

God's Wrath Turned Back

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[0 : 0 0] We look forward to the preaching of God's Word. Before we do that, let's read his Word again. Numbers chapter 25. Numbers 25.

I'll be reading from the ESV, and it will also be on the overhead behind me. Numbers chapter 25. This is the Word of God.

While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to haul with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.

And Moses said to the judges of Israel, Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor. And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

[1 : 1 6] When Phinehas, the son of Eliezer, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly.

Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped. Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand. And the Lord said to Moses, Phinehas, the son of Eliezer, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.

Therefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.

The name of the slain men of Israel, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, chief of a father's house belonging to the Simeonites. And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cosby, the daughter of Zer, who was the tribal head of a father's house in Midian.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Harass the Midianites and strike them down, for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peel, and in the matter of Cosby, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peel.

[2 : 5 0] Amen. There are lots of things in life that we ought to and often do take seriously, especially dangerous things.

Hurricanes have recently hit our country, and many people, those especially who were aware of the coming hurricanes, prepared themselves. They took precautions to minimize the possibility of damage as much as possible.

They fled the region where the hurricane was forecast to strike. And people who did purposefully stay, some of them regretted it, and they realized perhaps even too late that they hadn't taken the danger of the hurricane seriously enough.

In our passage this morning, in Numbers 25, we're going to see something else that we should take seriously. The reality of sin. We're going to see four reasons to take sin and the temptation to sin seriously.

Four reasons that we should be on alert when it comes to the temptation to sin. In our lives. So let's look at the first reason together. First reason is that sin is alluring.

[4 : 16] Sin is alluring. Look again with me. Let's read just verses 1 to 2 once more. While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.

These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. Since we're kind of just dropping here into Numbers 25 this morning, let's orient ourselves just a little bit with some context.

Israel here in Numbers 25 is on the verge of entering the promised land. They are at Shittim. This is the final encampment before Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the promised land to take possession of it, which we read of in the book of Joshua, starting with the city of Jericho.

Now remember the spies sent into Jericho. Those spies who were hidden by Rahab. They came from Shittim. So Israel was very near to this receiving of their long-awaited inheritance, the land of promise from the Lord.

Even the surrounding chapters, before and after Numbers 25, they are pointing forward to that future. So one chapter back, Numbers 24, beginning in verse 5.

[5 : 40] Now listen to the glorious future of Israel that we read of. How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters.

Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag, a king that Israel had recently defeated, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

So then jump one chapter forward from Numbers 25, and we read of a census that is taken in Numbers 26. Maybe we think initially, not much to see there, but there is.

Why? Because it's a census of the new generation. The former generation who had sinned against the Lord, and his punishment was to wander in the wilderness, that generation had died.

And so now we read this census of the new generation, and we're reminded they're about to enter the promised land. Their glorious future awaits them.

[6 : 47] So these chapters around Numbers 25, they are chock full of great hope, of eager, joyful expectation of the future.

Which actually then makes Numbers 25 really stand out to us. Because Numbers 25 does not reveal to us anything of Israel's great future.

It reveals to us Israel's present sin. While living so very close to the promised land, Israel was caught up in rampant, brazen sin.

It's on full display. Verse 1 says, The people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. And then we see the compounding of that sin. Verse 2, These invited the people to sacrifice of their gods.

And the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So what we see happening here at the very outset of chapter 25 is exactly what God had warned the Israelites against back in Exodus 34.

[7 : 52] God said this beginning in verse 12. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, lest it become a snare in your midst.

You shall tear down their altars, and break down their pilfers, and cut down their ashram, for you shall worship no other god for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and you are invited. You eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods, and make your sons whore after their gods.

Do you hear Numbers 25 there in Exodus 34? The foreign nations that are around the promised land, the foreign nations that are in the promised land, they were idol worshipers.

They were following after false gods, and so God is warning Israel to remain separate from these nations. It is not, as some would say, because of the color of their skin.

