



Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see. This is the song of someone who have been found!

We have been wandering around in the wilderness, in the book of Numbers for several months. This sermon series is entitled Lost because the people of the Lord lost their way. Lostness, however, is not merely an OT-ancient dilemma. The NT often uses “lost” imagery. Jesus said that He, the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He also said that “I have not lost one of those that the Father gave Him (Jn 18:9).”

The Word of God demonstrates that every person in the world falls into **two categories**. Those who **are** lost and those who **were** lost. If you **are** lost in spiritual darkness right now here is hope, Jesus is the rescuer. Don't stay where you are. Instead, turn from yourself, trust in Jesus, follow Him, and you will be found! If you **were** lost, it is only by His grace that you were found. Never forget, with extreme gratitude that Jesus is the Rescuer. And let your heart sing with confidence: I once was lost but now I'm found!

In today's passage, Numbers 20, we find the congregation of faith 40 years in to their journey. What have they learned in 40 years? **Not much**. What a sad state of affairs. We too like Israel are prone to complacency. We must take responsibility for living a holy life in which we daily pursue our Savior!

Today will you commit to grow in grace and flourish spiritually? *If you forget that you were lost, you will return to bondage.*

The Sin of Zin [Numbers 20:1-13]

Numbers 20:1-13 is a story that has deeply troubled readers for over 2,000 years. In only thirteen short verses Moses and Aaron lost their most cherished dream- the Promised Land. And within the next 4 months, Moses will lost his sister, brother, and the promised land.

The **heaviness** of this episode begins in the Wilderness of **Zin**. Zin is the southern border of the Promised Land and the place of origin for the scouts. It **was ground zero for the deliverance of God's promises**. And what should have been the start of the freedom trail but turned into a location of disappointment. (lost)

In the **1st month**- the time when the people of God should have celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Promised Land. More disappointment and lostness.

And to top it all off, **Miriam** dies. This was the sister of Moses. The sibling who watched over her brother when he was in the Nile river. She was the one who ran to find a nurse to take care of her baby brother. She was the one protected him from infancy. **Can you feel the weight of the passage?**

In the midst of all this disappointment, we find the people **doing what lost hurting people do, hurting others**. They are assembling against Moses and Aaron and quarrelling. They have legitimate gripes: they wanted to perish because of the difficult terrain and they were thirsty. What a clear picture of sin in Zin. What a **powerful visual** of the devastating effects of our brokenness.

For a brief moment let us turn our focus inward so that we can turn our focus upward

Selfishness in your life always leads to contention and quarreling (20:3). The assemblers should have known better! "If only we had perished with our **brothers**." This now pinpoints the older generation as the ring leaders. **Who is listening?** The next gen. They are seeing its ok to push back against the Lord and his leaders. **Why are generations turning from the church?** Because they see other generations **complaining** more than **carrying the banner of the Cross!** **Lost people quarrel.** I made a **promise** a long time again, I will not talk down about my **bride** or the (**bride** of Christ to others). **Selfishness always leads to strife.** Savior always leads to peace. Will you make **a commitment today to be a peace maker?** **As long as it depends on me there will be peace (Rom. 12:18).**

Selfishness in your life always leads to catastrophizing (20:3-4). This happens when we paint our situation in far darker colors that is really warranted. Listen to the people: **if we had perished, why Lord, our livestock are dying, and this place is evil.** This is the exact word the spies used in their report of the Promised Land (14:37). When you settle in the selfish Wilderness of Zin, you focus on your problem and plight, but this is still an external self-motivated perspective. **We cant white knuckle your way out. The greater you magnify your problems, the lessor your view of Yahweh. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in light of his fullness and grace. Will you commit to turn your eyes upon Jesus?**

Selfishness leads to blame shifting and projection (20:4). Projection is the defense mechanism in which the human ego defends itself by denying personal responsibility and attributing to someone else. **Why did you bring us! You are even trying kill our cattle! Our hearts have blame-retardant clothing – Duguid.** The gospel attacks our foundation of selfishness. "If we confess our sins (1 Jn 1:9)." Confession and personally responsibility is essential for salvation and critical for sanctification.

You will never leave the Sin of Zin if you don't confess and take responsibility. The root of all sin is unbelief in the One True God. **You don't have to settle in the valley of Zin.** You don't have to remain in your sin.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. *The Good News is that Jesus did not come to project blame, he died to acquire your blame and to offer you freedom and hope. Gospel- the ultimate blame shifting. Jesus died so that the father would project your punishment and condemnation on His Only Son. You must look inward before you can look upward.*

Spirit led living

The Spirit led life confidently rests upon the Faithfulness of Yahweh (20:8). We are not told whose **staff** was utilized although v.9 indicates that the staff was taken from the Lord's presence suggesting it was Aaron's which budded and produced almonds. Or was this the **staff** of Moses in which he struck the Nile in Egypt or the rock of Rephidim. Either way, it was a bold declaration and clear reminder, **God is with you!** The staff was a visual remind, "but God is faithful" (1 Cor. 10:13). **Take the Staff.** The Spirit-led life in Christ is constantly remind, remember the promises of the Faithful one! The greater your struggle the greater you grip the staff of His promises.

