

Call to Obedience #338  
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
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**Disappointment and discouragement are not the same.**

## **THE PEOPLE WERE DISCOURAGED**

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

**“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.”—Numbers 21:4**

In this passage we find Israel about to reach the Promised Land, after 39 years of wandering. Once again they were tested: they were forbidden to take the shortcut through the land of Edom. Instead, they were told to take a long, arduous detour through the Arabah desert - a treacherous, inhospitable place with scorching heat, sand storms, poisonous snakes and scorpions.

Friend, I write to tell you that, as Israel was tested, so **you will be tested**. There is also an Arabah for you. The road to what God wants you to be and to have, will not be well paved. It will not be a road designed for luxury buses. It will be as rough as Jesus' journey from Bethlehem to Calvary or as Paul's three missionary journeys. Don't expect less and you will not be disappointed. But my friend, God will see to it that you have all the supplies you need to endure the heat, the storms, the snakes, and the barren land. Remember that the Arabah is not of the devil, but of the God who loves you and redeemed you to be His Son's bride. This road is placed there by the Heavenly Father to make you a choice warrior and to see if you're worthy to walk with Him in white (Rev. 3:4).

Of course, I do not mean to say that anyone is worthy of the blood of Jesus. None of us are. But after we are born again, we have to become worthy heirs in the eyes of God. We become worthy in His eyes by taking up our cross to follow Jesus (Mat.10:38). All those around the Throne are worthy to be heirs and joint heirs with Christ forever. Among the Israelites, only those who were worthy were given the privilege to enter the Promised Land. And the worthy ones were those who did not allow discouragement to defeat them, or cause them to complain, or rebel against their Lord. **Those who were worthy were those who drew on God's omnipotent mercy and grace, in the midst of disappointing circumstances surrounding them.** We all will be tested as Israel was. None, absolutely none of us will be exempt.

Consider the beautiful hymn by Maltbie Babcock:

Be strong! We are not here to play, to dream, to drift:  
 We have hard work to do and loads to lift;  
 Shun not the struggle; face it - 'tis God's gift.  
 Be strong! Be strong!

Any preacher who leads his people around the Arabah desert is not of God. Israel was *much discouraged*, depressed, *because of the way*. The devil did not make it hard for Israel, God did! Any preacher who is a messenger of the broad way, the smooth way, is a deceiver. Friend, the Kingdom of God is not cheap. Salvation is not cheap. Sanctification is not cheap. Enduring the cross, fighting the good fight of faith is not cheap. Heaven is not cheap. Preacher, you may be able to fill the ark with people, but remember that if the people are not a holy people, the ark will sink.

**There is no way to heaven but through the cross, His cross and our daily cross** (Luke 9:23). *"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22). Yes, the Arabah is hard. All of God's true children are tempted to be discouraged. That is one side of the coin. But on the other side is that all true children have a sure cure against giving in to discouragement.

**Even Jesus was tempted to be discouraged.** The same things that tempt us tempted him. Isn't that good to know? Concerning everything you go through, he can say "precious child, I have gone through that before you." He too was tempted to be discouraged because of the way. His disciples doubted, betrayed, denied Him. But Jesus never gave in to discouragement. He was only disappointed. Disappointment is inevitable but you can flee from discouragement.

Do not allow yourself to be discouraged - **discouragement leads to doubting**. It always breeds poor judgment and talks a lot of non-sense. It destroys faith, it leads to complaining, murmuring, and a life of sour grapes and total defeat. Just as Israel and our Savior had to learn to walk the Arabah without discouragement, so must you and I. We know it is possible, both under the Old Covenant and under the New.

