

## Discouragement...a Disease of the Saints

Num 21:1-9 *“And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. 2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. 3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. 4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”*

### ***Never know when discouragement will attack***

Discouragement provides no warning that it is going to attack. You can wake up in the morning happy and go to bed the same day *discouraged*. Looking at verse 3 of our study passage, Israel has just defeated their enemy, the Canaanites. This was a blessing from God, for He gave them the victory. Were they happy for the victory? If they were, it was only for a little while, for in verse 4 we find them already *discouraged*. How could discouragement attack so soon?

Elijah had a great victory in I Kings 18. God gave him victory over the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove. He prayed 63 words, and his God sent fire down on the altar. However, his

celebration of victory did not last long. In the next chapter, I Kings 19, discouragement attacked Prophet Elijah.

There are several instances in the Bible that give us the understanding that discouragement comes without warning. It can come after a good church service. It can come after a wonderful victory over the Devil. I know of no way to predict and plan for discouragement.

### ***Discouragement makes your Christian life fruitless***

Notice the word “compass” in verse 4. Compass is traveling in a circle. Most of life is traveling in a circle- around and around. Israel was in a circle mode going round-and-round in their journey. This sure would discourage me! Traveling in a circle can get boring. You never see anything new. You never go any place. Such is life. We arise when the alarm sound at 6:00 am. We pour a bowl of cereal at 6:15 am. We jump in the shower at 6:30 am. We crank the car at 7:00 am to travel off to work. We clock-in at 7:30 am. The boss gives us our assignment and our workday has begun. We do the same ol’ stuff we did yesterday and the day before and the day before. We clock-out at 4:00 pm. Eat dinner at 6:00. Watch the news. Go to bed 10:30. Get up 6:00 am and repeat the day we just had. Yes, most of life is a circle. We spend it compassing, that is, traveling in a circle. It is easy to get bored. When we get bored, we get discouraged.

Discouraged by “*the way.*” Discouraged by life, which is something we can do little about. Your health does not have to fail to discourage you. You do not have to go broke financially to become discouraged. Your children do not have to “let you down” to bring discouragement into your life. LIFE is the #1 reason for discouragement. Yet, what can we do about life? We are stuck with life.

We spend most of our life in a circle. If I travel in a circle when I get in my car to go to church, I predict I will not reach my church. Too often, we allow our spiritual life to become patterned after our secular life, and we get *bored* serving God. Has this ever happened to you? We get in a rut. When we do, there is nothing exciting about the job, or home, or school and sadly, it spills over to our spiritual walk. We suddenly find ourselves discouraged serving God. I believe *discouragement is the number 1 disease* afflicting God’s children in our attempt to serve the Lord. Bitterness may be the

worst disease afflicting a child of God because it has a root and is hard to remove. But discouragement is the most common disease that afflicts God's children.

Traveling in a circle makes a Christian fruitless. Traveling in a circle, we never get anywhere for God.

### ***Discouragement is a recipe for blaming others***

Verse 5 "*And the people spake against God and against Moses...*" Oh no! Dissatisfaction causes us to look for someone to blame. This is the nature of the flesh. We blame the boss, the wife, the church, even God! Israel blamed God and the Pastor, Brother Moses.

### ***Makes it hard to see the goodness of God in out life***

In verse 5 the people said "*there is no bread neither is there an water.*" What was Israel saying? They were saying "God has not provided for us. He hasn't been good to us." I am not accusing the children of Israel of lying, but it seems they are lying. They are certainly falsely accusing Him. They said "we have no bread and no water!" What about the manna that fell in the morning on the wilderness? What about the 12 wells of water at Elim spoken of in Exodus 15:27? When we read Israel's journey through the wilderness, we find not a single grave of one who starved or died of thirst. Remember, there were more than a million people on this trip.

### ***Leads to unthankfulness***

Discouragement will cause a Christian to cease to appreciate what God has given them. Verse 5 "*our soul loatheth this light bread.*" What does this statement mean? It means they made "fun" of the bread God did give and referred to it as "light bread." In other words, it was bread more suitable for a *child* than an adult. Wow. Discouraged Christians can even make light of what God has blessed them with. Discouragement is awful!

I don't have a Cadillac, but thank God for the Ford I have. I don't have brick on my home exterior, but thank God for wood and vinyl siding. My friends in Africa live in mud huts, but at least they have shelter and some privacy.

The raven is a nasty bird. When Noah released the raven from the ark, the raven never returned. Why? I predict it landed on a floating elephant's carcass drowned by flood-waters. A raven eats nasty, dead flesh. God delivered food to Elijah by ravens! Yet, have you read in

the Bible somewhere that Elijah complained? No, he never complained or got discouraged. He was thankful for God delivering him food in time of famine, even if it came by a nasty raven. Others were starving.

True story: I have a friend we called Mac. He is in Heaven now. He taught me to not be discouraged. In the 40 years I knew him, he never showed one moment of discouragement. If God gave him a donkey to ride rather than a car, he would find something positive to say. He would have you believing the donkey rode better than a car. He would brag on the donkey and elevate it above a car. He always found the positive in whatever circumstance he faced. I wish I had learned even more from him about avoiding discouragement.

### ***Discouragement is a sin***

Is there any cancer mentioned in the verses we read? Is there any MS mentioned in the verses we read? The only affliction Israel had was, verse 4, *“the people was much discouraged because of the way.”* Yes, the only disease mentioned is discouragement.

Discouragement is a sin. God will judge discouragement. The people woke up and confessing in verse 7 *“we have sinned.”* In this instance, fiery serpents were sent by God for judgment! Yes, God will judge discouragement for it is a *sin*. Verse 6 closes with the words *“and much people of Israel died.”* How many discourages Christians are lying in the cemetery?

### ***Discourage leads to a greater disease***

Deal with discouragement in your Christian life as soon as possible. A common cold can become pneumonia if not treated. Treat discouragement quickly lest a worse disease develop.

I believe every bitter person I know started with discouragement. Something happened that brought discouragement in their life. Some were discouraged by financial problems, problems on the job, problems in the marriage, or perhaps with the children. The discouragement was not treated. Bitterness developed. Deal with your discouragement as soon as it appears.

Discouragement is the most common disease afflicting God’s children. Are you discouraged?