



**Sunday, June 25, 2022**



**Main Text: Num. 20:14-15, 17-18, 20-21—(14)** And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: (15) How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: (17) Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. (18) And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. (20) And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. (21) Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

**Introduction:** If you have chosen to follow Christ, praise God! You are on your way to the celestial city! But as you might have discovered, following Christ is no stroll in the park. There are obstacles the devil uses to hinder your walk with Christ. I call those obstacles spiritual bullies. The Edomites were Israel's spiritual bullies. They refused to let Israel pass through their borders on their way to the Promised Land! The King of Edom told the Israelites, "You shall not pass by me.." and dispatched his army to block the path. Unprepared to fight, the Israelites took another route. Every Christian will meet his/her share of spiritual bullies, like the Edomites. If we are not prepared, spiritual bullies will force us to abandon our pursuit of heaven. The good news is we do not have to retreat or quit when facing spiritual bullies. We can do all things through Christ! If we learn how to recognize and deal with spiritual bullies. When we encounter them, they will have no choice but to "let us pass."

**What is a Bully?** A bully is "a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those whom they perceive as vulnerable."

**Satan is the Chief Bully:** Read 1 Peter 5:8

**1 Pet. 5:8—** (8) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

**Note:** Satan is a spiritual being, not a person. However, he is a bully! He habitually seeks to devour human beings who are susceptible to his intimidation and harm. Intimidation is fear! If Satan can frighten a person into disobeying God's word, he uses fear! If the use of fear does not work, Satan moves to physical or spiritual harm, which can include physical weakness, sickness, or mental distress. If possible, Satan will spiritually and physically kill his victims. Every human being is on the devil's radar, but he especially bullies born-again believers. When confronted by a spiritual bully, we need to understand that Satan is behind the attack, and he will deploy, exploit, and manipulate whomever or whatever necessary to achieve his goal.

## God Allows Spiritual Bullies to Confront Us: Numb. 20:1, 14

**Num. 20:1**—then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

**Note:** When the Israelites left Egypt, God directed Moses where to lead the people. But when the Israelites came near the borders of Edom, the Edomites refused to let them pass! God knew the Edomites would not allow Israel to pass through their borders. Then why have Moses lead the people that way?! God will not always lead us away from spiritual bullies! Sometimes He allows us to confront bullies to make us stronger and to teach us to trust Him. The Israelites needed to understand that they would not make it to the Promised Land without challenges. The Edomites were one of those challenges. The same is true for Christians today. We cannot expect an effortless trip to heaven, and should not be surprised if we encounter a spiritual bully now and then.

## All Spiritual Bullies Are Not Strangers: Num. 14:14, Matt. 10:35-36

**Numbers 14:14**—Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: (15) How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

**Matt. 10:35-36**—For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in laws against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

**Note:** Moses instructed his messengers to tell the king of Edom, "Thus saith thy brother Israel..." The Edomites and Israelites were related! Isaac's eldest son was named Esau, and Jacob was his youngest son. God eventually changed Jacob's name to Israel, and he became the father of the Israelites (Gen. 32:26-28). Meanwhile, Esau founded the tribe of Edom, and became father of the Edomites (Gen. 36:9). The Edomites and the children of Isaac were cousins! But that did not stop the Edomites from bullying the Israelites. The point is spiritual bullies can be people we know, such as relatives! Jesus said the gospel would turn father against son and daughter against mother. The Christian's "...foes will be they of his own household." The closer an unbeliever is to a child of God the more the devil seeks to recruit them as a spiritual bully.

## Tactics used by Spiritual Bullies:

- **Hostility: Num. 20:18-20**—And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. (20) And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. **John 16:2**-They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

**Note:** It is true that most bullies are not so tough when alone, but that does not mean they will not fight. Moses tried everything to get the King of Edom to let the Israelites pass by on the highway that ran through his territory. But the king said, "thou shalt not pass by me," and dispatched his army to fight the Israelites if they tried to pass. Jesus told his disciples that people would kill them and believe they had done God a service! Satan did not want Israel to inherit their Promised Land, so he stirred up the Edomites to stop them! Likewise, Satan does not want Christians to enter the kingdom of heaven, so he uses spiritual bullies to stop us!

- **Patronizing: Acts 16:15-18**—(16) And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: (17) The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. (18) And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned, and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

**Note:** We might think that the young girl who followed Saul and Barnabas was innocent. Afterall, she told the truth; the apostles were preaching the gospel of salvation. The girl seemed kind and helpful, but she was possessed with a spirit! She was merely calling attention to the apostles so that the people of the city who were against the gospel would threaten or attack them! When Saul realized that the girl was one of Satan's bullying agents, he rebuked the spirit and cast it out of her! Spiritual bullies will patronize Christians just as the young girl patronized the apostles. While they appear kind or helpful, their goal is to undermine the Christian's witness. Satan hopes that if Christians are singled out, publicly humiliated, or ridiculed, we will keep silent instead of sharing our faith. This strategy is commonly employed by spiritual bullies disguised as friends.

