

REFLECTIONS

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Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Numbers 20:12NKJV

Forgiveness & Intolerance

His indiscretion really seemed rather minor. When you read the story, all Moses did was hit a rock with his staff a couple of times. And even if he was disobedient to God's instruction, he might have felt justified by all he had been through. He had been putting up with a disgruntled nation of Israelites for more than forty years! And now they had complained again about the water supply as if God had not always been taking care of their every need. This time, it just got under Moses' skin.

Just think about his frustration. God chose him to lead the Israelites out of their enslavement in Egypt. And though reluctantly, Moses obeyed God and took on the task. He engaged in a battle of wills with Pharaoh to get the slaves freed. Then he displayed remarkable faith when the nation he led encountered the Red Sea while being pursued by an angry Egyptian army. But he led the Israelites to safety and to freedom just as God empowered him to do. And what was the reward?

Well, the reward was shepherding about three million people who quickly became discontent with their new life and freedom. All within a matter of a year or so, they grumbled about their food and complained about the water supply. They criticized Moses' leadership; they worshiped golden calves; they forgot the promises they made. Then when Moses led them to the borders of the land God had promised them, ten cowardly and faithless spies persuaded the entire population that the "giants" who possessed the land could not be conquered. So, God had them wander in the desert for 38 more years! Now if I had been Moses I would have wanted to lay a few whacks on a rock too. But no matter how justified Moses felt, God was intolerant of his disobedience. Disobedience of God's commands is called sin.

God forgives us for our sins, but He does not tolerate them. Jesus was the same way. Jesus forgave the sinner, but He did not tolerate the sin. Jesus was intolerant of sin—each time He found it—every time He saw it. Jesus forgave sinners, but He was not tolerant of sin.

As we seek to be like Jesus in our daily lives, I hope we are forgiving of sinners. But let us not confuse our forgiveness of sinners with tolerance of the sin. God doesn't.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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