

Numbers 21:10–20

¹⁰Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth. ¹¹And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which is east of Moab, toward the sunrise. ¹²From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered. ¹³From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. ¹⁴Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD:

“Waheb in Suphah,
The brooks of the Arnon,

¹⁵ And the slope of the brooks
That reaches to the dwelling of Ar,
And lies on the border of Moab.”

¹⁶From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” ¹⁷Then Israel sang this song:

“Spring up, O well!
All of you sing to it—

¹⁸ The well the leaders sank,
Dug by the nation’s nobles,
By the lawgiver, with their staves.”

And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah, ¹⁹from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, ²⁰and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

Praising God’s Gracious, Historical Work

Main idea: we should sing God’s glorious grace that is necessary even for ordinary faithfulness.

Introduction: Counting the stops.

1. Gracious Work (v10–13, 19–20)

- a. The setup: all the things that had not produced this. Miracles, means, misery.
- b. The payoff: the one thing that must have produced this. Grace!

2. Historical Work (v14–15)

- a. Quote from a strange book. Holy Scripture proves historicity, so why do so? Because God knows your weakness and desires to strengthen your faith and emphasize to you the necessity of His work as an historical fact.
- b. Present history is also history. His work in your life is an historical fact, and you must interact with Him in truth and sincerity.

3. Praiseworthy Work (v16–18)

- a. God’s work doesn’t just intend to make you a survivor. It intends to make you a worshiper. “Gather the people” in v16, cp. 20:8, 10.
- b. By grace, the people rightly respond: “Then Israel sang this song” (v17, cf. Ex 14:30–15:1). They sang sovereign grace; what leaders and nations and nobles have done has all been for God’s people’s salvation (v18).
- c. Why sing?
 - i. To identify and unify in God Himself.
 - ii. To make it dwell richly in our heart.
 - iii. To commemorate it to future generations. (cf. Ps 78:7)

Conclusion: Do you (not just your voice, but your soul) sing?

(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)

Numbers chapter 21, we hope by God’s help to have verses 10 through 20. As our portion. I’ll just asking for his help, let’s pray. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father. Very much, we identify ourselves. And the Israelites who could have so many advantages and so many experiences and still keep turning away from you in their hearts and with Words, and with their actions.

And so we are thankful to you o God that you set yourself before us, now in this passage and your grace, that overcomes even sinfulness, like that Proclaim yourself to us. We pray by the ministry of your spirit, help. The servant on Earth at Sacred desk as he preaches.

Grant that. By your kindness. Helping and by your power over ruling. The preaching would be according to the scriptures and in the power. Of your Holy Spirit and Grant to all of us as we sit under your word as well. That your spirit would help us that he would work by Almighty Grace that he would produce a faithfulness in us, that is not from us, but from Christ, That we might see that he Who did this?

At this time with Israel and who came in his own time, in the flesh and who sits on the throne of glory is in our time still working by his spirit and that you our God who have displayed and declared yourself in. Your son, are also the same yesterday and today and forever.

And so come work by your grace Among Us. We pray and Make our hearts to sing in our mouths to sing your praise. For your great redeeming work. We ask in Jesus name, amen. Numbers chapter 21 verses 10 through 20. These are God’s words. Now, the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth, And they journeyed from obot.

And camped at EJ, 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 Arnon. Which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the amorites, for the Arden, as the border of Moab between Moab and the amorites, Therefore, it is said, in the book of the wars of Yahweh Wahab in sufa 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 Yahweh said to Moses, gather the people together and I will give them water. Then Israel sang, this song spring up a 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. And from Montana to nahaliel from niheliel to bamot and from bammoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab to the top of Pisgah. Locks down on the Wasteland. Amen. Thousands the reading of God's inspired and And Aaron twerk.

We looked to him to add his Blessing to the preaching of it. I need all the children who can count to help us in the introduction. Of the sermon. There's An important. A thing that I think we need to notice that the Holy Spirit wants us to notice by way of counting, And that is to count all of the stops.

That the people of God. Make in this passage. Uh, they start in a place and we we won't count The place that. Uh, that they begin. Because the peop the place that they begin is, where they were discouraged on the way, and they had to have the bronze, serpent to save them.

From God's judging them by the poisonous bites. So, So we won't count the starting place. But, Uh, 10 says, now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Obot. Okay. So Oobot That's, And they journeyed from obot and camped at EJ, aberim. Okay, difficult to say easier to count.

That's In the wilderness, which is Easter mob towards the sunrise from there. They moved and camped in the valley of Zarat. Okay, so now we're up to From there, they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnan. Which is from the board, sorry which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the amorites, for the Arnon, as the border of Moab between Moab and the amorites.