[9 : 06] This isn't about race. It's not ultimately about ethnicity. It is because the people of these nations do not know God. They do not worship the one true God.

And so Israel was in danger of falling into their idol worship by becoming friendly with these nations. And we see here in Numbers 25, that is exactly what happens.

First, we see their sexual sin. Israelite men with Moabite and Midianite women outside of the bonds of marriage, and then second and very connected to it.

One leads to another. People of Israel were then worshiping the gods of those nations. They entered into a relationship with them, and what followed was their worshiping of idols.

That's why God is so concerned in the Old Testament with Israel being separate from the surrounding nations, being set apart. And that's why God gives all kinds of commandments about Israel wiping out the inhabitants of the promised land.

[10 : 14] Any kind of friendly relations would open them up to idol worship. So do we see here the allure of sin?

The Israelites, verse 2 says, were invited by the Midianites to join in their idolatry. They were invited to their sacrificial feasts.

The Midianites were calling out to them. They were enticing them. It's going to be a great time. You're going to love coming to this feast. You won't want to miss out on the sacrifices.

You're going to enjoy yourself here. So they wooed them with their words. They called to them. It was like the call of the sirens from the Odyssey.

Those mythical creatures that would beckon sailors with their beautiful songs. They would beckon them on the sea, and yet they were beckoning those sailors to then shipwreck their boats upon the rocks.

[11 : 16] So great danger in the Odyssey awaited those sailors, but they were hypnotized by the song of the sirens, drawn in by the beauty of their voices. This is the kind of call.

This is the kind of invitation that the Israelites had received. They were not being forced. They were not being compelled under threat to join in this idol worship.

This was an invitation of pleasure, and it was one that they gladly received. The Israelites RSVP'd to the party. And so the people ate, the text says, and they bowed down to the gods of the Midianites.

So we see here, sin is alluring to the people of Israel. Sin is just as alluring today. There is pleasure in sin.

There is enjoyment. There is a sense of satisfaction found in sin. Yet it is fleeting. Yet it is temporary.

[12 : 21] And ultimately, it is destructive. So we read in 1 John 2.16, For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. So sin calls to us. Sin, you could say, beckons to us.

There's some sense of enjoyment here. There is fleeting satisfaction to be found. Perhaps in an outburst of anger, in putting someone else in their place, there's a sense in which that feels good in that moment.

There is fleeting satisfaction in greedily accumulating wealth that you can have your every want satisfied. There is fleeting satisfaction in embracing sexual sin, as the Israelites even were here in Numbers 25.

If sin were not alluring, there would be no reason to warn against it. God would not have said in Exodus 34, take care.

[13 : 36] He would have said, don't worry about it. Not a big deal. Let me just mention this offhand real quick, but let's keep moving. But he says, take care. Because it is alluring. We'd never be tempted if it wasn't.

But it invites us. Taste and see of the pleasures found in sin. Just as the Israelites were invited into the pleasures of sin with the Midianites, ugly and destructive as it may be, it promises some sense of satisfaction in the moment that seeks to draw us in.

And so we see that's the first reason that we must take sin seriously. It is alluring. Let's consider now the second reason from this text that we must take sin seriously, and that is, it's enslaving.

And we see that just in one verse, all that we need. Verse 3. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor.

Now this is actually the first reference to Baal in the Bible. So if you think we're diving into this passage and we don't have the context and it's hard to know where we are, well, this is the first time he showed up.

[14 : 45] So we're going to learn about him together here. Baal was a false pagan god. Baal was worshipped by nations in the land of Canaan, like the Moabites, the Midianites.

And so when the Israelite people participated in those sacrificial ceremonies, this is the god they were bowing down to.

Look at the end result. It is given to us in the strongest of terms. We don't just read that Israel joined themselves to Baal or committed themselves to this false god.

We read that Israel yoked himself. Brings to mind farming imagery. Oxen being hitched up to a plow or to a wagon and they're put in the yoke.

