

THE OLD PATHS

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“Eleven Days’ Work In Forty Years”

Jarrod Jacobs

Deuteronomy 1:2 tells us, *“There are eleven days’ journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.”* This verse may seem out of place unless we remember the context. By this time, the Israelites had made it through the wilderness wanderings, and are now at the border of Canaan near the Jordan River. These folks had endured forty years of wanderings as a punishment for their rebellion against God in Numbers 13 and 14. Remember that a generation earlier, the people had escaped Egypt by God’s power (Ex. 14). They had gone to Horeb, or Sinai, and received God’s commands (Ex. 20-35). The book of Leviticus reveals the words Moses spoke by inspiration to the Levitical, or priestly tribe, enumerating their duties before God. The book of Numbers then records the census of the people, and their eleven-day journey to Canaan (Num. 1-13).

These people were at the southern border of Canaan when they rebelled before God. Ten of the twelve spies said that while the land was just as God described, it would be impossible to conquer the people (Num. 13:31-33). Israel listened to the majority rather than Joshua and Caleb, and rebelled against God. They even demanded that they go back to Egypt (Num. 14:4)! God then rejected them, and threatened their death (Num. 14:12). Through Moses’ intercession, God did not destroy them in a short period of time. Punishment was still needed, though! So, God determined, *“After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die”* (Num. 14:34-35).

Thus, that generation waited in the wilderness, and wandered while the people from twenty years old and upward finally died (Num. 14:29). After this, God allowed the people to go into the Promised Land. A new

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generation would possess it, and fulfill the promise God had made to Abraham so long ago (Gen. 15:13-16). Deuteronomy (“second reading”) records the final words of Moses before the people entered the land of Promise, as recorded in the book of Joshua. They finally accomplished their eleven days’ work ... in forty years!

In a study like this, sometimes we can get bogged down in the details, and forget that there are lessons here for us (Rom. 15:4). Is it possible we can have the problem of only accomplishing eleven days’ work in forty years? What can we learn from these people’s example?

I would suggest that we can learn that our sin, any sin, will result in wasted time on this earth. Just think, after receiving the commandments, and the instructions to the Levites (this lasted about a year, Num. 9), these people were poised to begin taking the land of Promise in just a week and a half! Sadly, because of sin (Num. 13-14), these people would wait forty more years to do the work and enjoy the promise.

Let us remember that a life in sin is a wasted life. The time we spend engaged in sin is wasted time that we will never get back! Some may spend a proverbial “forty years” in sin, never realizing what they would have in Christ. What a tragedy! A life of sin wastes our time, talents, and energy. The time we could have used in devotion to God and bringing others to Christ has been wasted in selfishness, and perhaps even discouraging people from following the Lord! In contrast, “*our labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (I Cor. 15:58)! In other words, we do not waste our time when we are doing the Lord’s will and living for Him. There are no regrets, no embarrassment, and no wishing for another chance in the Lord!

Let us take a moment to examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). What kind of life are we living? Too many things in this life are a waste of time, anyway. Why would we want to waste more time in sin and separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2)? Let us repent and follow the Lord today while we still have breath and opportunity (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7-8; Mk. 16:16).

“Because Of You ...”

Joel Raulerson

One of the most powerful passages to me in scripture has always been Romans 2:24. Paul wrote, “*For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”*”

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Romans 2 is an excellent chapter dealing with hypocrisy. This was a big problem with the Jewish people of the first century. They would boast about their love for God, their reliance on scripture, their memorization, heritage, etc. Yet, the very sins they condemned the rest of the world for, were the very sins they were committing themselves! Romans 2:21-23 says, *“You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.”* Let us ask ourselves whether or not we are guilty of the same hypocrisy as these 1st century Christians.

I began to notice this hypocrisy when I was a teenager working in the fast food industry. From time to time, I would see fellow Christians come in to eat where I worked, and they acted nothing like a Christian. When they should have been striving to be lights to the world and set godly examples, they were treating their fellow man horribly, saying things they shouldn't be saying, and dressing in a manner that was not modest. In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus tells us, *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* We are supposed to be an example to our communities and try and bring others to serve the Lord. However, sometimes I feel we are guilty of looking like a bunch of hypocrites. Do we strive to look and act like the rest of the world while at the same time condemning them for their sinful actions? The sad truth is I have heard some “worldly people” justly pointing out when Christians are not acting like they should. Brothers and sisters, make no mistake, the world is watching us even if we don't realize it. We are affecting how the people around us view the church, our local congregation, and Christ. This should be a positive thing. Yet, I'm afraid we sometimes look like the brethren in Romans 2. The church is being blasphemed because of our actions.

Wouldn't it be so much better to hear, “The name of God is praised among the community because of you.” The same Christians that can destroy the reputation of the church in a community also have the opportunity to bring others to Christ. When out in the world, choose to show love to everyone you encounter (1 Jn. 4:7-8). Treat your family the way they ought to be treated rather than having fits of anger and disrespect

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(Eph. 6:1-4). When you're at work, work as if you are working for the Lord and don't be lazy. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men," If we are living our lives in this way, we truly can bring honor to God in our communities. Examine yourself. Is the word of God being praised or blasphemed in your community because of you?



Spotlight On A Bible Verse: Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This is a straightforward sentence, and it is loaded with meaning! All have sinned. There is no one who can say he has not sinned. This fact was repeated by John in I John 1:8 and 10. All of us have sinned through transgression (I Jn. 3:4) or omission (Jas. 4:7), or both! All have sinned because we all have given in to temptation (Jas. 1:14). The result is that we fall short of God's glory. Furthermore, saying we "come short" of God's glory declares that we are therefore not "born short" of God's glory. No one is born in sin. Rather, sin is a result of our yielding to temptation (Jas. 1:14-15).

Thankfully, Romans 3:23 is not the end of the story! Though we all have sinned, we also can be assured that Christ provides forgiveness (Rom 6:23). God's forgiveness is real and available to all who have sinned (Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:16)!
- Jarrod Jacobs



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