

COUNTING OUR DAYS (Deut. 2:7)

Do you ever feel like you are ‘losing it’? ... When you are trying your best but it is as if everything is against you!

I reckon the children of Israel often had a ‘real downer’ on life. They were so close to the land of Canaan. They had travelled from Egypt into the wilderness and settled for almost a year at the foot of Mount Sinai. They had then moved forward in anticipation of settling in a new land ... but all of a sudden the realities confronted them with a vengeance!

- * The land is occupied with giants of warrior men,
- * Their city is surrounded by an impregnable wall,
- * ... And they felt themselves to be a dishevelled and unprepared people for battle.

What is the way forward? How can there be a way forward under such circumstances? ... Actually, after the first two years following their departure from Egypt God *had* placed before them the opportunity to conquer the land ... but they wasted that opportunity and had to turn back into the wilderness for another thirty-eight years.

Have you ever done anything that has impacted on your life and you have regretted it ever since? It might have been something everyone knows about ... or it might be something you are harbouring close to your heart.

I have known people who have made the wrong choice in employment careers, and some people who have made the wrong choice in life’s partner ... and they don’t enjoy life; they get up in the morning and are almost counting the hours and counting the days, ... so empty is life.

What contributes to such an existence? ... and it *is* really only an existence. Of course, there is no easy answer but it *does* have a special resonance to the child of God whose life seems to be turning in on them.

Moses began the book of Deuteronomy by taking the Hebrew people back into their past. We don’t always like to be reminded of the ‘wrong turnings’ we took in life but sometimes it’s the ‘wrong turnings’ we need to return to get back on to the right road. The road can often be bumpy, there can be so many corners, there can be all the lanes and side-roads that could take you off on the wrong direction, there could be holes in the road ... there are many, *many* instructions we must navigate through.

In the second chapter of Deuteronomy Moses summarized Numbers 20:14 – 31:54, describing how the children of Israel at first were successful in battle as they made their way towards Canaan. However, during this period of thirty-eight years wandering through the wilderness Israel was out of favour with God. They were not faithful to the covenant; there is no record they observed the Passover or circumcised their sons. It was not until Joshua led the people into Canaan that they returned to these important characteristics of their relationship with God.

As they entered the land of Canaan they were a relatively young people, and therefore ought to have had lots of energy and vitality. The oldest of them would have been about fifty-seven years of age, ... because anyone twenty years or older perished in the wilderness, Num. 14:29 *Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, 30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. ... Therefore, ... $19 + 38 = 57$ years old. ... And those nineteen year olds had all the memories of passing through the wilderness ... and all the lessons to remember that the Lord taught their parents and grandparents.*

Using them as an illustration, let's see the way the Lord would teach us to enjoy our days rather than just counting them.

A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

- * 2:3 *Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.*
- * You have remained at this place long enough ... it is now time to move on!
- * It is now time to take down your tents, saddle your animals and move on through the wilderness.
- * You are a pilgrim people. Canaan is the promise I have for you ... move northward out of the dry and thirsty land.
- * Yes, God never intended for His people to set up home at the foot of Mount Seir. You might be tired and weary, you might feel as if you cannot go on ... but God told them clearly, *Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.*
- * Moving on can be frightening ... even if you *do* know where you are going! Moving on takes it out of you because you are moving out of your comfort zone and into areas you are not completely sure of.

