

# Numbers Chapter 20 v 1 - 13

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening. Welcome. Good to see you. Good to see some visitors amongst us. These people are very familiar to us. We can't seem to get rid of them. They keep turning up every now and then, but yeah, yeah. No, no, I didn't say that. I didn't say you were like a bad smell at all. You say that, but it's lovely to see you. Great to see other good friends of ours as well, Martin and Gareth as well. We do welcome you in the name of our Lord.

Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be blessed? The Bible uses the word blessed to mean that God has done us good, but it also means as well to be content, to be, well, in one sense, happy. And Psalm 32 begins, blessed is the one or the person whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against him, and in whose spirit is no deceit. And he goes on to say, this is David, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me.

My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

The joy of being blessed begins with repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus. And to know our sins are forgiven is the greatest relief there possibly can be, to be brought right with God. Blessed is the one. And because, of course, God sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for us. That's the only way we can be forgiven. Because he suffered for us and took our sin upon the cross, we are able to rejoice in all the goodness and the love of God. Our first hymn is number 23. Reminds us that our God is really beyond our comprehension. His love for us and grace for us blows our mind. God, beyond all praising, we worship you today. Let's stand and sing number 23.

Let's continue in our worship as we come to God in prayer through his son, the Lord Jesus. Let us pray together. We confess, O Lord our God, that what we have sung is so very true that we do not have the words to praise you aright. We do not have the language to declare and proclaim all that you are in your beauty and majesty and glory and holiness. You are so far beyond our comprehension. You are so way beyond the finiteness of our minds. Lord, how can we even begin to grasp what you truly are like?

[ 3 : 21 ] Without you revealing yourself to us, we never could. Like the rest of humanity, we would spend our lives grappling and grasping and clawing, trying to think of what God might be like, making gods in our own image, failing and faltering and fickle gods that the world runs after. But, O Lord, we thank you that you've not left us in the darkness of our folly and sin, but you have broken in to this world with your grace and majesty and glory. In the very creating of the world, you showed yourself to be an almighty and generous God. O Lord, throughout history, you have shown yourself to be a God who stoops low to meet with men and women where they are and to raise them up and to deal with them tenderly, justly, and graciously. But we thank you this evening, Lord, that we thank you from this evening and through eternity that, O Lord, you came to us in the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You came and stepped into our world, into our dark and gloomy and sinful world. You came from heaven to earth, and, O Lord, you did not come as you could have come, with rage and with anger against our sin. You did not come with justice in that sense and judgment to sweep all humanity away, but you came lowly and humbly. You condescended and you came as that baby born to Mary in Bethlehem. You came, O Lord, in the frailty of our humanity, still truly God, yet also truly man. And, O Lord, though we've celebrated our Christmas some weeks ago, Lord, we never want to lose sight of, we never want to lose the joy of what your birth truly means. God with us. Lord, we were once men and women who were far from God.

We were once men and women who knew nothing of God and would have continued in that lost place, in that blackness and ignorance, except that you came into the world. And in Jesus Christ,

we see God in all of his beauty, in all of his loveliness. We see you, Lord, you leap, as it were, and walk off the pages of the New Testament to us and the Gospels. And we see a God who cares for the downcast, a God who lifts up the weak, a God who heals the sick, a God who saves the sinner. We thank you that, though, Lord Jesus, you have ascended to the Father's right hand, having finished and completed that work for us of redemption. We thank you that yet you are still the same, still in the business, still with that mission and that determination to rescue and to deliver and to give light and life.

We thank you that you will continue that gracious work through your church and by your Spirit until that day when you come again. This time, O Lord, not with a condescension or with a humility, but you will come in all your glory and splendor. And every eye and every person will see you, and every knee will bow before you, and every tongue will confess that you are God, you are Lord, to the glory of your Father. Lord, we come this evening because it is our delight and joy to bow the knee to you. It is no, it is no compulsional strain upon us, as it were, or force or fear that makes us say, Jesus is Lord. It is because your love has melted our hearts. Your love, O Lord, has consumed us and broken us, so that, O Lord, we gladly confess that we are sinners, but we are sinners in the hands of a gracious God, who through his Son and through his sacrifice have wiped us clean, so that now, O Lord, you look upon us with eyes of delight and joy. And Lord, our desire is that as we gaze upon you afresh this evening, we too may gaze upon you with delight and joy as our Savior and our

