

THE SIN OF MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK

INTRODUCTION: Notice on your outline David's words in **Psalm 36:1** "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." Not much has changed since David penned those words roughly 3000 years ago! We would probably say it like this— "The way the wicked sin sure shows they don't fear God!" Means the same thing, doesn't it?

Why don't **the wicked** fear God? I suggested to you way back in January that **one** reason the wicked don't fear God the way they should is because God's children don't fear God the way we should!

--The Bible says in **Psalm 97:10** that "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil"—but **we don't!**

--The Bible says in **I John 2:1** that we are to "sin not"—but **we do!**

--And the Bible says in **I Peter 1:16** that we are to be holy; because God is holy—but **we aren't!**

God **wants us to be holy**—and if we are serious about obeying and pleasing God—**we will want** to be too!

What does it **mean** to be holy? It means to be **separated** from sin—and **separated** unto God!

If you haven't guessed by now, this morning we are going back to our series: "Be Ye Holy, For I am Holy." Although we've **technically** had a 6-week break from talking about holiness, we really haven't taken a break **at all!**

Why do I say that? Because **the cross** reminds us of God's **hatred for sin!** Not only that, but one of the Christ's commands connected to the resurrection that I shared with you was **Luke 24:47** "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name...." Why does **repentance**—a turning from sin—need to be preached? Because God has declared His **hatred for sin**—and His **punishment for sinners!**

This morning, I want to continue with the thought that God **punishes sin**. I mentioned earlier that it is my opinion that far too many of God's children **take sin lightly**—including myself! And a good way to fight that tendency is to keep before us **God's view** of sin and how God **deals** with sin.

Do we have examples of God **punishing sin** in the Bible? Yes, we do—**especially in the OT!** I'm sure there are more, but I came up with 20 different examples fairly quickly. Today I want to look at just one—Moses being **banned from the Promised Land** for **striking** a rock—instead of **speaking** to it!

We find that account in Numbers 20; please turn there and follow along as I read verses 7-12 (read).

1. The "specialness" of Moses

If I were to pick an OT Bible hero, it would definitely be **Moses**—although I can't tell you exactly **why!** Moses' name appears 783 times in our KJ Bibles—**2nd only to** [anyone care to guess]? **David!** (895 times).

A distant 3rd—and I wouldn't have guessed this one—is **Jacob** (345); followed by **King Saul** (323).

Abraham rounds out the top 5 with 280, but **Solomon** is not far behind at 272. One more tidbit of info—

Moses' name appears **more in the NT** than anyone else's from the OT! There's your Bible trivia for the day!

So what is it that makes Moses so special; so unique? Mark your spot here and turn to Exodus 1 where we will see the.... **A. Care of God in Moses' early life**

Look at vs 7. The children of **Israel**—whose name had previously been **Jacob**—were multiplying in the land of Egypt. Vs 8 says "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." God had **used Joseph** to spare the land of Egypt from famine, but the new king—instead of **favoring** God's people—was **against them**—so much so that he wanted all the Hebrew **baby boys killed**. We see that in vs 16.

Now look at **chapter 2** and follow along as I read vs 1-4.

Imagine all the things that could go wrong with a 3-month-old baby in a floating basket—made of bulrushes, slime, and pitch—placed in the reeds on the edge of the Nile River!

--the little basket could become waterlogged and sink

--the water could rise and pull the little ark into the bigger part of the river
--“Google” (actually, Duck-duck-go) says that babies start to roll around 3 to 4 months of age, so little Moses could have rolled over and fell out of the basket—or at least rolled enough to tip it over!
--Snakes and crocodiles would have been common on the edge of the water
--One last one—and probably one we don’t think about—is the fact that an **Egyptian soldier** could have found the basket instead of **Pharaoh’s daughter**!

In verses 5-6, we see that Pharaoh’s daughter came to wash herself in the river. She sees the ark, has a maid get it for her, opens it up, and the baby Moses begins to weep. Her heart is touched, and she rightly says, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

Now vs 7. Moses’ sister is watching, sees her little brother pulled out of the basket, and nonchalantly—or **rather excitedly**—goes to Pharaoh’s daughter and says, “Hey, you want me to find someone to take care of the baby for you?” We see the response in vs 8: “Go!”

Isn’t that interesting? Pharaoh’s daughter doesn’t seem to be the **least bit suspicious** of the young girl’s offer! If that isn’t the **hand of God**, I don’t know what is! Who does Moses’ sister go and get? We have the answer in the middle of vs 8 “And the maid went and called **the child’s mother**.”

