

Numbers 15-36

“The Book of Wanderings” (Part 2)

The Hebrew title of the book is “In the Wilderness.” “Numbers” is the English title, referring to two censuses that are recorded in the book.

“According to 1:1 and 9:1, the book begins just over a year after they left Egypt.

Our Central Theme for Numbers: Knowing and trusting Who God is and how He works must be what shapes the lives of His people. This book contains at least 5 key examples...

God often works through human agents, so His people must be ready for uncomfortable action.

Chapters 1-2 are God preparing them for a march that will include and end with much war. He’s giving them the Promised Land, but they have to fight for it.

God is jealous for His people, so they must not live independent of Him.

Chapter 3 (and also 8) use the Levites as an object lesson of how the Israelites are God’s, not their own.

God does not tolerate sin, so His people must be purified and protected.

Chapters 4-8 include various instructions regarding the Levites and their ministry, uncleanness, and purification that were designed to “guard” a sinful people from their holy God.

God delights in blessing His people, so they must be thankfully obedient.

Chapters 6-10 describe joyful celebrations of God’s goodness to the Hebrew nation, and also continue the theme of noting their obedience.

God is almighty and all-wise, so His people must not doubt Him.

Chapters 10-14 describe how these people who have been so blessed with God’s presence and provision begin to complain, culminating with refusing to go into Canaan out of sinful, doubting fear when they finally get there. In each case, God confronts their sin but remains faithful to His promises to eventually bring the Hebrew nation into Canaan.

Have you ever had times when it struck you particularly hard just how much better God is than us? For me this week (and several times in recent months), it's been the freeness of His love.

I tend to feel the strongest affection for my kids when they're being cute. I am the quickest to spend time with those who are enjoyable. I prefer to give myself to those who will appreciate me, or who already have. But God is so free in giving His love that He isn't confined to that, which is one reason Scripture teaches "Election"--His choice to save some. It's so we'll see the depth of His grace and do the same for others.

Center Picture - Heart w/2 people

God is gracious and merciful, so His people must not lose hope when faced with the reality and consequences of their sin. He encourages this hope by... (read subpoints from the bulletin)

I had to make a choice between going through chronologically and going through thematically, and I chose the latter. I regret that we’ll lose some of the storyline, but that really doesn’t seem to have been the main point anyway. Under each point, though, I will be chronological.

And as we go through these themes, you’ll see some similarities to those we’ve already covered in points 1-5.

a. ...giving continued instructions for life in the Promised Land.

14:31 – ... *Your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected.* - Chilling words for a whole generation

Abruptly, we're back to God leading them to anticipate Canaan. – 15:1 – “*When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you,...*” One commentator (Ronald B. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*) quips that it is “as though nothing has happened.” We're right back to the way things were in the book's earlier chapters, with God preparing them to go into the land. Or v. 17 – “*When you come into the land to which I bring you...*” They had just failed miserably in getting in themselves.

It's like a football team's quarterback getting into the huddle for the last play of the game when they need to score or they lose, and saying, “Guys, you're all invited over to my house for a victory celebration tonight.” There's something uniquely encouraging about that, even more than, “We can do it!”

“Although much has happened, nothing has happened. The land still awaits the people, but the people must now wait for the land.”¹ (Allen)

Well, the instruction about life in the land starts with sacrifices. What's unique about these is that they were often brought voluntarily out of thanks to God, not out of obligation for a sin committed. The word translated “bring” (ex. – v. 4) literally means “to come near, approach,” and has a much less casual tone than “bring.” Roughly a quart or more of wine/fine flour, along with some oil, was to accompany the animal offered. Sacrifices were bloody and solemn, but there was also festivity.

Picture #1 - Flour, oil, and wine

This same attitude guides our church's way of gathering for worship. We are not frivolous—we are revering God. But we are also not just somber—also celebratory.

As we continue, we'll see that the coming blessed life in the Land was primarily about living under God.

Following that, a gracious instruction to wear specific tassels on their clothes. 15:39-41 - *An it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.* ⁴⁰ *So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.* ⁴¹ *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God.*” He still was committed to them.

Chapter 18 – Details concerning the relationship between the priests, the other Levites, and the people, mostly relating to sacrifices and tithes.

Chapter 19 – Purification rituals, especially for those who had been in contact with a dead human body. This would be important as they took the land by bloody conquest.