King and our Lord. Come amongst us, we pray. Come by your Spirit and meet with us, we ask, wherever we are, whatever circumstances bring us to this building this evening, Lord, it is you that we long to meet with and hear and pray, O Lord, that indeed, because of Jesus, you would hear our cry and that, Lord, you would make yourself known afresh, that we might give you the glory and the praise you deserve, for we ask it in the name of your Son, the one and only Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let's turn together in our Bibles to Numbers and chapter 20. Numbers and chapter 20. We picked up again last week, or actually the week before, on this book, this book of Numbers, this journey of God's people from Egypt, really, and slavery to the Promised Land and God's dealings with them. I'm going to read chapter 20, verses 1 to 13. Now, last week, if you were here in the evening, we dealt with verse 1, and we had a little bit of a biography of the life of Miriam, did a bit of This Is Your Life with Miriam, and saw how the Lord had used her many times, but how sadly, near the end, she had fallen into jealousy and envy, and hopefully we learned something from her life. We're going to read verse 1 again, and then we're going to read through to verse 13. In the first month, the whole Israelite community arrived at the desert of Zin.

[ 9 : 49 ] They stayed at Kaddish. There, Miriam died and was buried. Now, there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord. Why did you bring the Lord's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no corn or figs, grapevines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink. Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance, to the tent of meeting, and fell face down. The glory of the Lord appeared to them.

The Lord said to Moses, Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes, and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community, so that they and their livestock can drink. So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, Listen, you rebels. Must we bring you water out of this rock? Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them. These are the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord, and where he was proved holy among them. Let the Lord help us to understand and live his word.

It would be helpful if you could have your Bibles open to Numbers chapter 20. It's page 157, page 157 in the church Bible, and particularly those verses 1 to 13 that we read earlier. All of us from time to time have acted as a representative. It may well have been that it was our job to be a representative, perhaps selling double glazing, or being an Avon lady. Maybe we've represented

someone else at a meeting that they were unable to attend, and we've gone as their representative, perhaps a parent's evening at school, or perhaps a funeral. Representative is a person who speaks, or acts, or does both on behalf of another person. The representative stands in the place of, and is treated as if they were the person they're representing. If you are a Christian this evening, then you are a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. In John chapter 15, when Jesus was warning and telling his disciples of what might happen to them, or would happen to them in the future, he tells them this, remember what I told you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name. Paul says something similar when he writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 20, he calls himself and the other believers ambassadors. He says, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Around the world, there are British ambassadors in almost every country, I imagine, and there they represent the Queen and the UK government at meetings and discussions, and so on and so forth. And if that nation has a problem with the UK government, they call the British ambassador to speak on the nation's behalf. Like those ambassadors in other parts of the world, we too live in this world, which is not our homeland, as representatives of the Lord our God. Our home is heaven.

That's where we belong. That's where we're headed. We are exiles. We are fugitives in that sense, Paul and the writers tell us. This isn't our home, but we are representatives of our heavenly Father here in this world. And because we are God's representatives, and because this is the case, there is a heavy responsibility upon us, just as there is upon a British ambassador overseas. The question that we need to ask ourselves regularly is, do I honor my Lord before the people of this world as I represent him?

[ 15 : 34 ] Or do I bring dishonor to his name by what I say and do? Now it's important that we grasp something of this concept of representing the Lord our God when we come to Numbers 20. Just to give you the background, which I'm sure many of you will know, the Israelites have spent many years in the wilderness since leaving Egypt. Over that time, God has met with them and given them his commandments and his law. He's given them instructions about the tabernacle and the priesthood and various other commandments to do with how they worship and relate to God with one another, with the nations around about them, and so forth.

And by the time we get to chapter 20 of Numbers, we're getting nearer to the end of those 40 years of wandering. And the reason that they were 40 years in the desert is because God took them to the edge, as it were, of the promised land and told them to go in, and they rejected God's command. They disobeyed God. They did not trust God. And therefore, they, as a generation, those aged over 20, all passed away over the 40 years in the wilderness. And it was going to be their children and very certain specific people who would enter into the promised land. So they're coming nearer to the end of those 40 years.