Okay, so the The other side of the Arna makes. Okay, there it is. Said, in the book of the wars of Yahweh where have been sufa, the Brooks of the Arden and the slope of the Brooks that reaches to the dwelling of R and lies on the border of Moab just quoting from another book.

So we won't count that they're still at Arnon. From there. They went to Bear. Which, Five. Thank you. I had started a lose count. I'm glad we have children helping me by mouthing or holding fingers. Our Bay Area is five, which is the well, where he always said to Moses, Etc.

Uh, and from the Wilderness, which is bare in in the wilderness, I skip down to verse 18 there, you can see, they went to, I skipped the song Matata. Okay, so Montana makes six. From Matata to nahaliel. Seven, thank you. From the Hale to bamoth. That's it. And from barmath in the valley, that is in the country of Moab to the top of Pisgah, So, that's 9, which looks down on the Wasteland or the desert, the Wilderness.

Um, I think actually that's the word Negev there. So the South the southern part of the promised land. If you were reading this from the promised land and you heard Pisco, Well, you would also know that that's where Moses got to see the promised land before he died. But when it said that he looked down on the Negev, that was the name of the southern area of the Judean Hill Country.

You wouldn't hear Wasteland, you would hear a piece of the promised land. So, very different. Feeling very different connotation. Uh, at the end of verse 20, I think if we translate it that way, all right, so, how many did we have? We had nine stops And it's not usual for the pastor in the introduction to the sermon, to ask you to kind of participate and to do that, but we needed to slow down a little bit often.

When we're reading the Bible, God does things for us to help us slow down so that we will thank and things will sink in. Now, I know at least one. Of you little Scholars who Not too many weeks ago, went through a unit adding zero. Uh, two numbers or adding numbers to zero.

Um, and you discovered of course, From new new immediately in the beginning, in the first lesson, it's obvious That it doesn't change the number. 09 is the number of stops. Zero is the number of times in those, nine stops that we saw that we see in this passage Israel complain.

Or Grumble. They obviously got thirsty at one point because at one of the stops God provides them water. He gathers has Moses gather Israel to give them water and Moses does what he says and God gives them one and they write a song about it. So it's not that they didn't have the problems that they had before.

But zero is the number of complaints, or grumbings, or rebelling against God's servant, or any of those things that we've seen Israel continually do throughout the the time since they left Egypt, they remember they didn't even get to Sinai before. They had started their complaining and grumbling And so there is something wonderful here and it is the work of God.

And his people, we see that. It's a gracious work in the first place. We see, it's a historical work and the second place and we see that it's a praiseworthy work in the third place. First, it's Is a gracious work. Uh, we just had these nine stops with no.

Judgment inducing incidents among the people of God and it's really a glorious Miracle at the time we get to this point. Think of all the things that God had given Israel. That had not produced a streak like this of faithfulness and submission and contentment and obedience to him. They had seen the mighty hand with which he judged Egypt and they had seen the mighty hand with which he delivered them and not only sparing their firstborn in the tenth plague but brought them out of Egypt and then when Egypt chased them and God had led them remember on purpose to the place where they were pinned against the Sea by the uh by the armies of Egypt.

God had delivered them through the sea and then used the same sea through which he had saved them and made them to walk on dry land to drown the Egyptian Army.

That we'll we'll get to in the third part. The praiseworthy work in verses 16 through 18. Had seen God do Miracle after miracle and then God had given them. His means He had made a covenant with them, gathered them to himself at Sinai thundered his own voice. From the top of the mountain which he made to shake and smoke and burn with fire, he had showed them his Holiness and his glory.

He had communicated to them, showed them that they were his own people and he was their very own God and he used that sort of language. When he says, I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the house of Egypt out of the house of bondage and then in the second commandment, God is a jealous God and the third commandment the name of Yahweh.

Your God. The fourth Commandment of the Sabbath of Yahweh. Your God, the fifth commandment the land that Yahweh, your God is giving you and so they had his miracles and they had his Covenant and they had the the means of his grace, he had given them his word. He gave them the Tabernacle with the, the ways of drawing near.

You remember, the the different offerings and always remember that word offering means to draw near. It's a way that God gives his people to draw near to himself. And the Ascension to draw near to him by ascending, uh, even as Jesus, of course, is our Ascension and has ascended, and the tribute bringing Jesus in hand.

