

Series: Questions

Title: How Long Shall God Forbear?

Text: Numbers 14: 26-27

Date: February 9, 2014

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Numbers 14: 26: And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 27: How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

What a sad way to be recognized by the Holy LORD God of glory!—“**this evil congregation, which murmur against me.**”

The LORD never looks upon his people in Christ this way, never upon those who are justified by Christ Jesus through faith, but there is an evil congregation. Christ tells us who they are in:

Mark 9:19: He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?...

God bear this evil congregation in Israel for a long time. He was longsuffering to them a long time. His forbearance with them lasted a long time. He suffered their evil manners for many days.

Proposition: God is longsuffering. He suffers—he puts up with sinners—for a long time.

Numbers 14: 27: How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

Divisions: We see how long God bore this evil congregation—and how great his longsuffering is toward sinners—using the three things that made the children of Israel’s unbelief to be so evil. It is found in **Numbers 14: 22. 1) Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, 2) and have tempted me now these ten times, 3) and have not hearkened to my voice;**

I. FIRST, WE SEE HOW GREAT GOD’S LONGSUFFERING IS IN THAT THOUGH THEY HAD SEEN HIS GLORY AND HIS MIRCLES, STILL HE DID NOT IMMEDIATELY TURN THEM OVER TO REPROBATION THOUGH THEY DID NOT BELIEVE—V22: all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness,...

The Plagues and the Passover Lamb

The glory of God—his power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and truth—were all displayed in the miracles, the plagues, God wrought before their eyes in Egypt. Then they beheld God’s glory when he brought them out of Egypt. God smote all the firstborn in Egypt. But God provided a Passover Lamb for his people in Israel: a lamb which represented all the firstborn in Israel, lamb which died in place of all the first born in Israel. They put the blood of the lamb upon the doorpost of their houses. And God promised

Exodus 12:13: And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

God provided himself this Passover Lamb in Christ. The Holy Spirit said through Paul, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” (1 Cor 5: 7) Holy God satisfied his own justice toward his own people by slaying his own Lamb, Christ Jesus, in their room and stead. Not one shall perish who rest in Christ through faith because all who do are effectually called and saved by God’s grace.

Red Sea

They beheld God’s glory: In bringing them through the Red Sea and destroying Pharaoh and his army. Christ has delivered all God’s Israel and destroyed all our enemies in the Red Sea of his blood on Calvary’s Tree.

Cloud and Fire

God showed them his glory in the Cloud which led them by day and in the pillar of Fire which led them by night. Christ Jesus is he who leads his dear children along, protects us and covers us all our days.

Waters of Marah

They beheld God’s glory in the bitter water’s of Marah which were turned sweet by the tree cut down and cast into the waters. God revealed himself in his name, “JEHOVAH Rapha—I AM the Lord that healeth thee.” Christ is that sweetening tree. He was cut down willingly and he alone turns the bitterness of his people’s sins sweet. Christ is “I Am the Lord that healeth thee.”

Manna from Heaven

Then they saw his glory when God rained down manna from heaven. That bread pictured Christ.

John 6: 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33: For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world....35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Smitten Rock

They saw God’s glory when God gave them water out of the Rock that was smitten. The Holy Spirit said through Paul, “and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor 10: 4) Christ bore the smiting of divine justice to declare God and to justify his people. Not one for whom he died shall be smitten because justice is satisfied for them. God is the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus Christ our Righteousness

The Rod of God

They saw his glory when the enemy—Amalek—came upon them in the wilderness. As Moses held up the Rod of God, Joshua defeated all their enemies. This pictured Christ our Savior defeating our enemies through the gospel of Christ and him crucified. God revealed himself as Jehovahnissi—the LORD our Banner!

Sinner, week-in-week out, you have seen God’s glory in the gospel I preach unto. You have seen God’s miracles in God’s word. Now, for you not to believe on Christ is to call God a liar. (1 Jn 5: 10) So sinner, “How long shall God bear with you calling him a liar? How long shall God bear with your evil of not believing his Son after he has been so evidently set before you?” Sinner, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Is 55: 6-7)

Romans 2:4: Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

II. SECONDLY, WE SEE HOW GREAT GOD’S LONGSUFFERING IS IN THAT THOUGH THEY TEMPTED GOD, STILL HE DID NOT IMMEDIATELY TURN THEM OVER TO REPROBATION—Numbers 14: 22:...and have tempted me now these ten times,

They tempted God with their murmuring and complaining. Perhaps, a certain number is given for an uncertain, meaning they frequently tempted. But we can see at least ten times in scripture. As I give you these, you think would you be as longsuffering with sinners as God is to you?

At the Red Sea

Exodus 14: 11: And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12: Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

At the waters of Marah

Ex 15: 24: And the people murmured against Moses...[God said, I have heard the murmuring, they murmur against me.]