Many of the original men and women who left Egypt have now died. But of course, their children and grandchildren, of course, have been born and are very much alive. We have a sense of that there in verse 3, where the people say, if only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord. There were occasions when God particularly judged his people, and at 1.42,000 were killed because of rebellion against God. But there were some that were left. Many, of course, that were left. And so now, on their journey, they've arrived at what we have been told is the desert of Zin, at a place called Kadesh.

The definition of a desert, if you're doing geography GCSE or A-level, a definition of a desert is a place where less than 10 inches, or in new money, 250 milliliters, millimeters of rainfall in a year. We probably get that in a week or a day, some days, maybe like today. A desert is a place, unsurprisingly, then, where there's no water. So it's no surprise that when they get there, in this desert of Zin, at Kadesh, there, verse 2, there was no water for the community. That happened before, in Exodus chapter 17, and it happens again. And in fact, we have many similarities between that event, because just as there is no water in the desert, so as usual, God's people, the Israelites, complain and murmur. In fact, if you only had the journeyings of God's people in the Old Testament to look at, you would say that one of the chief marks of being an Israelite was that you were good at moaning and complaining, because that seems to be all that they do. I hope that's not true of our fellowship or yours, that when people say, well, you know them down at Skinner Street in the Evangelical Church, there's one thing they're good at. They're good at moaning. That shouldn't be

the case with us, but it was the case with them. And so, in fact, the place where they were actually gets given a name.

[ 19 : 05 ] Verse 13, the waters of Meribah, and if you've got one of the NIVs, it'll give you a little footnote telling you that Meribah means quarreling. And if you were to go back to Exodus 17, when a similar situation happened, then you'll find that not only is that place there called Meribah, it's also called as well Masa, which means testing. The people tested the Lord and quarreled.

But in God's goodness, in spite of their moaning, complaining, and quarreling, God in His grace, provides water for the community from a rock. And we're told that this rock, it's a different rock to the rock in Exodus. That seemed to be a large boulder or rock. This is a wall of rock, almost a cliff of rock. It's a different type of rock. And it produces water, and we're told that they were all provided for. Of course, as often is the case with them and with us, we're not told that they thanked God, or were grateful or appreciative. But God graciously provided for them. Now, you might say, what has that got to do with what I said by introduction?

What has that got to do with a believer, the believer, each believer acting as the Lord's representative? Well, just notice the difference between what we read in verse 3, where it says they quarreled with Moses, and what we read in verse 13.

These were the waters of Meribah where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord. Moses and Aaron were God's representatives, so what the people did to them, God counted as being done to him. The Lord takes very personally what is done to his representatives, he takes it as being done personally to him. And throughout the Bible, we can see this in several situations where God's servants, God's people, were opposed or quarreled with or complained with, and God took it personally. Earlier on in Exodus 16, there the people were hungry, we're told, and grumbled against Moses. And Moses replied to the people, you are not grumbling against us, that's him and Aaron, but against the Lord. Later on in 1 Samuel in chapter 8, the people want to have a king. A king like all the other nations had a king. And so they asked Samuel for a king. And the Lord tells Samuel, it is not you, Samuel, who was the judge, the leader at the time, it's not you they've rejected, they've rejected me as their king. We find this also goes over, of course, into the teaching of our Savior, the Lord Jesus, into the New Testament. By the time we get there in the New Testament, we see that as far as Jesus is concerned, when one of his disciples is hurt or harmed, he counts that as harmed as to him. Particularly, of course, in the case of Saul, in Acts chapter 9. Saul, the persecutor of the church, who'd put God's people to death and in prison, he's riding to Damascus, he sees this incredible bright light, he's thrown to the ground, and he hears a voice from heaven, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Well, Jesus is ascended, he is in heaven, his body is in heaven. There's nothing that

Paul or Saul could do to touch him. But he was touching his church, he was touching his dear people, he was persecuting them, and Jesus says, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Earlier on in Jesus's own teaching, we find this particularly in Matthew 25, when he talks about the end of the world, when all men and women will be brought before him and separated between goats and sheep, and he will say to those who are his people, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. So when we serve one another, Jesus takes it as us serving him, blessing him. But to those on the other side who were the goats, as it were, those who had not loved the Lord and sought to serve him, he says to them, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do to the least of these, you did not do for me. And we read there also, didn't we, from John 15, how the Lord Jesus tells the disciples that they will be badly treated at times by the people of this world. Why? Because of my name. So when we are opposed, when we find the world against us, when we find it making commandments and laws which are contrary to what we believe and to our conscience, when we find ourselves being pressed upon, then dear friends, it shouldn't surprise us.

