

Numbers 21:10–20  
Ordinary Faithfulness by Glorious Grace

**Friday, September 13, 2024 • Read Numbers 21:10–20**

*Questions from the Scripture text: Where did the children of Israel go in v10? And where in v11? And where in v12? And where in v13? Between which two nations did this bring them? In what non-Bible book are these places identified (v14–15)? Where do they go in v16? Who speaks to whom there? What does He say to do? What does He say that He will do? How does Israel respond to this (v17, cf. Ex 15:1)? Where do they go in v18? And what two places in v19? And where in v20? What can they do to the wilderness from there?*

**How should we respond to ordinary faithfulness in believers' lives?** Numbers 21:10–20 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **ordinary faithfulness is produced by extraordinary grace, for which we must sing God's praise.** Extraordinary greatness of ordinary grace, v10–13, 18–20. If we have not felt the theological and spiritual dynamics of Numbers, we will miss how wonderful are vv10–13. Four stops! And then another in v16, and four more in v18–20. That's nine stops... without a judgment provoking incident of grumbling or rebellion. By now, we see what a miracle that is for the visible church. We have seen what their character was, despite seeing the wonderful works of God and despite having the wonderfully displayed and communicated presence of God. What no external pressure could produce, the inward work of the grace of God was accomplishing. It is a great mercy of God when we, or our families, or our congregations can just be boringly faithful and peaceful. It is almighty grace that upholds us in faithful plodding.

The historicity of God's work, v14–15. There is nothing that is more important to Christianity than that Jesus actually lived and died and rose again. We rejoice that other books outside of the Bible (though not nearly as well attested or maintained as the Bible itself) witness to the historical factuality of what we read in Scripture. There was even such a book at the time that Moses wrote Numbers 21, and the Spirit thought that it was important to bring to believers' attention that their religion is true.

The God of the Bible is the true and living God. He is our Creator, and He has genuinely worked His redemption in time. When He brings you to faith, He doesn't just convince you of ideas. He brings you into a genuine, living union with the second Person of the Godhead. He indwells you with the third Person of the Godhead. He is the same God with you that He was with His people throughout the ages, that He has been to the church under Christ for the past two thousand years, that He will be for unending ages in the next world.

Rejoicing over God's mighty, faithful work, v16–18. The place to which they come is literally called "well" ("Beer" is Hebrew for "well"). Leaders from nations may be dug it (v18), but it was YHWH Who gave them water (v16). The command to gather the people recalls 20:8, 10. And the people respond to God's display of God's grace in the same way that they had done when He saved them and defeated Egypt at the Red Sea (cf. Ex 14:30–15:1). How foolish their previous complaining had been! God would not let them die of thirst, when He had promised to bring them into the land. God gives His people to sing His mighty deeds that we would remember His faithfulness and power, so that they would set their hope in God, and not forget His works, but keep His commandments (cf. Ps 78:7). God has given to each heart, each home, and each church to have singing His songs as a core part of their life.

What ordinary faithfulness in your life has displayed God's extraordinary grace to you? What place does singing God's own songs have in your daily life? In your family life? In your congregational life?

*Sample prayer: Lord, left to ourselves, we would never be faithful, never grow, never even plod along in our walk with You. But by Your almighty grace, You have made us to walk by faith. Grant that the songs of Your Word would be the songs of our hearts, our homes, our churches, and our lives, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH449 "As When the Prophet Moses Raised"**

**"(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Numbers 21 verses 10 through 20. These are God's words. Now, the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth, Then they journeyed from oboth. And camped in E, aberim. In the wilderness, which is east of Moab toward the sunrise. From there, they moved and camped in the valley of Zarat.

From there, they moved and camped. On the other side of the Arna, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the amorites. For the Arden is the border of Moab. Between Moab and the amorites. Therefore, it is said, in the book of the wars of Yahweh Bahab and suffer, the Brooks of the Arnon and the slope of the Brooks.

That reaches to the dwelling of R and lies on the border of Moab. From there, they went to Bayer which is the well where he always said to Moses, gather the people together and I will give them water. Then Israel sang, this song spring up, oh well all of you sing to it.

The well, the leaders sank, dug by the nation's Nobles by the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the Wilderness they went to matana. From matanah to nahalial from nahalial to bamot and from bamat in the valley that is in the country of Moab to the top of Pisgah. Looks down.

