

Moses and the Rock Part II

GOOD MORNING

We consider **CHANGE** – especially **PAINFUL CHANGE** – to be easy for **others** but not so easy for ourselves.

Monday is memorial Day, a day in which we remember the men and women in our armed forces who died protecting our freedom. I thank God for their service.

Guns and Moses?

SLIDE:

- I don't have a problem with anger.
- I just need people to stop getting me angry.

This statement, to which many of us can relate, has a bearing on today's topic.

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SLIDE: Part II

This morning, I want to go back and look again at the incident that keeps Moses and Aaron out of the Promised Land – Moses gets angry and, out of frustration, he strikes a rock twice to get water. However, God had told him to just speak to the rock and water would flow.

- We saw last time that the word for holy in Hebrew – 'kadosh' – means to be 'separate' or 'apart'.
 - God's Holiness means that that we must treat Him COMPLETELY DIFFERENT than we treat everyone and everything else. People's instructions are optional – God's instructions are NOT. Whenever we consider His instructions as optional, we are not treating Him as holy, as separate.
- Moses and Aaron were punished for not treating God as Holy.

OK – that's what happened. There are three aspects of this event I want to discuss:

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SLIDE: ASPECTS

- 1st. In what way did Moses' display of anger not honor God?
- 2nd. What was Moses' excuse for his actions?
- 3rd. Was God fair to Moses by punishing him so severely for this one mistake?

~ Before we get into these issues specifically, I want lay a foundation about the underlying matter at stake here – and that relates to God's Name.

Consider how Jesus taught us to pray...

- **Hallowed be Thy Name... May Your name be respected, considered Holy, Sacred, on the earth as It is in heaven.**

SLIDE: What's In A Name?

(Juliet?) Traditionally, a name is not merely an arbitrary designation, something picked out of a hat. Chances are, your parents thought a lot about what name to give you even before you were born. In 2013, top children's names in U.S. were: for boys, a close tied between Liam (Irish short for of William) and Noah, and for girls – Sophia.

Janell – several choices ... "*God is gracious*"

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American Indian names are chosen somewhat differently. Children receive names that are descriptive (e.g.; little brown eyes); they may be given new names at adolescence, and again as they go through life according to what their life experiences and accomplishments are. Catholics often add the name of a Saint as an additional name at either Baptism or Confirmation – Joseph Edward Charles Rich.

In the Bible, Hebrew names were chosen to convey a special meaning, and a person's name may likewise change to **better reflect the history and reputation of the individual being named.**

- For example, Abraham's name was originally Abram, and his wife Sarah's name was Sarai. When God made a covenant with Abram, He changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. Abram means "noble father"; "Abraham" means "the father of many nations." God added the letter "H" to Abram's name, and put it in the middle of his name. The letter "H" is the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the number five signifies "grace".
- Hoshea means *salvation*. Joshua means *God is salvation*: the additional "J" in the name points towards the first letter of the name of God (Jahweh)

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OK – Let's look at God's Name....

SLIDE: YHWH [יהוה] – Yud–Hay–Vav–Hay. This was revealed to Moses at burning bush. It occurs 6,823 times in the Old Testament. YHVH comes from the Hebrew verb **"to be"** and is the special name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM; and He said, thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you... this is My eternal name, and this is how I am to be recalled for all generations'"

YHWH – like all Hebrew words – is just consonants, no vowels, so a person adds vowels to sound out the word. Today, we often pronounce YHWH as Yahewh or Jehovah.

However, over time, God's actual name was considered so sacred that only the High Priest was actually allowed to pronounce it aloud. And, by the time of Jesus, it was pronounced only once a year on the Day of Atonement. When the temple was destroyed and the Day of Atonement ceremony ceased, the actual pronunciation was lost. Like I said, today we translate this as Yahweh, but no one really knows how to actually pronounce it.

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SLIDE: Adonai – So, instead of using God's actual name, the Israelites made a substitution. When a section of the OT was being read, the term “ADONAI” is used. ADONAI means LORD. This practice continues today when observant Jews are reading the OT and or praying.

SLIDE: HaShem

That's in prayer and reading the Torah. In **normal conversation**, however, observant Jews today make another substitution for God – the term “HaShem”. So, when talking with your neighbor, you would say "*put your trust in HaShem*" or "*HaShem spoke to Abraham...*"

That's in conversation. When writing, Jewish newspapers and on-line blogs often write 'God' as ‘**G-d**’ – omitting the middle letter.

