

NUMBERS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Numbers chapter 14 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study we saw 12 spies enter into the Promise Land, the land of Canaan and after 40 days looking things over, they report back to the children of Israel on what they saw. Ten of the spies said that the land was great **BUT** there were giants in the land! **BUT** their cities were fortified! **BUT** the land was filled with people! They looked at this through the eyes of man.

The other two spies, Joshua and Caleb said that the land was great, just as the other 10 spies said. The only difference here is that they said that God had given to them the land and thus, they need to go in and take it! They looked at this through the eyes of faith and faith walks, unbelief is stagnant or moves backwards! Thus, as the children of Israel camp on the boarder of the Promise Land, in Kadesh Barnea, they hear both reports and we will now see the conclusion they come to. Will they walk by faith or by sight? Let's begin reading in Numbers chapter 14, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word, how the children of Israel will respond to these reports, to the situation that is before them.

NUMBERS 14**VERSE 1**

1. Obviously not a good response to this situation that was before them. Keep in mind that one representative from each tribe went in to spy out the land and thus, they truly represented the heart of the nation, the people! Thus, as they hear the report from the 10 spies they are weeping, crying, because the enemy was big, the task was too great for them to accomplish. Was this true? Yes, and thus, you now see why God did not want them to go in and spy out the land in the first place, but to just go in and take it. But as they saw this battle before them, instead of trusting in the Lord, they were discouraged and cried over the situation they were in instead of rejoicing in what God was doing!

2. Do you ever feel that way? “God, why isn’t it easier? Why are there so many giants I have to face?” And folks, the list of complaints can go on-and-on with the various situations we face. The reality is, the Spirit-filled life or this Promise Land life is a battle and just as God was preparing the children of Israel to walk, He is doing the same with each of us and thus, He wants us to walk! You see, there are giants that we will face. That really is not the issue. The issue is your heart and are you willing to walk by faith and defeat those enemies or will you walk by sight and let fear, unbelief cause you to be paralyzed and not move forward? God is calling for you to **“GO!”** and you have a choice. But He wants you to walk by faith as He leads!

VERSES 2-4

1. Yes, they were complaining against Moses and Aaron for getting them into this mess, but the reality is this. They were complaining against God because He brought them to this place and Moses and Aaron were just representing the Lord. We must be careful with our complaining because it truly is against the Lord even if we try to hide it behind some false spirituality. There is not the fruit of complaining, but there is the fruit of the Spirit, which is *LOVE* and it manifests itself in many different ways!

2. Also, look at what their unbelief did. They wanted to go back to Egypt, back to the world, instead of the abundant life in Canaan. Thus, they refused to listen to Moses, the man God picked and they chose for themselves someone who would take them where they wanted to go – back to Egypt! That unbelief led to rebellion on their part and we see that even today. Paul reminds us to, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5. You see, there are those who refuse to hear and obey what God is telling them through His Word and thus, just as with the children of Israel, they look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear! And folks, that is a very dangerous place to be, outside the will of God!

VERSE 5

1. Why didn't Moses and Aaron speak to the people? Because they realized it would do no good and thus, they brought the situation to God in prayer and asked for God to work in their hearts. What a great example for us, **PRAYER!** God can change hearts, look at each and every one of us and you can see what God has done in our lives! It isn't that we aren't to share, but there is a time and a place, and really, before we speak we should be praying!

VERSES 6-9

1. As Moses and Aaron are praying, Joshua and Caleb are speaking to the people reminding them that God has promised this land to them, that God is for them and thus, the victory is theirs! And they remind the people that their fear and unbelief is nothing more than rebellion against the Lord. How would they respond to the prayer and the promises of God for them? Let's read on and see.

VERSE 10

1. Why in the world did they want to kill Joshua and Caleb, what did they do or say that offended them so much? It is simple, the carnal man cannot live alongside men of faith and thus, they try to extinguish the light so they can live in darkness and be comfortable! We see this today. A person of faith speaks out to a rebellious brother or sister in the Lord and they reject what is being said and they look for those who will agree with them. They reject the godly counsel because it goes against what they want to do or are doing. And as much as they may feel they are right, if they are going against what God has said, in the end, rebellion against God is never rewarded but it is judged!

2. In this verse we see a contrast between the unbelieving people and the glory of the Lord. Think of it like this as one writer put it as he contrasts the two. He wrote:

- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to be unbelieving?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to mourn because the walk of faith was hard?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to long for death?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to accuse God of plotting murder?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to go back to the slavery of Egypt?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to reject God's leaders and go with "the people's choice"?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to threaten to kill those who call you to a deeper life of trust in God?

Thus, the people were not consistent with God's glory by their actions and their words and let's read on and see what God is going to do about that.

VERSES 11-12

1. Please understand that what God is doing here is just, He is righteous in His actions towards this rebellious people, the children of Israel. He is going to destroy them and start all over again through Moses. You see, God will fulfill His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but He tells Moses that all these people will be wiped out! And folks, God wants to use us but if we rebel against Him, then He will accomplish His will through another for He is looking for a person whose heart is faithful to Him so that He can work not only in them but also through them!