Often there's two put together in the yoke, fastened around their necks so that they're coupled together and now they're under the complete control of that farmer.

[15 : 47] He can move them, take them where he wants. There would be no escape for those animals. They would do his bidding. Now Israel had joined themselves to this god of foreign nations like oxen hitched to the plow.

Israel didn't accidentally stumble into idol worship. They yoked themselves. themselves. Not just, they weren't brought into the yoke by force, they yoked themselves, joined themselves, submitted to the false god of Baal.

So they were entangled up in their sin. They were enslaved in their sin. They were captured and there was no escape. Now we fast forward to the New Testament.

And in the New Testament, someone else talks about a yoke. Jesus does. It's from a well-known passage, Matthew 11. And listen to this very different yoke that Jesus talks about.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[17 : 05] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. The yoke of sin crushes us. The yoke of sin burdens us beyond despair.

It is destructive. It is entangling. And the yoke of sin only leads to death. Don't believe the lie that you can just be free of any yoke.

That you are totally independent. That you can be your own man. That you can be your own woman. You are yoked to someone or something.

You either belong to Satan under his domain or you belong to God under his. You are either in the yoke of sin or you are in the yoke of Jesus.

Joined to sin or you are joined to Jesus. Which master do you serve? We who are in Christ, we are enslaved now to a far better gracious master who is gentle and lowly in heart.

[18 : 14] One who gives rest to our souls. He sets us free from sin and he makes us now slaves to righteousness. Slaves of God. Slavery to sin only leads to death.

But that slavery to God leads to life. So sin produces death. Sin enslaves us. Sin lures us back in over and over again to what only destroys.

So we make the same foolish decisions over and over again with that hope of fleeting temporary satisfaction that it might bring.

If you are still believing the lie that sin will satisfy, hear the truth today. It will only lead to death. And so you must trust in Jesus for life.

believe the good news that He died on the cross to free us from slavery to sin. Believe that He paid the price for sin upon the cross that you might no longer be under that yoke of sin.

[19 : 23] But that now you might be under a new yoke. The yoke of Jesus. The yoke of sin will be to your destruction. It will only end in misery and despair despair and one day a coming judgment of condemnation.

But the yoke of Jesus, the yoke of Jesus will give you life and on that judgment day you will be found innocent and blameless before God and you will enjoy Him for all of eternity.

Now for us as Christians, we can still be tempted by sin. tempted to put ourselves back into the yoke of slavery to sin.

That's why Paul warns us in Romans 6.12, let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

If you are saved, you are not bound by sin. You do not have to obey it. You do not have to give in to temptation. You don't have to listen to its invitation.

[20 : 28] You don't have to let it reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey its passions. And yet Paul understands the very real temptation to do all of those things.

He describes himself in Romans 7 in very personal ways. Saying in verse 18, For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is my flesh.

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me.

Remaining sin is constantly at war in us. It is seeking to lure us back into living as though we're still enslaved to it. So we need to remember and keep remembering and keep remembering the truth.

We've been set free from sin. We are free from it and we are now slaves of a new master. We serve a new gracious master, Christ Jesus.

[21 : 36] You, if you are in Christ, you are not a slave of sin, so let us not live as though we were. So that's the second reason that we must take sin seriously.

Sin is, by nature, enslaving. Now let's consider the third reason to take sin seriously. Sin is deceptive. Sin is deceptive.

We find Israel here in Numbers 25 in this mess of a situation. We find that they have fallen into sin. Sexual immorality is running rampant and the people are worshiping these false gods.

It's a terrible, ugly situation. How did we get here? How is it that we find Israel in this mess? I know that we are dropping into Numbers 25 this morning, so we need to consider what led up to Numbers 25.

Things were going well in the previous couple of chapters. Things are going really well. The incident here in Numbers 25 follows on the heels of maybe another more well-known account in the book of Numbers.

