

Moses and the Rock - Part I

SLIDE: NEVERTHELESS...

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Things are not always as they appear.

- Fire department manned by residents of Jewish old age home. – going to get the brakes on the fire truck fixed.
- Things are not always as they appear.

SLIDE: Moses Strikes the Rock Twice – Part I

This morning, I want to look at the incident that keeps Moses and Aaron out of the Promised Land. Numbers Chapter 20 recounts one of the most perplexing incidents in the entire Torah. The Israelites have been wandering in the desert for 38+ years, and it has been one complaint after another. Today's complaint is that they're thirsty again. God tells Moses to speak to a particular rock and water will come forth.

The instruction to "speak" to the rock is in contrast to an incident years earlier when God told Moses to hit a rock – and water gushed out (Exodus 17:6).

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This time, Moses is to *speak* to the rock, yet Moses again *hits* the rock. Nothing happens, so Moses hits the rock a second time, and water comes out.

- God's response: "you and Aaron will not lead the people into the Promised Land" (Numbers 20:11–12).

In Scripture, we occasionally come across incidents like this where things – especially in the O.T. – don't seem completely FAIR. *It's almost as if God is not acting like a Christian.*

When I first read the passage many years ago, I thought that Moses' and Aaron's punishment seems "a bit over the top" for one mistake.

Think about it – Moses and Aaron have been leading this mob of chronic complainers thru the wilderness for the past 38 years.

- Moses and Aaron – who more than once had to intercede with God so that He to not kill them all – now, for one mistake, Aaron and Moses will not be allowed into the Promised Land.
- **And yet, ironically, the complainers will make it in!**

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When God speaks, every detail that He utters has an impact on every other detail. We have an ongoing task to see how all the pieces fit together into a natural, meaningful and consistent whole, else people see the Bible as contradictory, or they may see the God of the OT as *different* from the God of the New Testament.

- An example is the false idea that the God of the OT was the judgmental God of the Jews, and the merciful God of the NT is the loving Father of Jesus. This actually was a heresy in the early church (Marcion – OT God was a separate and lower God than the merciful Father of Jesus).
- But the Bible say God never changes, so we make every effort to reconcile what may appear as differences to us.

*Well, a general rule that I've recognized in incidents like this is that God's holiness is somehow involved.*

- **GOD WILL DEFENDING HIS HOLINESS !**

God's Holiness! Here it is again. We've been seeing a lot of references to God's holiness in our songs and messages lately. God's Holiness is involved in the issue here. So, in order to appreciate the fairness of the punishment, I want to look at *a different* aspect of God's Holiness.

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*What do we mean when we say God is **Holy**?*

What does Holiness *mean*? Well, while it is difficult to adequately describe, **we can sense that Holiness exists.**

**SLIDE:** Take for example...

- Negro spiritual: *Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. **Were you there when they crucified my Lord?***

The lyrics are haunting to me – something emotional, something wonderful stirs inside of me and yet – at the same time – it frightens me a bit when I hear those words.

*"Causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"*

It's like all-of-a-sudden, I'm caught up in a great truth. I'm face-to-face with something profound that's not of this dimension. It's a glimpse into eternity that God grants only infrequently. It washes over me. I can feel it in my soul!

- Isaiah felt this, Habakkuk felt this, Job felt this, and Moses did also. And I'm sure that you have felt this also at some time or other. We have a common bond

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with these OT saints, and that is we serve a Great and Almighty and Holy God.

God's Holiness is real. It's deep, it's overwhelming, AND it's somewhat scary.

- Right off the bat, I want to admit – as I have on previous occasions – this is a topic on which I am woefully lacking in understanding.

However, while I can't satisfactorily explain it, I do know that the Hebrew concept of Holiness is NOT exactly the same as what we today think of it. Today, holiness mostly implies purity or goodness – God is pure, God is good – there is no impurity or evil in God. That's all true. But, pure, good, kind, almighty ... those are *characteristics* of God – but His fundamental nature is Holiness.

