

"Denied"  
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Numbers 20:14-29

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers. And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory." But Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you." And the people of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him. And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, "Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor. And strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. And Aaron shall be gathered to his people and shall die there." Moses did as the LORD commanded. And they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. And Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron had perished, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days."

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The Scripture that was read at the beginning of the service was Psalm 86. In verses 1, 6-7 David prayed: "Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy...Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me." When I pray, do I ask God to hear my prayer, to "listen to my plea for grace", or do I just assume that God's going to give me His undivided attention? Explain.

We sang the hymn "How Great Thou Art". When I sing this hymn, do I end the statement with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point...when I sing "How Great Thou Art, am I making a statement, asking a question or making a loud declaration and why?

In the “Who’s Your One” video of Milton Campbell, a world-class track athlete, Mr. Campbell commented that sharing the Gospel with someone must be intentional and that it may seem socially awkward, but that’s what we’re called to do. He asks himself the questions: Who is God bringing into his life and how can he turn it into an opportunity to have a “serious conversation.” How about me? Do I need more intentionality when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Edom, the descendants of Esau, had an age-old grudge with Israel and refused to allow Israel to pass through their country on the King’s Highway which was the major trade route running north to south from Egypt to Damascus through Edom. In Genesis 25:23 (ESV) the problem was set out: “And the LORD said to her [Rebekah], “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” Because of the actions of one person (Jacob), all of Israel suffered from Edom’s disdain. Discrimination is a prejudice put into action. Simply put, Edom discriminated against Israel by denying Israel access to the King’s Highway because of who Israel was...or at least who Edom thought they were. How have I seen old grudges being played out in my life or in the lives of others about whom I care?

GotQuestions.org points out: “God has such a strong concern about grudges that He included a specific command about them when He gave the Law to the Israelites. Leviticus 19:18 says, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” It is interesting that God concluded this particular command with the words “I am the Lord.” In doing so, God reminded us that He is the Lord, not us. To hold a grudge is to set ourselves up as judge and jury—to determine that one person’s wrong should not be forgiven. No human being has the right or authority to do that.” How am I doing with that whole “love your neighbor” thing? Explain.

The GotQuestions.org article continued: “Misunderstanding forgiveness often keeps us in bondage to grudges. We think that to forgive is to excuse sin or pretend the offense did not matter. Neither is true. Forgiveness is not about the other person. Forgiveness is God’s gift to us to release us from the control of someone who has hurt us. When we retain a grudge, we give someone we don’t like power over our emotions. Without forgiveness, just the thought of an offender can send acid to our stomachs and heat to our faces. In essence, we make that person an idol, giving him or her control over us (Deuteronomy 32:39). But when we forgive, we release to God any right to vengeance or restitution. Forgiveness puts our relationship with God back in proper alignment... We do God no favors by trying to “help” Him right a bad situation through our vengeance. He does not need our anger. He needs our cooperation as we submit to doing things His way (Proverbs 3:5–6). And God’s way is always to forgive as He has forgiven us (Matthew 18:35; Ephesians 4:32).” Corrie ten Boom once said: “Hold everything in your hands loosely, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open.” How tight or loose do I hold on to hurt feelings and old grudges and why?

Recalling a few of the “mountain-top experiences” in the Bible, Abraham and Isaac climbed together in an act of extreme devotion to God and experienced the mercy of God. Moses climbed Mt. Sinai again and again to speak with God and to receive God’s Commandments. It was on top of Mt. Carmel that Elijah staged his victory over 450 prophets of Baal when God breathed down fire from heaven at Elijah’s request. Later, on the top of Mt. Horeb, Elijah stood in the mouth of a cave and heard God speak. Jesus climbed to the top of a mountain to provide people with a new interpretation and understanding of the Law through His Sermon on the Mount. Simon Peter and the brothers James and John accompanied Jesus one day up on a high mountain (Matt. 17:1) and witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration. We love to read about such experiences. Christians love to speak about their mountain-top experiences. But what about Aaron’s mountain-top experience? It should be noted that when God spoke of Aaron’s judgment, He was speaking to both Moses **and** Aaron. Aaron heard God’s decision: “Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah.” Yikes! Aaron knew his climb up Mount Hor was a one-way trip. Christians often refer to bad experiences in their lives as being in the valley, but if I’m living a life in tune with God’s will, how can such an experience, even one such as Aaron’s, be considered bad?

So, why go to the mountain top? C.H. Spurgeon writing on Isaiah 40:9 in his devotional “Morning and Evening said: Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but little: the mountain itself appears to be but one-half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley, you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the foot of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go higher, and you see the country for four or five miles round, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. Mount still, and the scene enlarges; till at last, when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south, you see almost all England lying before you. Yonder is a forest in some distant county, perhaps two hundred miles away, and here the sea, and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or the masts of the ships in a busy port. All these things please and delight you, and you say, "I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation." Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ we see but little of Him. The higher we climb the more we discover of His beauties. But who has ever gained the summit? Who has known all the heights and depths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge? Paul, when grown old, sitting grey-haired, shivering in a dungeon in Rome, could say with greater emphasis than we can, "I know whom I have believed," for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like ascending another summit, and his death seemed like gaining the top of the mountain, from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of Him to whom he had committed his soul. Get thee up, dear friend, into the high mountain." Where am I on my “climb” to Christ’s summit and why?

I know that everything that God does in my life is for my good and His glory, but do I tend to assume that everything that God does in my life will also be enjoyable...without pain? If so, why so? If not, why not?