The Daily Walk With God — Part 1 of 3

Numbers 26–27

July 18, 2021
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The Final Transition in Numbers

This morning we come to Numbers 26, the last major transition in the book of Numbers. It helps to step back and see the shape of the whole book before we move into this final section.

The first nine chapters find Israel at Mount Sinai, preparing for the journey ahead. A census is taken, the camp is arranged, the Levitical duties are established, the tabernacle is consecrated, and the Passover is celebrated — all in the first month of the second year. Then, in chapters ten through fourteen, the journey toward the promised land begins in earnest. The trumpets sound and the people move out. But almost immediately, the complaints begin. The people want meat. Questions of leadership surface through Miriam and Aaron. Elders are appointed to aid Moses. Spies are sent into the land, and they come back with a report driven by fear. The people refuse to enter. Chapters fifteen through nineteen cover the long wilderness years — laws of hope woven together with continued failures of leadership, Korah's rebellion, and the persistent challenge of living before a holy God. Then in chapters twenty through twenty-five, the journey resumes after nearly forty years. Miriam dies, Moses strikes the rock, Aaron dies. The people complain again. But something has shifted: now it is the inhabitants of the land who are afraid, not Israel. The account of Balak and Balaam makes this clear. Even so, the people sin at Baal of Peor, and the section ends in judgment.

And then we arrive at chapters twenty-six through thirty-six — the section before us now.

Preparing for the Land

This final section of Numbers is in many ways a mirror of the opening nine chapters, with one critical difference. Chapters one through nine are focused on preparing for the journey. Chapters twenty-six through thirty-six are focused on preparing for the land — and not just for the crossing of the Jordan, but for the rest of their lives on the other side of it. Instead of preparing for something of limited duration, the people are now being prepared for what I am calling their everyday walk with God in the land.

Do you see the difference? The journey was temporary. The land would be their home.

And the land was no small thing in Israel's story. In Genesis 13, the Lord speaks to Abraham with extraordinary promise: *"Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."* But then in Genesis 15, the Lord tells Abraham plainly: *not yet. "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years… And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* This is the land I promise you — but not yet.

Fast forward four hundred years. Moses stands before the people in Egypt and announces that the time has come. In Exodus 3 he delivers the Lord's word: *"The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'"* The time has come. The people are about to receive what was promised.

I want to pause here and highlight something about the Israelite understanding of land that is genuinely remarkable. In all of human history — and this is largely true even today — land is a commodity owned either by the state or by the wealthy and powerful. That is simply how the world has always worked. But this is not how it worked in Israel. The state owned none of the land. The priests, who were among the most powerful figures in Israelite society, were actually forbidden from owning land, apart from a small area surrounding the cities of refuge. And there was a carefully designed system to protect land ownership from being eroded by poverty on one end or wealth accumulation on the other. Every fiftieth year — the Year of Jubilee — a reset button was pressed, and all the land reverted to its original owners or their descendants. The promised land was a promise the Lord made to all of Abraham's generations, not merely the first ones to cross the Jordan.

This means that living in the land represented the fulfillment of God's covenant promises across time. And it raises one more critical point: the Israelites were not simply meant to inhabit the land the way the Amorites had — which is precisely why the Amorites were removed. They were to inhabit it as the people of God, defined by the terms of the covenant. The land was the place where they were to live as God's treasured possession, his holy nation, his kingdom of priests. In other words, the land was the place where they were to live out their everyday walk with God.

That is why these final eleven chapters matter so much. This is not administrative tidying up at the end of the book. This is the Lord preparing his people to spend the rest of their lives in his presence, in his land, as his people.

From the Israelites to Us

Now let us make the connection to us as Christians — and I am speaking specifically to Christians here.

We, on this side of heaven, have not been promised land. We have been promised something far greater: God's own Holy Spirit. And so we, through the presence and power of the Spirit, live in whatever land we happen to occupy as the people of God — a treasured possession, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. We live as a people called to reflect the holiness of God and to proclaim the gospel of his grace. Just as the Israelites were instructed to live in the land in a way that fulfilled their purpose, so are we called to live in this world, in this time, in this place, in a way that fulfills the purposes for which God has called us.