SLIDE: HOLY-SEPARATE

- The Hebrew word for 'holy' is '**kadosh**', which actually means **SEPARATE**, as in not a part of something common but above and beyond it.
  - The root word means: “What follows the threshing” -> What remains when all the chaff is removed

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There are dozens of references to the “threshing floor” in the Bible, some literal and some symbolic. In biblical days there was no machinery, so after the harvest, the grain was separated from the straw and husks by beating it manually. First there had to be a flat surface which was smooth and hard and this was known as the threshing floor. The process of threshing was performed generally by spreading the sheaves on the threshing floor and causing oxen and cattle to tread repeatedly over them, loosening the **edible part of cereal grain** (or other crop) from the scaly, inedible chaff that surrounds it

What does it mean to be SEPARATE?

- Example: Donna loves to separating dark loads from light loads when doing **laundry** – and that the Hebrew word *kadosh (holy)* could appropriately be used to describe her act of separating colors of clothing before washing them.
- Me – I'm not so fussy. College: underwear with some curious shades, the most extraordinary was a very attractive shade of **pink** (which I was careful not to wear on gym day.

**\*\*\* DON'T BE AFRAID TO LAUGH AT YOURSELF – YOU'LL HAVE A LIFETIME OF FREE ENTERTAINMENT!**

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God is Separate – He is beyond just normal separation or difference – the idea of God's holiness (*kadosh*) implies an **tremendous separation** -- the realm of the holy is entirely SET APART from the common, the ordinary, or the sinful.

I mentioned that the model of separation was often applied to a threshing floor, separating grain from the husks.

SLIDE: David's altar on threshing floor

- II Samuel 24 – site of David's altar.

CLICK: Later became the site of the Temple & the Holy of Holies (2 Chronicles 3:1).

SLIDE: LEVITICUS

Now, this idea of separation also applies to us. Holiness – being separate – can be seen in this quotation from Leviticus:

- Lev 20: 26 - You must be **holy to Me** because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the other peoples to be mine. --> **holy = set apart, separate**

“Set apart”, “holy TO Me”: You're completely separate from the world and you are Mine and Mine alone! I am a jealous God and will protect what is rightfully Mine.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 4:24; see session 30 of this series – Idolatry and A Jealous God.

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- So – the Hebrew concept of Holy contains the thought that something or someone who is *separate* from other things or persons.
  - ❖ In God's case, Holy means that He is above and beyond from everything else.
- *The implication of this is that we need to treat God differently than we do everything else.*

We must treat Him as Holy – We must treat Him completely differently from how we treat everyone and everything else!  
Example: God's instructions vs. my mother's instructions:

- My mother always urged my sister and myself to eat our spinach, because it has iron and make us strong and give us good color in our cheeks.
  - Didn't eat it – I figured: -- *who wants green cheeks?*
- Treating my mother's instructions as optional about eating spinach was not very smart, but it was not in-and-of-itself necessarily hazardous.
- But, if I treat God's instructions as optional, then I'm treating God just like everyone else.



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- In that case, I'm not treating Him as separate. In other words, I'm not treating Him as HOLY.

The very fact that I may *consider* God's instructions as occasionally *optional* is a sin against His holiness. This is going to be the basic element of Moses' sin – by ignoring God's instruction to *speak* to the rock, Moses forgot about the concept of God's Holiness – we cannot treat Almighty God as we do everyone else. His commands are *not optional* – as Adam found out!

God *demand*s to be treated as Holy in a way that is completely different from how we treat everyone and everything else.

**SLIDE:** Chapter 20 – OK Let's READ NUMBERS CHAPTER 20:1–13, 23–end.

"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.

<sup>2</sup> There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup> The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! <sup>4</sup> Why then have you brought the LORD'S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? <sup>5</sup> 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."