Um, Offering and the peace, another way of coming near. And so they had all of these means. And in addition to the Miracles and Uh and God's revealing himself to the manifesting himself to them. And the means that uh that God provided, he's all he'd also given the misery Every time he sinned against every time they sinned against him, he had disciplined them.

Well, not every time at multiple points, when they had sinned greatly against them, he disciplined them severely, he judged them severely and despite all those things We still hadn't seen them walk Faithfully with the Lord for any extended period of time. And praise God. That's a great help to us because many of us have seen wonders that God has done in our lives, even or in the lives of people near us.

In addition to the Wonders that we see throughout the Bible and that we know of throughout church history, many of us have known that we belong to God, and he belongs to us, he's taken us to be his very own people. Many of us have had the means of his grace, his day, his worship in that worship, his word, read, and sung, and prayed, and preached praying itself, and preaching, the preaching of his word.

We've had his means, and we've even had the misery Not treated us like we're illegitimate children. He's treated us as true Sons true children. And we have done things, and we have gotten our swats Um, in different ways that he brings pain and difficulty into our lives, and he has it those times, gotten our attention.

And we have either known as soon as it came, what God was trying to get our attention about, or we've just been going on in our own way. So ignorantly, and and willfully that, he's, he's gotten our attention and we've had to stop and and uh, say now what would the Lord, what is the Lord calling me to repent of?

Is there something that I don't see? And there have been times and despite all of those things, How often we find ourselves saying with Paul? At the end of Romans 7. The things that I hate I keep doing. And the things that I want to do, I keep on failing to do.

I keep on not doing And so, one of the things That God immediately gives us to see. He gives us this setup. With all of the things in the life of Israel. Thus far, that have not produced something like this. Nine stop streak, at least not that he's told us of and he gives us the payoff.

The thing that has produced this Was not the Miracles. And it was not by itself. Even the means of the word or the Covenant, or the chastening That leaves one thing that could have produced this. God's Almighty gracious work. God himself has to do the work in the soul of his people.

And that means that ordinary faithfulness. Is X is the fruit of extraordinary Grace. And so for us on the one hand, that means that God, the god of extraordinary. Grace is Our Hope. When we see how we have continued to stumble. After all that God has done for us and done to us.

We still have that hope in him. But when we go through a season, When we plod Faithfully for a few hours or days or weeks that we would look back and we would be grateful to God that this has not been. I finally got it. This has not been the stuff is finally working.

But it has been a season of God, working by his Almighty power in his Covenant. Love to keep us faithful for a few days or weeks or months or years. I think some of us have Felt this inherently. Uh that every once in a while we get to the end of a day and we obviously haven't been sinless, there's much that we're confessing And yet, God has given us an ordinarily faithful day.

And we lay our heads down on the pillow. And if we're understanding, what has just happened in, in that day of the history of Our Lives, our hearts rise with thankfulness to the god Who kept us from Evil. Didn't lead us into temptation and he delivered us from the evil in those Temptations.

Uh, there's not just the Daily Bread, there's The Daily Grace. And so there's there's glorious Grace in ordinary plotting. So that's the first thing. God shows us here about his work that it is a gracious work. The second thing is that it is a historical work. It feels like an odd Interruption.

In verses 14 and 15, especially since you, and I don't have a copy of the book of the wars of Yahweh. Uh, you know. Modern-Day commentators. Speculate whatever. Maybe in God's mercy to us. He will at some point allow the archaeologists to dig up a jar that's been sealed for a couple thousand years.

And there'll be something in it that identifies itself as the book of the wars of Yahweh and we'll read and it had been Sufa and the Brooks of the Arden, the slope of the Brooks, it reaches to the dwelling of R and lies on the border of Moab, you know, who knew what the book, uh, of the wars of Yahweh was The people of God who first received the book of numbers from the pen of Moses.

There was someone maybe it was an Israelite, maybe it was. Someone from another one of the Nations a historian who had just taken note of these extraordinary and amazing things that these Hebrews who were nobodies had done and, you know, written something called the book of the words of Yahweh.

But here, the Bible quotes from that book, now that does not show Uh regardless of what the unbelieving and rebellious commentators love to say that Moses was dependent upon other histories. No Moses is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The reason we know that these nine stops were historical events is because God says, so in Numbers chapter 21, God says, so in the Bible, but God wants his people to see and to know and be convinced that the historical factuality, the historicity of his work is important.

Because God is real, and he has really done this work. It is important that Jesus God, the son historically, became a man. And lived his righteous life and died his death on the cross and that as a historical fact. As you remember, Paul says as attested by Um, 500 Witnesses.