[ 24 : 08 ] The reason that we are being opposed is often because we are God's people. In fact, Jesus was very clear. He said, woe to you if everybody says good of you. If everybody agrees with everything you say, if you keep everybody happy all the time, Jesus says you're almost certainly not one of my disciples.

To be a disciple of Jesus means that we're stoned in somebody's shoe. To be a disciple of Jesus means that sometimes we're a bit of grit in their eye. To be a disciple of Jesus means not because of our character, and we've got to be careful of that, because some of us have got characters and personalities that can rub people up the wrong way, but because of what we believe and stand for

and how we live, we will be persecuted, opposed, stood against. It shouldn't surprise us. It will upset us, of course, but it shouldn't surprise us. But how are we to react to, we might say, difficult people? How are we to react when we feel got at simply for following Jesus, simply for being his representative and serving him? How should we respond? How should we react? And in this we can look at the reaction of Moses and Aaron. There were some things here that we can learn from them about how they responded to this quarreling with them as they sought to be the representatives of the Lord and sought to do the Lord's work and serve him. Of course, there's some things that we'll learn that they didn't do well, that we are to be wary of. What's the first thing that happens to them then? There's this tirade, isn't it, from verse 3 all the way to verse 5 about how awful life is with the Israelites, how terrible, and so on and so forth. And there's, of course, a great deal of irony there, isn't there? Irony in the fact that the reason that they're in the wilderness is because of their sin, because they wouldn't go into the land with the pomegranates and the vineyards and the corn and the figs and the water, because they resisted the Lord. They were in this horrible place. It was of their own making.

There's some irony there. But after they finish this moaning and complaining, what do Moses and Aaron immediately do? Do they do what I've just said? Well, it's your own fault. If you hadn't rejected the Lord, if you hadn't disobeyed him when he said go into the land, you could be enjoying all these things. So you've made your bed, you lie in it. It's not what they do, is it? Rather, we find verse 6, they went from the assembly to the entrance of the tent, meeting and fell face down. In other words, they sought the Lord. That's what they're doing, aren't they? They're going to the tent, the tabernacle, which represented the very presence of God and his people, and they fell flat on their faces before the Lord. They sought the Lord. That's their response over and over again. If you read through the adventures, as it were, of God's people, and the many times, of course, that they do this and complain and quarrel and murmur, almost inevitably the first thing is that Moses prays. He falls on his face before the Lord. In every situation, that's to be our first response. Very rarely is, if we're honest, but it should be to turn to the Lord in prayer. Facing a difficulty, we're facing opposition, or whatever it may be, the first thing is to pray. Prayer is the recognition that we can do nothing in our own strength. Prayer is an act of humility, seeking God's help, knowing that we ourselves cannot deal with it. The problem is, of course, that we don't do that, because when we are opposed, when we meet with difficulty or difficult people, it hurts our ego. That's the first thing, isn't it?

It's my ego that gets pricked. My pride that gets damaged, and naturally, we want to, first of all, respond to defend ourselves. They've said something nasty to me. I want to say something nasty to them.

[ 28 : 16 ] That's our natural response, because we're sinful people still. But remember, Moses was the humblest man on earth, we're told, earlier in Numbers 12. He prayed, humbled himself before the Lord. That's got to be the best thing to do, hasn't it? Whatever the circumstance. They humble themselves before the Lord, but then, of course, they hear or receive God's Word. The Lord appeared to them. The Lord spoke to them and told them what to do. Now, we don't need, in every circumstance, to have a divine voice from heaven telling us what to do, because why? We have God's Word, the Scriptures. We're told in 2 Timothy.