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<sup>6</sup> 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; <sup>7</sup> and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>8</sup> "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."

<sup>9</sup> So Moses took **the rod from before the LORD (AARON'S ROD)**, just as He had commanded him; <sup>10</sup> 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?"** <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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."** <sup>13</sup> Those *were* the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them."

skipping down to verse 23... <sup>23</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying, <sup>24</sup> "Aaron will be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, **because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah.** <sup>25</sup> Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up to Mount Hor; <sup>26</sup> and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar. So Aaron will be gathered *to his people*, and will die there." <sup>27</sup> So Moses did just as the LORD had commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. <sup>28</sup> After Moses had stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar, Aaron died there on the mountain top. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. <sup>29</sup> When all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.

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**SLIDE: Numbers 20**

- MIRIAM & AARON DIE.
- 2<sup>ND</sup> GENERATION OF ISRAELITES NEAR THE END OF THEIR YEARS OF WANDERING AFTER TISHA B'AV<sup>2</sup>
- THEY'RE BACK AT THE SAME PLACE & THEY'RE STILL COMPLAINING

Chapter 20 begins and ends with the deaths of Moses' two siblings.

What we're dealing with here in Chapter 20 is the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Israelites who are now back at Kadesh – it's been about 38 years since they were here before, and by now, almost all of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation has died off.

- PS> The *often-used* expression "40 years wandering around the mountain in order to learn a lesson" is a charming allegory but it **IS NOT the reason** why they were wandering.
- They were waiting for the older generation to **die off** for disbelieving God 37+ years ago at this very same place.

**SLIDE: KADESH-BARNEA**

- OK – here's a map showing the location of Kadesh (Barnea) on the southern border of the land of Canaan. After

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<sup>2</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Av. The date when they refused to go into Canaan in Numbers 13 & 14.

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almost 4–decades in the wilderness, the Israelites are back again at *the very same place* where they refused to enter the land after the report of the 12 scouts. As I said, by now, almost all of the older generation is dead; so the people being discussed in Chapter 20 is the 2nd generation – and *they're acting much like their parents did*.

The Israelites are again in need of water, and once more they go to Moses and want to know what he is going to do about it. And, just *like their parents*, this 2<sup>ND</sup> GENERATION **openly express their distress at being led out into a barren place**. They longed for what their parents had told them that they had back in Egypt. Back in Egypt, they say, they had plenty of food.....figs, grapes, pomegranates...and plenty of water. Living along the Nile meant they NEVER thirsted for water.

- **The people are spouting the same nonsense that their fathers had done.** They had suffered these past 38 years of wandering because of the discontent of their fathers, and yet they are now walking in the same footsteps. *It makes their complain even more foolish*

As I mentioned, this situation echoes something that happened about 38 years ago when they just came out of Egypt. They ran out of water at a place called Rephidim near Mt. Sinai.

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" Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup> Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; **and you shall strike the rock**, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." Exodus 17: 4-6

So, the difference between these two incidents of needing water is that the first time, Moses was instructed to **strike the rock**; this time, God's instructions is that he should merely **speak to the rock**.

So, Aaron and Moses went to the Wilderness Tabernacle and fell on their faces in worship seeking the council of the Lord about the complaints. And, God appears to them and speaks to them.

**SLIDE: Instructions to Moses**

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**

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the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him." Numbers 20:7-9

The gist of the instruction is that Moses is to take Aaron's staff and speak to a rock...

- we know it was Aaron's staff (not Moses' staff) because Moses was instructed to take the staff that was in the Lord's presence in the Tabernacle, and that was Aaron's staff that had budded.

Moses takes the staff from before the Ark, and he and Aaron walk over to some conspicuous rock that was nearby. They assembled the community of Israel (probably just the elders) as witnesses to what was about to happen; then Moses was to **speak... or better, ask... the rock to give up water.**

- **Think about what God was permitting. In Genesis 1, God spoke the world into existence.** There was no go-between that did something. God spoke a Word (which was Christ); events consistent with His word immediately took place. The time interval in each step was less than one day. God spoke the world into existence. His word was sufficient.