Now verse 9. What a wonderful demonstration of the goodness and providence of God! Instead of Moses **being killed** as a baby boy, he is found by Pharaoh’s daughter—and she **pays** Moses’ mother to take care of her own baby! And Moses’ mother not only raised him—she also taught him the fear of God!

The specialness of Moses doesn’t end with God’s care of him when he was a child, though.

We also see it in his... B. Calling of Moses from God in later life

Now look at vs 11-12. Here we see that Moses killed an Egyptian—and we know from Acts 7:23 that he is 40 years old at this time. In vs 15, Moses flees Egypt and goes to the land of Midian. Fast forward another 40 years—Moses is now 80 according to Ex 7:7—and God calls to him out of the burning bush.

Look at Ex 3:2-5. God calls—and Moses answers. Then God commissions him to lead God’s people out of Egypt! We see that in **vs 10**: “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Was Moses **excited** about this opportunity? Not at first! In fact, Moses **argues with God** and gives God several reasons why he felt God had made the **wrong** choice in choosing him!

Where we really see the **specialness**—the uniqueness—of Moses, though, is in the....

C. Closeness of Moses to God in his life as a leader

We obviously don’t have time to look at **every instance** where we see how close Moses and God were, but let’s think through some of “the biggies.”

--It was Moses that God used to **demonstrate God’s power** when the 10 plagues were unleashed on Pharaoh and Egypt.

--It was Moses that went to the top of Mount Sinai and **spent 40 days and 40 nights** with God—twice!

--It was Moses that **got the 10 Commandments** from God—and the pattern for the tabernacle.

--It was Moses that God **revealed Himself to** when God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and passed by him.

--It was Moses **whose face so shined** from being with God that he had to wear a covering on his face!

--It was Moses who **pled with God** on a number of occasions not to destroy the people even though they were stubborn and rebellious!

--And it was Moses who received the following epitaph from God found in **Deut 34:10-12** “And there **arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face**,¹¹ In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,¹² And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.”

Let’s turn back now to where we started—Numbers, chapter 20, beginning with vs 2. Here we see...

2. The situation of Moses

Notice vs 2-3: “And there was **no water** for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode [chided] with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!” Pretty desperate complaint, wasn’t it?

This was not the first time the people complained **against** Moses and Aaron!

Num 14:2 “And all the children of Israel **murmured against Moses and against Aaron**: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!”

Num 16:3 “And they [Korah, Dathan, and Abiram] **gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron**, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

There are other examples—including when **his sister and brother murmured against him**—but the point I’m making is this: Moses was **used to being murmured against** by the people he led, loved, and prayed for! So if there was anyone who had a reason to be **tired of** the rebellion of God’s people—besides God—it would be Moses!

Next, let’s consider... **3. The sin of Moses**

In vs 7-8, we see... A. The instructions to Moses

--Take the rod --You and Aaron gather the people together --Speak unto the rock

What did God say would happen when they did that? End of vs 8 “...it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts to drink.”

Who, in reality, is bringing water out of the rock? **God is**, right?

B. The reaction of Moses

Vs 9 “And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as He commanded him.” So far, so good, right?

Vs 10 “And Moses gathered the congregation together before the rock...”

Still doing what God had said—but not for long!

Mid of vs 10 “...Hear now, **ye rebels**; must we fetch you water out of this rock?”

Vs 11 “And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he **smote** [struck] the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

Did Moses follow God’s instructions! **No!** But “all is well that ends well, right?” **Wrong! Just because the water** came out does not mean God was “okay” with what Moses had done!

How do **we know** God was not pleased? Because of the **consequences God gave to Moses** for his sin!

I’m calling it... **4. The suffering of Moses for his sin**

Vs 12 “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore **ye shall not bring this congregation into the land** which I have given them.”

I can’t imagine how devastating this news would have been to Moses! Shortly after leaving Egypt, they were supposed to go into the Promised Land. 12 spies were sent to check out the land and they came back with a **mixed** report. It was indeed a **good land**—one that flowed with milk and honey—but the people they had to fight to get the land were **strong** and the cities **were walled**. And so God’s people wept—and wanted to return to Egypt—because they did **not believe God could defeat** the giants in the land.

What was God’s punishment for their complaining and doubting and murmuring against Him? They would **wander 40 years in the wilderness**—until all the people 20 years old and up and died. And now—after nearly **40 years** of waiting—Moses was not going to be able to go in!

How **hard** was this on Moses? How **badly** did he want to see the Promised Land? So much so that he asked God to reconsider His decision! **Deut 3:25-27** “I pray thee, **let me go over, and see the good land** that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. ²⁶ But the Lord **was wroth** with me for your sakes, and **would not hear me**: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; **speak no more unto me of this matter**.