So here is the question this series is asking: What does it mean to be a Christian today? What does it actually look like to live each day as someone who walks with God?

We face, as the Israelites did, a constant pressure and temptation to live in this world like everyone else — like the Amorites, so to speak. But we are meant to live differently. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be different. So what does that difference look like? What does the daily walk with God look like for a follower of Jesus?

That is my purpose over the next three Sundays. In Numbers 26–36, the Lord gives instructions to a people preparing to live in the land, and embedded in those instructions are principles that speak directly to us — not because we live in the same culture or the same century, but because we serve the same God. I have identified ten core truths in these eleven chapters about what it looks like to walk daily with God. We will look at three today, four next week, and the final three in our last session. These are not rules. They are not conditions for keeping your salvation. They are a description — a portrait — of what it means and what it looks like to live as a Christian.

Let us begin.

Truth 1: The Daily Walk with God Is Done in Community

Numbers 26:1–65 is taken up almost entirely with the second census of Israel. This is the count of the generation that will actually enter the land. And when we arrive at the end of the chapter, the significance becomes clear:

> *"But among these there was not one of those listed by Moses and Aaron the priest, who had listed the people of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. 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." — Numbers 26:64–65*

What strikes me when I look at the numbers is this: the difference between the first census and the second is only about 0.3 percent. The first count was 603,550; the second is 601,730. Think about what that means. This people has spent forty years in the wilderness, sustained on manna, and the population count is essentially the same as it was four decades earlier — with a completely different set of people. That is not demographics. That is preservation. The Lord kept his people alive, and now they are entering the land together.

Together. That word matters.

You cannot live the Christian life alone — and when you are trying to do it alone, I would gently suggest that you are not quite doing it at all. The Christian faith is meant to be lived in community.

In my understanding, that means two things practically.

First, it means that a Christian is part of a visible community of faith — what we call the church. The church is not a human invention. It is Jesus' idea. He established it. The church is the bride of Christ, the visible gathering of the community of faith. And there are things that can only happen in the church. Corporate worship, for instance — I cannot do that alone. The sweet fellowship of believers. The encouragement that comes from brothers and sisters in Christ. Growth in the deep things of the Spirit — things like submission, servanthood, generosity, and grace — these are learned in community, not in isolation. It is the church, as a body, that celebrates the Lord's Table, proclaims the gospel, and welcomes others into the family of God.

Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 3: *"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."* Through the church. If you have not joined

yourself to a local, visible body of believers, you have not yet joined yourself to the purposes of God in this world.

Second, living the Christian life in community means cultivating deep Christian friendship. I mean people in your life who can speak truth to you — people with whom you can talk openly about your faith, your struggles, your prayers. People who are trustworthy, who will not abuse the friendship. People who you know love you and are genuinely for you. If you have one or two people in your life who you can count as true Christian friends, you are doing well. It is my hope that you will find those friendships here, in this church. And as the old saying goes: to have a friend, you must be a friend — trustworthy, consistent, and available.

Truth 2: The Daily Walk with God Involves Trusting God Daily

We now move to Numbers 27, though I want to note that I am skipping over the daughters of Zelophehad in verses one through eleven for the moment. They appear again in the very last chapter of Numbers, and I will save that discussion for our final week, when their story will serve as the tenth and concluding truth in this series.

For now, we turn to verses twelve through fourteen:

> *"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. When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.' (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)" — Numbers 27:12–14*

When I read this passage, I do not read it primarily as punishment. I read it as grace.

Consider: the Lord tells Moses the day of his death in advance. That knowledge allows Moses to put his house in order, to prepare, to finish well. And then the Lord promises to show Moses the land before he dies — something we see fulfilled at the end of Deuteronomy. That act is not cruelty. God is not holding the land up before Moses to spite him for his sin. He is honoring Moses. He is giving this faithful servant a glimpse of what he has worked toward — a window into the future, into the faithfulness of God stretching forward through generations. I would love to see that. I would love to see what becomes of this church, of my family, of my children and grandchildren. What a gift it would be to see God's faithfulness carried forward in time.