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- Men do not normally possess such a word of authority. Moses was being given that authority in this instance.

Moses and Aaron go to the rock, and then Moses proceeded to vent his frustration with the people.

SLIDE: Moses was NOT a Rock Star

"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." Numbers 20:10-11

Basically, Moses sarcastically says, '*You're a bunch of rebellious losers, no better than your fathers. Always complaining. Somehow or another, even in a place where there is no water, you expect us to just manufacture it for you. I'm tired of your complaining - you don't deserve water, but we'll do it just to keep you quiet.*'

Then he turns and whacks the rock with Aaron's staff. Nothing happens. And so, he hits it again, and out flowed

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**enormous volumes of water.** Because for 3 million people and all those animals to survive, it would take something on the order of 11 million gallons of water, every day!

Well, the people were happy enough that the water came forth after Moses' action; but it turns out the Lord doesn't feel the same way about what just happened.

**SLIDE: GOD'S RESPONSE**

But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron. He said, "You did not trust in me enough to honor me. You did not honor me as the holy God in front of the people of Israel. So you will not bring this community into the land I am giving them." Numbers 20:10-11

God informs Moses and Aaron that because they did not trust Him enough, they had not upheld His Holiness in front of the Israelite community; their punishment is that neither of them will enter the Promised Land.

- Anyone reading the passage is bound to ask why? Why such a harsh decree from the Lord to the very two men who He has used, and to some degree *used up*, to achieve His purposes. **And what did He mean by saying that these two men didn't trust (believe) Him?**



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What is it that Moses and Aaron did that would bring this sort of chastisement from God upon them? It's obvious is that Moses disobeyed God; he hit the rock when he was only supposed to verbally command it to produce water. But, this seems so small a thing in comparison to the consequences, especially considering his faithful track record over the past four decades.

SLIDE: WHAT EXACTLY WAS THEIR SIN? **Here are the Usual Suspects...**

- Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it
- Moses struck the rock twice, not once
- Moses belittled the people
- Moses doubted God's ability to bring them into the Land
- Moses spoke and acted as if he had the power rather than God

Perhaps it was a combination of two or more of these actions... And there are **dozens** of other suggested possibilities – and good arguments can be made for most of these possible reasons. But, there is no consensus on the matter.

- One commentator suggests that this may be another example of the Holy Spirit being purposely unclear because **He wants us to seek Him for answers.**

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- You may remember the incident where Noah cursed grandson Canaan because of some unclear act of his son Ham.

Was God vague with a purpose with Moses here? Well, the text doesn't seem to have any ambiguity about it – SPEAK to the rock!

Now, you may have noticed that the description of the incident doesn't record Aaron as doing or saying *anything*, yet he is included in the punishment!

This seems somewhat paradoxical. Consider the fact that Aaron was involved in making the Golden Calf. He later joining with his sister Miriam against Moses, complaining about not having enough authority in decision-making.

- And yet, up to now, Aaron evidently was STILL going to be allowed into the Promised Land. Now, he is locked out.
- **And yet, ironically, this 2nd generation of Israelites who were doing the complaining and rebelling – THEY would be allowed into the Land!**

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So... Why was Aaron included in the punishment? **It's not recorded that he did anything – and THAT'S the Problem ->**

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➤ **Aaron didn't do anything!**

Perhaps Moses told Aaron what he was going to do when they were walking to the rock. More likely, Aaron's sin was that he said *nothing* after Moses struck the rock the first time and no water came out. That first strike was enough to warrant Moses' punishment, but when no water flowed out of the rock, I believe that *God was giving Aaron a chance to say something* and affirm God's holiness, something like "Brother – STOP!. God says we are to *speak* to the rock..." But, Aaron remained silent.

