Blinded By Frustration
Numbers 20:1-12

Slide 1
Have you ever had someone intentionally get on your nerves? Not just any of your nerves, but on your very last nerve?

What about having someone constantly pushing your buttons? When it happened, did you keep it together or did you finally reach your breaking point and blow a gasket?

The writer of Proverbs tells us in Proverbs 29:11, *"A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back."*

Frustration is an inevitable part of human life. It comes when things don't go as expected, when we're faced with delays, or when circumstances seem beyond our control.

As Christians, we're not exempt from experiencing frustration. No one likes to be prevented from accomplishing a purpose. None of us want to be prevented from fulfilling a desire.

Our desires, our purposes help define who we are and when we can't achieve them, we feel empty, hurt or even broken. In short, frustration can break our hearts.

Have you ever played one of those arcade games where you operate a claw that picks up a toy inside?

Years ago, there was a story out of Wisconsin about a 6-year-old who attempted to get the toy of his dreams out of one of those machines, and he wasn't being successful.

This 6-year-old got so frustrated that he finally gave up using the claw and decided on a more direct approach. He attempted to climb inside the machine to get the toy he wanted.

He managed to get almost inside when he got stuck. The Fire Department arrived, unlocked the game and got the boy out unharmed. There was no report about whether he got the toy he wanted or not.

That boy was frustrated because he wasn't able to achieve his goal. He got so frustrated he ended up doing something he shouldn't have done and, of course, got stuck.

Our message today deals with frustration. One dictionary defined frustration as: *"The feeling of being upset or annoyed, because of an inability to change or achieve something."*

Another definition compares frustration with anger, but anger is like setting off an explosion of emotion. Frustration is different.

It's more like a slow burn; if it lasts long enough, an explosion of anger isn't far behind. Which leads us to our focal person for today, Moses.

Slide 2
Moses had been leading the Israelites through the wilderness for nearly 40 years, and it seemed like every time he turned around, the Israelites were quarreling, complaining or grumbling about something.

The first time, the children of Israel complained they hadn't even left Egypt.

Exodus 5:19-21, *"The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day."*

When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

The second time they complained was when they arrived at the Red Sea, after God had brought them out of bondage.

They couldn't go any farther and, looking behind them, they saw the army of Pharaoh approaching. In immediate fear for their lives, they complained to Moses.

Exodus 14:11-12, *"They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"*

Next, they complained about water being too bitter, then they complained about the food.

Exodus 16:2-3, *"In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."*

Later, they complained about being thirsty.

Exodus 17:2-4, *"So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses.*

They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Then, when they're about to enter the Promised Land, they do it again, which seems to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Numbers 14:2, *"All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!"*

These people did this over and over and over, again and again! God has warned us, as Christians, DON'T DO THAT!

1 Corinthians 10:9-10, *"We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel."*

Every time Moses turned around, it seemed like these people were nipping at his heels. It got so bad at one point that Moses complained to God.

Numbers 11:11-12, *"He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors?"*

It was frustrating! Moses' frustration finally got to the point that he'd had enough. He was so annoyed and so irritated that he did what he shouldn't have done.

Slide 3
Nearing the end of their forty years of wandering, the Israelites came to the Desert of Zin. There was no water, so the community turned against Moses and Aaron.

In Numbers 20:8, God told Moses, *"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."*

Moses took the staff as the Lord commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them in verse 10, *"Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?"*

Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly. The congregation drank, as well as their livestock.

Then, in Numbers 20:12, they are chastened for their actions, *"But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."*

There're several views about what Moses did wrong. Some believe God was angry because Moses didn't follow instructions.

Moses was supposed to speak to the rock, but instead he struck the rock, not once but twice, and he apparently struck it in anger calling the people *"rebels,"* and I believe there's something to that.

But I think something more going on. God told Moses that he didn't *"honor me as holy."* What does that mean? Notice what Moses said: *"Listen, you rebels, must **we** bring you water out of this rock?"*

Moses didn't proclaim God's power, he proclaimed his own! *"You people want to grumble and complain at me? Well, just let me show you what I CAN DO!!!"* And, in his frustration with the Israelites, he forgot about GOD and focused on himself.

Moses' sin was NOT that he got frustrated, he sinned because he let his frustration get the better of him.

Slide 4
Each of us and all of God's children must walk according to God's will. In our walk with God, when we're obedient to His will for our lives, we'll encounter people and situations that'll challenge our commitment to walk according to God's will.

If we break under that pressure, even though we've walked with God and have been blessed mightily by Him, we could end up walking away from His covering, thereby giving Satan access to our lives.

Now there's all kinds of things that can frustrate us. For example - there's SMALL things like getting stuck in traffic, having your lawn mower break down, or having to pick up someone else's dirty clothes off the floor.

SMALL things can frustrate us but it's not the frustration; it's how we respond to the frustration that makes the difference. It can cause us to lose our temper or curse under our breath.

You see, it's not the frustration, it's how we respond. Even small frustrations can lead us to sin.

Yet, small things like traffic jams or broken lawn mowers - they're just annoyances. They don't last. Sooner or later, they stop bothering us.

But what about the BIG frustrations. What about an annoyance that won't go away. What if there are frustrations that keep staring at us in the face and keep coming back at us.

These are the frustrations that really bug us because we can't fix it! We can't change it, we can't control it and we can't get away from it. It traps us! Like the Israelites who were always quarreling with Moses.

Somehow, what happened to Moses doesn't seem fair. Moses was a nice guy. He was holy and humble. He talked to God all the time and did almost everything God told him to do.

Yet he didn't get to lead Israel across the Jordan. One sin! That was all that kept Moses out of the Promised Land.

Just like ONE SIN is all it would take to keep us out of heaven. The Bible's quite clear - all it takes is ONE SIN! But we have an advantage. We have Jesus.

Jesus died so we could be forgiven of ALL OUR SINS, and it's ONLY through Jesus that we get into OUR Promised Land/heaven.

Moses sinned and God said, *"Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."*

Moses was allowed to go the top of Mt. Pisgah and see the Promised Land, then…

Deuteronomy 34:5, *"And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said."*

Slide 5
Conclusion

Frustration is a part of life, but it doesn't have to control us. People will frustrate you, world events will frustrate you, your own circumstances will frustrate you, and you'll even frustrate yourself.

Frustration can break your heart. But when your heart is broken you can thank God because, through that pain He will shape you, teaching you patience, dependence and loyalty.

Through the pain of frustration God will shape you into the person He wants you to be so you can be used to bless the lives of others and bring glory to Him.

The way we can stop our frustrations from leading us to sinful behavior is to look to God for His guidance and help. Paul said it this way in his letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:11-13, *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

If we hold on to God as our source of HOLINESS, God will carry us through. He'll give us the strength to do what we have to do.

It's too bad that Moses didn't have Jesus to get him into the Promised Land. But WAIT… Moses did get into the Promised Land!

Matthew 17:1-8 tells us, *"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them.*

His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus."

Moses got into the Promised Land! How did he get there? Jesus brought him. The only reason Moses got into the Promised Land was because of Jesus.

That's the only reason we'll get into heaven. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. If we acknowledge that we've sinned and repented of our sins.

If we're willing to confess that Jesus is our Lord and Master and allow ourselves to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. That's all we need to do to be assured that Jesus will bring us with Him to our Promise Land/heaven.