Most of whom were alive at the time that First Corinthians 15 were written. Why did Paul say that? Was First Corinthians somehow validated by these 500 witness? Of course. Not was the resurrection somehow that? No, the resurrection was validated authenticated by God telling them about it in his word is valid and authentic because it actually happened and the way they knew it was true was because God had said, so in his word See how God comes to us who are weak in our faith.

And we, we often struggle with unbelief and even though we should out of submission to God and acceptance of his word, we should accept whatever his his word says as the the highest degree of authentication. Yet, he knowing our weakness comes and he says see the, you know, The tacitus also says this and Josephus also says this and then he allows some arrogant mostly Germans but there are liberal Americans among them as well in the 1800s to take all of these names and events and places that are in the Bible and say, see we have no historical record of these things.

It's all just invented nonsense. This is religious myth and then for the next 150 years, Archaeologists. Some of them in God's. Ironic and just Providence, German not all but archaeologists for 150 years end up digging up the insignias and the capstones and and the documents Etc, that that tell all these names and these places.

And these events that the Liberals had said, usually the Bible isn't true because history doesn't record that and it turns out history does. But it's also for us, isn't it? So that we will remember that. It is important. That God's work is historical work. He is and he has actually done these things.

And so, of course, they were supposed to know and believe this on account of God, giving it to them by the pen of Moses. But the Holy Spirit here emphasizes to The necessity, the importance. Of believing that this is history. That this is historically factual. And so is all of God's work and one of the reasons why it's so important is because your life right now is history.

And it's historically factual and you are not to interact with God as if he is. Some combination of religious ideas and feelings that men have come up with or even a combination of religious ideas and feelings that he has somehow mysteriously communicated to you? No, God is he has existence inherent to himself when you answer your catechism question what is God?

That that first thing in which he is Infinite Eternal and unchangeable in, is his being, he is, and you're worshipping with him is to be an actual interaction with him. The idea that God is addressing Us in his word and especially in the preaching or that he is listening to us as we pray.

These are not just religious fantasies. These are historical facts Remember from last week's morning, sermon passage how Jesus was warning those who were playing at religion. Do not play at interacting with God. Do not play at worship. Do not play at faith. Interact with him, who is You know, present history is history.

Just as much as past history. It is historical. It is real. It is true. And you are to really and truly interact with the God, who is, and who is working even now, You know, future history is just as factual as past history, especially when God has told you, what that future history is, it's not in any more doubt than past history.

It's just as certain it just hasn't happened yet. So that you have for instance, in Romans 8, that wonderful statement, Those whom he foreknows, he predestined, those whom he predestined, he also called Those whom he called he also Justified those of me justified. He also glorified A bunch of foreknown people and predestined people who are not yet called, they haven't been born yet.

Oh, that's the Lord Terry's. And there are a bunch of Justified people in this room who I love you, but Not yet glorified. And yet God can say it as past tense. Why? Because that which he has decided to do and that which he has told us, he will.

Most certainly do, is as factual a history, even though it's future history, As if it had already occurred. So God's work is a historical work God's work in. His people is a gracious work. It's a historical work, it's also a praise worthy work. From there. They went to Bayer, which is the well where Yahweh said to Moses, gather the people together, and I will give them water.

Then Israel sang this song spring up? Oh well. Now we don't know, it's probably knocked the same place. As in chapter 20 verse 8. And, uh, and Through 10. You remember when the people were grumbling about water in the wilderness of Zen, Um, at Kadesh. And Yahweh spoke to Moses.

Saying, take the rod. You and your brother, Aaron gather the congregation together. And speak to the Rock and so forth. And then verse 10 of chapter 20, and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the Rock and they were supposed to speak to the Rock in front of the people.

Why? So that God could be hallowed before the eyes of Israel so that they could see how God was taking care of them and loving them and providing water for them. Even though they had grumbled even though they deserved Wrath and Moses gave them wrath instead of displaying God's mercy to their wrath.

You remember That's why Moses and Aaron couldn't enter the land in chapter 20 verse 12 because you did not believe me to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel. And so again, God didn't just provide water. He says, gather the people together and I will give them water.

Why? Because the people were just supposed to see more than water. The people were supposed to see the god of power and the god of Mercy, providing for them. And that's what they saw. He said to Moses gather the people together and I will give them one. It doesn't even tell us.

About them drawing from the well. And behold there was water and there was enough for the people and there was enough for their animals. It doesn't give any of that information. It just says that's the well where Yahweh said to Moses, gather the people together and I will give them water.