- * It is a challenge to contend ... and these people had become so used to the limited possibilities of the wilderness that they were afraid to go ahead into the land flowing with milk and honey.
- * You and I are pilgrims ... this is a world we are simply passing through. Like the wilderness in which the Israelites journeyed this world has its high peaks and low valleys, its overflowing rivers and dried-up streams.
- * Peter wrote, [1 Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.](#) The writer to the Hebrews used the same language, [11:13 strangers and pilgrims on the earth.](#)
- * ... And the lesson for the pilgrim is “don’t become too comfortable!” Moses told the people, we are moving on northwards ... towards Canaan.
- * It is good to work hard and enjoy a comfortable home, - there is nothing wrong with planning your life for now and in the future ... *as long as God is in the centre of those plans* ... as long as those plans are made with Him in mind.
- * When you know the Lord Jesus as Saviour you are travelling a **different direction** for it is a direction contrary to the world, - you are ‘swimming against the current’.
- * The man of the world says, [Lk. 12:18 I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. He has it all worked out, - he is for staying ... and then God steps in and says, v.20 Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?](#)
- * If you are working hard only for what this life can give you, *beware*, for there is nothing you can take with you when God calls your name.
- * Unbeliever, not all the money in the world can purchase what you need to redeem your soul ... and neither will any of it stand you in good stead in eternity, - *for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* ([Mk. 8:36](#))
- * You need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and cry to Him to take away your sin.
- * Believer, you and I need to remember also the riches of this world, - with which the Lord has blessed us, - are but fleeting, they don’t last.
- * I read the story of a pastor who was baptising one of his congregation. As the candidate was coming up out of the water he panicked because he suddenly realised he had his wallet in his pocket.

The pastor made the comment afterwards that not many wallets get baptized! ... “Lord, You look after my sins. I’ll look after the rest”.

* Believer, everything you have and are belong to God when He saved you from sin, - your soul, your wallet, your life ... *everything!* ...

* Take a **different direction** from the world, **Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.**

A DETERMINED DIRECTION

* 2:4 command thou the people, saying,

* When you read the account of the travels of the children of Israel you quickly find they are a people who liked to discuss and debate ... and after such weighty and fiery times the conclusion they always arrived at was that *their* conclusion was the best! ... They gave Moses many headaches and heartaches. [You and I can agree, as long as you agree with me!]

* However, God’s command was not up for debate. His ways were not for discussion. His word was His command and His command was clear.

* He had brought them out of Egypt, - they never would have left bondage unless God had freed them from it.

* They never would have had it in them to escape if God had not opened the Red Sea and brought them onward. They would still have been in Egypt!

* And notice how He is described here, - He is the **LORD** (cf. vv.2,7,9,12,14,15,17,etc). He is the same LORD Who spoke to Moses, Ex. 3:7 I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

* He is the Sovereign LORD. There is none besides Him. There is none like Him, Ex. 3:15 Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

* I would not dare to tell you what to do ... and you have no obligation to be obedient to anything I say ... but when it comes to the Lord’s commands from the Lord’s Word you, - as a child of God and a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, - are obliged to be obedient!

* You cannot afford to be disobedient. In fact, if you tell me you are a believer and you do not obey God’s Word here is what the Word tells you, I Jn. 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a

liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

* You see, it is not just your words upon which your faith is to be judged, ... it is your actions also.

* To be a child of God is a demanding profession of faith ... and God expects the fruits of the tree that He has planted in the garden of His salvation.

* These children of Israel were commanded by God ... and He commanded them ...

* v.4 Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau ...

* v.8 And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Eziongaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.

* v.13 Now rise up, said I, and get you over the brook Zered. And we went over the brook Zered.

* In these various locations they were told ...

* v.4 take ye good heed unto yourselves

* v.5 Meddle not with them

* v.6 Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.

* God had it all worked out. Their supplies for the journey came from Him and there was no dependence upon anything of the world's favours, ... and they simply had to trust Him for the journey and be obedient to His command.

* **A different direction ... a determined direction ...**

A DEDICATED DIRECTION

* 2:7 he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.

* These children of Israel spent forty years wandering through the wilderness ... not one step did God have them wandering *aimlessly!*

* They might have thought there were times when it seemed God did not know where they were going ... but God had every step and stop of the journey already planned.

* He knew all about the dryness of the desert, and the inhospitable domain. He knew all about the enemies they would face ... and the dangers that lurked behind the rocks ... Moses told his people, *he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.*

* He has not left you. He has not abandoned you. He started you out on the journey and He will bring you into the Promised Land! ... The promises of God are sure!

