both his love, mercy, grace, justice, wrath, and righteousness. Therefore, dear friends, let us be like Moses, those whose great desire is for the honour, the praise, the glory of God.