- Judaism does not prohibit writing the Name of God per se; it prohibits *only erasing or defacing* a Name of God. However, observant Jews avoid writing any Name of God casually because of the risk that the written Name might later be defaced, obliterated or destroyed accidentally or

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by one who does not know better. For example, the newspaper may be thrown in the trash, used to wrap fish, etc., and therefore it would desecrate God's name.

Side note: The prohibition against defacing or erasing God's name caused a Rabbinical dilemma, as usual (funny).

How do you deal with God's name written on a computer?

- Can you type God's Name on a computer and then backspace over it? What about deleting a file containing the Name, thereby erasing it? What about a Powerpoint presentation with God's Name on a slide that is projected on a screen – can you turn it off?
- I actually came across an eight page Rabbinical discussion entitled: *The Sanctity of God's Name, Part 1: Erasing Sacred Texts from a Computer Screen.*
 - **No wonder Jesus talked about straining out gnats but swallowing camels!**
- But, to be fair, the issue is not a new one. People have had to deal with erasing the Name of God from the time that the first scroll was rendered unusable by an ink spill. Then came the printing press and the photocopier,. But,

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the computer is different. -> Can you type God's Name on a computer and then backspace over it ?

- The Rabbis have ruled that the prohibition against erasing or defacing Names of God applies only to Names that are written in some kind of permanent form. A name on a screen is merely made up of pixels that are constantly reforming, so it is not actually permanent. However, once you print a document out, it becomes a permanent form. That is why observant Jews avoid writing a Name of God and use G_d – because there is a risk that someone else will print it out and deface it.

➤ I GUESS THE RULING TOOK THE BYTE OUT OF THAT SIN.

SLIDE: HaShem

- OK – What does HaShem mean?

click: Shem in Hebrew means "Name" or "Glory"

click: in English, Ha Shem translates as "The Name."

The Name....

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SLIDE: Your Name

- What do we mean when we talk about a person's name?
- Well, Name' can mean a variety of things. It can mean a person's given name (e.g.; Thomas Perito, Lyle Hadley, Michael McGlaulin)

CLICK – name can also refer to a person's "nickname"

CLICK: – can mean an alias or, in CB language, a Handle:

- 'Homer' – Jon Otterbeck (I remember)
- 'Mr. October' – Reggie Jackson, for you Yankee fans,
- '**The Iron Kidney**' – for Jack Oles, one of the original X-men, whose talent was the ability to cross multiple State lines without once stopping in a rest area.

SLIDE: Reputation

- Your NAME can also mean YOUR REPUTATION – *it's a statement about your Character*
 - "Make a 'Name' for himself"
 - "Ruined the family Name"

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- Genesis 10:8-9 states: “Cush was the father of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, *“Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.”* Nimrod's reputation was as a ruthless hunter of men – an OT *“Ivan the Terrible”*.”

SLIDE: Reputation

Or, a more familiar verse that speaks of *Reputation and Character* is Isaiah 9:5-6, speaking of the coming Messiah...

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and **His name** (shem) will be called

- Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The Name "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" speaks of His Character, not His actual name Jesus.

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SLIDE: Reputation

- Your Reputation – Can I trust You? Can I trust You to do what you say you'll do? This is the crux of Moses' and Aaron's sin. God promised that the 2nd Generation would make it into the land – period. He didn't need any help from Moses. Moses' actions tainted God's reputation as a Promise Keeper.
- Reputation is the context of Psalm 9, verse 10 which says, **"Those who know Your name put their trust in You."**
 - It *doesn't* mean those who know the name God in English or Hebrew or Greek or any other language will necessarily trust God. However, those who know His Name – those who know **Who He really is** – put their trust in Him. Those who know the fullness of His nature and character really understand Him.

Now – Moses did know how important God's reputation was to Him...

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SLIDE: Think of Your reputation, God

Once, when God threatened to wipe them all out because of their numerous rebellions, Moses argued with God on the basis of what that would do to God's reputation.

“Moses said... ‘Now **if** You slay this people as one man, **then the nations** who have heard of Your fame **will say**, “Because **the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised** them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.” ’” Num. 14:15–16

- God, if You wipe them out, the other nations will say that it is because You're not as Powerful as You claim to be.
- God – Your reputation is at stake.

This DYNAMIC is in play in Numbers chapter 20.

OK – let's reread verses 1–13.

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SLIDE: Numbers Chapter 20

"Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there.

² There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. ³ The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! ⁴ Why then have you brought the LORD'S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? ⁵ Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink." ⁶ Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; ⁷ and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁸ "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and **speak to the rock** before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink."

