

Numbers 31 - Life After Failure

After failure -- Moses was willing to be used by the LORD

Num 31:1-54 ESV The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "**Avenge** the people of Israel on the Midianites. **Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.**" 3 So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian **to execute the LORD's vengeance** on Midian.

"GATHERED TO YOUR PEOPLE" IS A REMINDER OF HIS FAILURE

- Num 20:12 ESV ...And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "**Because you did not believe in me**, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, **therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land** that I have given them." ... Num 27:12-14 ESV The LORD said to Moses, "Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. 13 **When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was,** 14 **because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin**

Peter denied the that He knew Jesus 3 times - but he dove off the boat to see Jesus

David in Psalm 51 - he fought his way back from failure - he did not settle for defeat

- Psa 51:10-13 ESV Create in me a **clean** heart, O God, and renew a **right spirit** within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and **take not your Holy Spirit** from me. 12 **Restore** to me the **joy** of your salvation, and uphold me with a **willing spirit**. 13 **Then I will teach** transgressors your ways, and **sinner will return to you**.

After failure -- Moses still believed that the LORD was FOR him

4 You shall **send a thousand from each of the tribes** of Israel to the war." 5 So there were provided, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. 6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with **Phinehas** the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and **the trumpets for the alarm** in his hand.

1) HE SENT 12,000 - seemingly an inferior number

- When you look at the size of the plunder and the number of virgin women - some estimate an army of up to 50,000 ***(although the bible does not tell us)***
- When Gideon fought the Midianites (300 vs 135,000 - see Jud 8:10)

2) HE SENT THE SILVER TRUMPETS - an acknowledgement that we need the LORD

- Num 10:9 ESV And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, **that you may be remembered** before the LORD your God, and **you shall be saved from your enemies**.

3) NOT A MAN WAS MISSING - the outcome of this faith and God's help - a miracle

- 48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, came near to Moses 49 and said to Moses, "Your servants have counted the men of war who are under our command, and **there is not a man missing** from us. 50 And we have brought the LORD's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and beads, **to make atonement** for ourselves before the LORD."

After failure - Moses was willing to obey the LORD

7 **They warred against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every male.** 8 They killed **the kings of Midian** with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, **Zur**, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed **Balaam** the son of Beor with the sword. 9 And the people of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones, and they took as plunder all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods. 10 All their cities in the places where they lived, and all their encampments, they burned with fire, 11 and took all the spoil and all the plunder, both of man and of beast. 12 Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

- The reason for this attack is the Midianites had seduced Israel by sexual promiscuity to worship other gods - remember God judged his own people with a plague
- **Zur** was the father of the girl who committed adultery in front of the tabernacle, that Phinehas killed
- **Balaam** was the man who (since he could not curse Israel) convinced the Midianites to seduce Israel with whoredom and God would judge them

After failure -- Moses did not lower God's standard

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. 14 **And Moses was angry with the officers of the army**, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. 15 **Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live? 16 Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD.** 17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. 18 But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.

- It is difficult for some people to read this (boys would grow up committed to take vengeance)
- It is horrific to think about, but sin and its judgement IS horrific - there's no other way to see it
 - Think of the world-wide flood
 - Think of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - Think of the judgement at the end of the age
 - Rev 6:15-17 ESV Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is

seated on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb**, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

- **Of all people, Moses understood the glory of God - and would not compromise it**
- Exo 33:18-23 ESV Moses said, **"Please show me your glory."** 19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." 21 And the LORD said, **"Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,** 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and **I will cover you with my hand** until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

They divided the plunder - vs 19-47

After failure -- He did not turn against the LORD because of his discipline

50 And we have brought the LORD's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and beads, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." 51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest received from them the gold, all crafted articles. 52 And all the gold of the contribution that they presented to the LORD, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels. 53 (The men in the army had each taken plunder for himself.) 54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting, **as a memorial for the people of Israel before the LORD.**

Are you willing to be used?

Do you believe the LORD is still FOR you?

Are you willing to continue to obey him?

Are you willing to uphold God's righteousness and not lower his standard to match your failure?

Are you willing to thank the LORD for his goodness, and set up reminders?