It's everything we need, in every circumstance and situation, for correction, for rebuke, for help, for discipline. It's all here, so we are to go to the Word of God. What is it that you want us to do, Lord? What is it that your Word tells us to do in a situation like this, when we are opposed or meet difficulty or persecution? God has a great deal to say, of course, in his Word about trouble and troublesome people and difficulties. There's a great deal of clear instruction about how we're to deal with these problems. And if, instead, we simply, as it were, boil up, or we do our own thing, or we try to work it out in ourselves without God's Word, then we are going to fall a cropper. We need to come to the Word. What is it that the Lord says? So, once they sought the Lord in prayer, but they also sought the Lord for his Word. What do you have to say to me? How does your Word teach me to, in my relationships with people I disagree with, or fall out with, or whatever? And then, of course, what we see thirdly, and they're doing quite well, Moses and Aaron here, they obey God's Word, to begin with, anyway.

God says to them, in verse 8, take the staff, you and your brother Aaron, and gather the assembly together. So, what do we find in verse 9? Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence. This is the staff, remember, that was Aaron's staff that had buddied, and had been told to put in with the, in the

Holy of Holies, along with the Ark of the Covenant, and the Law, and also a pot of manna, as well. So, they do that. They take the staff from the Lord's presence, as he commanded them, so they're obedient to God's Word. Then he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock. So, they're obeying the Lord so far. They've received his Word, and they're starting off on the right foot. Suddenly, they don't follow it to the end. It's not a lot like you and me. We start off with the right intention. We start off in prayer. We start off in the Word, and we start to get it right together, but then something unexpected happens, and crops up, and we don't see the Word through to the end. We become impatient, maybe, or we want to sort this problem out in our own way. Do we struggle to be faithful to the end, and faithful consistently with God's Word? And so, what we find, sadly, is this. They disobey God's Word. They start off, but then they disobey God's Word. Verses 10 and 11, he and Aaron gathered the assembly together, yes, in front of the rock, yes, as the Lord commanded. And Moses said to them, listen, you rebels. Must we bring you water out of this rock? And Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff, water gushed out. Now, we can fully understand. We can, all of us, look at the situation and say, I can fully empathize with Moses and Aaron here. They are so frustrated and fed up with the people's complaining. They had it year after year after year, just ground them down. It wound them up. They never seem, these people, to learn from their sin. Oh, dear me. Yes, I know how they feel. Some people just get under your skin. Some people just get, they wind you up, and it seems, well, I fully understand. [ 32 : 44 ] It's so human, isn't it, of Moses and Aaron to finally snap. Put up with you and laugh, you rebels. Haven't we, sadly, done the same on more than one occasion? And we must hang our heads in sorrow.

What did they do wrong? What did they do? Well, they fell, didn't they, in several ways. First of all, they fell in their attitude to the people, listen, you rebels. That's a nasty thing to say, isn't it? Calling them names. Insulting them. These are God's precious people, saved by his grace. They are those that he set his seal upon, as it were. Those that he set apart for himself. God's holy people, who he declares elsewhere in the Old Testament, these, you'll be my precious possession. You rebels. Of course, when we insult others, then what are we actually doing? We're showing that we are full of pride. We're actually saying, we are better than you. By calling you this name, by calling you this name, I'm putting you down, and I'm saying that you are less than me. I'm not a rebel.

I'm not disobedient to God. That's what's coming out of this heart, isn't it? I'm better than you. Insults, dear friends, they should never be in our mouths, but they are, sadly, we confess at times. [ 34 : 16 ] Then we see, of course, that that pride is all the more compounded by not only how they speak down to and arrogantly against the people, but how they speak about themselves. Must we, me and Aaron, must we bring water out of this rock? It's utter foolishness, isn't it? As if Moses and Aaron can make this great cliff of rock burst forth in water, even if they had dynamite and concrete and explosives to blow a hole in it or drill or a drilling machine or a well, they still couldn't do it.

See, when ego is attacked, it doesn't shrink, it puffs itself up. Can you find that? When somebody attacks my ego, when somebody tries to put me down, when somebody opposes me, then I puff myself up to make myself bigger than I really am. And I start to say stupid things, make foolish boasts, foolish claims that I've no right to say, do you know who I am? And we said that. Don't you realize how much more spiritual I am than you? Don't you realize how much I pray? Don't you realize my position? Don't you realize how long I've been a Christian? We forget that all of that is the very grace of God, and we begin to be foolish.