⁹ So Moses took **the rod from before the LORD** (AARON'S ROD), just as He had commanded him; ¹⁰ and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, **"Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"** ¹¹ Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock **twice** with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. ¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, **"Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."**

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OK – God told Moses to take Aaron's rod, assemble the leaders of the people, go to a specific rock and **speak** to it for water. As we noted last time, Moses had some doubts that God would actually allow this rebellious group into the land. Moses had a choice:

- walk forward on God's promise, stand there holding Aaron's rod – signifying God's authority – and speak to the rock, or
 - give into his long-simmering frustration with the people's stubbornness by yelling at them and taking the rod and whacking the rock.
 - He chose the latter.
- As punishment for this act, both Moses and Aaron were prohibited from entering the Promised Land.

OK – that's what happened. There are three aspects of this event I want to discuss:

SLIDE: TOPICS

1. In what way did Moses' display of anger/frustration in public not honor God?
2. Was there a Blame Game going on there?
3. Was God fair to Moses by punishing him so severely for this one mistake?

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OK. First topic: In what way was God not honored in front of the people, since you will notice that **God gave the instruction to Moses to speak to the rock in private** – so the people didn't know he was disobeying, and also note that *Moses doesn't say anything negative about God at all when He strikes the rock?*

SLIDE: ANGRY MOSES

Moses stands up before the assembled congregation and says: “ Listen, *you rebels*, must *we* bring you water out of this rock?’... and Moses struck the rock twice with *the rod* ...”

Now – remember last time how we discussed that Moses evidently had some doubts about God allowing the rebellious people into the Land. Moses' inner *struggle with doubt* was **not** the problem – having doubts is a reality and – AND when you think about it – it is an opportunity to exercise faith.

The issue was not that he had doubts but **what he DID with the doubts!**

- I've noticed from personal experience that I often judge God by myself. Moses looked at the people & said:

“I wouldn't let them in, if I were God...”

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- He decided that a peaceful ceremony – speaking to the rock with perhaps a gentle reminder of God's loving provision – wasn't enough of a display for his taste, so he gave into his emotions, went on a tirade of anger and sarcasm, and struck the rock...
- Note also what he said – "Shall **WE** (Moses and Aaron)..." He intimates that he now, thru the gift of God, has in himself has the power and authority to accomplish the miracle.
 - Moses found a way to deliver the water, vent his frustration, let the people know how put-upon he is, and assert his importance all at the same time. And, he feels self-righteous and justified in doing so.
 - Imagine his surprise when God cried foul.
- Moses is now just about 120 years old. At that age, you would expect him to be docile and a bit mellow. But, If you were hotheaded and emotional before you came to God, you'll have that same tendency to be hotheaded and emotional after you do. If you have a tendency to be domineering, greedy, grasping, before you're converted; you'll have that same innate old nature when you're saved.

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- Moses was a emotional man. He had a fiery and burning temper. Remember – 80 years ago, back in Egypt, he killed a man with his bare fists when he saw that Egyptian wronging an Israelite slave. He's has had a temper all the way through his life – although remarkably he was able to suppress it for the most part. Now, it explodes here.
- This is a vital point here for us in our walk with Christ. Remember, it is Moses who is writing this down, and he doesn't put himself in a good light here. The Apostle Paul said that these accounts in the Book of Numbers were written down for OUR benefit. Moses is warning us. **If it could happen to a man like Moses, my fellow saints, it can and does happen to us.**
- What we're saved, God puts a spirit of grace and intercession in us by which we're able to command and to control our explosive spirit. But we've still got it. It's called THE FLESH.
- God gives us a new heart, but deep down in our souls, there goes civil war all the time, a'fighting, and a'struggling all the days of our life.
- Here, Moses gave in to the FLESH.
- And I'm sure it **felt good** at the time to do so...

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SLIDE: GOD'S OPINION OF MOSES' TEMPER TANTRUM

1. Because you did not trust in me...
2. *You did not honor me as Holy in the sight of the Israelites*

SLIDE highlight of second part

Why does God equate Moses expressing anger & frustration at a bunch of rebellious knuckleheads as not showing honor toward Him?

I think a significant part of the reason is in the last part of the quote – "in the sight of the people".

- God is saying to Moses that even if you had doubts that He would allow this rebellious generation into the Land, that was still **NO** reason **NOT** to treat Him as Holy **IN FRONT OF THE PEOPLE.**

God is concerned about His Reputation –and that includes how His representatives represent Him to the world!!

