

“Dealing with Discouragement: Wearing Out in the Way”
Numbers 21:1-6, (v. 4)

Introduction: This verse is certainly not a strange experience to most of us, for like the Israelites, we have all at one time or another become discouraged because of the way. Their journey from Egypt to Canaan had turned into a prolonged trip, making it longer and harder than intended. Now, they have just finished a major battle with the Canaanites and have become exhausted. It is still further to the promise land and they are becoming tired in the way. Discouragement begins to settle in their heart. Notice where it came from:

1. Discouragement Because of a Battle Numbers 21:1-4
2. Discouragement Because of the Brethren Deuteronomy 1:28- *“Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.”*
 - a. Numbers 32:7- *“And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?”*
 - b. Numbers 32:9- *“For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.”*

Body: Courage in the battle must be followed by endurance in the race. It is easy to win a battle but then lose the victory. The anger and impatience that developed in their heart because of discouragement led them to speak harsh words against the Lord and Moses. Discouragement is hard to handle, but we must learn to deal with it appropriately. Therefore, notice:

- I. The Road to Discouragement
 - A. It was God that had led them there by the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. Though the people were discouraged about the way, they could be encouraged in the fact that it was indeed God’s way. They were not going contrary to His will.
 - B. Keep in mind that God’s way is not always the pleasant way.
 - C. Sooner or later, discouragement will come in your life.
 - D. Noah Webster defined discouragement as, “The act of disheartening, or depriving of courage; the act of deterring or dissuading from an undertaking; the act of depressing confidence. That which destroys or abates courage; that which depresses confidence or hope.”
 - E. Important: Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light.
- II. The Reasons of Discouragement
 - A. Fatigue
 1. When you are physically or emotionally exhausted, you are a prime candidate for discouragement. Your defenses are lowered and things can seem bleaker than they really are.
 2. Psalm 127:2- *“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”*

3. Our physical affects our spiritual.
4. Hormones, PMS, Menopause, Health Problems, etc.
- B. Frustration—When unfinished tasks pile up, it is natural to feel overwhelmed.
- C. Failure
 1. Sometimes, your best laid plans fall apart. The project collapses. The deal falls through. No one shows up to the event. How do you react? Do you give in to self-pity? Do you blame others?
 2. You have only three choices in life: give up, give in, or give it all that you have got.
- D. Fear
 1. The fear of criticism (What will they think?) The fear of responsibility (What if I can't handle this?) The fear of failure (What if I blow it?)
 2. On the other side of fear lies freedom.
 3. Do not feed the fears.
 4. Someone said, "I love the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night."
 5. What you put up with you end up with.
- E. Flesh
 1. Sin—Once you have accepted your flaws no one can use them against you.
 2. Death
- F. Finances—As one man said, "Just when I think I can make ends meet somebody moves the ends."

III. The Response during Discouragement

- A. Numbers 21:4-5
- B. Do not let bitterness and discouragement allow you to respond negatively.

IV. The Remedy for Discouragement

- A. Encouragement Through Self I Samuel 30:6- *"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."*
 1. Judges 20:22- *"And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day."*
 2. How do we encourage ourselves?
 - a. Learn to Laugh Proverbs 17:22- *"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."* (Mama said there'd be days like this.)
 - b. Learn to Look—Visit a nursing home, VA hospital, Duke, etc.
 - c. Learn Our Limitations
 - (1) Rest your body. If you need a break take one!
 - (2) Reorganize your life. When wrong things happen it is not because you are doing the wrong thing. It may just be that you are doing the right thing in the wrong way. Try a new approach. Shake things up a little. Sir Winston Churchill said, "Never, never, never, quit!"
 - (a) Thomas Edison said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

- (b) Michael Jordan said, “I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”
- d. Note: Discouragement is a choice. If you feel discouraged, it is because you have chosen to feel that way. No one is forcing you to feel bad.
- B. Encouragement Through Saints
1. Deuteronomy 1:38- *“But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.”*
 2. Deuteronomy 3:28- *“But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.”*
 3. II Samuel 11:25- *“Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.”*
 4. Hebrews 3:13- *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*
 5. A good word costs no more than a bad one.
 6. Don’t point a finger—hold out a helping hand.
 7. How many people stop because so few say, “Go!”
 8. Is anyone happier because you passed his way? Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
 9. Someone said, “I’ll call the unloved and make them beloved.”
 10. Someone said, “I want to be your favorite hello and you hardest goodbye.”
 11. People inspire you, or they drain you—pick them wisely.
- C. Encouragement Through Scriptures II Chronicles 31:4- *“Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.”*
- D. Encouragement Through the Sanctuary II Chronicles 35:2- *“And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD”*

Conclusion: Although we may become discouraged because of the way, we need to remember that the Israelites were on the path that God had led them to. God’s way may be a rugged way, but it is the most rewarding way. Doing His will is not always exempt from trials and hardships. Do not depart from God’s way, for it is the best way, and the only way. Therefore, stay in God’s way regardless of the circumstances and remember Deuteronomy 1:21- *“Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.”*