

Place: Lurgan Baptist 16:2:2014

MOSES, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Reading: Numbers 20:1-3 Deuteronomy 3:23-29

19. THE ANSWER IS STILL NO

Do you remember when your kids were small and even not so small? They came to you on many occasions and asked if they could have something or do something and your response was “No.” So you refused. But children are not that easy put off. So with determination and persistence they came to you again with another plea. And what was your response on this occasion? Why you had to tell then, “*The answer is still no.*” Now when Moses struck the rock twice in disobedience and unbelief to God’s command to “*speak,*” to the rock so, that it might bring forth water. God told Moses that he would not lead Israel into Canaan. (Num 20:12) Then in (Deut Ch 3) when Moses asked about going into the Promised Land, God essentially said, “*the answer is still no.*” One of our hymns asks that we might be taught “*the patience of unanswered prayer.*” Do you know something about unanswered prayer ? Have there been times when the Lord has said “*no,*” to you ? Is He still saying this “*the answer is still no.*”

*I know not by what methods rare
But this I know, God answers prayer
I know not if the blessings sought
Will come in just the guise I thought*

*I leave my prayers to Him alone
Whose will is better than my own*

Now Moses was a mighty prayer warrior. Do you recall when God sent the plagues on Egypt, it was Moses’ prayers to the Lord that frequently caused the plagues to cease. (Exod 7:14) When the Amalekites attacked the Israelites in the wilderness, Moses went up the mountain-top and lifted up his hands in prayer. (Exod 17:8) When the nation of Israel sinned greatly against the Lord by worshipping the golden calf, it was Moses, the intercessor, who spared them (32:7-14) He went back to Mount Sinai, and prayed to the Lord on behalf of the people. (Exod 32:30) When God smote Miriam with leprosy for criticising Moses, he was the one who prayed for her, and God healed her. (Num 12:1-16) At Kadesh-barnea, when the Jewish people had disobeyed God, by refusing to enter the Promised Land, Moses once again interceded on their behalf, and the Lord spared the people. (Num 14:1-21) When the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents, it was the intercession of Moses that brought about healing. (Num 21:5-9)

It is interesting that Moses was the great intercessor. People criticised him. They complained about what he did. *They took him for granted, and yet if it had not been for the prayers of Moses, where would the nation of Israel have been ?* My we should not take the prayers of our families or our leaders for granted, for if we have praying parents and spiritual leaders, we have the answer to every problem and the provision for every need. Moses often prayed for others and God gave him what he requested.

Here Moses prayed for himself and God says, “ *the answer is still no.* ” You see, Moses knew God’s will and yet here in (Deut Ch 3) we find him trying to change God’s mind. Had Moses forgotten the meaning of prayer ? My what is prayer ? Prayer is asking God to accomplish His will. “ ***Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance but is taking hold of God’s willingness.*** ” Prayer is not arguing with the Lord or twisting His arm in order to get what we want. Prayer is asking God to perform His will in our lives and then accepting His will. Do you recall what John says, “ *And this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us* ” (1 Jn 5:14) Now I want to talk to you this on the subject, “ **The Answer is Still No.** ” In order to set this within its context I want you to notice,

(1) A PROBLEM THAT WAS NOT RESOLVED

Do you know what their biggest problem was ? The same problem, as ours. *Its called murmuring.* I mean the children of Israel are again on the edge of Canaan. By this point the Hebrews have been wandering for thirty nine years and complaining every step of the way, it seems. It’s the same tired old refrain. They’re still griping, still carping, still complaining about their lot in life and how neglected they are. I mean Moses had heard it all, a thousand times before. But what the people didn’t realise and what Moses didn’t realise was that they were about to push their leader over the edge. I mean can you see here,

(a) THE DESPICABLE PEOPLE:

Do you see how they are spoken of ? “ *The people.* ” (20:2-3) You see, the old generation is no more, a new generation is risen. When the nation had arrived at the border of the Promised Land almost four decades ago, the people refused to go in because of unbelief. As a result of this disobedience Moses led the world’s longest funeral march and Caleb and Joshua watched their generation die. *They were probably being buried at the rate of seven funerals an hour.* Yet despite the fresh burials, despite the tombstones that stretched across the wilderness of Zin, the people of Israel continued to complain. You see, this new generation was following closely in the steps of their parents, murmuring, complaining, whining and forgetting the blessings that God was showering upon them daily. Do you see their attitude ? “ *Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord.* ” (2);3) Do you see their accusations ? “ *Why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness* ” (20:4)