And then thirdly, of course, the outcome of their folly and their frustration and their pride. Moses raises his arm and he strikes the rock twice with his staff. What did God say? Speak to that rock. But no, Moses now, he's got himself in a bit of a hissy fit, if I can be honest. There's real anger, isn't there? He lashes out. He can't hit the people. He can hit the rock. He can kick the cat. Aggression and violence are the end result if we allow pride and arrogance to settle in our hearts. We will lash out with anger, unjustified anger, self-righteous anger.

[ 36 : 40 ] We see it's mounted, hasn't it? It's grown, hasn't it? Here's a problem in Moses' heart, problem that he's never dealt with before. It's there and it's not been, as it were, brought before the Lord. It's not been sorted. He's allowed it to fester, a root of bitterness, we might say, in his heart, as Paul talks and warns about.

But look how gracious God is. Water gushed out. Isn't God good? Isn't he good?

Moses has completely blown it. He's done everything wrong. He's not spoken to the rock, he's hit it. Yet God, in his mercy, still provides water. In spite of Moses and Aaron's sin, he still provides what the people need.

They were faithless, the people and Moses and Aaron, but God remained good.

They didn't deserve the water. But God is gracious. Not a massive fan of the AV, but there's that lovely verse in Romans 6, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

[ 38 : 11 ] I think that's probably the best way to put it. Some of the modern translations put it in a different way, and it means the same thing, but there's a lovely, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That's the God that we worship. That's the God that we serve. That's the God that we represent.

Sin can never prevent God's grace accomplishing his will. That's why we can have hope, dear friends, in our present evil age.

That's why we can see the evils of our society. We can see the wickedness of the human heart. We can see all the depravity that's going on around about us, but we still have hope.

Why do we have hope? Because we're a great church, and because we're great people, and because we've got power, and because we've got publicity. No, because God's grace is bigger than man's sin.

Always has been. Always will be. Whatever the devil and the world seeks to do, and even our own sinful failings, as in the case of Moses and Aaron, even in spite of us, God's grace will accomplish his will.

[ 39 : 24 ] All that he's purposed and planned, he shall bring to bear in the saving of his people. However, that's not the end of the story, is it?

Because here we meet with probably one of the most painful events. Verse 12. God punishes Moses and Aaron.

That's a bit harsh, isn't it? That doesn't seem fair. It was the people who wound them up. It was the people who got under their skin.

It was the people who quarreled and complained against them, and therefore against God, and the people get off scot-free. Here's Moses and Aaron. Yes, they got it wrong.

Yes, they cocked it up. Yes, they blew their stack. Yes, they're not fair. Yes, they're not fair.

[ 40 : 44 ] Is God fair? Is God just? But notice how God views their failure to obey.

Notice how God describes it there in verse 12. He describes it as a sin which dishonors him and does not show him as holy.

It's not just a simple matter for these representatives of God to get upset and angry and blow their stack. It's not enough.

We may think, well, it's very natural and human, but God takes it, remember, personally. You have dishonored me before these people.

You have not shown me as holy before these people. They were representatives of God to the Israelites. Therefore, what they did reflected upon the Lord God and how the people viewed him.

[ 41 : 43 ] Moses and Aaron acted and spoke as men who lacked faith in God. They acted with petulance and they acted with malice.

And that reflected upon God because they were his representatives. Now, God had punished in the past or through the wilderness wanderings those who'd sinned in a similar way in dishonoring him. In fact, some of them he had judgely just and justly punished there and then. He'd sent fire from heaven against them or had opened the earth to swallow them or he'd sent a plague amongst them. Is God now going to treat Moses and Aaron differently? Is he going to show them favoritism? Let them off with dishonoring him before the people? No.

Because God is just. There is no favoritism with God. There is no partiality with God.

[ 42 : 49 ] For the sake of his holiness, he forbids either of them of entering the land. It's the same punishment that was upon those people over the age of 20 who also dishonored him when they would not trust him and go into the land.

God is being absolutely fair. fair. And just. And good. In the way he treats Moses and Aaron.

