

Sin in the Camp

Part 4

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Sin in the Camp, Part 4 Numbers 20:1-13

Well, if you have a Bible and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Numbers 20. The beginning of the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus – fourth book is Numbers 20. What we've seen over the last few weeks is we saw sin in the camp of the people of Israel as they fashioned a golden calf and bowed down to worship an idol instead of God, just after being delivered out of slavery in Egypt. They're worshipping a golden calf, and we saw the disastrous affects of sin in the camp. And then we saw, in Joshua 7 the affects of sin in one man, Achan, him holding back to some things in his tent, and the affect of that one sin on the entire people of God.

And tonight, we come to Numbers 20, where we see sin in the camp of the least expected person among the people of Israel. We're going to look at the man who God called to deliver the people of Israel out of Egypt; the man who stood before Pharaoh with the power of God; the man who led the people of God across the middle of the Red Sea; the man who had the privilege of meeting with God on the mountain and receiving the law of God and passing the law of God down to his people; the man who Exodus 33 says met with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend. We're going to see Moses himself with sin in his camp. It is – I'm convinced, one of the saddest chapters in the entire Old Testament, really in all of Scripture, and it is a needed word for us today.

The two churches that have had the greatest impact on my life—this church and the church I grew up in—have both experienced seeing first hand the affects of sin in the camp of its leaders. And what a guy named Marshall Shelley said is true. He said, "When church leaders fall, they can wound many believers." And it's true. Sadly, I don't believe the church I grew up in or this church are an anomaly in our culture. We live in a church culture today where pastors and church leaders are characterized by sexual sin, and financial impropriety, and prideful arrogance.

And since becoming the pastor here, I am more convinced than ever that spiritual warfare is having its way with leaders in the church. And not just in the church as a whole, in this church. Ladies and gentlemen, the reality is there has been sin in the camp of leadership in this church. And so tonight, I want us to look at Numbers 20 and the goal is not to preach to or about leaders from the past or about this person or that person. The goal tonight is to look at Number 20, and first of all to preach to myself, and then to every leader in this church – every leader of any capacity in this church – not just every leader in this church, but every potential leader in this church. This is one of those texts that, as I've studied this week I've thought over and over again, "I wish somebody would have walked me through this text when God was initially calling me into ministry." So to every leader and potential leader, and not just in this church. To every leader and potential leader who listens to this online or on podcast, the reality is it is high time for the Church Jesus Christ to rise up and address sin in the camp of its leaders.

And this is no question, the most difficult of these messages on sin in the camp to preach because it is aimed primarily at myself. Ian Bounds said it best. He said, "While the church is looking for better methods, God is looking for better men. What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use." It is no wonder that we have not experienced the fullness of the blessing and the presence of God in this church when we have grown so content and so comfortable and so expectant of sin in the church's leadership.

And so I want us to dive in, and lest you're already thinking, "I'm not a leader in this church so it's a good thing that this sermon doesn't apply to me," I want to remind you that every single person in this church is affected by leaders in the church. And that's a biblical thing. This is the way that God has set it up. He has given – Ephesians 4, He says He has given leaders to the church as a gift. Hebrews 13, those leaders, it says – Hebrews 13 says, "Remember your leaders, consider your leaders, pray for your leaders because your leaders take watch over your souls and would give an account to God for that," Hebrews 13:17, it's an incredibly humbling verse. Leaders, it says "Remember your leaders, because they will give an account for the way they have kept watch over your souls."

And there's no question that leadership in the church affects everyone in the church. Ian Bounds went on to say this. Follow along. He says "The church of God makes or is made by its leaders. And whether it makes them or is made by them, it will be what its leaders are. A church rarely revolts against or rises above the religion of its leaders." That is a convicting quote. I had heard before I became a pastor, I had heard people say the church will become like its pastor or a church will never go farther than the pastor is willing to go spiritually. It was one thing to hear that then. It's another thing to hear that now, and to realize elders, pastors, staff members, small group leaders, leaders in the context of The Church of Brook Hills, the church will not rise above the religion of its leaders.

