

**Message #16****Numbers 15:1-41**

When God saves a nation or individual, He has a plan that includes a development that will lead to His great blessings. That development process takes time and during that time, God teaches His people that they can trust Him and He will care for them. If His people develop, He leads them to the greatest blessings in accordance with His will. The problem comes when His people don't develop. The problem comes when His people don't trust Him and learn lessons.

Now to understand this text, we must understand the context. It was the will of God to take Israel from Egypt to Mount Sinai. This was His plan for Israel. He saved the nation, gave His Word to His nation, gave worship to the nation, organized the nation and in less than two years took her to the very boundary of the Promised Land. All she needed to do to have all of the blessings of God was to trust God and His Word and she would have it all.

It was not His will and never His will that they wander in the wilderness for the next 38-39 years. This was brought on by their failure to trust God and obey God. So this next 38-39 years were years of chastising punishment.

In fact, in chapter 14, God came dangerously close to wiping out the entire nation. They were a bunch of emotional, irrational, disbelieving, grumbling losers and if it hadn't been for Moses, God would have destroyed them and started over.

But God was merciful and He said because of your rebellion, I will not totally destroy you, but you will know My opposition for 40 years (Num. 14:34). Furthermore, God said I will not permit one person who is over 20-years-old to enter the Promised Land (14:29). Your corpses will fall in the wilderness and your children will be those I will bring to the land (14:29-32).

So the disciplinary will of God was for the first generation of Israelites to die in the wilderness. They were to wander around until they died. One thing is worth noting. Had Israel nationally repented of their sin and said to Moses, we need to offer sacrificial offerings for our sin, perhaps God would have let some enter the land. We will never know that because they did not do that.

God made a promise to Abraham that He would give him a land (Gen. 12:1-3). Even when God let the spies go into the land, He told them "I am going to give this land to the sons of Israel" (Num. 13:2). So even when God's people blow it, they cannot stop God from fulfilling His Word. There is a wonderful truth to see from Israel and that is **"God's will may be delayed, but it cannot be destroyed."** **"God's will may be interrupted, but it cannot be eliminated."**

God's people can make miserable choices in life and they can prevent God from blessing them, but they cannot stop the fact they are going to heaven. In fact, it was Paul who said concerning this very point, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (II Tim. 2:13). Never is that point more evident than when we look at Israel.

Just after God had pronounced this judgment on the nation Israel, we read in **Numbers 15:1**, “Now the LORD spoke to Moses.” So this is the first message that God gives Israel after His judgment message.

We would understand it if God never spoke to His people again. They sure didn’t deserve it; but God is longsuffering with His people, even in the aftermath of their unbelief and He decided to speak to them again.

When you have really blown it, it is a special moment when you realize God is again developing you and speaking to you through His Word.

Now God’s message for Israel was this:

**WHEN THE SONS OF ISRAEL ENTER THE LAND, THEY MUST MAKE CERTAIN THAT THEY OBEY THE WORD OF GOD IN REGARD TO THE OFFERINGS, IN REGARD TO PEOPLE, IN REGARD TO THE LAW AND IN REGARD TO THEIR OWN HEART.**

There is amazing encouragement that comes from **Numbers 15:2** because God says, “when you enter the land where you are to live, which I am giving you.” The obvious implication is you will enter the land because I am going to give it to you. **There is still a future plan for Israel in spite of her rebellion and that future plan includes a Promised Land.** It is a specific land that will be given by God to Israel. It is a land where Israel is to live and one day will live.

Now they sure did not deserve this. This is amazing grace. God could have said, “I am not giving you anything” and been perfectly justified in doing that. But in amazing grace He says, “I am still going to give you this land.” This promise is as relevant tonight as it was when He said it here.

**One thing was certain, and these people better very carefully consider this fact, when God would bring them into that land, they had better be serious about obeying His Word and not following their own heart or eyes or whims (15:39).** This is what got them into trouble.

If God grants another opportunity to receive His blessings, His people need to truly focus on God’s Word.

Now there are five areas of obedience that God spells out in this chapter:

**AREA OF OBEDIENCE #1** – If you want God’s blessings, give the right offerings and offer the right sacrifices. **15:1-13**

I truly believe that had Israel humbled themselves and truly repented of their sin and had offered proper sacrifices and offerings to God, things could have been different. We will never know because she did not do this.

Now the first thing God wanted done when they got into the land was to make certain they gave their offerings to Him. They were to give God their offerings. Now many of these offerings had been carefully spelled out as to precisely what they were supposed to be. The offerings could be to fulfill a vow, or a freewill offering or a regular required offering (v. 3); but one thing was clear, offerings were to be made as part of the blessings of God. They were to make a burnt offering to the Lord as a soothing aroma to God.

Now the thing that jumps out at us is that there were things that were to be added to the offering:

In **verse 4**, to all offerings one was to add one tenth of an ephah of flour (2 quarts) mixed with one fourth of a hin of olive oil (about 1 quart).

In **verse 5**, with a lamb offering one was to add the flour and oil plus one fourth of a hin of wine (about one quart).

In **verses 6-7** for a ram offering you were to add 2/10ths of an ephah of fine flour (4 quarts) mixed with 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a hin of oil (1/3<sup>rd</sup> gallon) and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a hin of wine (1/3<sup>rd</sup> gallon).