Chapter 26 – A second census is taken, this time of the next generation that would be allowed to enter Canaan – 601,730—down almost 2,000 from years earlier; and 23,000 additional Levites—up 1,000 from before. There was also an instruction to divide up Canaan based on the numerical size of the tribes.

Vv. 63-65 – *These were those listed by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who listed the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.* ⁶⁴ *But among these there was not on*

of those listed by Moses and Aaron the priest, who had listed the people of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵ *For the Lord had said of them, "They shall die in the wilderness." Not one of them was left, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun (the two faithful spies).*

Chapter 27 includes instructions for the handing down of an inheritance if there is no son. Chapters 28-29 – A restatement and clarification of many of the sacrifices and feasts that were to be done regularly.

Chapter 32 – Leaders of Gad, Reuben, and apparently Manasseh come and request that their land inheritance be on the near (east) side of the Jordan. With their promise to still go into Canaan with their kinsmen to overthrow it, their request is granted.

Chapter 34 – God gives them boundaries for how far Israel's land should extend. This limiting of the conquest gave clear direction that kept the task at hand specific and put the emphasis on purity in one place over expansion.

Chapter 35 – The Levites are to be given 48 cities (and the surrounding pastureland) in which to live, of which 6 are also designated as cities of refuge, which were for the protection of a person who had killed someone accidentally and therefore could no longer live at home because he had polluted the land with someone else's blood.

Picture #2 - city in the hills

Chapter 36 – A clarification of inheritance laws that ensures that land will stay within the tribe to whom it was originally given.

All of these things anticipated the land that God would still graciously give them. But they had to get it...

b. ...ensuring that they will have the blessing of godly human leadership.

12:3 – *Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.* The word translated "meek" is just as often rendered "poor" or "afflicted"—essentially "miserable." Aside from this one questionable word, we would never otherwise think of Moses as meek, so it probably shouldn't be translated that way. Therefore, we are instructed that God expects us to follow imperfect leadership for His sake.

I don't say this just for our relationships within the church. You will be blessed if you determine to view *all* authority as from God. We *all* need our self-centered ambitions restrained, and even tyranny is better than anarchy. Christ submitted to greater injustice at the hands of human authority than we ever will, for the sake of His Father.

Chapter 16 – There is a rebellion by some who feel that Moses and Aaron have exalted themselves too much. It is led by Korah, one of those Kohathites who were highly set apart; but he perhaps wanted the priesthood. Those who oppose Moses and Aaron here are important, well-known guys in Israel, and to some degree, the whole congregation was rebelling—against God. V. 11 – *"...It is against the Lord that you and all your company have gathered together."*

God is ready to consume the whole congregation a couple of times, but Moses and Aaron intercede and in the end only the 3 leaders and their families (ground opening up), the 250 accomplices (fire), and then 14,700 others (plague) are executed.

Aren't you glad Christ, your representative Leader, is interceding continually for you?

Chapter 17 – God uses a test with the staffs of the heads of the tribes to authenticate Aaron's appointment. His staff produces buds, blossoms, and even almonds overnight in the tent of meeting.

27:16-18 – after God instructs Moses on how to die – *“Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation”¹⁷ who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.”¹⁸ So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him...”*

Picture #3 - Joshua

Not only holding them together with godly leadership, but momentum...

c. ...blessing them with victories in battle.

As chapter 21 opens, they win their first battle against a Canaanite king who had taken some of them captive, vowing to God to devote his cities to complete destruction.

And as chapter 21 ends, the Israelites are refused passage by some of the Amorites and so defeat them and live in their land.

Perhaps the most amusing of these victories isn't a battle at all. Chs. 22-24 record how Balak (Moabite king) reaches out to an area sorcerer named Balaam – 22:5-6 – *“Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me.⁶ Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”*

What Balak doesn't know is God's words to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 – *“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* He wasn't just messing with the Hebrews, but with God.

Balaam has the sense to ask God about this, even referring to Him by the proper name *Yahweh*. And in spite of God's repeated warnings, Balaam finally gives in to the repeated requests of Balak and sets out to curse the Hebrew nation. But God intervenes by guarding the way with an angel. 22:27-31 – *When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff.*

²⁸ Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?” (Picture #4) ²⁹ And Balaam said (apparently unphased) to the donkey, “Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.” ³⁰ And the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?” And he said, “No.” ³¹ Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face.

So when Balaam arrives with Balak, he blesses Israel rather than cursing. This is ultimately God blessing an undeserving but favored people.