And I'm guessing – I'm guessing there's even people here tonight who are not followers of Christ, and who are not – wouldn't even call yourself a part of the church. But even for you, I want you to realize why I believe Numbers 20 is so important. Because I am convinced there are many people in our culture who have grown hard toward Christ because what they have learned in the lives of leaders in church. And I am deeply sorry for that. And I hope that even if you're here tonight and you're not a follower of Christ, you will see the importance of Number 20 in the church.

Kingdom Leadership Requires...

And so, we're going to dive into this picture of sin in the camp of Moses. And what we're going to do is we're going to see some characteristics—really, requirements of leadership in the kingdom of God. And with each of those, I want us to see ways that we can pray for leaders. This is a biblical thing to do. It's a New Testament thing to do.

Hebrews 13:18, right after that verse I mentioned just a second ago, the author of Hebrews says, "Pray for us." Paul, throughout the New Testament says, "Pray for me. Pray for us." It is a biblical responsibility upon the church to pray for its leaders. So how do you pray for leaders in the church? That's part of what I want to do tonight based on Numbers 20 is to beg you to pray for me and to pray for leaders in this church.

And so what we're going to do is we're going to see these requirements, characteristics of kingdom leadership and then see how they affect the way we pray for leaders in the church. Numbers 20:1, follow along with me. One of the saddest pictures in all of Scripture, verse 1.

"In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, 'If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!'

Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.'

So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.'

These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord and where he showed himself holy among them (Num. 20:1-13).

Now in order to understand what's going on here, we've got to catch the context here. We've got to realize that approximately 40 years before Numbers 20, the people of God found themselves at this exact same place – a place called Kadesh, and they were there having been delivered out of slavery in Egypt on the brink of the Promised Land. And God brought them to this land and He said, "I am going to give it to you." A land flowing with milk and honey, all that you ever could have imagined.

And so what they do is they send out 12 spies to go scope out the land. Those 12 spies come back and they start talking about how the land is too tough to take. They start talking about how they don't need to trust God and take the land. And the crowds start rising up and they say, "We don't need to go in." All the spies are saying that except for two of them—Joshua and Caleb. So Joshua and Caleb stand up and say, "We need to take God with His Word and go get the land," and they get drowned out by the crowd. And they say, "We don't want to go in the land, we don't want to trust God." And they turn back. And on that day in Kadesh, God says to His people, "An entire generation is going to wander in this wilderness. I'm still going to take my people into the Promised Land, but not one person from this generation, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, will go into the Promised Land."

And so they turned back from the Promised Land. And for 40 years, they wander there in the desert. They come back around to the same place after all of that wandering. And here they are, quarreling again, complaining again. This is kind of the normal routine for the people of Israel. They'd done the exact same thing in Exodus 17, a long time before when they didn't have water, they had quarreled and complained and God had provided water out of a rock then.

And so they're complaining. And Moses and Aaron go running to the Lord, and they fall down before Him and God says, "Here's what you do." In Exodus 17, He had said, "Strike a rock and water will come out." This time, He says, "Speak to a rock and water will come out. Take the staff, but don't hit the rock with the staff this time. Just take the staff and speak to the rock." And so they go before the people of God, it says in verse 9, "Moses took the staff just as the Lord commanded him." But then you get to verse 10 and things go awry. And it's at this point we begin to see sin in the life of Moses unfold in a brief moment that would affect his life from this point on.

A Radical Compassion for God's People

And I want you to see four requirements of kingdom leadership that begin to emerge from Numbers 20. And the first one is this: kingdom leadership requires a radical compassion for God's people. A radical compassion for God's people. You come to verse 10, "Moses and Aaron gather the assembly together in front of the rock. And Moses said to them"—listen to the anger, the impatience in Moses' voice. He said, "*Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?*"

Now Moses was not doing good. Verse 1, Miriam had died – was not going like Moses had planned. And all of a sudden, these people start complaining again, and they start saying, "Wish we were dead instead of being here, we'd rather die than be where the Lord has led us." And Moses is understandably angry at this point. And I know... I'm guessing Moses is thinking here, "You know, if you wished you could die, I wouldn't mind the same thing happening to you."