On the Wasteland. Man, this ends this reading of God's inspired. And aren't. There's a wonderful miracle in this passage. They don't mean the miracle of the water. For which there is a song. Although that too is a miracle of God. Um, the salvation of his people and Mercy. But in this passage, we have movement.

To four different sites, where they camped, four, different places, where they camped in the beginning of the passage and then movement to Bayer. The place with that water in the middle of the passage and then movement to four more sites at the end of the passage. That's nine camps.

Nine places they move to And not one of these, is it recorded for us that there was a general grumbling or rebellion of the people of God Now that does not seem like it should be a miracle because it is right to be content with God and not to rebel against him.

But as we have read, through the books, especially of Exodus and numbers, where there was a lot of The movement. Israel has complained grumbled rebelled against the gods appointed leaders done. Something to provoke his wrath, almost every step of the way. And so, when we have here, nine campings.

And then none of them is there. Some general great transgression. Of the church against God. We're now prepared by all that has come before to see. That that's actually a miracle of Grace. That. When a church goes through a season of faithful plotting, It's actually a miracle of Grace.

That it is not falling into some sin or in entering into some Rebellion or stirring up some grumbling against God, committing some great, unfaithfulness against him. And so, we Are instructed by this passage in its context. Um, Not to take faithful plotting for granted. But rather. Be grateful to God.

For those ordinary seasons of In which he sustains us from one day to the next. In doing well with him and walking. With him. And not to take that for granted. Of course not only in Individual lives and in our household's life, but in the life of the church, That.

Ordinary. Faithfulness. Comes, and there's a dis comes, as a result of and is a display. Of spectacular Grace. So that's the first thing to see here is The miracle of God sustaining his people. An ordinary faithfulness. The second thing to see here is this, what seems to us odd reference in verses 14 and 15.

To the book of the wars of Yahweh, and it's an odd reference to us, because we don't have this book. It's a secular book. Maybe a secular book written by. Some Israelite who had taken it upon himself to be a historian and, and had gotten wide distribution among the people of Israel or maybe.

Some other. A historian at the time, we have no idea what this book was. We don't have this book who had this book. Well. The people who received the book of numbers, The last generation that entered the land and received the book of numbers from The pen of Moses, they had this book.

And so you can see here, God encouraging them. That not only is he giving them inspired scripture, which is the very word of God, but that what he records is historically, true. It has actually happened. Now they would know that and believe that just from having the book of numbers, something is not made historically true because it's recorded in a book outside of the Bible.

It is historically true because it's historically true and the greatest reason to believe that it's historically, true is because God says so And so our strongest reason to believe that anything is historically true would be. If it's recorded in scripture, then we are absolutely certain that it's historically. True.

But, God in his Mercy to us and knowing our remaining unbelief and knowing how frail our faith. Is sometimes. Gives us these other testimonies that affirm the historicity of what we know from the Bible. So that we will both be strengthened in our faith and be reminded that it's important that this is historical.

It's important. That God the son really in history. Became a man. So that he could obey in our place and A tone for our sins. It's important that he historically, after having been crucified and genuinely physically died that he rose again from the dead and descended bodily into glory.

The historicity of the Christian faith is necessary. Because you are actually. Created by the Living God and you must have actual dealing with him in your life and you will have actual dealing with him forever. And it will either be with his Fury, his glory expressed upon you, in Fury.

Which, Is the substance of hell or with his glory expressed upon you in favor forever. Which is the substance of. And so God is the great reality. And one of the ways that he reminds us that we must deal with him, and that it is important that the Christian faith, be factual and historical.

Is by doing things like this by giving us access to other books. Other ways, we continue actually to find Um, through archeology things that corroborate both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Uh, not that we need those things to be sure. Of what it says. But God, both strengthens our faith and underlines to us.

The necessity of a historically factual F. And therefore, the necessity. Of historically, factually interacting with him. You know, past history isn't the only history future history is also history. It just hasn't happened yet the future history that God tells us about is sure, even though it hasn't happened just as sure as those things in the past, but present history, Is also history.

You are interacting with God. The days of your life and your interactions with him. Are part of his historical factual work in the world. And The God Who dealt with the people of Israel throughout the Book of Numbers. And throughout the rest of the Bible and throughout church history.