By the time all is said and done, Balak is out 21 bulls and 21 rams, and his Hebrew adversaries have been blessed 3 times while he has been cursed.

Victory over Israel's enemies isn't the only confrontation going on, because there's a far worse enemy than the Canaanites...

d. ...continuing to confront the sin in and around them.

Chapter 20 – The people again begin to complain about things including not having water, saying it would be better if they had died in God's earlier judgment. (Not wrong to express

needs, but to insinuate wrongdoing on God's part is wrong.) So God tells Moses to assemble the people and tell the rock in front of them to give them water. Vv. 12-13 - *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." 13 These are the waters of Meribah ["quarreling"], where the people of Israel quarreled with the LORD, and through them he showed himself holy.* And so later in the chapter, Aaron's death outside the land is recorded, as Moses' will be in Deuteronomy.

Picture #5 - Moses strikes rock

Chapter 25 – The Israelites begin to intermarry with the Moabites and fall into the worship of false gods. God responds by telling Moses to have the Israelite chiefs who had led in this impaled up on poles, and blessing a grandson of Aaron who executes another of the people whose sin is particularly brazen. This act stops God's judgment, but not before 24,000 are killed by a plague.

Chapter 31 – They have now arrived at the plains of Moab on the east of the Jordan. At God's command, they go out for vengeance against the Midianites (accomplices of Balak from earlier chapters). An army of 12,000 (1,000 from each tribe) kills every Midianite man without sustaining a single casualty. Two things surprised me in this chapter:

They killed Balaam, who had blessed them earlier.

Moses was angry that they hadn't killed the women and children, too.

As chapter 24 ended, God had blessed Israel and Balaam appeared to be a somewhat virtuous man who had insisted on only speaking at God's direction. But...

Joshua 13:22 (before they even enter Canaan) – *Balaam also, the son of Beor, the one who practiced divination, was killed with the sword by the people of Israel among the rest of their slain.*

2 Peter 2:14-16 (speaking about false teachers) – *They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!*

¹⁵ *Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ¹⁶ but was rebuked for his own transgression; speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.*

Revelation 2:14 (writing to the church in Pergamum) – *... You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.*

Numbers 31:15-16 – *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.*

So it was about preserving their holiness to God and from idolatry, which the Canaanites were deliberately trying to destroy.

33:50-56 – *And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, ⁵¹ "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan in the land of Canaan, ⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. ⁵³ And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. . . ⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and*

thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. ~ And I will do to you as I thought to do to them."

Picture #6 - thorns

I've been reading through Kings and Chronicles, and I can't remember one king who led them in this perfectly.

One commentator says: "As we know, from our distance, it was the very type of evil described in chapter 25 that finally destroyed the Hebrew kingdoms in the land. While it is difficult to say such a thing, the destruction of the women and the boys was an act of God's mercy—for Israel. There is a sense of perspective here that is so very difficult to grasp and yet which permeates the Word of God: Divine judgment is sure for the nations who are a threat to the existence of God's people or who have rejected his grace. And that remains true in our own "sophisticated" day. The nations today, and the ungodly among all peoples, are a risk. They know of risk from the possibility of nuclear disaster, from the threat of war, from the tweaks of nature, and from the freaks of chance. But the nations today are at risk from the judgment of God. This is true whether they acknowledge it or not. One day that judgment will come. At that time there will be no weeping over women and boys who died in ancient Media three and a half millennia ago; at that time the judgment of God will transcend anything ever written in the harshest Scripture. And God will still be merciful and holy, maintaining glory and honor in the midst of havoc and ruin. The God of Israel will still do right."²

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 – Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

That passage mentioned serpents... (on to the next point)

e. ...working through their story toward Jesus Christ.

We know that a key feature of God preserving the nation is His purpose to bring Christ from them. But more specifically...

In ch. 21, on their long way around Edom, they again began to complain *against God and against Moses*, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food [manna]." (v. 5) They are calling God's miraculous provision "worthless." So God sends fiery serpents with a deadly bite among the people, which leads them to confess and ask for Moses' intercession. *So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.* (v. 9)

Picture # 7 - serpent on pole

John 3:9-18 (after Jesus had just described how the Holy Spirit causes the new birth) – *Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*

Like those Hebrews in the wilderness who had rebelled and been pierced with deadly venom so is every unbelieving person on earth by nature. And as they were saved by simply looking in faith, so is even the worst of sinners who simply and sincerely looks to Christ alone.