At the wilderness of Zin where God gave the Manna

Exodus 16: 2:...the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron...3: Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

They rebelled against GOD’S commandment by leaving the manna until the morning. (Exodus 16:20)

Then they went out to gather manna on the Sabbath day contrary to God’s command. (Exodus 16:27)

At Rephidim where God gave the smitten Rock

Exodus 17: 1:...there was no water for the people to drink. 2. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? 3: And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

While Moses was in the mount 40 days receiving the law from God

Ex 32: 1: they said to Aaron, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him...[Aaron did so]... 4. and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5:

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

At Taberah, for no apparent reason, again they murmured. (Nu 11:1)

At Kibrothhattavah

Numbers 11: 4: And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5: We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6: But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

Now in our text the spies returned from spying out the land of Canaan with an evil report

Numbers 14: 1: And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2: And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3: And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4: And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

In all of this, they tempted God:

- **His power:** whether God could provide
- **His goodness:** whether he would forbear
- **His faithfulness:** whether his promise would be performed.
- **His justice:** they dared God, they challenged God whether he would answer their provocations and punish them or not.

Application: Brethren, all the days of our unbelief, our unbelief, tempted God. And you who do not believe on Christ do so now! All murmuring is tempting God: about God's providence, God's way of salvation, even about the weather. Fake questions is tempting God: When the Pharisee's came to Christ with their questions, Christ called it "tempting God." Every question in hypocrisy to justify rebellion is tempting God. When the Judaizers tried to bring believers back under the law, Peter said, Ac 15:10: Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Self-righteousness and yoking believers with the law is tempting God. Yet, all that time, God gave them and us space to repent and believe on him:

Romans 2:4: Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

III. THIRDLY, WE SEE GOD'S LONGSUFFERING IN THAT THOUGH THEY WOULD NOT HEARKEN TO GOD'S VOICE, STILL HE DID NOT IMMEDIATELY TURN THEM OVER TO REPROBATION—Numbers 14: 22:...and have not hearkened to my voice;

From Egypt till our text, they repeatedly would not obey God's voice. At last, they disobeyed God's command to go in and possess the land God promised to give them.

Deuteronomy 1:21: Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged....26: Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God:

I want you to see how hard the natural heart of rebellion is against God. They would not obey God's voice and go in to possess the land. So finally, God said,

Numbers 14: 23: Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:...25:...To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. [God commanded they go away from the land of promise into the wilderness]....**28: Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:** [They said, Nu 14: 2: Would God we had died in this wilderness! Now God said,] **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 swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.** [They said, Nu 14:3: And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that...our children should be a prey? Now God said,] **31: But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32: But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33: And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 34: 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. 35: 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. 36: And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, 37: Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.** [These were the evil spies. By their immediate judgment, God shows that those who not only disobey him, but also make others disobey him, shall receive the greater degree of damnation.] **38: But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.** [they had another spirit and followed the Lord fully.]

Now seven times they heard the Lord's word that because they **would not** obey God's command to take possession of the land, now they **could not**. God commanded them to turn back, God said their carcasses would fall in the wilderness, that they would not be able to enter the promised land. Before their very eyes, God even killed the evil spies with a disease while God saw to it that Joshua and Caleb, were not even touched by the disease. Now what do they do?

Numbers 14: 39: And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

Moses must have been greatly disappointed. He would have to remain in the wilderness for 40 more years, too. But Moses did not mourn. He saw God's glory in this judgment.

But these guilty men mourned because of the consciousness of their own guilt. The fact they earned this judgment made them mourn even greater. They mourned, not because they sinned against God, but because of their judgment only.

If they had wept for their sin when Caleb faithfully reproved them (Nu 14:9), this sentence would have been prevented; Now it is too late. Don't let that be the case with anyone here!

Numbers 14: 40: And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

Now, they want to go into Canaan. Now, they confess their sin. So it will be when God judges unbelievers. He will bring all to confess that their judgment is their own fault. He will come,

Jude 15: To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Numbers 14: 41: And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD?

They were still disobeying God. Rather than bow to God, they broke it, so they are trying to fix it. Moses said, “Do you still disobey the commandment of the LORD?” They still did not believe the LORD. They still tempted God. They did not seek the Lord while he might be found, and now he would not be found.

Numbers 14: 41...but it shall not prosper. 42: Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43: For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. 44: But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45: Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

Now these three things show us how longsuffering God is—they had seen his glory and miracles, they had tempted him, they had not hearkened to his voice—still, God suffered a long time with these rebels. But these same three things shall increase the guilt of those who will not believe. The light God has given men justifies God in turning them over to reprobation and for sending men to hell. (Rom 1: 20) The gifts of God are given freely by his grace but men earn hell!

Every sinner here, pay attention to what I am about to say—pay attention to what God says to you: today is the day of grace, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor 6: 2)

Hebrews 3: 7: Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:...13:...exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin...15: While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Mark 1:15: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

John 6:29: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Acts 17: 30: And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

If these men would have been as eager in the day of grace as they were when the day of grace was over, it would have been well with them. Be diligent to seek Christ now, in the day of grace, while he may be found. Provide yourselves oil while the bridegroom tarries and it will be well when the bridegroom comes. Amen!