The Spirit filled life constantly rejoices in mercy (20:8). The rock, before the eyes of people, was a symbol of God's mercy and benevolence. *Did the people deserve the rock?* Absolutely not! Mercy is not getting what you deserve.

God's mercy is so great that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of its light, or make space too narrow, than diminish the great mercy of God. –Spurgeon

Are you rejoicing today in God's benevolence towards you? **Take a moment to rejoice!** Do you rejoice in God's mercy towards others? Are you looking for ways to celebrate Yahweh's mercy towards others? Choose to be a mercy finder. **Mercy celebrations are an external reminder of the inward Spirit-led life.** Rejoice Somebody!

The Spirit-filled life is a refreshed life (20:8). The people longed for water (20:5) and in response to the thirst of the congregation, the benevolent Lord mercifully provides.

Moses was to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will yield its water. This is a similar miracle that that in Exodus 17. Moses had already witnessed the quenching of thirst by the hands of the Father. Here however, Moses was not commanded to hit the rock, often a measure used by Bedouins to break upon sand stones in a cave, but to speak directly to it. Here, there was no possibility that a physical blow would dislodge a natural plug to an aquifer. There was no doubt that this was **divine intervention.**

Where does thirst originate? Neurologists discovered that your brain is wired/created with emotional regions in which you become satisfied when you drink water. We see this genetic make-up and eternal design in our spiritual lives.

Just as they drank from the rock, we still need eternal refreshment. 1 Cor. 10:4 tells us that the rock is Jesus Christ.

John 7:37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **38** The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him."

The Saved life. The Spirit-led life is a refreshed life. The One who is in Jesus can sit back and say ahhhh, because they are fully satisfied with streams of living water. **Be refreshed today.**

The Spirit-filled life demonstrates His holiness (20:12).

Moses decides not to speak to the rock but to smite it. **Does it really matter if we follow God's Word Isn't it something that would be good if we get around to it, or are a fanatical Christian?** Heed the example of Moses.

We don't exactly know the sin. Throughout ages numbers examples have been given although the crime was not articulated. **Was it his character: temper, cowardice, or callousness to Miriam's death? Word: his question, his doubt, or his contentiousness toward the people? Physical activity: because he stuck it instead of speaking, he chose the wrong rock, or he struck it twice.**

The Lord provided water from the rock despite Moses' ill fated demonstration, and then pronounced the sentence: because you did not trust, or **demonstrate holiness**, you will not enter the Promised Land.

What a harsh sentence. Moses had worked his entire life for this moment. He put up with the rebellious congregation for 40 years to lose his inheritance in one moment! Regardless the punishment is clear.

The Spirit-filled life is demonstrative of trust and **holiness**. Are you living out your holiness before the eyes of others? What would Moses say about holiness?

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this church, distinguished for holiness. It is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy church? It is of no use to the world and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. –Spurgeon

The Spirit-filled Christ life is a holy life. Do you need to return to holiness today? The world is watching.

Application- So What?

Today, some right now are content to dwell in the wilderness of Zin and sin. Maybe you don't realize your lost. Maybe you now you are lost but have given up. Here is good news, Jesus wants to save you. Turn from yourself and Trust him.

Are you ready to have new life? How many today are ready to look inward- and then look upward?

The Christ life, the **Spirit led life** is a life built upon the conviction that Jesus is everything I need. **Will you rejoice today that you have been found and to never go back?**

Notes

The first part of this chapter contains a story that has deeply troubled readers for over two millennia. Its length belies its weight; in only thirteen verses, Moshe and Aharon have lost their most cherished dream—the privilege of entering the Promised Land (Fox, 754).

Within a span of 4 months, Moses loses his sister, brother, and the promised land.

[Num. 20:1](#) The entire Israelite community entered the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and they settled in Kadesh. Miriam died and was buried there.

1st month- the month in which they should have been celebrating the Passover and the Festival of the Unleavened Bread in the Promised Land (NAC, 323)

Miriam

The death of Miriam announces the third travel narrative. Red sea- Sinai, Sinai-Kadesh, Kadesh- Trans Jordan. This was the sister that cared for him in the reeds of the river. This was the sister that protected him from infancy. Even Miriam grumbled.

It has been noted that the central women in the NT was also called Miriam, usually abbreviated to Maria or Mary (TOTC, 149).

Miriam was gone, the only woman whose death has been remembered from that generation (NAC, 324).

Zin- the point of origin of the scouts. The exact location is not entirely known, but Zin is cited as the southern border of the promised land.

Num. 20:2 There was no water for the community, so they assembled against Moses and Aaron.
3 The people quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD. 4 Why have you brought the LORD's assembly into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? 5 Why have you led us up from Egypt to bring us to this **evil** place? It's not a place of grain, figs, vines, and pomegranates, and there is no water to drink!"