Spurgeon's testimony:

“I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Church. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved....

The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was—“LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH” (Isa. 45:22) He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimmer of hope for me in that text.

The preacher began thus: “This is a very simple text indeed. It says ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pain. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.

“But then the text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Ay!” he said in broad Essex, “many on ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some say look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Some on ye say ‘We must wait for the Spirit’s workin.’ You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ ”

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: “Look unto Me; I am sweatin’ great drop: of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me, I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sitting at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! look unto Me!”

When he had . . . managed to spin out about ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery. and I daresay with so few present. he knew

me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!"

I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought . . . I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away.

There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved." Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die. . ."

"I have heard men tell the story of their conversion, and of their spiritual life, in such a way that my heart hath loathed them and their story, too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime, and they have mentioned the love of God, not with a tear of gratitude, not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart, but as if they as much exalted themselves as they exalted God. Oh! when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with great sorrow, remembering what we used to be, and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things. I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation, and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but, on a sudden, the thought crossed my mind, "Why, you are a poor, lost, ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself." Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened, because they were hearing something which the speaker himself felt, and which they recognized as being true to him if it was not true to them.

Can you not remember, dearly-beloved, that day of days, that best and brightest of hours, when first you saw the Lord, lost your burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on your way in peace? My soul can never forget that day. Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me. My eyes looked to Him; the disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light. What delight filled my soul!—what mirth, what ecstasy, what sound of music and dancing, what soarings towards Heaven, what heights and depths of ineffable delight! Scarcely ever since then have I known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour." — Spurgeon, from his *Autobiography*

Is that how you talk of your salvation, or is your testimony a tightly-worded lecture on systematic theology? Depth is good, but it is worthless apart from true, humble amazement that God would save *you*.

And if you can't remember a time—conversion or after—when that amazement described you, perhaps you've never truly known conversion.

Looking to Christ like this in conversion happens in a moment, but it cannot be for *just* a moment. Looking to Christ like this in humble dependence on His accomplishments characterizes God's people throughout their lives just as at conversion.

Spurgeon, *A Sermon for the Worst Man on Earth* (based on Luke 18:13):

"Then, dear Friends, remember, if we begin to preach to sinners that they must have a certain sense of sin and a certain measure of conviction, *such teaching would turn the sinner away from God in Christ to himself*. The man begins at once to say, "Have I a broken heart? Do I feel the burden of sin?" This is only another form of looking to *self*. Man must not look to himself to find reasons for God's Grace. The remedy does not lie in the seat of the disease—it lies in the Physician's hands. A sense of sin is not a *claim*, but a *gift* of that blessed Savior who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Beware of any teaching which makes you look to *yourself* for help! You must, rather, cling to that doctrine which makes you look only to Christ! Whether you know it or not, you are a lost, ruined sinner, only fit to be cast into the flames of Hell forever. Confess this, but do not ask to be driven mad by a sense of it. Come to Jesus just as you are and do not wait for a preparation made out of your own miseries. Look to Jesus and to Him alone.

If we fall into the notion that a certain sense of sin has a claim upon God, *we shall be putting salvation upon other grounds than that of faith*—and that would be false ground. Now, the ground of salvation is—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way of salvation! But to say, "I shall be saved because I am horribly convicted of sin and driven to desperation," is not to speak like the Gospel, but to rave out of the *pride of an unbelieving heart*. The Gospel is that you believe in Christ Jesus; that you get right *out of yourself* and depend alone on Him! Do you say, "I feel so guilty"? You are certainly guilty, whether you *feel* it or not! And you are far more guilty than you have any idea of. Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you have been prepared to come by looking at your guilt! Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need. A man may have a sense of disease a long time before he will get healing out of it. The looking-glass of conviction reveals the spots on our face, but it cannot wash them away. You cannot fill your hands by putting them into your empty pocket and feeling how empty it is! It would be far wiser to hold them out and receive the gold which your friend so freely gives you. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is the right way to put it, but not, "God be merciful to me *because* I sufficiently feel my sinnership, and most fittingly bewail it."

And looking to Christ and His accomplishments alone like this profoundly changes a person, because we imitate what we admire.

God's free and undeserved favor on the Hebrew wasn't just a nebulous idea--it was specific action. The same is true for His love for us, and should be true of our love for others.