

Coping with a Crisis – Numbers 20:1-13

May 17, 2020

This morning, we move back into the wilderness experience of the people of Israel. It's been six weeks since we left our study of Numbers, and we will finish in the next few Sundays. A few things to be reminded about the context:

- **These are the redeemed, covenant people of God.**
- **These people are wandering aimlessly in the wilderness due to unbelief.**
- **God is faithful and just. His judgment is mingled with mercy.**

Déjà vu! Here we go again! Chapter 20 serves to remind us of the steadfast love and provision of God, even in the midst of persistent unbelief and rebellion.

The scene opens with the death of _____ (1) and ends with the death of _____. (28-29) The death of someone we love is the most difficult crisis to manage. It produces emotions, regrets, guilt, remorse, blessing, and cursing.

When we read of Moses' anger with the people, let us frame it in the context of Scripture. Moses is now almost 120 years old. He has just buried his sister and will soon accompany his brother up on a mountain and watch him die. Grief is a heavy load to carry!

These three had experienced the divine drama of God redeeming His people. They had spent 40 years together living in Egypt, 40 years apart while Moses was in the desert, and now 40 more years together in the Exodus journeys. This desert trio had experienced much — some good and some not so good!

The scene progresses as the people, once again, _____ and rebel. (2-5) Let me remind you that this is the new generation, offspring from the generation that refused to enter into the promised land, and yet it appears the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Many were the occasions of murmuring and complaint with their fathers' generation and now it appears the children are following in their parents' footsteps.

- They belittled the wrath of God. (3)
- They minimized the power of God. (4)
- They despised the provision of God. (5)

The scene reaches a climax as Moses _____ the rock. (6-13) This passage records a most uncharacteristic response of Moses. The man Moses was perhaps the greatest leader Israel would ever have. He experienced an unequaled intimacy with God, he demonstrated a meekness and humility like none other, and he interceded for these rebellious people time and time again. But Moses was just a man! And as a man, he came to his breaking point and allowed his emotion, his grief, his frustration, his anger to control his actions.

- He disobeyed the command of the Lord.
- He misappropriated the gifts of God.
- He diminished the glory of the Lord.
- He distorted the foreshadow and type of Christ.

**Application: Sin is a common enemy to every generation. Be aware of our sinful tendencies!
Frustration and anger can cause even a great man or woman to act uncharacteristically!
God can bless his people in spite of flawed and faulty leadership. Praise the Lord!**