Remember how the 2nd thief on the cross defended God from the other thief's sarcasm toward Jesus. The High Priest at the time of the crucifixion – Caiphas – joined in the sarcasm. Now, Aaron – the High Priest at this time – likewise joined in with Moses' sin thru inaction.

Even though he was the older brother and the High Priest who represented the people before the Lord, **Aaron did not correct Moses** – either because he was too timid or, more likely, he agreed with Moses. Either way, Aaron was thus **complicit** in what happened. Moses needed correction but did not receive it. Peter needed correction while at Antioch, and Paul **did** correct him. (Gal 2:14).

✚ This is a lesson for the Christian Church today -> **people in authority have a great responsibility to uphold the**

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**Holiness of God.** This applies to shepherds, deacons, leaders of ministry, and to parents, etc. Shepherds in particular *must* correct other shepherds (**gently of course**) when something is out of wack, *else they are complicit in the sin just as Aaron was.* The gospel historically has been undermined when this does not happen.

**SLIDE:** Ok – Let's look again at God's statement as to why Moses and Aaron will not be allowed into the Promised Land....

God mentions two issues...

- Because you did not trust in Me enough...
- ... to honor Me as Holy in the sight of the Israelites

Well, right off the bat, we have another very puzzling statement – God says: Moses and Aaron - you didn't trust Me enough. What? Moses? Seems so out of character – at least for Moses.

The way the sentence is constructed, we see that the actual sin was the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the statement --- Moses & Aaron did not honor God as Holy before the people. The 1<sup>st</sup> part of

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God's statement – *they did not trust Him enough* – was what LED to the sin.

- One aspect deals with the heart and the other deals with action – one deals with the inner man facing a CHOICE, the other with the OUTWARD action based on that CHOICE.

We'll get more into the implications of Moses' and Aaron's actions on our own behavior *next time*, and we'll look at the issue here that is often skirted because it is uncomfortable: *do we believe that God was being unfair in punishing them so severely? (No...)*

Today, I want to look at the first part of God's statement – that *Moses & Aaron did not trust Him enough* – at least in this situation – and this led to their unacceptable actions before the people.

Let's concentrate on Moses, since I believe that his thinking is probably clearer to understand...

- Moses' action was the outward expression of something else – *something going on inside of him. A STRUGGLE...*

--> THAT "STRUGGLE" WAS WITH DOUBT.

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\*\*\* *Now – I'm making a **DISTINCTION** here **BETWEEN** 'DOUBT' and 'TRUST'.*

You can doubt that something is going to happen – example – passing your driver's test – but you can decide go ahead and take the test because you trust your father's opinion when he says you're ready. Moses doubted something and that led to his not trusting God here. What didn't he trust God for?

**SLIDE: MOSES AND INCIDENTS FOR TRUST**

- Now, given all the miracles that Moses had been a part of (10 plagues, splitting the Red Sea, manna from heaven, etc.), I don't think Moses doubted God's **ABILITY** to make the water flow by just speaking to it.
- OK – then What did Moses doubt?

I believe that Moses harbored doubts that that God would **allow** such a rebellious group into the Land -- perhaps a **FUTURE**, more faithful generation, but not this one.

- Put yourself in Moses' shoes (or sandals). You've been 38 years walking around in a desert because the 1st generation constantly complained and then rebelled against God's direction to enter Canaan.

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- You've just witnessed the death of your sister who couldn't enter the land because of that rebellion – and now you're **BACK** at the **SAME** place leading another crowd that is behaving *exactly* like before.
- You are witnessing a RERUN of the same rebellious spirit that prevented both the 1<sup>st</sup> generation AND YOURSELF from entering the Land.
- His Struggle – Moses plainly doubted that quietly speaking to the rock was enough of a display for this rebellious crowd – *they needed correction*, not a gentle show of God's provision. And – they needed to see how much of a burden they have been to him personally. Moses wanted both to help solve God's ongoing problem of rebellion in the ranks, and he also wanted very much to vent. He made the choice to substitute his wisdom for God's. He made a choice not to trust God's wisdom regarding merely speaking to the rock.
  - And, in that spirit of **REBELLION**, he struck the rock.

