

When the Old Man Lost His Cool

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/Cn7k5pyHAvQ?si=WlrkQOCeLUawkmdC>

Key Text: Numbers 20:1–13 (NASB 1995)

Supporting Texts: Hebrews 11:24–29; Numbers 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Acts 17:30; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 4:11; James 3:1; Matthew 17:1–3

Sermon Outline

Title Aim

To examine Moses' sin at Meribah, why it was so consequential, and what it teaches us about obedience, anger, leadership, and giving God the glory.

Introduction

- Moses is one of the Bible's most moving servants of God—faithful, enduring, and used mightily.
- Yet after nearly forty years of carrying a hard-headed congregation, Moses had a moment where he **lost his cool**.
- And that one moment cost him the privilege of leading Israel into the physical Promised Land.
- The point is not to tear Moses down. The point is to **take sin seriously**, especially for those who lead, teach, and represent God.

Transition: Before we go to Numbers 20, remember what Scripture says about Moses' faith.

I. Moses Was a Man of Great Faith (Hebrews 11:24–29)

A. He chose God's people over Egypt's pleasures

- **Hebrews 11:24–25** — He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose ill-treatment with God's people over the passing pleasures of sin.

B. He valued Christ's reproach above Egypt's treasures

- **Hebrews 11:26** — He regarded "the reproach of Christ" as greater riches than Egypt's treasures.

C. He endured by looking to what cannot be seen

- **Hebrews 11:27** — He endured as seeing Him who is unseen.

D. He obeyed in the great moments

- Passover, blood, Red Sea deliverance — **Hebrews 11:28–29**.

Application

- Faith can be real and strong—and still a person can fall hard in one moment.
 - Past victories do not cancel present responsibilities.
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II. The Pressure Cooker: What Led Up to Moses' Fall (Numbers 20:1–5)

A. Grief: Miriam dies (Numbers 20:1)

- Miriam's death is not a minor note. Moses is human. Leaders grieve too.

B. The people attack at the worst possible time (Numbers 20:2)

- "There was no water... and they assembled themselves **against** Moses and Aaron."
- Not to comfort. Not to help. Not to pray. **Against**.

C. Complaining turns into accusation (Numbers 20:3–5)

- They contend, argue, and speak like the wilderness is Moses' fault.
- “If only we had died... Why have you brought us... Why have you made us come up...”
- The mouth runs hot when the heart is ungrateful.

Warning

- Congregations can be selfish toward the burdens of leaders.
 - But even when people are wrong, **their sin never licenses our sin.**
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III. God's Clear Instruction (Numbers 20:6–8)

A. Moses and Aaron go to the tent of meeting (Numbers 20:6)

- They fall on their faces; the glory of the LORD appears.

B. God's command is specific (Numbers 20:8)

- “Take the rod... assemble the congregation... **speak to the rock...** that it may yield its water.”
- God's purpose: to display His holiness and power before Israel's eyes.

Key Principle

- When God gives instructions, the issue is not what seems efficient or emotional in the moment.
 - The issue is: **Do exactly what God said.**
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IV. The Sin at Meribah: What Moses Did Wrong (Numbers 20:9–12)

A. Disobedience: he struck instead of spoke

- God: “Speak to the rock.”
- Moses: “He... **struck the rock twice** with the rod.” (Numbers 20:11)

Lesson

- Partial obedience is still disobedience.
- Doing a “religious-looking” act does not excuse ignoring God’s word.

B. Anger: he publicly vents at the people

- “Listen now, you rebels...” (Numbers 20:10)
- Moses’ anger becomes part of the message, and that message misrepresents God.

Cross-Reference

- Moses’ character was known: **Numbers 12:3** — “very humble, more than any man...”
- Even strong areas can become weak points under pressure.

C. Self-glory: “Shall we bring forth water...?”

- Moses shifts the spotlight:
 - Not “God will provide.”
 - But: “**Shall we** bring forth water...?” (Numbers 20:10)

Lesson

- Leadership temptation: to take credit in frustration, or speak as if the work is ours.
- God will not share His glory.

D. Misrepresentation of God’s holiness

- **Numbers 20:12** — “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel...”

- Moses and Aaron failed to uphold God as holy before the people.

Bottom Line

- The people sinned in their complaining.
 - Moses sinned in his response.
 - Their behavior explains the pressure—but it does not excuse the disobedience.
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V. Why This Was So Consequential

A. God's holiness was at stake

- God was teaching Israel something about His power, His provision, and His holiness.
- Moses' action blurred the picture.

B. Leaders carry stricter accountability

- Moses wasn't just a private Israelite—he was the representative leader.
- **James 3:1** — teachers incur a stricter judgment.

C. God still provided water—but discipline still fell

- Water came out abundantly (Numbers 20:11).
- Yet God's verdict stands (Numbers 20:12).

Truth

- God can bless others in spite of our failure.
 - But we still answer for our failure.
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VI. Lessons for Us Today

1) God does not excuse disobedience

- **Acts 17:30** — God now commands all people everywhere to repent.
- Do not live as if “I meant well” cancels disobedience.

2) Guard your strongest areas

- Moses was known for meekness, yet he fell in anger.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12** — let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

3) Give God the glory in everything

- **1 Peter 4:11** — whatever we do, do it so that **God is glorified through Jesus Christ**.
- If you teach, lead, serve, provide, counsel—never speak as though it’s “we” who supply what only God supplies.