And in doing so, God proves himself holy to the people. As they look on, what are you going to do, God, with this sin?

Are you going to brush it under the carpet because it's Moses and Aaron and they're your favorites? Yes. If that's the case, then Lord God, you're not fair and just and holy.

But God will not brush any sin under the carpet. He will not turn a blind eye to iniquity. He will not treat one person with favoritism and another person with justice.

[ 43 : 56 ] He will treat us all the same, whoever we are. That's why when men and women stand before the judgment seat of God on that day, no matter what their race or creed or background or failings or sins or good deeds or charity, God will treat each and every man faithfully, justly, fairly as they deserve.

And if it wasn't for the amazing grace of God towards us, we would receive the justice that our sins deserve.

But the wonderful thing is that where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. Praise God, you and I, dear friends, have been forgiven for our sins because the punishment that we deserve has been laid upon the shoulders of Jesus upon the cross.

All our sins, all our failings, all that we deserve, he bore and took in a way that we can never, even though we spend eternity considering it, understand.

Because God is holy. He cannot just, as it were, sweep away your sin and mine. But what he has done for you and for our dear friends is this, he's provided full forgiveness and pardon for you and I if we will receive the wonderful gift of his grace in Jesus.

[ 45 : 36 ] If we will turn from our sins in repentance and if we will trust in Christ and he promises to forgive us and we will still fall, of course we still do, of course we still get it wrong.

However, what do we learn from this? We learn, ultimately, though Moses and Aaron are forgiven for their sin and let me put that claim clear because we know that they are with the Lord in glory because Moses appeared, didn't he, with Elijah at the transfiguration.

We know that though they sinned and fell, they were saved by God's grace and goodness and will be there at that wonderful feast in heaven. However, let us be warned, dear friends, that if we publicly dishonor the Lord Jesus before other people, there must come a time when he must reveal his holiness in our lives.

Yes, we fall and we sin but dear friends, we represent him and he is not going to take lightly us sinning and dishonoring his name before others in this world.

Do you not see that when we see it all the way sadly across the tabloids and across the news where men and women who have claimed to be God's people have been exposed for the wicked and sinful people they are and brought low and down.

[ 46 : 55 ] God will not put up with it. He will not have his name dishonored in this world. He is a jealous God and his name is worthy of praise and honor and glory. He is to be seen as the holy and awesome God he is and he will make sure that he is revealed in that way.

Through you and through me or else he will remove the privilege of being his representative in this world.

Dear friends, let us rather than be those that dishonor the Lord in the way that we live be those that honor him.

Let us be able to say with God's grace and help with much prayer and with the encouragement of one another those same words as Paul was able to say imitate me as I imitate Christ.

That's our goal isn't it? That's our longing that's our prayer. I want men and women and boys and girls to see Jesus in me and give him the glory for what he's done.

[ 48 : 01 ] I want men and women to hear his words from my lips not the words of insult or pulling down or anger or frustration. I want Jesus to be made known in my life and I know that's what you want.

And so when we look at God's word as we've done this evening we see just how important it is that we seek the Lord that through us and in us by his spirit Christ may be glorified.

Let's pray together shall we? We have to confess Father this evening that as we've been exposed to your word it's shone a light in our lives and we've come up short.

We're no better than Moses and Aaron. But we thank you that there's grace with you and forgiveness with you and mercy with you.

But thank you too oh Lord that you do not let us continue in sin you discipline us as you did them. You've chastised us as a loving gracious and good father.

[ 49 : 26 ] You've given us this incredible privilege to be your representatives in this world and you know that we long long in this dark and dismal world to be light and salt in this tasteless world in this flavorless world we long to be those who show Jesus to those who are empty and lost and forlorn.

And so Lord we pray that you would work in us by your spirit and your word that you would purify us that you would change us day by day and moment by moment that we might more and more bear the likeness of your dear son that men and women may see him in us.

May we be able to know and say with John the Baptist of old I must decrease but he must increase in our lives for Lord our longing and desire is that men and women would see you as you truly are they might discern from all the false and fake news of God the truth that Jesus Christ saved sinners and that he is able to save even them.

So Lord help us continue to work in us continue to lead us in your ways for your glory and praise Amen. Now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever Amen.