[22 : 46] there's this failure of a particular false prophet, one who was a sorcerer in that time named Balaam. Balaam failed to curse Israel.

If you know nothing else of that story, the true story, you know something of there was a donkey that talked, wasn't there? Three times, Balaam tried to curse Israel on behalf of the king of Moab because Moab had heard of Israel and the people of Moab feared Israel and they thought the solution is perhaps we can bring curses down upon them.

So three times, Balaam tried and he was unable to. He couldn't curse God's people. God was very much involved in these attempts for Balaam to curse Israel.

Balaam would speak of having to come before the Lord and the Lord would not let him do it. In fact, Balaam ended up doing just the opposite.

It was him who ended up blessing the people of Israel. The enemies of God had sent Balaam to do harm and three times Balaam reports back saying, yeah, I actually, I blessed the people of God.

[24 : 01] And then in Numbers 24, Balaam delivered his last oracle. And in his last oracle, he does pronounce curses, but they weren't curses against Israel. They were curses against the surrounding nations.

The very nations who had hired Balaam to pronounce curses on Israel were themselves getting cursed. So Numbers 24 ends on a high note.

God's people are blessed even by God's enemies. God's enemies are cursed. Things are going well. And then we come to Numbers 25 and things take this sharp turn for the worse.

So what happened here? The short answer is Israel was deceived. They were invited, we've seen, by the Midianites. And yet there was deception in that invitation.

And we see that deception at the very end of our passage. So look now at verses 16 through 18. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, Harass the Midianites and strike them down.

[25 : 07] For they have harassed you with their wives with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cosby, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peor.

So Israel was deceived by the wives of the Midianites. They beguiled the Israelites. What a word there. Beguiled. They charmed them.

They pulled the wool over their eyes. They were duped by them. They were tricked into sin. And guess who was involved in all of these schemes? Balaam.

Balaam was there. That pagan sorcerer who had failed over and over again to curse the Israelites because God would not let him do it. That supposed superstar sorcerer had no power over God.

He could only do what God would allow for him to do. What God told him to do. So at the end of Numbers 24, it seems like Balaam had given up.

[26 : 10] Numbers 24 ends with these words, Then Balaam rose and went back to his place. And Balak, that's the Moabite king, Balak also went his way.

So they failed in their attempt to curse God's people and it seems, alright, they quit and they went home. End of story. But then we find later on in the book of Numbers, a little bit later than even Numbers 25, that Balaam never stopped scheming.

Along with the people of Moab and Midian, they came up with another plan. After the whole cursing Israel debacle, the Midianites and the Moabites, they realized, we can't defeat Israel by twisting the arm of Israel's God.

He is too powerful. Every meeting that Balaam had with the Lord, the Lord always had the final word. We can't manipulate him. He's not fickle like our gods.

Balaam could only do what God told him to do. So we need a new plan. Plan A isn't going to work, so we need to go with Plan B. So they schemed with Balaam to seduce the Israelite men.

[27 : 20] And that plan worked. That plan was successful. Israel face plants because of the deceptiveness of sin. God said it in verse 18, they have harassed you with their wives with which they beguiled you.

So Plan A, involving interacting with God, total failure for the enemies of God. But Plan B, interacting with the people of Israel themselves, ah, there's success there.

Plan A failed because God is perfect and unchanging and unable to be harassed by the wives of man. God is unable to be beguiled. Plan B succeeded because man is imperfect and fickle and absolutely capable of being harassed by the wives of man and absolutely capable of being beguiled.

Read Proverbs 7. Weak men are easily deceived, wooed, and led astray. Read 2 Timothy 3.6.

Weak women are easily deceived, wooed, and led astray. That's what we see going on here in the hearts of the people in Numbers 25. Men and women like you and me.

[28 : 41] We can be persuaded. We can be convinced to change our minds. We can be manipulated. God can't be, but we can be. And that's why Plan B works.