I wonder is murmuring your constant problem ? Paul says, “ *Do all thing without murmurings and disputings.* ” (Phil 2:14) Let me give you a word about murmuring. Don’t do it. Paul says, “ *Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer.* ” (1 Cor 10:10) Some Christians believe they have been given the “ *gift of grumbling.* ” But there is no gift of grumbling. You need no talent to grumble, you need no brains to grumble, you need character to grumble, you need no self denial to set up the grumbling business. Have you discovered that its one of the easiest things in the world to do ? For the moment you take your eye off the Lord you become one of “ *The Grumblers.* ” (a)

(b) THE DEFINITE PLACE:

The name “*Kadesh*,” ought to ring a bell. That was the place where the people of Israel had refused to enter the land of Canaan. (Num 13:26) Almost forty years have come and gone and now the people are in Kadesh again. *They had come full circle. Why ?* Well, they trusted the Lord to bring them out of Egypt but failed to trust Him to bring them into Canaan. Before Kadesh the children of Israel were pilgrims advancing with purpose at the commandment of the Lord. After Kadesh they were simply wanderers going around in circles. They were like the proverbial door on its hinges all the time moving forwards and backwards but never getting anywhere.

Think of it. Thirty eight years wandering in the wilderness waiting to die. I wonder, is this where you are spiritually ? Have you turned your back on the will of God ? Have you come a certain distance in spiritual things only to vegetate in a kind of spiritual vacuum ? Have you become like a stagnant pool rather than like a watered garden ? For you at this moment is it “*wasted years ?*” You see, it was at Kadesh Barnea they went wrong. It was 38 years later at Kadesh Barnea they got right. (a) (b)

(c) THE DEFICIENT PROVISION:

“*And there was no water for the congregation,*” (20:2) Matthew Henry says, “*It is a great mercy to have plenty of water a mercy which if we found the want of we should own the worth of.*” It’s interesting that they quarreled with Moses, but were angry at God. You see, while they

thought that their complaint was against Moses, God viewed it differently. Do you see (20:13) ? Instead of giving God thanks for sparing them, they prefer slavery to liberty, the house of bondage to the land of promise. At the center of all this is their refusal to believe that God is good, despite the lack of water. My for forty years God provided them with everything they needed. Now this immediate need cast a long shadow over God’s faithfulness. Do you know something ? When we “*hit out,*” at others often the root problem is that we are angry at God for the way things are going. Now we don’t shake our fist at God do we ? But we become angry with the pastor, the elders, our spouses, our kids, our friends, our co-workers but our anger at others is really just unspoken frustration with God’s providence.

I can recall years ago a brother “*hitting out,*” out at me. He called me to his home and gave me a dressing down on one aspect of my gospel preaching. A year later he came to me apologizing for his behaviour. His business had not been going well, so he vented his anger on me. Have you done that ? Now look at,

(d) THE DIVINE PROPOSAL:

Look if you will at (20:7-8) What could be more clear ? There was nothing ambiguous about those instructions. “*Take the rod go out to the rock, speak to the rock and get out of the way. Water will be on its way.*” Now this was not the first time that God had provided water from a rock. (Ex 17:5-7) Do you recall on the first occasion the Lord had commanded Moses to strike the rock ? Now

instead of obeying the Lord's command to speak, Moses relied on his past experience and struck the rock twice. F. B. Meyer said this about the different methods,

But how much there is of this reliance on the rod in all Christian endeavor. Some special method has been owned of God in times past in the conversion of the unsaved or in the edification of God's people and we instantly regard it as kind of fetish. We try to meet new conditions by bringing out the rod and using it as of yore. It is a profound mistake. God never repeats Himself. It is for us to consult Him and to abide by His decision, doing precisely as He tells us, and when and where.

