

“Blowing It”
Numbers 20:9-13; Psalm 106:32-33

INTRODUCTION

Today, I’m going to preach about something that all of us have done more than once. I know that I have.

I’m a member of our denomination’s EP&E Board. At a meeting about five years ago, I gave the devotions with which we begin each meeting. I talked about becoming like Jesus. I said that we should strive to think, feel, speak and act like Him in everything. Several hours later, the Board was addressing a vital issue about which one of the other members and I disagreed. And in the course of discussing it, he said something that put me down. Offended and annoyed, I then said something sarcastically back to him. My heart immediately sank because I realized what I had done. I had negated the very devotions that I had spoken several hours before.

There’s an expression we use to describe what I did that day. You all know it. I “blew it” and that’s what I’m going to preach about today, “blowing it.” Turn to the Bible’s classic illustration of this, Numbers 20:9-13 and Psalm 106:32-33.

WHAT “BLOWING IT” MEANS

Let’s start with what “blowing it” means. After Jesus, Moses is my favorite character in the Bible. In my view, after Jesus, he was the greatest person who ever lived. But he “blew it” and I mean big time.

Numbers 20:9-13 recounts what happened. God had called him to deliver the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and take them into the Promised Land. The events in this chapter occurred during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, before they entered the Land. The Israelites were running out of water and thirsty. So, they assembled **against** Moses and Aaron in verses 2-5. They not only complained about the shortage of water but also blamed them to their face for it. But in verses 6-8, God solved the problem by commanding Moses to speak to a

certain rock and strike it once. All the water that the Israelites needed would then come forth from it.

But Moses sinned in doing that and the other passage I read, Psalm 106:32-33, describes how. Verse 32 says that he *"spoke rashly with his lips"* when he struck the rock. Numbers 20:10 records what he said, *"shall we (Aaron and he) bring forth water for you out of this rock?"* Moses was defending himself against the charges of the people. So he spoke to them not the rock as God commanded. And he spoke as if Aaron and he, not God, were giving them the water. Besides that, he struck the rock twice not once as God commanded. Doing that, according to 1 Corinthians 10:4, broke the typology of Jesus death once and for all for the sins of the world.

That's **what** Moses did and here's **why**. This was just one of many times that the Israelites assembled against him – when they complained and blamed him. They were an ungrateful and exasperating people and he finally had enough. So in a reckless moment of frustration and anger, he sinned against God. He "blew it" in other words.

And so have we. All of us know what "blowing it" means because we've done it. "Blowing it" occurs when we're "on the spot" so to speak, when we're in the moment of crisis, like Moses was. Circumstances arise or things occur that elicit strong negative desires, emotions, or sensations in us. We then succumb to those and act foolishly or sinfully, often against our own will. As Paul says it in Romans 7:16, *"I do the very thing I do not want to do."*

Years ago, I talked with a Christian who purchased a lemon, a new car that didn't work right. He had already taken it back to the dealer twice to be repaired and by now, the third time, had had it. So he went into the dealership and exploded. He went off on the salesman who sold it to him and then raked the manager over the coals. By the time he left, they knew he was boiling mad and meant business. But now, the next day, he felt guilty about it. He realized that he had "blown it."

That's what Moses did at Meribah. That's what I did at that board

meeting. And that is what all of us have done at one time and place or another. We've "blown" it.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF "BLOWING IT"

Now, that we know what "blowing it" means, let's examine its consequences. By consequences, I mean the harm it causes. That is usually the case isn't it? It almost always causes harm.

It certainly did to Moses. Notice the consequence of his "blowing it" in Psalm 106:32. The psalmist writes that *"it went hard with Moses on their account."* "Hard" is probably an understatement. It is in reality one of the saddest episodes in Scripture. He had devoted the last 40 years of his life to a single aim – taking the Israelites into the Promised Land. That aim was the lodestar of his life, the grand and glorious dream for which he had worked and sacrificed so much. But in a moment, "blowing it" forfeited that dream. God denied him entrance into the Promised Land, calling Joshua to take the Israelites there instead.

That teaches us something. It's far easier to ruin than to create. It's far easier to destroy than to build. That is true in all the realms of our life - friendships, political campaigns, careers, marriages, businesses, Christian testimonies, health, and more. In all of those realms, "blowing it" can destroy in a moment what we've labored long and hard to build.

An impulsive one-night stand can wreck a 20-year marriage. A greedy investment can erase a life's savings. A rash conversation can end a lifelong friendship. A careless remark can ruin a long career. An angry act can destroy our carefully built testimony and so on. All of those things actually happened and they make the point. "Blowing it" is dangerous. It always diminishes and sometimes even destroys.

So, don't blow it. That's the moral of Meribah and the passages I read. Don't blow it.

"But that's impossible," people say, *"After all, we're only human and humans 'blow it.' We can't not 'blow it.'"* Oh yes, we can. We can conquer "blowing it" and here's how – by doing two things.