Can't get God to allow for misfortune to come upon His own people by interacting with Him. We'll just go to the people themselves and watch as they bring misfortune upon themselves.

It's an evil, devious, conniving plan, but it absolutely works. And in Numbers 31, we see Balaam was involved. In Numbers 31, Moses is talking about this incident and he says, Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor.

So Balaam was involved. They were deceived. They fell into sin. Deception is the oldest trick in the book for Satan. 2 Corinthians 11, 14 says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Why does he do that? Because it works. Because people can be easily deceived by that angel of light. It's an effective strategy.

[30 : 00] A deception and manipulation and persuasion. They trip us up. We get caught off guard. We may not be seeking sin out. We may not be looking for it, but we are totally unprepared.

We prepare for all kinds of things in life. Kids, if you're in school, in public school or private school, you probably do fire drills in case maybe one day there actually is a fire.

We carry jumper cables in our cars in case the battery in our cars dies one day. We wear seatbelts in case someone crashes into us or maybe worse, we crash into them one day.

When we fly, maybe this is only the first time, if that. We listen to those safety instructions from the flight attendants in case something goes wrong on the airplane.

Lots of things that we are seeking out or that we're not seeking out. Like fires, like car crashes, like batteries dying, like plane malfunctions, all kinds of things. We're not seeking them out, but we're still preparing for them.

[31 : 05] How much more so the temptation to sin. We may never encounter a fire in a building. We may never need to know how to evacuate a plane. The odds are low on those things happening.

Good to be prepared because much is on the line, but we are unlikely to encounter those scenarios. With Satan and his schemes, there is so much on the line.

And how often it is that we do encounter his schemes. It's not a low probability. It's a certainty. We know Satan wants to destroy us.

Satan prowls around like a raging lion looking for someone to devour. We know that he wants to deceive us. We know that he wants to see us fall into sin.

God has told us all about Satan and his schemes. So how much more should we be prepared for his deception? Dead car batteries, rare.

[32 : 07] We're prepared. School fires, even more rare. But we're prepared. But the temptation to sin, that temptation is before us every single day.

So how much more than should we be prepared for those attempts to get us to sin? You know, Satan is preparing.

Satan himself, he is preparing to catch us with our defenses down. He did that very thing with Eve in Genesis 3.

He found her when her defenses were down. and he convinced her to not trust God. He offered to her an alternative plan. And that plan itself was pretty alluring.

Look at how good that fruit is to eat. Don't you want some of that fruit? Don't you want to be like God? For what she thought promised life only brought her death?

[33 : 08] She was deceived. She was beguiled by Satan. And we can be deceived too. Satan can be convincing. And guess what?

We can be just as good at convincing ourselves even if he's not the one doing the convincing. I can come up with all kinds of reasons to excuse sin in my life.

I can persuade myself that it's no big deal if I talk about that person behind their back. I mean, it was just my wife that I was talking to about that person. I can persuade myself that the person that I'm angry with, they were deserving of that.

Maybe actually my anger will teach them a lesson and they'll change for the good. So it was okay if I was angry with them. Or I can persuade myself, it's just an innocent look.

Nobody's going to get hurt. All kinds of ways that we can deceive ourselves and be easily deceived by Satan so that we might fall back into sin.

[34 : 08] sin. The Israelites were deceived and we are capable of being deceived as well. So then what does it look like to be prepared to fight against the temptation to sin?

If sin is alluring, if sin is enslaving, if sin is deceptive, how do we prepare well to fight against it? Here's one way that we could talk about, many ways that we could unpack, just one for this morning.

And it's given to us in Hebrews chapter 3. In Hebrews 3, beginning in verse 12, this is what we read. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today. And here's the reason now why the writer of Hebrews says we need to exhort each other. That none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

So exhort one another. Every day even, the writer of Hebrews says, we have each other. We have each other to help each other to fight against sin. And then what is it that we exhort each other with?

[35 : 24] Consider what Paul says in Colossians 3.16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.