You see, some always approach an unsaved person by using "The Roman Road Method," still others use "The Four Spiritual Laws." Now there is nothing wrong with these methods but they are not the only way to lead a sinner to the Saviour. The Lord Jesus used different methods as He approached Nicodemus, Zacchaeus and the woman at the well. You see, we need to know Scripture well enough so we can meet any sinner where he is and lead him to Christ. So Moses was to speak to the rock so what happened? Look at (20:10-11) (1) But now,

(2) A PRAYER THAT WAS NOT REALISED

Do you see Moses here? He, under God has brought the people to the very edge of the Promised Land, his dream is fulfilled, his objective is accomplished, so he comes before the Lord and says, "I pray thee, let me go over,

and see the good land that is beyond Jordan." (3:25) And God says, "No." Why? Why was this simple request denied by God? Well this was God's judgement upon Moses for his sin of striking the rock. He would not now take Israel into the land of Canaan. You know, we never advance so far in spiritual things that we are beyond the reach of sin. Now why was this sin so serious? Because, it was the,

(a) SIN OF UNBELIEF:

Do you see what God says in (20:12) "Because ye believed me not." You see, when Moses struck the rock, he was saying that God's Word is not true. He was rebelling against God's instructions and doubting God's promise. Moses disobedience revealed his lack of faith in the power of God. My when you know God's will and you wilfully move in another direction that is unbelief pure and simple. You're saying before the Lord, "I do not believe your plan is the best." Now while the Lord still kept His promise and gave them water from the rock, He made it clear to Moses that he had committed a serious sin. My because of unbelief, Moses missed getting into the Promised Land. Tell me, are their requests in your prayer that are being denied? Is it because of sin in your heart? Do you recall the words of the Psalmist? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (66:18) The force of that verse is this, "If I regard, hold dear, and tolerate unconfused sin in my heart, God will not listen." The word "regard," implies "toleration, knowing and fostering sin and stubbornly refusing to confess it," this will cause our prayers to go unanswered.

What about the sin of unbelief ? Have you failed to take God at His Word ?

Moses sin of unbelief was serious in another respect. You see, this rock spoke of Christ. Paul says, “ *they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.* ” (1 Cor 10:4) This is plain and positive. “ ***That Rock was Christ,***” Christ smitten for us. Now this smiting could only take place once. (Ex 17:6) The Lord had provided water from the rock on both occasions in order to give the people a picture of Jesus Christ, the Rock from which the living water of the Holy Spirit flows. It was an illustration of how Christ would be smitten once on the cross. My it is never to be repeated. “ *But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* ” (Heb 9:26-27) “ *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.* ” (1 Pet 3:18)

My the Rock had been struck once, and from that point on, it would not be necessary to strike the Rock again. ***Striking the rock speaks of Christ's death on the cross, speaking to the rock speaks of His heavenly ministry.*** We come to Him and He gives us what we need. You see, when Moses struck the rock, instead of speaking to it, he ruined the beautiful picture the Lord was seeking to portray. (a)

(b) SIN OF PRIDE:

Do you see what God says to Moses ? (Num 20:12) Prior to this time, Moses had been a very meek and

humble man. (Num 12:3) But his meekness disappeared at that instant. He temporarily forget that the purpose of leadership is to glorify God. He lost his temper and called the people rebels saying, “ *hear now ye rebels must we fetch you water out of this rock ?* ” “ *But Moses when did you ever bring water out of a rock ?* ” Isn't God the one who summons water ? (20:10) My Moses took the credit for the miracle, that God was about to perform, glorifying himself rather than the Lord. *Isn't it interesting to notice how many people in the Bible failed at the point where we would have considered them strongest ?* Moses was renown for his meekness, yet Satan used pride to cause him to stumble.

Abraham's great strength lay in his faith, but that's exactly where he failed. Twice he lied about his wife, Sarah. (Gen 12:10, 13:4 20:1) Do you recall David ? His great strength lay in his integrity. He was a man after God's one heart. But he forgot his integrity and began to scheme in order to get Uriah's wife (2 Sam 11:1) Peter's great strength was his courage. But in his moment of testing, he denied knowing the Lord Jesus three times out of fear for his life. My watch out for that area that you consider to be your strongest. You see, the reason this sin was so serious in God's eyes was because it was the (a) (b)

(c) SIN OF REBELLION:

“ *And the Lord said unto Moses, get thee up into this mount Abarim and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people for ye rebelled*

against my commandment in the desert of Zin.”

(Num 27:12-14) Of course, the people were partly to blame for Moses’ sin. Like all leaders, Moses had been provoked at times by the children of Israel.