And so he goes before the Lord. And what does God say? God says, "Give them water. I'm going to provide water this way." Moses comes out before the people, and it's almost like he hasn't met with God in a sense. He comes out before the people and begins to speak harshly towards them – Psalm 106:33 talks about this instance, and talks about how the people of God rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips. And it's at this point in Numbers 20 that we are seeing a tension that exists in spiritual leadership, in kingdom leadership.

All throughout Scripture, in any leader's life, there is a tension between on the one hand, holy indignation against sin. And it is right. It is completely right to have holy indignation against sin, and to speak out strongly against sin. We see this all throughout the Old Testament. Prophets speaking boldly, even dangerously at points against sin. New Testament church leaders speaking boldly, dangerously against sin. It is right to speak out against sin, and in my estimation, this is one area where we are lacking in kingdom leadership today. Boldness to address sin for what it is.

Yet that holy indignation against sin is coupled, in kingdom leadership, with a holy compassion for those who sin, with a holy compassion for sinners. And we see this tension, even in the character of God here. God is being rebelled against. And we have seen, over the last couple of weeks especially, how God responds to sin. At the same time, a people who are saying, "We'd rather die than be where the Lord has brought us." Moses and Aaron come before Him and what does God say? He says, "Give them water." Astonishing mercy.

This is the picture we see of God throughout Scripture. We see His goodness and His severity side by side. We see His mercy and His wrath side by side. This is the character of God. It is to be reflected in those who lead people are representatives of God. This is the picture of Jesus in the New Testament. You see holy indignation against sin. You see Him going to the teachers of the law – “Woe to you,” He speaks vehemently against the teachers of the law, Pharisees, for their hypocrisy. At the same time, Luke 19 gives us a picture of Jesus coming to a mountain and overlooking the city of Jerusalem right before He goes in to be crucified in Jerusalem. And He said He looked out over the city, the same city that was full of hypocrites who were about to crucify Him and Luke 19:41 says, “Jesus saw the city and he wept over the city.” And so you’ve got this tension here between a hatred for sin and yet a weeping over those who are in sin.

And it’s a tension that exists in kingdom leadership that must be maintained. And what we see here in Numbers 20 is Moses taking things into his own hands in holy indignation against sin. And it’s a reminder to us. It’s been a reminder to me, especially after the last couple of weeks as we’ve been looking at and talking about the wrath of God on sin. It’s been a reminder to me that David, it makes no sense to talk about, to preach about the wrath of God on sin and not to go out then in the middle of the week and get your hands dirty serving those who are under His wrath. It makes no sense, just like we saw in the video. It makes no sense whatsoever for us to see the wrath of God on sin in Scripture and not—every one of us—go running as fast as we can to the nations, to the millions of people who haven’t even heard the name of Jesus and tell them about Christ and salvation from sin. They go together.

And so we see that kingdom leadership requires radical compassion for God’s people, and I want to urge you, church, when you pray for leaders in the church—when you pray for your pastor, your elders, your leaders in the church—pray for love in your leaders. Pray for authentic, godly, biblical love. Pray for a love for God, an authentic love for God that hates sin, but pray for love for people, and pray for love for those who are lost, those who don’t know Christ. Pray for leaders who hate sin and who find themselves weeping over the condition of those who are in sin. Pray for leaders who are bold, but have a brokenhearted boldness. For courage in your leaders, but a contrite courage. Pray for that. Pray for brokenhearted boldness, for contrite courage. Pray for love and all that entails. Pray for gentleness in your leaders, for kindness, for patience in your leaders. Kingdom leadership requires a radical compassion for God’s people.