Then Israel sang this song. Because the main thing was for the people to be gathered, to behold the grace of God, and then the people to sing and praise in response to the grace of God. And this is where we said earlier, remember when they, when God had drowned Um, Egyptian Army in the Red Sea.

Let me read you from the end of Exodus 14 and into Exodus 15. Thus Israel saw the great work which Yahweh had done in Egypt. So the people feared Yahweh and believed Yahweh and his servant Moses then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Yahweh and spoke saying I will sing to Yahweh for.

He has triumphed gloriously the horse and its rider, he has thrown into the sea and in that case, it gives us the entire song Verse 18. And then in verse 20 of Exodus 15, you remember Miriam leads The women of Israel. Uh, then Mary and the prophetess, the sister of Aaron took the timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances and Miriam answered them sing to Yahweh for.

He has Triumphed gloriously the horse and its rider. He has thrown into the sea and it doesn't give us the rest of the song. So here, when we have, then Israel sang, this song. What we're to remember is God, is not just provided water for them. He has provided praise for them.

He has provided the knowledge of himself as their deliverer who loves them and redeems them just as God had not merely provided for them. Safety from the pursuing Egyptian Army. He had provided praise for them, so that they would sing of the triumphs of Yahweh as triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and Rider into the sea.

And that probably indicates that what we have in this in these few lines. In verses 17 through 18 are not the whole song. Opening lines of a more extended song that Israel knew at the time. And that we don't know. Now, You see God doesn't just intend to make you a Survivor.

He doesn't just deliver you so that you will have survived your trouble or survived your danger. God God's work, intends to make you a worshiper. He's gathered you here so that you would see by faith that God Saves you. So that you would know that by his grace, we should respond with praise By grace, in this passage, the people rightly responded with a song.

Now, why to sing? Well, when you sing together? There is an identifying with one another and a unifying with one another. There's something about song that we even hear God talk about, doesn't he in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 admonishing one another A unity and a fellowship in singing together that is of a different quality and often of a deeper quality than merely talking together or chatting together.

We know that God uses his uses song to make the words of Christ. Dwell more richly in our hearts. And we know that. Not only in the nation of Israel but many cultures use song for an event like this, in order to imprint it upon the memory. The histories of the Nations were often sung.

They're given, not just in prose but in poetry, So that it is retained better and that's one of the reasons God gives us songs Uh, Psalm 78, for instance and there was Uh, there was another text, that slipped my mind, just now That said, a very similar thing in the catechism class today.

Uh, but In Psalm 78 verse 7. Here's this long song about the Wilderness wanderings that God has given his people uh to sing and for in fact, 78a in the Trinity, Salter Hymnal is the longest song in any of our books. Well, why that song? Uh, vers. Verses five through seven for he established a testimony in Jacob, an appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children that the generation to come might know them the children who would be born that they may arise and declare them to their children.

In fact, They may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God. His praiseworthy. Because his communicating to us his glory and his praise in his work is one of the ways. That he graciously Works in. And not forget the works of God, but keep his Commandments.

And may not be like their father's a stubborn and rebellious generation. A generation that did not set its heart. A, right? And his Spirit was not faithful to God. God wants us, not only to see that. His work is gracious. That he works by his power in our hearts.

To produce life and Faith and faithfulness, not only that, his work is historical. That the same God who did those things then is the one with whom we are interacting now who is working on us and in our lives. Now, But to see that his work is praiseworthy. That as he works in our lives, we would respond with praise and song.

Not just with our voice. But with your soul, That you would identify with him and with his people, as you sing his, his praise together with one another, that his word would dwell richly in your heart as you sing it. And that this would be what holds before us and a means by which we communicate to the generations to come.

The wonderful works of God. Hope in him. And not wonder, and not Rebel, but rather keep his Commandments. Praise God for Setting before us in this passage throughout his word in so many of his songs. His gracious and historical and praiseworthy work. Let's pray. Thank you, Father for this passage.

Thank you for How interesting it is. And the way that your spirit has used some of its interesting characteristics to call our attention. Uh, to important. Doctrine that you're communicating to us here. Help us Lord to deal truly and genuinely With you. Uh, not to think that faithfulness in our life is going to come in any other way.

But to look to you to work in Us by your grace to produce it, bless your means employ them You have appointed the means of your grace honor, Those means that you have appointed by using them, but we pray, Lord, that it would be you who use them. And that when we see you doing.

So you would Enlarge our hearts and loosen our lips to sing your praise. Uh, Grant these things we ask In the name of your son. Our Lord Jesus the sweet psalmist of Israel. Who is Great, David's, greater son, and your son from all eternity. Our Savior, We ask it in his name.

Amen.