* Not one promise He has ever made has been, will be or ever can be broken. He is the covenant-keeping God, [Ps. 145:17](#) The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

* Yes, for certain, some of the roads I travel I wish I had never found ... Some of the roads I have gotten myself on, I never meant to travel ... Sin will take you places you never wanted to go ... but God always has a way back onto 'the main road' ... onto the King's Highway.

* Jesus said, [I am the Way \(Jn. 14:6\)](#) ... There is no other way whereby a sinner can be saved or for a believer to reach Heaven other than trusting and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* He is the only Way to God and to Heaven, - He is the **dedicated direction**.

* Yes, there *may* be times when you feel life is so empty and so directionless and so not-worth-living ... but God says to [you, Dt. 2:7](#) the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand. He has done a work in eternity and in time whereby you would know His great grace and wonderful goodness.

* The Lord has blessed you over and over again, - you could not count the numbers of times God has been good to you! He has overwhelmed you on so many occasions when you never deserved it ... and yet He has been so good to you regardless, - [the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand ... for the LORD thy God hath been with thee.](#)

* He said, [Heb. 13:5](#) I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. [6](#) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

* And it is *impossible* for God to leave me because Jesus again said, [Jn. 10:28](#) I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. [29](#) My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

* You are held in the same hand that created the heavens and the earth!

* Therefore the Lord says to each of us, [Dt. 2:7](#) thou hast lacked nothing. When you cried out for water, I provided it. When you cried out for food, I provided the manna and the quail. When you cried out for fear I gave you victories over your enemies. ... thou hast lacked nothing. ... [Ps. 59:16](#) I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

- * ... And yes, oh yes, ... *2:7 he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness*. I am not on my own, my Heavenly Father is with me.
- * Like Pilgrim in *Pilgrim's Progress*, you might be walking through a narrow pathway in the darkness ... with a ditch on one side and dirty stinking mire on the other. John Bunyan recorded, "oft-times, when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where, or upon what he should set it upon". He went a little further and the pathway became more dangerous, "Now, thought Christian, what shall I do? ... So he cried in my hearing, O Lord, what shall I do?"
- * The enemy approached and the dangers multiplied ... and then Christian declared, *Ps. 71:16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God*.
- * Children of Israel, here is your assurance ... and because of your assurance ... here is your **dedicated direction**, *2:7 he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness*. ... What a great cry of hope and confidence!
- * There is no problem or difficulty that is hidden from Him around the next corner or over the next hill ... Here is the ground upon which you and I stand, *he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness*.

CONCLUSION

- * God took them on a **different direction** ... *you have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward*.
- * Yes, initially it would lead them through enemy territory ... territory in which they had to take great care in case the enemy might influence or strike them at any time.
- * He also told them to very definitely follow a **determined direction** ... *v.4 command thou the people, saying* ... God was not presenting them with suggestions or options, - He had only one road for them to travel ...
- * He does not always explain what He is doing and why He takes us certain ways but He takes us on along the **dedicated direction** and nothing can harm us for eternity as long as we follow Him.
- * Charles W. Naylor wrote a beautiful hymn,

God's way is best, I will not murmur,
 Although the end I may not see;
 Where'er He leads I'll meekly follow,
 God's way is best, is best for me.

Had I the choosing of my pathway,
 In blindness I should go astray,

And wander far away in darkness,
Nor reach that land of endless day.

God's way is best; heart, cease thy struggling
To see and know and understand;
Forsake thy fears and doubts, but trusting,
Submit thyself into His hand.

Thy way is best, so lead me onward,
My all I give to Thy control;
Thy loving hand will truly guide me,
And safe to glory bring my soul.

* So here is how the Lord teaches us this morning ... Rather than simply counting the days, count the blessings God has wonderfully favoured you with ... for... He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness. Amen.