A Radical Submission to God’s Glory

Second, kingdom leadership requires a radical submission to God’s glory. A radical submission to God’s glory. We come back to verse 10 and listen to Moses’ words, “*Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?*” You catch that statement? What a statement. Moses, who do you think you are? “*Must we bring you water out of this rock?*”

Now, to this point, I remember sitting in my seminary archaeology class, which just doesn’t sound like it would be that exciting of an adventure. But it really is, because some of the biblical world just starts to come alive. And texts like this come alive. I remember where I was sitting when the professor on the open of class pulled out Numbers 20. And he said, “I want you to look at this with me.” He began to talk about how it’s pretty commonly known that there are aquifers that exist under the surface strata of the Sinai Peninsula, which is being talked about here.

And what you’ve got is a picture of underground water sources hidden beneath the rock strata. That when rocks are struck or jarred, that springs of water begin to flow, seemingly from the rock. And this is exactly what God had done in Exodus 17. Moses had struck the

rock and water had come flowing out. You can't help but to wonder, when you get to Numbers 20, when God starts talking about bringing water from the rock, Moses starts to think, "You know, I know how to do this deal."

And God has said, "Moses, speak to the rock." And what does he do? He goes and he grabs his staff and he hits the rock a couple times until water starts coming out. And don't miss it here. It is the subtle temptation of all spiritual leadership—it is to do the work of God in a way that draws attention to yourself. To do the work of God in a way that draws attention away from God—"Must we bring you water out of this rock?" Like it was Moses and Aaron who were going to bring water out of the rock. Like it was Moses and God who were going to bring water out of the rock. It was God and God alone who was going to bring water out of the rock for His people.

And here, this picture of kingdom leadership is prevalent. It's there throughout Scripture. God has designed leadership among His people so that His strength and His glory and His power are always put on display. That's why He calls those whose weakness is so clear, because He gets great glory in providing strength in weakness, power in weakness.

And the reality is, whenever a kingdom leader does the work of God, and does not point to the glory of God, that leader is sinning. Whenever a leader among God's people does God's work without pointing to God's glory that leader is sinning. And so I urge you, church, to pray for humility in your leaders. Pray for humility in your leaders.

This is a struggle for every single spiritual leader. Every kingdom leader struggles with radical submission to God's glory. Moses, here doing this in Numbers 20, just eight chapters before this, Numbers 12:3 says that "Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth." That's what it says. On the face of the earth, Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth. Numbers 12:3.

Eight chapters later, he's drawing attention to himself by doing the work of God in this way. You see the struggle there, the wrestling there? And I'll be honest, if I could just be a bit vulnerable tonight, this is a struggle in my own life. My life verse is John 3:30, and it's my life verse because I wrestle with it so much.

It's John the Baptist and John 3:30 and he says about Jesus, he says, "*He must become greater; I must become less.*" What a statement. Jesus must become greater. I must become less, and I twist that verse. I twist that verse. I really believe in my heart I want Christ to be glorified. I want God to be glorified. I want Christ to become greater, but I twist that verse so that I make it into "He must become greater and I wouldn't mind becoming greater, too. I want His name to be exalted, but I don't mind if my name is lifted up a little in the process as well." And what John 3:30 is saying—self is cut. Your name is crucified to glorify Christ and not you at all, that you would want to become less so that He might become greater, that your name would be forgotten and His name would be exalted.

This is what C. S. Lewis talked about, almost is the great unattainable. C. S. Lewis said, "Humility. You try and you try and you try and you try to be humble, and once you finally get there, you're proud of it and you have to start all over again." How do you get humility? How do you become humble? One of my favorite authors on prayer is a guy named Andrew Murray. He also wrote a book entitled *Humility*. Is that bold or what? To write a book on humility and put your name on it, and sell it. *Humility, and How I Attained It* by David Platt.

Don't... You see the wrestling here. Don't tell people that you think they're humble or you admire them because they're humble. That is a horrible thing to say to people because

whenever anybody says that to you, then you walk away and you start thinking, "Huh. I'm humble." It's almost prideful to share that as a possible illustration, as if somebody's actually said that to me and I would want you to know that.

You see the wrestling that goes on here with humility? The reality is, ladies and gentlemen, God has promised to bless leaders that He can trust with His glory. He's promised to bless leaders He can trust with His glory. And I want to be a leader. I want us to be a church of leaders that He can trust with His glory. God, give us the nations and do it in such a way that only you, only you, only you get the glory for it.

