

BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF ERIE
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**“Looking Up for Encouragement
In The Valley of Discouragement”**

NUMBERS 21:1-9

We are doing a series of messages on “Looking Up” from **Psalm 121:1-2**. We are told very clearly that when in need we should look up – because that is where our help comes from, the God who made heaven and earth. This morning we are going to look at **Numbers 21: 1-9** about **Looking Up for Encouragement in the Valley of Discouragement**.

The Scripture before us tells us of a valley of discouragement and the valley of discouragement is one of the deepest valleys we will ever go through. I want to look at this valley of discouragement this morning with both its causes and effects. Why do God’s people get discouraged when He is meeting our every need?

I. REASONS FOR DISCOURAGEMENT

- A. Because the battles are long and hard – vs. 1-3.** Remember that we are in a battle. **Ephesians 6:12**
- B. Because the way is often long and hard – vs. 4.**
- C. Because our hearts get cold and hard and we often are complaining and bitter – vs. 5a.** The anger and impatience in their hearts boiled over into harsh words against the Lord and Moses. In both their attitudes and their words, they were tempting the Lord. **1 Corinthians 10:9**
- D. Because our spiritual sight becomes hard and dimmed – vs. 5b.** It was the same old complaint. Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, and there was nothing to eat but manna. In the difficulties of the daily march, they’d forgotten God’s promise that they would enter the Promised Land and claim it as their home **Numbers 15:1**.

Look at how they described this heavenly bread in **V-5b**. **Manna was Angels food according to Psalm 78:25** but the people had gotten so accustomed to their blessings that they loathed it and called it worthless bread. **Listen this morning:**

- 1. Discouragement can often lead to Sin
- 2. Discouragement Is Infectious

II. THE RESULTS OF THEIR DISCOURAGEMENT

Look now at verses **Vs. 6-9**. The aftermath of this grumbling was no different for the new generation than it had been for the old generation. The Lord sent judgment upon his grumbling people in the shape of fiery serpents, whose bite was fatal (**v. 6**). To understand what is going on here, it is important to recognize that neither the judgment nor the remedy was a random phenomenon.

These serpents were a potent representation of the power of Egypt, to which they were apparently so eager to return. Snakes were well-known symbols of power and sovereignty in ancient Egypt, as the familiar image of a cobra on Pharaoh's crown reminds us. Having once been freed from Pharaoh, did they really want to be subject to the power of the serpent all over again? Even more profoundly, though, the serpent is a symbol of the ultimate enemy of mankind, Satan himself. It was in the form of a serpent that Satan deceived our first ancestors and brought about the sin that caused us to be cast out of the garden into the desert of this fallen world.

The serpent on the pole is also a reference to Egypt, such a pole or standard was a recognized symbol of the deity's power.

The transfixed serpent on the standard thus demonstrated in visual terms the defeat of Israel's mortal enemies, Egypt and Satan, overcome by the power of the Lord. Jesus used the bronze serpent on the pole to illustrate His own death on the cross (**John 3:14**).

III. RESOURCES FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Remember that....

- ♦ **You Will Not Find Encouragement in Circumstances** even though they may improve temporarily, they will continue to change.
- ♦ **You Will Not Find Encouragement in Human Reason** because the world has no spiritual answers.
- ♦ **You Will Not Find Encouragement in Self-Pity** as this will only cause the valley to deepen.
- A. You Will Find Encouragement In The Lord -1 Samuel 30:6.1**
 - 1. **There Is Encouragement In His Person –**
Listen to the prophet **Habakkuk 3:17-1**
 - 2. **There Is Encouragement In His Presence - Hebrews 13:5-6**
 - 3. **There Is Encouragement In His Power - Romans 8:31**
 - 4. **There Is Encouragement In His Protection - 2 Corinthians 1:10**
- B. You Will Find Encouragement In the Word - Psalms 119:28**
 - 1. **There Is Encouragement In Its Promises - Deuteronomy 1:21**
 - 2. **There Is Encouragement In Its Preaching - 2 Timothy 4:2**
- C. You Will Find Encouragement In The Church**
 - 1. **There Is Visual Encouragement - Hebrews 10:2**
 - 2. **There Is Vocal Encouragement - Hebrews 3:13**