So we need wise reminders. We need wise exhortations. We need wise encouragements. Wise rebukes even. And we need it from each other as we are drinking richly from God's word.

So we need to be in the word. We need to have the word on our lips ready to share the word with one another. That is one effective way that we are prepared then to fight against the temptation to sin.

Isn't it true? The more that we live in isolation from God, the more that we are in isolation from his word, the more that we are in isolation from one another, the more that those lies begin to sound more and more like perhaps they are true.

More and more we begin to give in to the allure of sin. So we have each other. We have God's word and if we are taking advantage of these wonderful means of grace that God has given to us, we will be well equipped to fight against the temptation to sin.

[36 : 46] So let us exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of us may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We have seen three reasons to take sin seriously but there is a fourth and a final reason that we must see from Numbers 25.

Sin warrants God's wrath. Sin warrants God's wrath. Look again with me at our passage in Numbers 25 and let's begin again reading in verse 3.

So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and the Lord said to Moses take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel and Moses said to the judges of Israel each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor and behold one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting when Phineas the son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest saw it he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them the man of Israel and the woman through her belly thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped nevertheless those who died by the plague were 24,000 and the Lord said to Moses

Phineas the son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy therefore say behold I give to him my covenant of peace and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel so we take sin seriously because God does we see that so clearly here God is angry with the sin of the people we see it in the passage with the Israelites we see the Israelite man is killed with the spear we see the chiefs of the people are hung we see the people are killed by the judges we see the plague that kills 24,000 of them we see the Midianite woman who is pierced with that spear as well we hear later of the Midianites also being killed by the Israelites at God's command sin warrants

God's wrath that is a sobering reminder to us we deserve to be punished with death just like Israel was just like the Midianites were because sin cannot go unpunished by a holy just God sin must be atoned for as the passage says something must be done to make it right something must be done to make amends for the wrong that was done to turn away God's wrath and that's what we see happening here in this passage the people have sinned and their sin is atoned for through the actions of Phineas the grandson of Aaron he steps up and he does something about the sin that has been committed he doesn't sit by and silently condone the sexual immorality he doesn't sit by and silently condone the idol worship as God says he was jealous with my jealousy that's a really important statement

[40 : 40] Phineas cared about what God cares about Phineas shared the same value system as God Phineas did not redefine right and wrong he didn't say well I'd rather not do things God's way I'd rather forge my own path he submitted himself to God he cared about what God cared about so he didn't justify sin he didn't excuse sin he killed those who had sinned against the Lord and because of that because he was jealous as God was jealous the sins of the people were atoned for and the plague stopped something had to be done about the people's sin Zimri this man who had brought the Midianite woman into the camp he is an example of just how blatantly the people were rebelling against God he just flaunted his sin the text says that he brought this woman into the camp in the sight of all it's as though he's he's challenging

God God what are you going to do about it everybody saw it what are you going to do you going to stop me from this now this is certainly a very specific incident in Israel's history God is not calling us to act as Phineas did we shouldn't be walking around with spears in our hands ready to impale anyone if they sin but that fire for righteousness that Phineas had we should share in that men I'm especially speaking to you as those who are called to lead myself as well we have a model here in Phineas we don't know if anyone else was going to take a stand like Phineas did Phineas doesn't know either because he just did it he took a stand for what was right for what was true for what was good we should be jealous for what

God is jealous for we should love what God says is good and we should hate what God says is evil is it not true that sin is flaunted in our day just as it was flaunted in numbers 25 and how often is it men that we are just silent observers just passively sitting by not saying anything not doing anything to promote what is good and what is right and what is true so Phineas serves as an example to us men of a man who was so fiercely devoted to the Lord a man who so fiercely loved the Lord that he could not sit back quietly when sin was running rampant all around him do you see sin running rampant in our day it's election season there are lots of issues of our day that are being talked about all around us issues that have great moral significance abortion is the greatest of them how often is it said that the issue is one of reproductive rights or one of reproductive health abortion is murder we must be quick to say what is true and to say what is true in love yes we ought to care for women who are in extremely difficult circumstances we should be filled with compassion and gentleness and love we should support efforts to help pregnant women and there are so many ways to provide that support but we cannot say that abortion is one of them we cannot say it at any stage in a pregnancy that is not the answer not at 40 weeks not at 15 weeks not at one week never is that the answer life in the womb life outside the womb is valued by