ADMIT THE CAUSE OF "BLOWING IT"

First, we need to admit its cause. That cause is our character. Let me explain that to you.

There is a consistency in the self that we are and its actions. If I do evil, I am the kind of person who does evil. If I do good, I am the kind of person who does good. Dallas Willard says it this way: "*Actions are not impositions on who we are, but are expressions of who we are. They come out of our heart and the inner realities it supervises and interacts with.*" Or to say it another way, our actions come from our character. They come from the inner dimensions and their interactions with each other that make up the person we are.

Sadly though, most people will not admit that. They desperately seek to deceive others and themselves about it instead.

I was called out one night years ago to a family's home. The husband was quarreling with his wife and in the process of doing so slapped her in the face. Totally distraught, she then called me and asked me to come and help them out. I learned as I did that this was the first time that he ever slapped her, which was his point to me over and over again. He must have said it four or five times that night "*It isn't like me to do that. I just 'blew it.'*"

I've heard many people say that in many contexts and I've said it myself. Do you grasp what we're doing? We're using "blowing it" as a rationalization for our folly or sin. We do something foolish or sinful and then try to justify ourselves by saying, "*Oh, I just blew it.*" The idea is that it isn't really like me to do that kind of thing. What I did doesn't fully represent me. I just had a weak moment and "blew it."

Now, it may be true that what I did doesn't **fully** represent me. But it isn't true that it isn't like me to do that kind of thing. It is like me to do that kind of thing, which is why I did it.

The bottom line is that "blowing it" shows who I am as a person. I am the kind of person, through and through, who "blows it." Five years ago, for instance, I was the kind of person who, when put down, spoke

sarcastically back. In the same way, that husband was the kind of person who, in that level of stress with his wife, slapped her. The cause of “blowing it,” in other words, is our character.

We must understand and admit this. We will never conquer “blowing it” as long as we’re rationalizing it. We must “fess up” as they say and admit that the cause of “blowing it” is our character.

EMBRACE THE CURE FOR BLOWING IT

There’s a second thing that we must do to conquer blowing it. We must embrace its cure. That cure is discipline.

When I say discipline, I don’t mean when we’re in “the moment of crisis.” That’s where most preaching and teaching are focused. Almost all of us believe in the power of effort in the moment of crisis. We believe that we have the ability to control our impulses, desires, and inclinations when we’re “on the spot” and to do what Jesus would.

The problem with that approach is that it rarely works. You’ve all heard the old saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. That is true because, in the moment of crisis, our impulses, desires, and inclinations almost always overwhelm our good intentions. That was true of Moses at Meribah and of me at that board meeting.

So when I say discipline, I mean **before** “the moment of crisis.” Paul grasped this as well as anyone. He writes, for instance, in 1 Timothy 4:7, “*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.*” He means there **before** or **in between** the moments of crisis.

So, that’s the cure for “blowing it.” We must discipline ourselves before or in between the moments of crisis.

Now, disciplining ourselves in that context has a specific meaning. It means that we do things that we can do now that eventually enables us to do the things that we can’t do in the moment of crisis. We call those things that we can do now spiritual disciplines. In my view, that is what Paul was referring to in 1 Timothy 4:7 – practicing spiritual disciplines.

The purpose of spiritual disciplines isn’t to solve behavioral

problems like speaking sarcastically back when we're put down or slapping a spouse under stress. It is instead to transform our character into image of Jesus. The behavioral problems are then solved as a result.

Take being put down for instance. On the negative side, God wants us not to feel anger and speak sarcastically back. On the positive side, He wants us to feel compassion and speak lovingly back. During the past five years, I've practiced spiritual disciplines that address that issue. I am now much less inclined to do the negative and much more inclined to do the positive. My character has changed and I'm less likely to "blow it" in that moment of crisis as a result.

So, embrace the cure for "blowing it." Start practicing spiritual disciplines that address the moments of crisis to which you're the most vulnerable. The Holy Spirit will be faithful to you if you do. He'll use those disciplines to transform your character into the image of Jesus.

There are four disciplines that are central to that. The first is solitude. The second is silence. The third is fasting. And the fourth is the memorization of Scripture. Those four disciplines allow the Holy Spirit to retrain us – retrain us away from the impulses, desires, and inclinations that cause us to "blow it."

I don't have the time to explain those to you. But I have made materials available on the round table in the narthex. They will help you learn about and begin practicing them now. Something else you can do is read Richard Foster's book [The Celebration of Discipline](#) or Dallas Willard's book [The Spirit of the Disciplines](#). They will teach you what you need to know about those disciplines and all the rest. Both are available by the way in our library.

CONCLUSION

I close with two questions. When was the last time that you "blew it?" And what did "blowing it" reveal about you? Whatever the answers to those questions are, admit the cause of and embrace the cure for "blowing it." You'll conquer it, in the power of the Holy Spirit, if you do.