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3rd commandment

I want to look at one of the 10 commandments that I believe bears directly on this issue of representation. Exodus 20, verse 7 reads in the King James Version:

SLIDE: *"Thou shalt not **take** the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."
Exodus 20:7 King James Version*

Now, growing up as a Catholic, this was considered the 2nd commandment.

- Catholics, Protestants and Jews divide up this Chapter of Exodus differently as to what the specific 10 command are. Catholics consider this command to be the 2nd commandment; Protestants and Jews consider it to be the 3rd command. Whether it's #2 or #3, however, doesn't effect its applicability.
- The nuns taught me that this commandment meant that it was forbidden to use the Lord's name **in a curse or to swear falsely in a courtroom.**

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SLIDE: 3rd Commandment

The New International Version translates the passage as:

“You shall not **misuse** the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.”

This better reflects my Catholic understanding of the passage.

- In researching some Jewish commentaries, I have gained a new insight. While cursing with God's name or falsely swearing in a courtroom “...so help me God...” is condemned here, the 3rd Commandment has an additional connotation. The Hebrew word that is translated "take" or "misuse" is can mean "take" or "misuse", but it also literally means **"CARRY"**.

SLIDE: “You shall not carry the Name of the Lord, your God, in vain, for the Lord will not forgive anyone who carries His name in vain...” Rabbi Joseph Telushkin: *Biblical Literacy*:

Rabbi Telushkin writes: *“In other words – don’t use God as your justification in selfish causes.”*

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- He suggests that this context – *of carrying* – is the reason why the Third Commandment is the **only** commandment of the 10 for which God says, “for the Lord God will not forgive him who carries His name in vain” Rabbi Telushkin writes: *“The reason now seems to be clear. When a person commits an evil act, he discredits himself. But when a religious person commits an evil act in the name of God, he or she discredits God as well. And since God relies on religious people to bring knowledge of Him into the world, He pronounces this sin unpardonable.”*
- {The Book of Leviticus states that we are "Not to profane His Name" (Lev. 22:32).
 - In Hebrew, the phrase **Kiddush HaShem** refers to actions by a believer that brings honor, respect, and glory to God, thereby sanctifying God's Name – His Reputation) – whereas }
 - ***** ANY BEHAVIOR OR ACTION THAT DISGRACES, HARMS OR SHAMES GOD'S NAME – HIS REPUTATION – OR DISGRACES THE TORAH ITSELF – is regarded as a chillul Hashem (desecration of the Name).**

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A SIGN

God specifically told Moses to take Aaron's rod when he went to the rock. Remember, this was the rod that had budded and was placed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle.

This staff represented God's authority - whoever held it was speaking and acting for God.

- This is why Moses and Aaron actions were not overlooked by God. As His representatives, **they were carrying God's Name in vain in front of the people.**
- Moses – You used **the rod** that was in MY very presence and **therefore is now Holy – it was to be SIGN TO THE REBELS** . of My authority. You used it to vent your frustration.
 - ❖ **You didn't treat me as Holy** in front of the people.

God maintained His holiness by punishing Moses and Aaron. He did not make an exception – He did not grant a mulligan, a do-over...

> This, I believe, as St. Paul says, is a lesson for us – elders, deacons, parents or when just driving down the road. We represent Christ, and we need to be diligent not defame His Name or His Holy Scriptures.

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- We tend to forget this... we represent Him to the church, to our family, to the world.
- **WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT...**
- **WHETHER WE WANT TO OR NOT...**
- We're like a car on the thruway with a bumper sticker that says – "may the name of the Lord be Praised..." – cut some off???
- I tend to excuse my sin: "there, there, my dear Joe, it's understandable. You have been sick or you're under a lot of stress because of your health or **because no one sent a LIKE on your latest Facebook post...**
- I once heard a story by a nun about her visit to the confessional – true story. She went in and knelt down, pulled back the veil and said : "Father, I have sinned. I lost my temper." The priest responded: "Oh yeah? Well, You keep it, nobody else wants it."

My Reaction to **JANELL** out of my weariness from sickness (hot sauce bottle) – **I'm not demonstrating the character of Christ** – I am not upholding God as Holy in her sight -- **the same sin as Moses.**

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The Blame Game (no slide here)

Now, I want to read a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy regarding **Moses' reaction** to being banned from the Promised Land. Deuteronomy consists of three sermons or speeches of Moses to the Israelites when they are on the plains of Moab, just before he dies and they enter the Promised Land.

"¹⁹And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. ²⁰But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today. The LORD was angry with me because of you, and He vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving for your possession. ²²For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land."