²⁷ Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for **thou shalt not go over this Jordan.**"

At first glance, it would seem that **God's punishment** did not really fit **Moses' crime!** **Striking** a rock—instead of **speaking to it**—did not seem to be the worst crime in the world—especially considering **the close relationship** God had with Moses and all **Moses had done for God** over the past 40 years!

So was God being a bit **too harsh** on Moses? Was God being **excessive in His punishment?** To answer that, I want us to lastly consider... **5. The significance of Moses' sin**

Let's dig into what Moses **did** or **didn't** do—and what **God said** about what Moses did.

First, it is pretty obvious that... **A. He was angry**

Although it doesn't say—here—that Moses is angry, we see it in his words in vs 10 "Hear now, ye rebels...." And we know **for sure** Moses was angry because of **Psalm 106:32** "They **angered him** also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:"

A guy named **Binnie** makes an interesting observation: "For once he loses command of himself. On all former occasions of the kind his meekness was unshaken; he either held his peace, or prayed for the rebels, or at most called on the Lord to be his Witness and Judge. Now he breaks out into bitter chidings."

I think this is especially significant because he and Aaron had just been on their faces before God, presumably pleading on the behalf of the people as they had at other times. And yet, here he is angry!

Second, I believe... **B. He was arrogant (vs 10):** "...must **we** fetch you water out of this rock?" It was not "we"—as in Moses and God; it was "we" as in Moses and Aaron! 'Must Aaron and I get water out of this rock for you?' They **could not do that**—without the miraculous working of God—any more than you or I could do it! Yet Moses spoke as if **he** could bring water out of the rock! And that is why God rebuked him in vs 12 and said you did not "sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel." 'You did not honor me, Moses—you honored yourself!'

Third... **C. He was disobedient.** In vs 11, we see Moses **striking** the rock instead of speaking to it. It might seem like a small technicality, but Moses was the leader of the nation and "to whom much is given, much is required." God expects us **to do things** the way **He tells us** to do them—not our own way! And Moses obviously failed to do that. To again quote **Binnie**: "The better a man is, his sins may be the more dishonouring to God. A spot hardly visible on the coat of a labouring man, may be glaringly offensive on the shining raiment of a throned king."

D. He was doubtful. It is interesting to me—and a bit puzzling—as to **why** God says what He says in vs 12. Moses was undoubtedly **angry and disobedient**; he also appeared to be **arrogant**. But God does not address any of those three sins. Instead, God says "Because ye **believed me not**, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel..." God obviously **did not make a mistake** in saying those words, so how was **unbelief** tied in with what Moses did? Here are a couple of thoughts.

1) Forty years earlier—according to Exodus 17—Moses had been in a similar situation. At that time, God had instructed Moses to **strike the rock** with the rod—and he did. What happened? Water came out, of course! **Did Moses doubt** that water would come out **this time** by just **speaking**? If so, that is obviously not believing God! Because God knows the heart—and we don't—maybe Moses was becoming **more dependent on the rod** he used than the **power of God** behind the rod!

2) Here's a second thought. If God tells us to do something—like **speak** to a rock—but you think you need to "help" God by **doing more**, isn't that unbelief? It certainly is! Do we do that today?

We **certainly do**—but maybe in a way you don't realize! In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer asked Paul: "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's response—which is **God's response**—was "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" But sadly, countless people do not **accept that answer**. They don't believe it; it is **too simple**! They say—or at least think— 'It **can't be that easy**; surely God **needs my help** to save me!'

And so they **reject God's way** to be saved—which is to **trust only Jesus** for the forgiveness of their sins—and **try to "help God" by doing good**—just like Moses did when he struck the rock!

Rest assured—God does not **need your help to save you**! Come to God God's way—and don't add to it!

Does God take sin seriously? He does, doesn't He? The question is, **do we?**

There are no "little sins" in God's sight—they are all offensive to Him. May God stir within each of us a greater desire to "sin not" ...and "hate evil" ...and be holy because He is holy!

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, be honest about how you are trying to get to heaven! God does not need your help to save you—it is based solely on trusting Jesus and Jesus only. Don't think for a minute you can say "no" to God's way to get into heaven—and then get in!

2. Child of God, are you asking God to help you not sin—or do you take sin lightly? Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Doesn't get any plainer than that, does it? Just because God doesn't immediately give us consequences for our sins doesn't mean He is not displeased. It is not a compliment to you if God has to use a 2x4 to get your attention!