In **verses 8-10** for a bull offering you were to add 3/10ths of an ephah of fine flour (6 quarts) mixed with ½ a hin of oil (half gallon) and ½ a hin of wine (half gallon).

According to **verses 11-13**, these additions were to be made for each offering, once the sons of Israel were in the land enjoying the blessings of God. This would please God and would cause Him to continue to shower with blessings.

God would view this as a sweet savor offering. A key point to see here is this - you cannot please God if you are not willing to give God your offerings. Furthermore, if you want the blessings of God to continue, you must be willing to add to the offering and not just continue to give the same thing when God is blessing His people. God's people will never be blessed by God if they refuse to give God their offerings.

These were all fellowship offerings that made it possible for God to fellowship with sinful people and bless His sinful people. God's blessings covered every aspect of life from the land (v. 2) to the herds, to flocks, to grain, to wine. All were expected to offer these offerings as a soothing aroma and as an offering of being in a peace relationship with God.

Perhaps one of the most significant areas of life that shows God that we are dead serious about loving Him, believing Him and trusting Him and appreciating all He has given to us, is our giving our money to Him. People who experience the blessings of God are generous givers to the Lord's work. They want to give more and more, not less and less and not the same. People who will be blessed by God realize God has given them everything and they willingly and sacrificially and joyfully give back offerings to Him. People right with God cannot wait to get their money into the offering plates.

The Apostle Paul actually spoke of this very thing to the Church of Corinth (II Cor. 8:1-5, 14; 9:6-11)

**AREA OF OBEDIENCE #2** – If you want God’s blessings, make certain alien people conform to God-ordained worship and offerings. **15:14-16**

Visitors and aliens were to be welcomed and received; but they were never to be allowed to dominate anything. Look at this very carefully because most churches today don’t have a clue as to what is revealed here.

If God’s people want the blessings of God, they do not get those blessings by trying to infiltrate pagan things into worship; they get the blessings by demanding that anything pagan conform to God’s worship.

God’s people are never to allow people from the world to affect what they do in worship. At times there would be those who would want to live with the Israelites, who were not Israelites. **It was the responsibility of the people to make sure that they influenced them rather than the alien influencing the Israelite.**

Do you understand this point? God will not ever give His blessings to a church that is trying to lure in the lost world by secular concepts. When the world comes to church, it needs to learn you conform to us, we don’t conform to you.

**AREA OF OBEDIENCE #3** – If you want God’s blessings, realize there is a difference between unintentional disobedience and Intentional disobedience. **15:17-31**

**Verse 18** makes it clear that God will bring His people to the land and when He did, they needed to think very seriously about obeying the Word of God in all aspects.

Now the first offering that was to be offered to the Lord was a lifted up offering for the food God was supplying in the land (**15:17-21**).

Once Israel got into the land, they were to offer specific offerings in order to receive God’s continued blessings. However, there could be times when something was neglected inadvertently and in those instances, an offering needed to be made for failures (**15:22**).

Now when one failed, but was not in blatant rebellion against God and His Word, an atonement sacrifice could be made. Ignorance is no excuse. **God will not pretend failure does not exist. God will never pretend that disobedience to His Word never happened.** If someone realized I didn’t do what God said I was supposed to do, they needed to deal with it straight up and head on.

If, on the other hand, someone intentionally went astray from God and refused to offer the sacrifice, he was to be cut off from the people. If a person blatantly turns away from God and His Word, he will kill his spiritual life and all the blessings of God.

According to **verses 27-31**, if a person defiantly turned against the law of God and intentionally did just the opposite, there would be no forgiveness. But the person would be cut off.

**AREA OF OBEDIENCE #4** – If you want God’s blessings, realize God’s law is to be obeyed and there are serious consequences if not obeyed. **15:32-36**

Now an illustration of this is given of one who did this. He was told he was not to gather wood on the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath Day for Israel was to be kept holy and no work was to be done (Ex. 20:8-11). The death penalty would be given to violators (Ex. 31:14-15).

Well some guy decided to push the limits of the law and he decided to go out and gather wood on the Sabbath Day. We may assume he was gathering wood to sell it so he was actually working on the Sabbath Day.

Now Moses had never faced this before. This matter had not been specifically addressed. So he consulted God and God said stone him.

What we learn here is that it is possible to so sin against God as a child of God that one cannot recover blessings.

**AREA OF INSTRUCTION #5** – If you want God’s blessings, you must pursue a separated Holiness. **15:37-41**

The chapter ends by reminding the Israel that you do not govern your life by your own feelings, heart or eyes. You govern your life by the Word of God.

In fact, God says put tassels on your garments and when you look at them, remember the responsibility to obey God’s Word.

Jesus wore garments that had tassels and there were times when the sick touched them in order to be healed (Matt. 9:20; 14:36).

If you do these things, you will be blessed.

If we want God to continue to bless us:

- 1) We must always want to give more and do more.
- 2) We must maintain a reverent worship.
- 3) We must immediately resolve sin matters.
- 4) We must not defiantly pursue sin.
- 5) We must purpose to be Holy.