REBELLION? This sounds a little strong, doesn't it. But that's what God called in, as we read -- Verse 24: God speaking to Moses: "*for he (Aaron) shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah.*"

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Understanding Moses' inner struggling with doubt and – **more significantly, what he did with it** – are vital to 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 happen to us.**

- This is not talking about losing your salvation – Moses & Aaron *did not lose* their salvation because of their action here. (Moses on Mt. transfiguration). Our salvation is assured by the Blood of Christ & we'll never find that the gates of heaven are closed to us. *What the incident is talking about is our daily life here and now.*

DOUBT led to Moses MAKING A CHOICE. HE CHOSE TO SUBSTITUTE his wisdom for God's, which IS NOT TRUSTING GOD ENOUGH.

- That's a KEY point – when we substitute our wisdom's for God's wisdom, we're not trusting God enough!.

Now, the nagging question remains, WHY DID MOSES & AARON DOUBT GOD HERE *IN THE FIRST PLACE* – WHY DO ANY OF US DOUBT GOD?



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- Good question. I'll give you my view – based on what St. Augustine said about how we make our choices.

**SLIDE: RORSCHACK TEST**

Consider the Rorschack test. Here is a slide showing an inkblot from the Rorschack test = the Rorschach **inkblot test**.

- Now, Most of what I know about Psychology I've learned from a one-semester college course, so I can't compete with Michael Ferris here. However, I have watched a lot of *Law & Order* reruns on TV and also I've seen the movie *What About Bob?* dozens of times.

The Rorschack test is a method of psychological evaluation. Psychologists use it in an attempt to examine personality characteristics and emotional functioning.

During the test, you're shown a series of ink blot images and asked what it reminds you of. At the end of the test your responses are analyzed and scored. **By the way, some people claim to see a 'minion' in this slide, which usually engenders the diagnosis of 'despicable'.**

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- What About Bob – hilarious scene in a mental hospital where Bob – a person with a lot of problems – is telling jokes to the psychiatric staff. He says:
  - A Doctor shows a schizophrenic patient a series of the inkblots
  - Doctor: *what do you see?* Patient: "sex."
  - Doctor – "*what about this slide?*" – "sex" – and so on, to every picture, the Patient answers "sex".
  - Doctor: "I know what your problem is – you're obsessed with sex."
  - Patient says: "Me?" – "you're the one with all the dirty pictures!"
  
- I guess it all depends upon your perspective – your perception!

**SLIDE: PERCEPTION**

- Perception – Take a look at this slide  
[ASK... what do you see?]
- Two people looking at each other, or a candlestick ?
- People looking at the same picture can see two different things. OK.

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- Now, with a little imagination, we can see **both images**, but *one tends to dominate*.
- Now – If I were to ask you tomorrow morning to choose the ONE of the two visions that **BEST** represents how you remember what you saw, what would it be?

We certainly would not **ALL** chose the **SAME** image. **BOTH** images **STILL REMAIN** in our memory but we **CHOSE** one over the other as **REPRESENTATIVE** of what we experienced.

- **St. Augustine** said this **CHOICE** in what we remember is how we function regarding God's promises and consequently how we act when facing **TEMPTATION**.

**SLIDE: ST. AUGUSTINE: PAST PRESENT FUTURE**

I'm going to borrow from my days in Catholic High School back *during the Civil War*.

- Augustine (354–430AD): "Lord, give me chastity and self-control, but not right away,."

In his book titled *Confessions*, which was an autobiography, Augustine took a philosophical look at the CONCEPT OF TIME –

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especially as it relates to a person's life. The normal groupings of time that we use are **PAST, PRESENT** and **FUTURE**.

