

- ***Read Numbers 21:1-9*** In this text we find the Children of Israel continuing on their wandering through the wilderness awaiting the time when God would allow them to enter the promised land. **Deuteronomy 1:2,3** informs us that their journey should have taken them less than two weeks, but because of their disobedience it took them much longer. They turned an 11 day journey into a 40 year wandering of punishment. Those above 20 were to die out before the rest could enter the promised land, and those on this journey were constantly suffering different troubles from the environment and those around them.
- In our text, we find the king of Arad causing trouble for the people of Israel. He rises up and fights against Israel and takes some of the fighters as prisoners. The Israelites turn to God and make a vow to the Lord stating that if God would be with them then they would destroy all the cities of the enemies around them. God is with them and they carry out the deeds of the vow. **(vv.1-3)** Sadly, this good relationship between God and His people didn't last long. They had to take a long route along the land of Edom because the king had not allowed them to travel through his land. This, along, with the journey itself caused the people to become annoyed and frustrated and they began to become impatient and they complained against God and Moses. **(vv.4,5)**
- God did not take too kindly to these complaints from the people after He had done so much for them. He had brought them out of slavery. He had blessed them with great strength in their numbers. He had given them food to sustain them. But still they complained. We remember back earlier in this book how they had complained about their manna. Here, again, we find them complaining about the food saying that they hated loathed (intensely hated) this miserable food. The Lord was fed up and sent serpents among the people and many died from the snake bites. The people recognized their great mistakes and they asked for Moses to intercede for them with God. God hears them and instructs Moses to raise up a bronze serpent on a pole so that anyone who is bit might look upon this serpent and live. **(vv.6-9)**
- This is certainly an interesting story, but there is one thing that continually comes to my mind as I read this story and contemplate upon it. I can't help but be reminded and think upon the Grace of God as I read this text. God's wonderful grace is shown all throughout this text here in **Numbers 21**. We normally think of grace in terms of unmerited favor, but I'd like for us to consider this description of grace as we go throughout this study. Let's think of grace in terms of "not receiving what we deserve & not deserving what we receive." The fact that these people were God's people at all shows God's grace. These were not a people that deserved to be known as the people of God, but His promises to Abraham and His love lead him to bring them out of captivity and into freedom. **(Deut. 7:6-8)** What else can we learn about the nature of God, His grace, and I need for it? Let's consider 4 things we learn about God's grace from this text, this morning.

What we learn about God's grace from Numbers 21:1-9.

I. Sin gets us into trouble that we cannot get out of.

- A. Israel got themselves into a horrible situation that they couldn't escape because of their impatience and continual nagging and complaining against God and Moses. **(vv.4-6)**
 1. The Israelites started off the chapter well by looking to God for strength to defeat enemies. They kept their end of the vow and were successful in their battle. **(vv.1-3)**
 2. As already noted, this time of peace between God and His people did not last long because they became impatient on their journey.
 3. Their impatience and complaining angered God to the point where he sent poisonous snakes into they camp and many of the people were killed by their bites.
 4. The people were helpless against the snakes and their was nothing they could about it.
 5. At this point they were receiving what they were deserving of.
- B. Our sins lead us to a place where we are helpless without the grace of God.
 1. Our sins lead us to a place where we are separated from God because we are walking in darkness. **(I John 1:6)**
 2. We by ourselves are helpless to restore fellowship with God. Humans who have sinned are in a place with no hope unless God provides that way. **(Rom. 5:6-8)**
 3. We, like the Israelites are without any hope once we have sinned. It is impossible us to cleanse ourselves of sin...

II. We must humble ourselves and seek out for God's intercession for us. (vv.7,8)

- A. The Israelites quickly realized their mistakes and humbly asked God for his intercession.
 - 1. People were dying all over the place and they recognized that it was because of their complaining. They petitioned God through Moses to help them and their snake afflictions.
 - 2. They acknowledged their sins and their need for God to intervene on their behalves.
 - 3. God, being Who He is, came to their aide and provided a means for them to be saved from the poisonous bites of the snakes.
- B. The humble person recognizes his/her helplessness and reaches out to God for His intercession.
 - 1. God's mercy for the helpless has been shown through His actions for mankind.
 - 2. Back in **Romans 5:6-8** we see God's intercession for the helpless sinner.
 - 3. Paul continues on and expounds upon God's intercession for us as helpless sinners. **(Rom. 5:9-11)**
 - 4. As helpless sinners our only hope is for God to intercede for us with grace, and He did just that by giving Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

III. God's intercession of grace shows His mercy and love.

- A. Let's not forget that God greatly loved the people of Israel and that love and mercy was shown when He gave them the ability to be healed from the snake bites.
 - 1. If God did not have love for them, why would He give them the ability to be healed?
 - 2. Apart from His need to have the Messiah come through them, He also loved them as a people.
 - 3. God is also merciful towards those who humble themselves, and He is willing to lift them up. **(James 4:6)**
- B. God loves all people and wants them to be saved from their sins.
 - 1. God does not want anyone to be condemned. He wants all people to be saved. **(II Peter 3:9)**
 - 2. God loved the world enough to give us grace through the giving of His Son. **(John 3:16)**
 - 3. God desires for us to draw nearer to Him when we are in great times of need. **(Heb. 4:15,16)**
 - 4. His mercy, His grace, His help, and the strength He gives us are all showings of His great love for us. His love never fails and we can always depend on the love of God that provides grace to us all.

IV. God has the right to set the conditions of His grace. (vv.8,9)

- A. God could have just healed the people, but instead He chose for them to show their dependance on God through the avenue of healing that He provided.
 - 1. The people begged for mercy and healing and God could've just zapped and healed them.
 - 2. But instead, He created an avenue for them to be healed that required a little something from them.
 - 3. Moses raised the bronze serpent, and those who were bitten had to go and look upon the serpent if they wanted to be healed.
 - 4. It would have done them no good to argue with God or tell Him that He had made it too difficult to be healed. Who were they to argue with the One who had given them a way of escape when they were the ones to first get themselves into the trouble?
- B. God is the grace giver and if He demands faith, repentance, baptism, and obedience then that is His right as Almighty God. **(Acts 2:37,38)**
 - 1. Many would say that God would never require someone to do something for their healing, but that is just simply and untrue statement. These people had to go and look upon the snake to be healed!
 - 2. Namaan had to go and dip in the Jordan River 7 times if he wanted to be healed. Was he in a position to argue with the ones who were extending grace towards him in God and Elisha? **(II Kings 5)**
 - 3. Many would love to argue with God's plan of salvation that includes water baptism accompanied by faith, but what are they arguing for? If God has made that a condition to receive His grace then isn't that His prerogative to do so as Almighty God and the Grace Giver? I would have to say so! **(Rom. 9:20,21)**
 - 4. Part of obedience is humility as we have already pointed out. Those who are humble and obedient to God's Word, regardless of its conditions, will receive His amazing grace!

There is so much that can be said for the wonderful grace of God, and we could never discuss it all in this one study, but my hope is that we are reminded of what grace truly is. God's grace of salvation is something that we don't deserve and it allows us to avoid that which we do deserve as punishment, the second death. Praise be to God for His amazing grace, mercy, and love, and may we also live in such a way that He is shown our appreciation for His grace. May He be glorified in our lives as a people who have been given the perfect gift of life and a second chance!