The first portrait of a man who walked with God, after the fall, was Enoch. He was a lone figure in a hell-bound world of wickedness, and yet he kept discouragement out of his heart: *"Enoch walked with God, and God took him"* (Gen. 5:24). Listen, Enoch had an abundant supply of grace before Pentecost. God expected Joshua to drink of that same supply when he lay on his face discouraged at Ai; He expected Elijah to drink of it under the juniper tree; He expected Job to say, *"His grace is sufficient for me"* instead of, *"cursed be the day on which I was born"*. God chided all of these men for being discouraged. The way was hard for all of them, and they were some of the best. But God was disappointed with them. As Enoch fought off discouragement so they could have done also.

*"The people was much discouraged because of the way."* The way can get us discouraged: the heat, the sand storms, the serpents, the meager earthly supplies. But then there is a Way above the way. **Our feet may be on the scorched dry earth but our hearts should be on and in the Way of all ways.** Jesus said, *"I am the Way"*. Paul and Silas' feet were in the stocks, in maximum security, but their hearts were soon in and on the Way called Straight. At the midnight hour they sang praises to God. *"Israel was much discouraged because of the way"*. So they too could have sung, but they

did not. They did not consider the pillar of fire by night and the cloud during the day that testified of God's presence even in the Arabah. My friend, you choose what you're looking at. If you look at your rocky path, you will get rocks. If you look up to Jesus, you get Jesus' power.

Look at how Paul expressed his journey through the Arabah of his life In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. *"We're troubled on every side; yet not distressed, not discouraged. We are perplexed, but not in despair (like Joshua at Ai); persecuted yet not forsaken; (I will never leave thee nor forsake thee) cast down (referring to the world of boxing: temporarily knocked down); but not destroyed (In other words, we get up and get at it again). For "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). For "He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Somehow Enoch had a pre-Pentecostal taste of that. Paul's attitude could have been a great encouragement to Joshua, Elijah and Job in their hours of severe trial!*

Never, never, never once do you see any notes of discouragement in the writings of Paul. Not a one in all his Arabah journeys. Disappointments? Yes - such as we see in these words *"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). "No man stood with me but all men forsook me" (2 Tim. 4"16).* Again, disappointment yes, but not discouragement.

**Why is discouragement inexcusable, but disappointment is not?** What is the difference between disappointment and discouragement? Disappointment is unavoidable; it is a simple recognition that the world is not fair, that things are not as we expect them to be, or as they ought to be. Disappointment comes out of us facing reality. Again, Jesus was disappointed with men. He faced reality. But discouragement is when we let disappointment get to us, when we leave out the "God-factor"... the "but-God-factor"...the but we have this treasure in earthen vessels...the He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world.

So discouragement is only taking in a partial sweep of reality. It sees only the darkness and not the light. It only takes in what is of the earth and not what is of heaven. **Discouragement says "the world is not fair." It leaves out the "God is good."** That was the problem with Joshua, Elijah and Job in their times of crisis. That is your problem when you're down. You forget about heaven. Paul never let that happen to him. He never let the Arabah get into his heart.

*They were much discouraged. There is no reason for you to let this happen to you.* Enoch never let it happen to him. He had a lot less of spiritual goods in his backpack than we do: he did not have the Holy Spirit **in** him but only **with** him. How much more do you have by having the **Holy Spirit in you**? Can that be measured? Is it not the first function of the Holy Spirit to be a Comforter to you in the Arabahs of your life? Did not Jesus introduce the Holy Spirit as the Comforter with these words, *"And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter"* (John 14:16)?

**Have you received the Comforter**, who adds the ‘but-factor’ to all your disappointments? Why don’t you receive Him? And notice that He is “another” Comforter. That means one more to the comforters you already have in God the Father, in Jesus His Son Who said to His distraught disciples, “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me...I go to prepare a place for you... I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:1-3). Oh friend, there is another Comforter Who has “Comforter” as His primary function.

So then the Arabah is unavoidable, it is God’s will. But being much discouraged, being in any way discouraged is avoidable. That is part of the gospel. Receive it and share it with others and you and they shall be found worthy to walk with Him in white. Because as He overcame so shall we also overcome and sit with Him in the Father’s throne forever (Rev.3: 21).

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