And then he threw a curveball. He stated that the only thing that really **EXISTS** for any of us in time is the **PRESENT**

-> **THE PRESENT= HERE AND NOW.**

- The **PAST** is – by definition – in the *past*, it really is "gone" & no longer exists in the **PRESENT**. Similarly, *the FUTURE* **HAS NOT HAPPENED YET** AND SO IT ALSO DOES NOT EXIST TODAY.

The **PAST** no longer exists today. Think about it for a minute: 15 minutes ago, the Music Ministry was standing right here here, and now they're not. That moment in time no longer exists in the **PRESENT**. I could go over to where Donna was sitting at the keyboard and sit there – I wouldn't be sitting in Donna's lap (as much as I'd like to) because she is no longer there.

- Photographs are images of the past that sometimes we'd like to experience again, but we can't because that moment is in time.

Augustine reasoned that neither the **PAST** nor the **FUTURE** can exist in the **PRESENT** under normal circumstances. Kind of esoteric – I know – but there's a point Augustine is making.

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- IF the PAST and the FUTURE ARE to exist at all, they must somehow exist in the PRESENT. *HOW DO THEY EXIST NOW?*
- **THEY EXIST IN THE MIND.** We re-live things of the PAST in our mind, just like we live events from the FUTURE in our mind.

<CLICK> The PRESENT considers the PAST as *memory*. Augustine reasoned that, since the PAST itself no longer exists (it is gone), our PAST amounts to **What we remember + our interpretation of what happened.**

The PAST is made up of how we *remember* things happened. Ex. if a parent says something that hurts us as a child, we remember that event with sadness; however, the parent may not have intended it as an insult, or he/she may have been speaking about someone else but we assumed it was meant for us. So, our PAST might be a false impression of what actually happened, but it **IS** the PAST that exists in our minds.

Likewise, emotions and conclusions we draw from our memories – that we're a disappointment to our parents – also are part of the PAST.

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The FUTURE in our mind then becomes what we expect will happen based on our interpretation of the PAST – what we expect based on how we remember our past.

When it comes to how we think about God and His care for us in our FUTURE, a lot depends upon...

<CLICK> How We Choose to Think about Past

- Was God in control ALL of the time, MOST of the time, or only SOME of the time ?

Augustine's point is that, since the PAST is *only in our memory*, we can mentally CHOOSE to see events of the PAST in whatever light we decide.

- ex; Joseph was sold into slavery: "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

Our Future Expectations : This impacts how we see the future: God will be in control ALL of the time, MOST of the time, or SOME of the time.

How & what we remember and how we interpret what we remember is based on our choice of what God's role was/is/will be in our lives. He is good all of the time, most of

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the time or some of the time (and of an atheist, none of the time).

- Is life a series of random events w/God not involved, God was sleeping, He didn't care, etc.? Or does He care and have plans to prosper us, even when things don't appear that way?

*What do memory and expectation have to do with temptation to sin?* **Everything – that's the point!**

- *What is planted and nurtured in the soul of memory produces fruit, good or bad!*

Take the case of the 12 scouts sent into Canaan to survey the land. There's nothing good or bad with the scouts admitting that the Canaanites had fortified cities or were very tall people

The fortified cities may or may not be a temptation depending upon their memory and expectations. For Caleb and Joshua, it was an opportunity to embrace the power of God's word; for the others, a temptation to disbelieve. What's the difference? **The way their minds were in accord with, or in conflict with, the promises of God.**

For Moses and Aaron, there's nothing good or bad in admitting that the Israelites were a frustrating group of chronic complainers, or that God had banned the 1st generation from the Promised Land because of this exact behavior. But, God

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also PROMISED that the 2nd generation WOULD make it into the Land.

- What would Moses do with those conflicting memories?
- Which memory would he choose to embrace?

Moses looked that those people and said "you'll never make it, it's hopeless, you rebels."