Pray for humility in your leaders. Pray that self would be crucified in your leaders. Pray continually for this, and don't think, "He's humble. I don't need to pray for that in him or her, or this leader or that leader." Pray for humility in your leaders. Pray for a radical submission to the glory of God.

How many of you have heard of Bill Bright? You know Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade? In the 20th century, probably no man has had a greater impact. That's a bold statement. But very few men have had a greater impact on the kingdom of Christ in the 20th century than Bill Bright did across the world. When he was dying, he said these words in an interview. He said, "Who is Bill Bright? I'm a little nobody among 6 billion nobodies. God has given me several things I think He has wanted me to do, and yet there doesn't seem to be any assurance that time will allow me to finish some of these things." He continued on. He said, "God doesn't need Bill Bright anymore than He needs a twig on a tree. He created us in His image, and He loves us and He esteems us and we are of worth to Him. But He can raise up sticks and stones to worship Him. So it's not as though my departure is going to leave a big hole."

I urge you to pray for humility in your leaders. Please pray for humility in your leaders.

A Radical Trust in God's Plan

Radical compassion for God's people, and radical submission to God's glory. Third, kingdom leadership requires a radical trust in God's plan. Now we come back to this picture—I mentioned it a couple times, in Exodus 17 when God provided water from the rock, when Moses hit the rock. And scholars who have studied this passage more than I ever could debate over why in Numbers 20, why exactly God told Moses to speak to the rock instead of striking the rock this time. And there are all kinds of ideas that are out there, and I think some have more credibility than others. But the bottom line is this.

God gave Moses a plan, and we can debate exactly why God gave Moses this particular plan. But the reality is, God gave him the plan and Moses modified the plan. Moses took the plan into his own hands and changed it according to what he thought would be best in that moment. And as a result, God says to him verse 12, "*the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me,'*" Moses. "You did not trust in me." Deuteronomy 32:51 literally says, "God says to Moses, 'Moses, you broke faith with me. You breached faith in me. You didn't trust me. You didn't trust what I had said to represent it clearly and accurately.'"

And what's really interesting – you go back up, and we looked at it in the middle of Verse 10 when Moses looks at them and he calls them rebels. This is the same word that Numbers 14 used to describe the people of God. They had. They'd rebelled against God at Numbers 14. Deuteronomy 1 is recounting that, talks about how they were rebels—they rebelled against the plan of God. But what's really interesting is that same word, circle it there in verse 10, that Moses uses to describe the people of God, circle it in verse 10 and then go

with me over to verse 24. And Verse 24, Aaron's about to die. God is speaking to Moses, and I want you to listen to what God says about Moses and Aaron in verse 24. Numbers 20:24 says, "*Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I give the Israelites because both of you,*" What's the word? "Rebelled." Circle it there. Same word, and that originally was the Old Testament, Moses used over here in verse 10. "*Both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah*" (Num. 20:24). Don't miss the picture here.

The Bible says the people of God rebelled at this place, turned back, saw the Promised Land, turned back and said, "We're going to do things our own way instead of God's way." They rebelled against God. And as a result, an entire generation missed out on the Promised Land. 40 years later, Moses comes before that same people. He calls them rebels. He said, "Here you are rebelling again," but the sad reality is, in doing this, Moses is doing the exact same thing he is indicting them for. And God says, "Just as my people," in Numbers 14, "Stood at the edge of the Promised Land and turned back and said, 'We're going to do things our own way,' You, Moses, met with me, went before my people, had my plan and you turned back and said, 'I'm going to do things my own way.' And therefore you and Aaron will not go into the Promised Land. Because when I gave you my plan, you modified it. You did things your own way instead of my way."

This is the great curse of spiritual leadership the temptation to break faith in God and to put confidence in yourself as a spiritual leader. This is what is, I'm convinced, rampant across the Church today and every kingdom leader must guard against it. The temptation to take the plan of God and modify it according to what you or I think is better.