- **Scaremongering: Num. 13:31-33, 14:1**—(31) But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. (32) And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. (33) And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. 14:1—And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

**Note:** The scaremonger, also known as the alarmist or pessimist, is one of Satan's most effective spiritual bullies. The scaremonger reminds us that whatever we desire to achieve for God will not work! It is too dangerous; too risky, or too costly! The goal of this spiritual bully is to convince us that our investment in God's plan for our life is not worth the effort. Of the twelve spies Moses sent to survey the land God promised Israel, the scaremonger bully intimidated ten of them! This bully convinced an entire nation of people to sit in their tents and cry—all night—rather than believing God and possessing the land! Do not allow the scaremonger bully to deter you from God's plan for your life. You may be sentencing yourself to spiritual wilderness for a long time.

- **Blocking: Acts 13:6-8**—(6) And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: (7) Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. **Matt. 23:13**--But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

**Note:** A deputy of a country heard that Paul and Barnabas was preaching in his town and wanted to hear the gospel. But immediately Satan dispatched his blocker, a sorcerer name Elymas. The goal of the blocker bully is to create a diversion by doubt, confusion, or distraction, within or around the person the Christian wants to evangelize, so that the person will change his/her mind about a Bible study, church visit, or hearing the word of God. Elymas ran interference for the devil by challenging Paul and Barnabas. This spiritual bully is identified in the Pharisees Jesus rebuked for not entering the kingdom, but setting up obstacles (blocking) so that others could not enter in.

## How to Defeat Spiritual Bullies

- **Be filled with the Holy Ghost:** 2 Tim. 1:7—(7) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. **Acts 19:15**—And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

**Note:** The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. We receive power after we receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8). Just as natural bullies recognize power, or the lack of thereof, so do spiritual bullies! When the men of Sceva tried to cast a demon out an individual, the demon said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” The sons of Sceva lacked the power of the Holy Ghost, and the evil spirit ran them out of town—naked! We cannot deal with spiritual bullies with our natural strength! We need the power of God working in us and on our behalf.

- **Understand Satan’s Device is Fear: Heb. 11:14-15— (14)** Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

**Note:** The common denominator for every spiritual bully Satan deploys is fear; fear of ridicule, fear of not being popular, fear of not having enough money, fear of losing a job or a relationship, or fear of dying. Fear works! Therefore we must recognize when Satan attempts to inject us with the fear bug! Paul said, Christ died and rose again to destroy him who hath power over death, the devil. Through his death and resurrection Jesus delivered us who, all our lifetime were in bondage because of our fear of death. Therefore, if we are in Christ we should not fear death. Death has no power over the born-again believer because we have the power that resurrected Christ in us!

- **Banish Fear with Faith: Rom. 12:3--** For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. **Heb. 11:6-(6)** But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

**Note:** The scriptures teach that everyone has been given a measure of faith. Each of us must decide how we will exercise our initial dose of faith! We can either exercise our faith to believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, or we can choose not to believe God. Faith is like a muscle. Exercise makes faith grow! Each time a spiritual bully confronts us is an opportunity to exercise our faith. The more we believe the word of God, stand on the word of God, and apply the word of God to our lives, the more our faith increases, and fear decreases.

- **Submit to God and Resist:** James 4:7-- Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**Note:** James was writing to saints in the church who had received the Holy Ghost; so they had power! Even so, to defeat spiritual bullies he told them to submit to God and resist the devil; not merely resist the devil. How do we submit to God? We submit to God through faith in Him and His word and obedience to His word. We submit to Him by allowing our will to die and conforming to the will of God. We cannot submit to God while disobeying Him at the same time! When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the Devil, he pointed to the word of God after each attack by the enemy. Jesus set an example for us: instead of asserting ourselves, stand on the word of God to defeat the

enemy. David did the same in his battle with Goliath. He reminded both King Saul and Goliath that God was his strength and deliverer. David trusted God to deliver Goliath into his hands—and he did. We are made strong through the word of God and the power of *His* might. When we rely on God, He works on our behalf.

**Summary:** Every Christian will meet his/her share of spiritual bullies. In fact, God may purposely allow spiritual bullies to confront us to strengthen us and to teach us to trust Him. If we are not prepared, spiritual bullies will force us to turn aside, or worse yet, quit following Christ. Spiritual bullies operate just as human bullies operate. They habitually intimidate and harm those they perceive to be vulnerable. Satan is the chief spiritual bully, and with his team of demons, he uses anything or anyone to withstand those on the road to heaven. Relatives, friends, and associates are the most common spiritual bullies deployed by Satan, but strangers are not exempt. Satan's bullying techniques include hostility, patronizing, scaremongering, and blocking. However, the key to defeating spiritual bullies is 1) be filled with the Holy Ghost. 2) understand how Satan weaponizes fear to intimidate. 3) Purge our heart of fear, and 4) submit to God and resist the devil. Using those techniques not only fortifies us, but will cause a spiritual bully to move aside and let us pass.