When faced with challenges or temptations, it seems like human nature to *dwelling on problems in the past* in a way that alters our expectations of the future. Moses had acted differently earlier. When God said that he would feed meat to the people, Moses doubted that even God could produce that much meat, but he CHOSE to act based on God's promise and told the people it would happen.

Remembering the past one way, such as "God does what He promises", will lead to faith; remembering it another way breeds temptation. Thus, the issue has everything to do with the PERCEPTION of the past and WHO was in control of the situation.



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Moses' sin was NOT that he had some doubt. **The struggle between doubt and trust is not wrong in-&-of itself -**

➤ **It's what we do with it !**

While Moses had some doubt during the incident with the quail, he didn't **SURRENDER** to a temptation to disbelief in God's goodness or promise.

That's the lesson for us. Trust doesn't mean that we *never* doubt. Trust means that we act on God's word *in spite of* our doubt, and that produces faith!

- When you look at your past, do you see the face of failure or emotional scaring or betrayal staring back at you? Does doubt haunt your decisions today?
- If we're honest, we'd admit that sometimes we are *haunted* with doubts.
  - ❖ Doubts knock at the door of understanding things that are not yet, but *have to be*, understood. Doubt must precede every deeper assurance; for uncertainties are what we first see when we look into the future.
  - ❖ Remember, *there's also a candlestick in that picture if you choose to see it,* the seven-branched

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Menorah in the Holy Place – the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

God allows doubts for us actually grow in faith. Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to those who are honest. If we never doubted, how would our faith grow?

Unfortunately, Moses chose to **GIVE IN** to the doubt, which then gave him permission to react emotionally and sinfully.

**SLIDE:** FAITH HONORS GOD, GOD HONORS FAITH.

Faith is more than positive thinking. Positive thinking will NOT produce faith. (Abraham vs. Moses] – Romans 4: And being not weak in faith, Abraham considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: <sup>20</sup> He staggered not at the promise of God ."

but *he staggered* NOT at God's promise of a child). *I like that phrase – He staggered NOT.*

Two things are necessary in order to **TRUST** someone who deserves our trust:.

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- ✚ First – you must find someone who is trustworthy.
- ✚ Second – you must get to know Him.

In order to know Christ, you come to Him, and that you keep coming to Him day by day. If you come to Christ, He has made Himself responsible for taking care of everything else that needs to happen in your life.

Starting in the Garden, God brings all mankind to choices: Will we trust Him or not? Will we instead trust in "man", either someone in else or in our own emotions, which is constantly egged on by the whispers of the serpent"?

We (I) need to COME TO Christ like little children and say, "Jesus, I don't want to live on my own. I want to trust You.

- When I don't know what to do, I'll trust You.
- When I don't understand why, I'll trust You.
- I'll do my part with Your help, and when I'm done, I'll trust You to do the rest."
- *Lord - I believe - help me with my unbelief!*

It's a DECISION – my brothers and sisters – that you and I must consciously make daily!

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SLIDE.

- Philippians 4: "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. **Fix your thoughts on what is true**, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."
- Col. 3:1-4 "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, **where Christ is**, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

➤ ABOVE-THE-LINE

Finally, this is one more aspect to our trust in God regarding how we **choose** to act in this present life... And this is how we get to the word "nevertheless":

SLIDE: "And He (Jesus) went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; **nevertheless** not as I will, but as Thou wills.' "

MATTHEW 26:39

**NEVERTHELESS...** Sometimes, God doesn't deliver us as we want. Will we still trust Him? **Who's Holiness is involved?**

✚ **ABOVE-THE-LINE & NEVERTHELESS** Mindset.

○

*Moses and the Rock - Part I*

**10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)** Jonas Myrin & Matt Redman

“Bless the Lord, O my soul (Psalm 103)

Worship His holy name

Sing like never before

O my soul

I'll worship Your holy name.

Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me

**- NEVERTHELESS -**

**Let me be singing when the evening comes.”**