The idea that we need to come up with a new game plan for how to take nations for the glory of Christ. The idea that we in the church need leaders who can devise new strategies for making the gospel known in all nations. The reality is God has given us the game plan. He has given us the strategy, and He is calling out leaders who will trust His plan, who will take Him at His Word. Cling to His Word, hold to His Word, fall on their faces before Him, just like Moses and Aaron did, hear His Word, and then obey His Word. Put His Word into practice. Jeremiah 7, "Obey me," He says, "Obey me and walk with me and things will be well with you. But do not be like a foolish generation that lets truth, my Word, perish from your lips, perish from your thoughts as you go off into your own ideas and your own thoughts."

God, raise up leaders in the church who trust in your plan. And church, I encourage you to pray for obedience in your leaders. Pray for leaders who are obedient to the plan of God. Because the reality is people, not just people, the reality is God's people will stray and wander from the plan of God. And God raises up kingdom leaders who will rise up and even when the people, even when God's people are straying away, even when it is not popular, God raises up kingdom leaders who will proclaim His plan, trust in His plan, and obey His plan no matter what it costs them. This is the picture of kingdom leaders throughout Scripture—prophets of the Old Testament, church leaders in the New Testament who at great cost to themselves trust in the plan of God and cling to what God has said to do and do not breach faith in God because of a confidence in themselves.

A Radical Responsibility for God's Reputation

God, raise up leaders who have a radical trust in your plan. And finally, related to that, fourth requirement of kingdom leadership. Kingdom leadership requires a radical responsibility for God's reputation. A radical responsibility for God's reputation. And this is where the climax of Numbers 20 comes in. God says to Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20:12, "Because you did not trust in me enough," to do what? "To honor me as holy in the sight of

the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." God says, "Moses, when you took things into your own hands, and you broke faith with me, you spoke harshly to the people and you drew attention to yourself, what you did is you violated my holiness." The man who spoke with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend just defamed the character of God in front of His people.

And God says to Moses, and He says to every kingdom leader in Scripture, "I raised you up to show my holiness to my people, to show my character to my people. And when you jeopardized my reputation, then you face strict judgment. You have a radical and awesome accountability, responsibility for my reputation." This is why God raises up leaders in His church. Not just in the Old Testament here, but throughout Scripture and church history, God raises up leaders who will be a reflection of His character. He says, "I lift you up so that I might show myself holy through you before their eyes. And when you do not display my holiness before my people, then I will remove you out of the picture."

The same thing, 1 Timothy 3 talks about... Have a list of high standards of holiness for leaders in the church. Two chapters later talks about when an elder sins, when a pastor sins, he is to be rebuked publicly in the church. This is why Scripture at some points even seems to encourage us not to become leaders in the church. James 3:1, "Don't presume," James says, "To be a teacher in the church, because you who teach will be judged more strictly." There is a high level of accountability and responsibility to be a leader in the church among God's people.

And the reality is, in the place God has put me in, the reality is if I do not live up according to those standards in 1 Timothy 3, the reality is you are to rebuke me publicly. God takes His holiness among His people in His leaders extremely seriously.

It almost seems a little extreme. We talked about this last week. I mean, people of God are going to miss out on the Promised Land because they lived in perpetual rebellion. They're always rebelling and complaining. Of course they didn't need to go in the Promised Land. But Moses for years faithfully, year after year after year after year, he had led God's people. He has one bad moment on a bad day in Numbers 20, and God says, "You're not going to the Promised Land."

You go to the end of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 34. It's one of the most humbling pictures. God takes Moses to the top of Mount Nebo, I was there just a few months ago – same place. From the top of this mountain, standing there, you can look out and you can see the city of Jericho. You can look out and see the Promised Land that Scripture is talking about. Incredible site, all around. And God takes Moses there. Deuteronomy 34—He takes him there, brings him to the top of the mountain and says, "Moses, look out on this land. The land I'm going to give to my people, and you will not set food on it." Just put yourself in Moses' shoes. What was that like? You start to think it's like you have to be perfect to lead in God's kingdom. It's like you have to be completely faithful, perfectly faithful, you can't mess up.

