



Sunday, June 28, 2020
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Numbers 21:4-9

If anything has been consistent among the people of God throughout history, it is our ability to complain. We complain about all kinds of issues. We complain in all kinds of seasons. Even when things are going well, we can find something to complain about. This is such an odd dynamic for a people who have literally been given everything we have (1 Cor. 4:7), which is everything we need (2 Pet. 1:3). Of all people who should be free of a mindset of entitlement, it is the people for whom Christ died, and yet season after season of our lives produces complaining.

In the Heidelberg Catechism (written about 1563), there were essentially three main things that the writers sought to help people understand: guilt, grace, and gratitude. The first question reads, “What is your only comfort in life and death?” The response, “That I...belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” The second question gives us the outline for the rest of the catechism, “How many things are necessary for you to know, that you...may live and die happily?” The response, “First, how great my sins and miseries are (guilt); second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries (grace); and third, how I shall express my *gratitude* to God for such deliverance.” Thus, the whole of the Christian life ought to be summarized in that word: gratitude.

Context

The context of our passage in Numbers 21 is the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel after that generation had been sentenced to die in the wilderness because of their disobedience (Num. 13-14). They had been on the cusp of entering the promised land, but they didn’t believe. This prolonged their wanderings and led to various rebellions (Num. 16), the deaths of Miriam and Aaron, and ultimately Moses’ own sin which ended up costing him entrance into the land as well.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4; John 3:14-15

“The Good Snake”

Numbers 21

- Complaining (4-5)
- Consequence (6)
- Confession (7)
- Cure (9)

Comparison w/John 3:14-15

- Highly unusual
- Completely undeserved
- Desperately needed
- Freely offered to everyone
- Personally appropriated
- Immediately effective

Discuss

- 1) What do you most often complain about? What do you think that reveals about your deepest desires?
- 2) What does our complaining reveal about our faith in the sovereignty of God?
- 3) What does it say about God's character that He provides a way of healing and salvation even when people are ungrateful?
- 4) The Israelites took the bronze serpent and effectively made it into an idol (2 Kings 18:4). What are some good gifts from God that we are tempted to make into idols (things we care about more than God)?
- 5) How does knowing that Jesus sacrificed His own body for us impact the way we think about complaining?