“You have stayed too long in this Place”
Deut 1:6-8

It seems in my devotion I run across this same reading and it does the same thing to me every year. It is one of those that just gets under your armor and cut you at the heart. Every year I come across these words found in Deut 1:6 which says, “You have stayed too long in this place” and every year I find this message personally very convicting, and I don’t want to be convicted alone so I have decided to share it with you. But before I do I want to tell you of three men who were avid football fans. It seems that one day there was a NY Jets football fan, a Baltimore Raven’s football fan, and a Pittsburgh Steelers football fan. They were having a rather heated discussion about which team had the best fans. I mean it was getting a little bit out of hand, so they had to settle this thing once and for all. So, they decided to prove their loyalty to their teams and to each other. They drove up a mountain and stopped at the top. They all got out and lined up. First it was the Jets fan, he yells out, “This is for the JETS” and he jumps off the cliff. Next it was the Steelers turn, so he yells, “This is for the Steelers” and he grabs the ravens fan and throws him off the cliff!

If I were to ask the question, “What is the worst enemy the church faces today?” What would you say? The fact is that most of you would come up with the wrong answer. Some of you might say that the worst enemy of the church is liberalism. But the simply fact is that most bible believing churches do not have much trouble with liberalism. We do not have anyone who says the creation story is just religious fabrication. No one denies that Jesus walked on the water or that He rose from the grave. No one says that the scriptures are no valid today. So we need to stop hiding behind liberalism as our worst enemy.

The deceitful enemy facing the church of Jesus Christ today is the dictatorship of the routine, when the routine becomes ‘lord’ in the life of the church. Programs are organized and the prevailing conditions are accepted as normal. Anyone can predict next Sunday’s service and what will happen. This seems to be the most deadly threat in the church today. When we come to the place where everything can be predicted and nobody expects anything unusual from God, we are in a rut. The routine dictates, and we can tell not only what will happen next Sunday, but what will occur next month and, if things do not improve, what will take place next year. Then we have reached the place where what has been determines what is, and what is determines what will be. But falling prey to this disease does not happen all at once it happens in progressive Stages.

The first stage that takes place is what I am calling the routine. Far too many of us are caught up in the routine, repeating without feeling, without meaning, without wonder and without any happy surprises or expectations.

We go one step further and come to what I call a rut, which is bondage to the routine. There is a road in GA that has a sign on that states, “Pick your rut carefully, you will be in it for the next 50 miles.” I have heard a rut described as a grave with both ends kicked out.

The third stage is the most horrid of all it is rot. This is best explained when the psychology of non-expectation takes over and spiritual rigidity sets in, which is an inability to visualize anything better, a lack of desire for improvement.

What scares me silly about this progression is how easily it can happen. It can even happen when you are sincerely trying to add more people to the church. But to what end? We are just adding more people to come and repeat the routine, without feeling, without meaning, without wonder, without surprise. So what is the answer, “How do we change the church?” is it in changing the routine? No. The church is made up of people, what ever kind of people they are “that is the kind of church it is – no worse and no better, no wiser, no holier, no more ardent and no more worshipful. To improve the church you must begin with individuals.

Moses says that it is an eleven day journey to Mt. Sinai and they have now been at it for forty years. The
condition that causes this seems to have an inward and an outward appearance. That is what I want to spend the rest of the time we have together this morning talking about. The appearance and what causes it.

1) I want to touch on some of the inward hindrances that keep us from moving on:

a) Perhaps the greatest hindrance we have to moving on is a concern for Our **Comfort**.

For eleven months Israel had camped and lived at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Horeb). Eleven months had allowed the people to settle into a life of ease. They had grown accustomed to their surrounding and life was good. In Amos 6:4-6 the prophet speaks to the nation of Israel, a nation that has become at ease and really had no intention of being otherwise. He took them to task for being at ease in Zion. In verse four he says, *“Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; (5) Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; (6) Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”* If that is true of Israel how much more true is it of us in America today, we live lives of unimaginable affluence and ease, will the unbelieving die all around us.

b) Another hindrance we have to moving on is **Fear**.

And perhaps the greatest fear of all is the fear of the unknown. And when we get right down to it, our problem often is that we would rather hold on to what we have than trust our future to God. We have a hard time moving on because we have a hard time give up control of our lives. But God says, *"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."*

c) Another hindrance to moving on is our tendency to live in the **Past**.

The past, both the good and the bad tend to keep us stuck in the present. If we have failed in the past then we may allow the past to tell us that we can or cannot be. We allow the past to destroy what God has for us in the present. But God says, *"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."*

d) The other extreme is that we tend to glorify the past, and the past tends to become a glorified **imagination**.

Israel like many of us longed for the “good ole days.” But when we stop to consider the good ole days hardly any of us really want to go back. In the good old things could be pretty rough too. So of you grew up in homes that did not have central heat and certainly not air conditioning. Do you really want to go back to those good ole days? And let me assure you that lingering in the past, however good or bad, is not worth the risk of God moving on without you. But God says, *"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."*

e) Another hindrance to moving on is maintaining the same **attitudes** that have caused us to fail before.

The children of Israel were only three days out of Egypt when the people began to complain, and here they were nearly forty years later and they are still complaining. They allowed a critical spirit to stall out their spiritual growth. Their love for truth languished, their hunger for people to be saved dissipated, their praise turned into pity-parties. Strife, bickering over small things; majoring on minors while minors became the majors; settling for mediocrity and staleness, all take center stage when a church gets side tracked by a critical spirit. But God says, *"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."*

Sometimes the things that appear dangerous are actually much less hazardous than a safer-looking alternative. Some people refuse to fly in commercial airliners, preferring rather to travel in an automobile. But statistics tells us that traveling by commercial airline is 30 times safer than transportation by car. Being pushed through the air several thousand feet above the earth by huge jet engines may not seem like it would be safer than being pushed along the highway by an automobile but it is.
The same of our journey through life, following the Lord into a new adventure may seem risky. But in reality it is the safest way to travel through life.

2) Now that we have looked at the things that hinder us inward, let’s take a look at the outward appearance we should be portraying to a lost world.

a) We need to **break camp** and advance on your journey.

God has said “You have been at this mountain long enough.” If you have been a Christian any length of time, you should be prepared for battle. You should be ready for service in His Kingdom. Listen to verses 7-8 again, “Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.” So what is it that we are being told to do? We like the people of Israel are to “go in and possess the land.” That is that we are to be actively pursuing the mission that Christ left us here to do, that is to reach a lost and dying community for him. So what is our problem?

In Ephesians 5:14 the apostle Paul says, “Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” What is interesting is that this not a part of a message to an unbelieving audience, this is not a message to sinner but to saints. Not only is this a message to the church but it was written to one of the best churches in the New Testament, the church at Ephesus. Our problem is that we have gone to sleep on the job. Let me share with you a couple of facts about going to sleep on the job, and the picture that we are sharing with the people around us.

a) We all know that being suddenly awakened can be **surprising**.

How many times have you gone to sleep extremely tired and when awakened by the alarm clock, you were startled and thought “It can’t be morning.”

b) Being awakened suddenly can also be **disconcerting**.

Once on a trip to Colorado I was sleeping, when we stopped for gas and when we left it was my turn to drive. Unfortunately when I took off I went in the opposite direction, the way that we had just come. It was a little disconcerting to find out that I was going the wrong way.

c) Being awakened suddenly can also be **shaming**, if we have gone to sleep in a place or a time that is inappropriate. You know like going to sleep in church!

We need to awaken and get busy, for God says “you have been at this mountain too long”