But there is a hard word here too, and it must not be avoided. The Lord says Moses failed *"to uphold me as holy at the waters."* This refers to Numbers 20, when Moses was told to speak to

the rock so that water would flow out. Instead, he struck it with his staff. I understand this as Moses placing his confidence in his own action — his own proven method, his own reliable technique — rather than in the bare word of God. In doing so, he failed to show the Lord as holy. And there is a profound connection here between worship and faith. When a person fails to trust the Lord, they are, in effect, saying: *You are not trustworthy.* And if you treat the Lord as untrustworthy, in what sense is he holy to you? When I place more faith in my own works than in his word, I am telling God that he is not able to do what he says.

That is what Moses did at the waters of Meribah.

This has direct application for us. I have heard it preached — and I want to be clear that what I am about to describe is wrong — that while we are saved by grace, we keep our salvation by works. This is not a minor error. It is heresy. And like Moses, anyone who places their trust in their own works above God's grace is failing to uphold the Lord as holy. Here is the truth: we are saved by grace, and our salvation is preserved for us by that same grace. This is why I hold firmly to the assurance of salvation. My assurance is not grounded in me or in what I do. It is grounded in him and in what he does. So not only do I depend on the Lord for my salvation — I depend on him in my daily walk, day by day, step by step. Faith — trusting the Lord — defines what it means to walk with God.

Truth 3: The Daily Walk with God Involves Surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ

We continue in Numbers 27, verses fifteen through twenty-three:

> *"Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 'Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation 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.' 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. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.' And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses." — Numbers 27:15–23*

The Lord tells Moses he is going to die. Moses accepts that — and then, characteristically, his first concern is not for himself but for the people. *Who will lead them after I am gone?* The Lord points to Joshua. Moses obeys, and we witness the ordination and commissioning of Israel's next leader.

There are a couple of layers here I want to draw out.

The deepest layer is the Lordship of Christ. As Paul teaches, Christ is the head of the church. He is the Lord, he is the King — and that means that if you are a Christian, your will must be submitted to his and placed in the service of his purposes. Jesus says it plainly in Luke 9:23: *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* Daily. This is not a one-time transaction. There is a daily surrendering to the Lordship of Christ.

Many people think of their relationship with God in terms of two parallel tracks: here is my will, and here is God's will, and the goal is to get God to come alongside and bless what I am already doing. But for the Christian, there is only one track, and it is God's will. Daily, a person's goals, desires, and prayers are oriented toward that one question: Lord, what are you doing, and how do I join it? *Your kingdom come, your will be done.* That is the posture of surrender.

But there is a second, more practical layer that flows from this. If we are to walk daily with God in community — in the visible body of believers we call the church — then that community needs leadership. The Numbers passage itself models something instructive: Joshua is not to lead alone. Eleazar the priest carries responsibility alongside him. Throughout the history of Israel, leadership was characteristically shared — king, priest, and prophet holding one another in a kind of triangulated accountability. The same principle applies in the church.

What does healthy leadership in the church look like? Let me offer three brief observations drawn from this passage and from the broader testimony of Scripture.

First, leadership is always shared. No one person, and no single group, should bear it alone. We practice this here through our boards — men and women who provide oversight and direction across the various ministries of this congregation. That shared leadership extends into the whole congregation as well.

Second, leaders are servants. Jesus could not have been more direct on this point: *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant."* (Matthew 20:25–26) Those who lead in the church do so by going lower, not higher.

Third, shared leadership is held together by mutual submission. Paul writes in Ephesians 5: *"giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus*

Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." We do not get to where God is calling us by insisting on our own way. We get there together, through the practice of yielding to one another in love.

The question this raises for each of us is simply this: How can I be a part of what God is doing in your life? And how can you be a part of what God is doing here?

Summary

So then — what does it look like to walk daily with our God?

The daily walk with God is done in community. You are not alone, nor are you meant to do it alone.

The daily walk with God involves trusting God daily. We live in this world as people who are wholly dependent upon the Lord's grace.

The daily walk with God involves surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is only one track, and it is his will.

We will take up the next four truths together next week.