4) If you speak for God, speak accurately

- Don’t add your temper to God’s message.
- Don’t put words in God’s mouth.
- Don’t present your irritation as God’s attitude.

VII. Hope Beyond Consequences: Moses Still Reached the Better Promised Land

- Moses saw Canaan from a distance—but that is not the end of his story.
- At the Transfiguration, Moses appears with Elijah and Jesus (**Matthew 17:1–3**).
- That shows something unmistakable:
 - Moses faced consequences in this life.
 - Yet God’s mercy and reward are real for the faithful.

Encouragement

- Consequences are real.
 - Forgiveness is real.
 - Heaven is the goal.
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Conclusion / Call to Action

- Learn from Moses: **there are reasons for our behavior, but never an excuse for sinful behavior.**
 - Obey God precisely—not emotionally, not approximately, not selectively.
 - Put off the “old man” and live under the Lordship of Christ.
 - If you need to come home to God:
 - Believe Jesus is Lord and the Son of God.
 - Repent and turn from sin.
 - Confess His name.
 - Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.
 - Live faithful—aiming for the eternal Promised Land.
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Slide Deck (10–15 Slides)

Slide 1 — Title

Main Content:

- When the Old Man Lost His Cool
- Moses at Meribah: Anger, Disobedience, and Consequences
- Numbers 20:1–13
- **Scripture (if applicable):**
 - Numbers 20:12
- **Design Intent:**
 - Background tone: warm / neutral
 - Emphasis: serious
 - Mood: reverent / sobering

Slide 2 — The Aim

Main Content:

- What exactly was Moses' sin?
- Why was it so consequential?
- What does it teach us today?

Scripture (if applicable):

- 1 Corinthians 10:12

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light
- Emphasis: instructive
- Mood: focused

Slide 3 — Moses: A Man of Faith

Main Content:

- Refused Egypt's identity
- Chose suffering with God's people
- Looked to the reward

Scripture (if applicable):

- Hebrews 11:24–27

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral
- Emphasis: honoring
- Mood: steady / respectful

Slide 4 — The Pressure Cooker

Main Content:

- Miriam dies (grief)
- No water (need)

- People assemble “against” Moses (attack)

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:1–2

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light / muted
- Emphasis: explanatory
- Mood: sobering

Slide 5 — Complaining Turns to Accusation

Main Content:

- “If only we had died...”
- “Why have you brought us...?”
- Ungrateful hearts speak loudly

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:3–5

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral
- Emphasis: warning
- Mood: corrective

Slide 6 — God’s Clear Instruction

Main Content:

- Take the rod
- Assemble the congregation
- **Speak to the rock**

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:8

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light
- Emphasis: clarity
- Mood: instructive

Slide 7 — The Sin: Disobedience

Main Content:

- God said: speak
- Moses did: **struck the rock twice**
- Partial obedience is disobedience

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:11

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral
- Emphasis: serious
- Mood: direct

Slide 8 — The Sin: Anger on Display

Main Content:

- “Listen now, you rebels...”
- Moses’ emotion became part of the message
- Leaders must not preach their temper

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:10

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light
- Emphasis: warning
- Mood: corrective

Slide 9 — The Sin: Self-Glory

Main Content:

- “Shall **we** bring forth water...?”
- Taking credit steals glory from God

- God will be treated as holy

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:12

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral
- Emphasis: God-centered
- Mood: reverent

Slide 10 — God's Verdict

Main Content:

- “Because you have not believed Me...”
- “You shall not bring this assembly into the land...”
- Water provided, but discipline stands

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 20:12

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral / subdued
- Emphasis: sobering
- Mood: weighty

Slide 11 — Lesson #1: Guard Your Strongest Areas

Main Content:

- Moses was known for humility
- Yet he fell in anger
- Strength can become vulnerability

Scripture (if applicable):

- Numbers 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light
- Emphasis: practical
- Mood: cautionary

Slide 12 — Lesson #2: Give God the Glory

Main Content:

- Don't speak like the work is yours
- Don't misrepresent God's heart
- Do everything so God is glorified

Scripture (if applicable):

- 1 Peter 4:11

Design Intent:

- Background tone: warm / light
- Emphasis: God-exalting
- Mood: reverent

Slide 13 — Leaders Are Accountable

Main Content:

- Speaking for God is serious
- Teaching brings stricter judgment
- Accuracy matters

Scripture (if applicable):

- James 3:1

Design Intent:

- Background tone: neutral
- Emphasis: warning
- Mood: serious

Slide 14 — Hope Beyond Consequences

Main Content:

- Moses lost Canaan
- But Moses reached the better Promised Land

- God is just—and God forgives

Scripture (if applicable):

- Matthew 17:1–3

Design Intent:

- Background tone: warm
- Emphasis: hopeful
- Mood: encouraging / worshipful

Slide 15 — Call to Action

Main Content:

- Obey God precisely
- Put off the old man
- Aim for the eternal Promised Land

Scripture (if applicable):

- Hebrews 5:9

Design Intent:

- Background tone: light
- Emphasis: inviting
- Mood: earnest / urgent