God it's given dignity by God and so abortion is not the answer God cares for the weak God cares for the helpless and we should too all of them we should be jealous for what God is jealous for that's one example we could go on and on and on of the examples that we should take the lead on that in every arena of life with our words with our actions though not with a spear in our homes in the world in which we live we should love God we should love others we should love our wives we should love our children we should love our neighbors we should love the weak the helpless we should love them too much to just sit by quietly let's be filled with the same fierce zealous love for good that Phineas was let's be filled with the same hatred of all that is evil which

Phineas was but we also have to never forget God is the ultimate judge and sin warrants his righteous wrath and we have to also never forget we all were at one time sinners deserving of that righteous wrath our sins needed to be atoned for and so here we are dropping into numbers 25 but guess who numbers 25 points us to Jesus Christ through his death on the cross for those of us who are his our sin was atoned for our sins atoned for we who have trusted in Christ no longer at odds with God we who have trusted in Christ no longer enemies of God his wrath is no longer directed towards us because it was directed towards his son if not for

[47 : 05] Phineas the son of Eleazar God would have consumed the people of Israel in his jealousy and if not for Christ one day we would have all been consumed Hebrews 10 27 says this is what awaits those outside of Christ a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversary like grass that is quickly kindled and is consumed by the fire that would have been our end but Christ like Phineas stepped in and yet unlike Phineas Jesus did not hold the spear in his hand Jesus had the spear thrust into him Jesus did not thrust the spear into another it was his own body Isaiah 53 says he was pierced for our transgressions there upon the cross

Christ died in the place of us who were sinners he was not pierced because he was the transgressor he was pierced in our place Zimri the woman of Midian that he brought into the camp in Numbers 25 they were pierced as transgressors but not so for Jesus he took the punishment that was reserved for us he paid the price for our wrongs Jesus atoned for our sin and now like Phineas we have peace with God and no longer an expectation of judgment no longer a fury of fire that will consume us we've been reconciled to God we've been made right with God and so Isaiah 53 5 goes on but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed or as Paul says in Romans 5 therefore since we have been justified by faith we have with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ and so that is both a comforting truth and a motivating truth because his spirit is now at work in us who belong to him enabling us to fight against sin and the temptation of sin in our lives the power of sin to deceive us the power of sin to enslave us it has been broken because we have been given new life and now like Phineas we can agree with God we can love the things God loves we can hate the sin that God hates if you are in Christ God is working in you to make you more and more like his son you are growing in grace sin does not have the power over you that it once had so keep fighting the deceptive lies of sin with the truth of God's word live as one yoked not to sin but to Christ and remember God's wrath is no longer upon you because his wrath was poured out upon his son so take sin seriously and rejoice that your sins have been atoned for through

Christ let's pray together heavenly father what sobering words we have read and considered from your word today and yet indeed they are from your word and how we need to hear them that sin must be taken seriously and how lightly we so often can treat it father forgive those of us who treat sin lightly and give us your mind we pray father also give us strength and encouragement to fight against it and to do that together give us hope that is found only in Jesus remind us over and over again because we are so prone to forget that atonement has been made for the sins of all of those who are in Christ so encourage our hearts help us to go from here not fearful of condemnation because that is not coming for yours but with hope and with courage and with boldness to tell others of

Christ and the hope that is only found in him thank you for Jesus thank you for salvation that was accomplished through him thank you for the love that you showed us through him and his love for us that he would go to the cross and die in our place it's in his name that we pray amen