



BAD MANNERS

"Suffered He Their Manners In The Wilderness" Acts 13:18

Please read Numbers 21:4-9 "And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Our Flesh Nature...Ewww, It's Really Bad!

We see in this passage the realness of what the Scriptures refer to as our "flesh" or "carnal" nature. (To simplify things, let's just use the term "flesh nature"). Our flesh nature is something that is capable of enduring difficult circumstances and tolerating discomforts with a level of patience, but only for so long. Then, it reaches what we think is "rightful indignation." Like Popeye the Sailor Man used to say, "That's all I can stand, 'cuz I can't stand no more!" Then, things get ugly - they always do. God's people, in their discouragement, went to Moses and complained, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water and our soul loatheth this light bread (i.e., the manna)...and the people spake against God and against Moses." If you find this a reasonable and justifiable reaction to their dire circumstances (as I did), it's because of your "flesh nature."

The "flesh nature" always feels justified in its complaints and murmurings and it will always end in accusing God (or any real "Moses" He has raised up for you). Now sometimes we may not do this outwardly and openly, but keep these thoughts and feelings inwardly within our heart and in our spirit. We think we know how to hide our flesh from God (just as Adam & Eve did in Eden). But, 1 Corinthians 4:5 states that the Lord knows how to bring the hidden things of darkness to light; as He did here in this passage and with His people.

Sheesh! Isn't That A Little Severe?

The wrath and judgment of God that followed the Israelite's complaints was severe. God (yes, God) "**sent fiery serpents among the people...and much people of Israel died!**" How severe do the judgments of God need to be? In our "flesh nature," we will always find fault with the Lord. The flesh nature would just rather murmur, complain, find fault, accuse and make demands. Ultimately, it is all aimed at God - who is Sovereign over every aspect of our lives. Sometimes, we just blame it all on the Devil instead. Either way, our flesh nature just does not want to seek or acknowledge God (*in His Sovereignty*)...but rather, it cries out for its "rightful demands" and against a Holy Creator.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." - Hebrews 4:16. It is a hard cold fact that when our flesh nature is in dominion, rather than approach the throne of grace in a time of need, we prefer to murmur, point the finger of blame and make demands. But we are dead wrong there and in danger of the judgment of God. We are no more special than were His people in this Old Testament passage, and God would have to apologize to them should he exempt us from His judgment and wrath for doing the very same thing.

Mercy, A Very Particular Mercy

It says in Micah 7:18 that the Lord is a God that "delighteth in mercy". Can you find His mercy in the passage? Did you spot it? (*Go back and re-read the passage, it won't take long. See if you can find it!*)

His mercy was extended in a very particular and incredibly unique way. He instructed Moses to make a bronze image of one of the fiery serpents and to set it upon a pole. Odd, don't you think? And why one of the fiery serpents? Because, it was the very image of the severity of His judgment and of His wrath that He brought upon the people. The level of the severity of our own sin can be somewhat realized by beholding the level of the severity of God's judgment upon it. So He told Moses to make an image of one of these fiery serpents

and raise it up upon a pole! Then He told Moses to tell the people that if any man would look at the bronze image, he would live. They had to "look upon it" it says, and he who did lived and the mercy of God was realized.

Mercy Under The New Covenant

In John 3:14 Jesus said this, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Under the New Testament, we need to turn and face Jesus Christ, look upon Him "lifted up" (not on a pole but on a cross). Truly we can somewhat realize the severity of our own sin by beholding the severity of God's judgment in the crucifixion of His own Son, not a brass serpent, but His only begotten Son. The mercy of God is there for who ever will receive it.

The Wrath To Come (1 Thessalonians 1:10 & Revelation 6:17)

In this passage in Numbers 21, we see the judgment and the wrath of God fall upon the people **before** the Lord made a way of salvation from the inevitable coming death that awaited them. But this order is reversed in His dispensation of the Gospel of his Son where we see God **first** having provided us a way of escape, a way to receive His mercy and salvation **before** His inevitable and coming wrath and judgment. (Matthew & Luke 3:7, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Revelation 6:17, 11:18). Only now do we have this opportunity to flee from the wrath to come.

Have you truly turned to God, faced Jesus, and repented for your sin? You should do it today. You can approach the throne of grace to find help in time of need. Pray and ask God to forgive you...tell Him in your own words...but look upon Him, and know God's mercy for yourself.