People quarreled

The people by definition had been born after their parents left Egypt, so the spectacles of rose tinted Egyptian glasses are their parents.

The people's sin is their almost willful forgetfulness and lack of gratitude for what God has done for them, their lack of seeing their own sin as part of the reason for their problems, combined with their lack trust in God's ability to provide (Stubbs, 159).

Once the complaints department was open for business, everything and anything was fair game (Duguid, 250).

The people sinned in two specific ways: catastrophizing and blame-shifting. Catastrophizing means that we paint our situation in far darker colors than is really warranted.

Psychological projection is a defence mechanism in which the human ego defends itself against **unconscious** impulses or qualities (both positive and negative) by denying their existence in themselves while attributing them to others.

"our hearts have blame-retardant clothing" – Duguid, 251.

Brothers

The younger generation would have referred to Korah's generation as fathers and not brothers thus implicating the older generation.

No water- the sequence of events in vv 2-5 closely parallels those of Exod 17:2-3, though the wording of the need is slightly different.

Evil

The same word the spies used in their report concerning the Promised Land (14:37).

Grain- literally seed.

Figs/pomegranates- precisely the items brought back from the promised land by the scouts (13:23; JPS, 164). 40 years prior.

They still suffered from the same syndrome of unbelief (NAC, 325).

Num. 20:6 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting. They fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. 7 The LORD spoke to Moses, 8 “Take the staff and assemble the community. You and your brother Aaron are to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will yield its water. You will bring out water for them from the rock and provide drink for the community and their livestock.”

Staff

Those whose rod was intended to be used was not specified, v.9 indicates that the staff was taken from the Lord’s presence, suggesting that the rod was that of Aaron which budded, blossomed, and produced almonds in the divine confirmation of Aaron’s priestly authority (NAC, 326).

Or is this the rod with which Moses struck the Nile in Egypt and the rock at Rephidim (Exod 17:6).

Rock

As in previous circumstances of this kind, the rock was a symbol of God’s mercy and benevolence, so striking the rock was in a sense a striking out against God (NAC, 328). Moses had damaged severely the intimate personal relationship he had with God.

1Cor. 10:1 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. **3** They all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them, since they were struck down in the wilderness.

The staff in Moses’ hand served as a reminder of the earlier miracle (NIV, 671).

There was no possibility that a physical blow will simply dislodge the natural plug to an aquifer (NIV, 671).

See Exodus 17:1-5. The rock in Exodus was not a stone but a rock cliff or cleft. It is well-known that porous desert rocks, particularly sandstone can hold a good deal of water, and that Bedouin shepherds exploit this by striking the rock walls with their staffs to cause them to release their water. The rock of Horeb was most likely a sandstone mountain. God led Moses to the right spot and told him what to do (Garrett, 431).

Num. 20:9 So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence just as he had commanded him. 10 Moses and Aaron summoned the assembly in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?” 11 Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff, so that abundant water gushed out, and the community and

their livestock drank.

What is the sin?

Throughout the ages numerous explanations have been give. The punishment is clear, but the crime is not articulated.

Striking- he struck it instead of speaking (Rashi) he chose it although the people wanted another rock (Tov), he struck it twice instead of once (Targ. Jon, Ibn Ezra).

Character- blazing temper (Ibn Ezra), his cowardice, or his callousness in morning for Miriam when the people died of thirst (JPS, 448).

Words- his question, he doubted God, or he called the people rebels.

Numbers clearly articulates that Moses did exactly as God commanded many times. Here he did not and inexact obedience on the part of leaders (and others) is the same as disobedience (NIV, 384).

Rebels

And this is exactly what they were, even stated by Scripture in Num. 17. However, Moses was putting himself in the place of judge to make that declaration even though the Lord did not give permission to do so (Duguid, 252).

Strike the Rock in Exodus (Massah) 17.

The

Moses, show my people how My Word can bring forth a waterfall of abundant life!

We- the fatal pronoun by which Moses ascribes the miracle to himself and to Aaron.

Not only did Moses set himself up as judge but placed himself in the position of deliverer. God alone is the provider.

Num. 20:12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me to demonstrate my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land I have given them." 13 These are the Waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD, and he demonstrated his holiness to them.

Trust

We commonly assume that the opposite of trusting God is doubting God. In the OT, the opposite of trusting God is trusting something or someone else (Goldingay, 49). Doubting God doesn't matter so much as long as you are doubting the right God.

“Because you did not have-trust in me to treat-me-as-holy before the eyes of the Children of Israel (Fox, 756).

When unholy men approached God, he shows himself holy by immediate or delayed judgment (TOTC, 151).

Application

W/out living water you will perish

Beware that you never call good evil and evil good.

Don't talk to people when you can talk with God.

The Christian life is this: are you demonstrating the Holiness of God?

What will you exalt? The holiness of the Lord or the hand of man?

Why?

The Bible consistently takes a stringent view of leadership; that leaders must be above reproach, and that they must not lose sight of the fact that it is God whom they represent (Fox, 754).

In this passage, the three most important people in Israel fail to enter into paradise.