Is the same God and he is still himself. He has not changed. He is still working in the same Redemptive plan. In your life. And this same God who is this? Same way both in the history of the Bible and throughout the history? That has been since the Bible in the history of your life, he has the same God that you will know.

And enjoy. For unending ages and he will be the same. Then. As he is now. As he is in numbers and so forth. So that's the second thing, the historicity Of God's work. The factual historical factuality. Of God's dealing with his people. And so there's the faithful plotting and there's the historical.

Factuality. And then there's the necessity of a proper response to God both for his miraculous Grace. And of course, the fact that this genuinely has happened And that we get in a song. Uh songs were often used to Mark historical moments both to communicate the significance of the moment and to help recall help.

Uh, memory about what happened. But also songs of praise. Now, we've seen this before. Uh, when it says, then Israel sang this song. We saw it back in Exodus.

Exodus 15. When God. Not just delivered Israel, through the midst of the Red Sea. But had drowned Egypt in the Red Sea. And you have almost the exact same wording. I think in Exodus 15, it's then, Moses and Israel, or maybe Moses, and all Israel saying this song that Than Israel sang this song, and we get, of course, These couple of lines are not the entire song in verses 17 and 18 here.

But you remember even then when he gave us the entire song, he then noted that Miriam took up her tambourines and she had led the women of Israel in singing. It and just gave us the first couple of lines didn't repeat the entire song again. Well, here in numbers 21, verse 18, or verse 17 and 18.

He's just giving us the first couple lines of the song. Sing of the wonderful works of God. And God has given us songs in his word of all of his wonderful Works even songs about the second coming. Israel was singing about the second coming for a thousand years before the first coming.

Uh, and so God has given us songs. Both to affirm the factuality and to keep in our memory, the truth, and to give vent to our hearts. And our thankfulness and rejoicing over him. Yes, it may have been leaders who had sunk these Wells and the nation's Nobles who had dubbed them, hundreds of years before Israel got there.

But God is the god of history. And he had sustained even those pagans in digging those Wells long before. Israel had come along so that when they got to Bear which gets its name from the well, beer means well in Hebrew, when they got to bear, they would have easy access to water.

Maybe they had to re-dig it a little bit. Probably they had to re-dig it a little bit. But, There was water enough for all of his people. And so they saw God's great provision at that moment and they saw it in the context of God's Sovereign Providence. Over all things even over these leaders and Nobles from the other nations.

Whom God has had used as water boys for the people of Israel. And so too God does for you, doesn't he That which the kings, and Nobles of the earth do that, which makes the conspiracy theorists tremble makes us conspiracy factualists Rejoice. Because we know for a fact that there is a Divine conspiracy by The Sovereign, God to bend, everything that happens everywhere and all the acts of every sort of person for the good of his people.

And so we see how we ought to sing, In response. To the wonderful works of God for us. And so, Passage that we might not have expected so much richness for our minds and hearts and applications to our lives. At first, but you see these three great things. First, the miracle of God's grace, and faithful plotting.

Second, the necessity. Of believing, and knowing this necessity of the reality. Of the historical factuality of God's work. And, Um, that we ought to respond to what God does. Uh, with his songs. So, let us ask the Lord. To give us these things. Not only as Ideas that we learn in a family worship lesson.

Uh, but Things that shape the way that we think and feel and act in our lives. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven. Thank you for this portion of your word. Thank you for giving it to us. Today on this day in the history of your work among your people. Thank you. For taking us to be your people and Gathering us to yourself. And the worship that you have instructed, That we might know you as our God and ourselves.

As your people. We do praise and thank you. For the wonderful works that you have done. Thank you for even ordinary faithfulness, like sustaining us and Gathering unto you as a household. Thank you, that. What you did in numbers and what you did in the life and death and resurrection of Christ and what you have done In the history of the church and what you've done in our own lives, are all historically true.

And that you are the same God carrying out the same plan. Help us to grasp that as we live in relationship with you. Grant, that this would be. Great antidote, a great cure. For all of our anxieties and also, Against our laziness. And give us to participate, joyfully and diligently.

In the work that you are doing in our day and our place in our lives. And give us O Lord, to have hearts and voices that sing your Praises for all the good that you have done. Grant that by your spirit, blessing your word to us. Uh, all of these things would be answered in our lives.

We ask in Christ's name, Amen.