And ladies and gentlemen, that is true. It is true. You have to be perfect to lead in the kingdom of God. That is the whole point of Numbers 20. That is the whole point of the first five books of the Old Testament, ending in Deuteronomy 34 with that picture. Moses, the great Moses himself, the great lawgiver, the great covenant mediator. Not even Moses himself was able to live up to this law. Not even Moses himself was able to perfectly mediate this covenant. As a result, he would not be the one to lead the people into the Promised Land. Instead his successor would. His successor's name? Joshua. Joshua's name

means "The Lord saves." The Lord is salvation. Joshua's name in the Hebrew translated into the Greek is Jesus.

The whole point of Numbers 20 is to show us that Moses was not good enough. But as Hebrews 3 tells us, one greater than Moses came, and His name is Jesus. And He is perfect. He perfectly keeps the plan of God. He perfectly submits to the glory of God. "Not my will, but yours be done." He has perfect compassion on the people of God, and He alone is fit to lead the people of God. Only Jesus can do this. There's not one leader, not one person, including myself in this room who could ever live up to these standards, and that is the point. That is the point. Only Christ can. And as a result, every single pastor, every single elder, every single staff member, every single small group leader in this church must find themselves at one place day after day after day after day. It is at the feet of Jesus Christ Himself.

We need Christ. Only Christ is fit to lead His church. Christ is the head of the church. Only Christ can make these things a reality in us. Only Christ can crucify self. Only Christ can help us to have this kind of humility and this kind of compassion, this kind of trust and obedience and holiness. Only Christ can do these things.

And so if you are an elder here tonight, or you are a pastor or a staff member or a small group leader, any context a leader in this church, I plead with you to fall on your face, fall on your face, fall on your face before Christ and express daily the depth of your need for Him. My need for Him because the reality is if we do not stay close to Christ, if we do not stay intimately close to Christ, and if Christ is not imparting His life into us on a daily basis... If we wander from that intimacy with Christ. If we wander from our place on our face before Christ then we will fall. I will fall. You will fall soon as we try to do this thing on our own.

The Bottom Line...

Kingdom Leadership Requires Christ in Kingdom Leaders

Only Christ can remove sin in the camp, and the great need among leaders in the Church today is for Christ to reign in the camp. For Christ to reign in the camp, and so I urge you to pray for holiness in your leaders. Pray for the holiness of Jesus Christ Himself. Here's the bottom line, ladies and gentlemen. The bottom line is kingdom leadership requires Christ in kingdom leaders.

And so when you pray for these things, pray for the love of Christ to be formed in leaders. Pray for the humility of Christ to be formed in leaders. Pray for obedience of Christ to be formed in leaders by the Holy Spirit of God. And pray for the holiness of Christ to be formed in leaders. Pray continually for this. Pray constantly for this. I am begging with you, pleading with you.

Church, pray for your leaders like this. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, one of my favorite pastors from church history said this. He said, "My people's greatest need is my personal holiness." Then he went on to say, "It is not so much great talents that God blesses, but great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

I am praying that God would raise up leaders including myself in my own life. That He would work in this church so that leaders in The Church of Brook Hills are not characterized by great talents and great gifts and great this or that, but characterized more than anything by

great likeness to Jesus Christ. And so that's what I want us to do tonight. I want us to pray. I want us to pray for leaders in this church.

And in just a moment, I'm going to ask any elders who are here tonight in The Church of Brook Hills, any staff members, any small group leaders who are here tonight, I'm going to ask you in just a moment to come down and join me down at the front. And I'm going to invite you, if you are physically able, to kneel at the front, if not physically able just to stand here. And I want to invite leaders across this church to consecrate themselves, to fall before Christ. And I want us leaders to express the depth of our need for Christ.

We need to do this. And after they've come, what I'm going to do is I'm going to invite members of this faith family to then come and gather around these leaders. And we're going to pray for each other, and we're going to pray for leaders in this church. And we're going to pray that God would raise up leaders who bring great glory to Christ in The Church of Brook Hills.

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