Deut 4

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SLIDE: THE BLAME GAME

The Blame Game: **Making Excuses for Not Treating God as Holy.**

- Moses tells the people: "It's YOUR fault"

"But the Lord became angry with me *because of you* and vowed that I would never cross the Jordan nor enter the good land that he is about to give you. So I must die here in this land; I will not cross the Jordan." Deut 4

- it's **someone else's** fault that I acted sinfully.

Moses and the people stand at the very gates of the Promised Land, and his memory glosses over his own responsibility in the matter. Suddenly, it's not his behavior that prohibits his entrance into Canaan, but the actions of the people. Moses shifts blame. In fact, Moses blames the people three times in the Book of Deuteronomy that they caused his anger which resulted in his being prohibited from entering the Land. (Dt 1:37; 3:26; 4:21).

- Moses' reaction sounds a lot like the reactions of Adam and Eve:
 - Eve – snake *deceived* me
 - Adam – turned around and blamed both Eve and God: "the woman *You* gave me" is at fault.

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- Don't blame me, God – You gave her to me. I was doing fine before she came along – It's Your fault that I was provoked to sin!

Our human nature is apparent even a man like Moses – he wanted to blame his sin on someone else.

- Here, I believe, we see Moses as a person just like us. He wanted to excuse his sin, or water it down so it didn't seem so bad – perhaps it was even justifiable, certainly it was understandable – wasn't it? How corrupt is the human heart.
- **"That's just the way I am"**, I have often found myself thinking. That since God formed me in my mother's womb, my susceptibility to emotional anger somehow is His doing.
- The blame game – it allows us to excuse ourselves of sin, or lessen the severity of sin because of something else going on in our lives...
- **Ephesians: says "be angry but sin not"**
 - ❖ Another person's sin gives me no excuse for sinning.
 - ❖ **My temper tantrums and self-pity parties cure no evil.**

Moses and the Rock - Part I

THAT'S NOT FAIR?

SLIDE: THAT'S NOT FAIR?

- Let me pose a final question – What is your opinion of the SEVERITY OF THE PUNISHMENT for Moses' action?
– because the answer has a **BEARING ON OUR VIEW OF THE CROSS.**
- *Was God being fair for just one mistake?*

SLIDE: SYMPATHY FOR MOSES?

- Do we feel sympathy for Moses? When we consider his 40 years in the desert leading these people and the exemplary life he led and his devotion to God...
- I can honestly say that there is something in me that does sympathize with him – and that **makes me a little bit uncomfortable!** **Because God didn't!**
 - ✚ When I see Moses doing what he did, my reaction is: give'm heck, Moses, they deserve it – that ungrateful bunch of children.

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- ✚ I find a alarming sympathy for this man. I have to admit that I'm bothered by my reaction **BECAUSE GOD HAD NO SYMPATHY FOR MOSES ACTION!**
- **God** demanded an absolute holiness, and **when you and I can take sin and feel sympathy for it – to say that the sin doesn't matter, not on this occasion – then we all should be afraid of that.**
 - But, Come on! Moses is almost 120 years old and has been putting up with these complaints for the last 40 years – give him a break!
 - His sister just died a month ago. Doesn't he get even one Mulligan – one do-over?
- I do sympathize with him -- but that doesn't make it right. It doesn't make him right, and it doesn't make me right.
- What this reveals to me is that – **deep down, I still obviously have a lingering sense of legalism.**
 - ✚ My reaction contradicts ALL I discussed about the uselessness of our works, that we can do nothing to earn salvation, and that the only thing we can go is to cast ourselves on the blood of Christ for the

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remission of our sins, – yet I still find myself thinking like that about Moses.

- The lesson for me personally here is that – But for the grace of God, I could return to all my old struggles of works righteousness -- I could justify myself before God as good as any Pharisee.

SLIDE: My life

SLIDE – again

click: crosses – expound?

- Bob Wasson – I respect his insights – "I'm too stupid..."
That's even a better insight – **WE'RE ALL TOO STUPID!**

- Martin Luther often prayed over and over again:

"Lord, I'm Yours – save me.

We are saved by the blood of Christ alone. We need to stop making excusing for our actions. Christ Alone, Christ in us, our only hope of glory.

Moses and the Rock - Part I

- Holy Spirit – please remind me to control my tongue before speaking out of anger, especially when I'm stressed or sick or tired. I want to uphold You Lord God as Holy in the sight of others.

SLIDE:

- I WANT TO HONESTLY PRAY – 'FATHER, HALLOWED BY THY NAME'

Amen