(Ps 106:32-33) I mean sometimes the people of God create problems for the servant of God. That’s why it so important for us to be patient with pastors, elders, and church leaders. We need to love and support them rather than complain about them and to them. My may we never be guilty of contributing to a persons fall into sin. My do you see why this sin was so serious ? (a) (b) (c)

(d) SIN OF ANGER:

“ *Hear now ye rebels must we fetch you water out of this rock ?*” (Num 20:10) Where did Moses get the ok to deliver that scathing message ? The truth is. He didn’t. Then where did it come from ? From anger. *Think of it, one moment of anger, one moment of disobedience, one moment of mistrust, one moment of frustration and doubt, and the price to pay, and the blessing he missed was great.* Do you know something ? ***We need the Lord in our 40th year just as much as in our first.*** We need the Lord at the end of our ministry, just as much as at the beginning. On 18th June, 1972, an airliner crashed at Heathrow Airport in London. 118 people died in the wreckage. The intensive investigation that followed revealed that the pilot had been unhappy because of the way an airline strike had been settled. As he took the plane off the ground, he noticed that it pulled badly to one side. The men who loaded the cargo had failed to keep the weight in balance. *That was the last straw.* The pilot, already angry,

exploded in rage and overcorrected, jamming the controls. The plane dived into the runway and all on board were killed. “ *Anger,*” Benjamin Franklin once said, “ *is never without a reason but seldom with a good one.*” An old Arab proverb says, “ *Anger is the wind that blows out the lamp of the mind.*” Do you know what Paul says ? “ *Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” (Eph 4:31-32) So we have here (1) (2) and subsequently,

(3) A PLACE THAT WAS NOT REACHED

Moses prayed “ *let me go over,*” (Deut 3:25) God replied, “ *thou shalt not go over.*” (Deut 3:27) Now isn’t that punishment a little harsh ? A bit severe ? All Moses did was hit a rock. And after all he was provoked. Those people were stubborn enough to test the patience of Job. Yet God said, “ *Moses the answer is still no.*” Indeed did you notice that Moses silence was commanded ? “ *Speak no more unto me of this matter.*” (3:26) I can recall old Sidlow Baxter speaking to me years ago about a matter that lay close to his heart and he said to me, “ *Denis, the Lord whispered in my heart ‘ Sidlow speak no more unto me of this matter.’*” Now,

(a) God in His Grace Forgave Moses:

Did God forgive Moses of the sinful act he committed ? Yes indeed. And more to the point you might be asking,

“ Will God forgive me if I disobeyed Him just today ? ”

Yes He will. But does this incident not teach us to be more careful in our obedience to God ? You see, some Christians think they can sin to their hearts content as long they can run to God for forgiveness. My God forgives us but not in a way that will ever encourage more sinning. Indeed while God in His grace forgave Moses.

(b) God in His Government Forbade Moses:

“ For thou shalt not go over this Jordan, ” (3:27) Was Moses sin forgiven ? Yes. But never forget that even forgiven sins bear terrible consequences. Did the Lord forgive David for his terrible sin against Bathsheba ? Yes. But if you study the life of David you’ll notice that in the first part of his rule David went all the way up. His reign was like an unstoppable express train of success, rolling on and on until Bathsheba.

Then the wheels came off the wagon. Everything changed for God does not look favourably upon the smearing of His glory by His child. Wouldn’t you love the ability to go back in time and change something that you did or said ? I know there have been moments in my life when I have acted on the impulse of the flesh, that I would dearly love to call back. But I cannot. Don’t you imagine that during those days prior to his homegoing, Moses would have cheerfully given his right arm to relive that incident at the rock ? *“ Oh, Lord, if I could only back up and do that all over. I would have cried for your help to control my anger. Lord, I would have been more concerned for your glory. ”* I wonder how many blessings you have missed

out on because you have failed to obey God ? What things could you have had in God, what ministry could you have exercised for God, that will be left on the table when this life is over ? My do not let sin and unbelief bring Gods **“ No, ”** into your life. Do not forfeit the blessings of victory because of your own disobedience. (a) (b)

(c) God in His Glory Favoured Moses:

For on the Mount of Transfiguration, two men were conversing with the Lord Jesus whose glory for a moments had been unveiled. One was Elijah and the other ? **Moses.** And their theme ? *“ They spake of his exodus (decease) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. ”* (LK 9:31) They were admitted into the sacred method by which Christ was going to free us from the slavery of sin and lead us His ransomed throng into that true Land of Promise. My Moses heart longing was granted. The exclusion had been only temporary and he was given a foretaste of glory to come. Moses did enter the Promised Land and in company with none other than the Lord of Glory

**With glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod
And spoke of the strife that won our life
With the Incarnate Son of God**

Is there not a sense in which the experience of Moses is the experience of us all ? Our highest hopes and aspirations are not always fulfilled on earth, but beyond lies the land of fulfilment.