2. Why didn't God speak to the people? Because they refused to hear His voice, listen to what He has told them and thus, He will not give them more when they refuse to obey what he has already said. Many today complain that they do not hear the voice of God but maybe the reason is simple. Maybe you are living against what God has already shown you and thus, He will not give you more, He will not speak to you until you obey what He has already told you!

VERSES 13-16

1. Again, notice the contrast. The unbelieving or the faithless people were covering the glory of God by their actions, while Moses wanted God's glory to shine. Thus, Moses intercedes for the people based on the fact that if God destroyed them the other nations would mock God because He was unable to do what He promised! In other words, the sin and rebellion of man was greater than the power of God, the goodness of God. Folks, that is not true for God dealt with the power of sin by destroying it. He shed His blood for our sins and thus, we can see the power and the goodness of God through Jesus!

VERSES 17-19

1. Moses appears to God, interceding for the people, based on who God is and His promises that He made to them! That truly is the heart of God being reflected in Moses here. Moses is others-centered; he is more concerned about the people than for himself. And folks, God's desire was that they would turn back to Him but make no mistake about it. If Moses didn't intercede, God would have wiped them out because He is fair, he is righteous and His justice must go forth. They would get what they deserved, not more or less, but it would be a perfect judgment against them!

2. And for Moses, he does not appeal before God based upon the goodness of the people because they were not good. He falls upon the mercy of God here. You see, justice demands punishment but as Moses interceded he asked for mercy for the people, that God would not give to them what they truly deserve, ***DEATH!***

In Ezekiel 22:30-31 we are told, **“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,’ says the Lord God.”** Moses stood in the gap for the people but here in Ezekiel there was no one and God did judge them. In the days we are living in, with the immorality that is running wild in this country, we deserve God’s judgment. But folks, may we be like Moses and intercede for the people, for this nation and ask God to have mercy on us and that they would truly turn to Him! May we stand in the gap!

VERSE 20

1. Prayer does change things, not that we change the heart or mind of God, but somehow in the sovereign will of God, prayer makes a difference and even though I might not understand it completely, I do believe it by faith and thus, I pray! You see, God does not change His mind as I have said, but He allows prayer to change us and, like we have seen in Ezekiel, prayer is important and situations can be won or lost based upon prayer, but again, it is all in the sovereign will of God!

VERSES 21-25

1. This generation saw the power of God in delivering them out of their bondage in Egypt. The Children of Israel came through the Red Sea on dry ground and as those waters came crashing down, the entire Egyptian army drowned. He sustained them with food and water in the desert and yet, they refused to walk by faith and they will be judged for their rebellion. And keep in mind this was not just a one-time deal here, over and over they refused to walk by faith and complained, murmured, rebelled against the Lord and finally God said, “That is it! They will not enter the land I promised to them and the next generation will enter into the Promise Land, that generation that they said would be destroyed in the desert or taken captive!”

2. Keep in mind they are on the boarder of the Promise Land, Kadesh Barnea, and because of their rebellion they will not enter in but will move away from the land and for the next about 39 years they will wander in the desert!

VERSES 26-35

1. Remember what they said, “**If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!**” Numbers 14:2. Now God is going to give them their desire, all those that are 20 years old and up will die in the wilderness and that next generation will enter the Promise Land. Now, what was a walk of faith is now the longest funeral march in history, some 40 years! That is what unbelief will do to us! You can’t walk the Spirit-filled life until the old man is crucified, put to death!

2. The only two from this generation that will make it into the Promise Land, out of the 603,550 men who could go to war, were Joshua and Caleb, men of faith! Not even Moses or Aaron will make it in and we will see why as continue our study through the Word of God.

3. What a powerful lesson for us. Look at the history of this generation because we, as Christians can learn from it. In Psalm 95:7-11 we are told, **“For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, “It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.””**

In Psalm 106:24-27 we see this again, their rebellion against the Lord, **“Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe His word, But complained in their tents, And did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore He raised His hand in an oath against them, To overthrow them in the wilderness, To overthrow their descendants among the nations, And to scatter them in the lands.”**

And in Nehemiah 9:16-17 we are told, **“But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.”** You see, they did not live the abundant life, they did not enter that rest in the Lord because they rebelled against God, they walked by sight and not by faith, guided by their flesh and not the Spirit of God!

For us as Christians, Paul reminds us in Romans 6:6-7, **“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”** You see, the old life, the old man wants to keep you in bondage while Christ wants to set you free as you walk in the Spirit!

Also, in Ephesians 4:20-32 we are told, **“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”** Again, put off the old man, the old life and put on Christ and that is done as you fill yourself up with the things of God and purge out the garbage in your life, crucify the flesh!

And in Colossians 3:5-11 Paul tells us, **“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”**

You see, there are only two options here. You can let the old man, that sin nature, that old life live as you are controlled by the lusts of the flesh, slaves to sin or you can crucify the flesh, the old man, put away those things and walk by faith where there is that abundant life, that freedom from the bondage of sin, that rest we find in Christ. The choice is yours, slaves to sin or free in Christ. Walk by sight or walk by faith. There are consequences to both! You see, the old man can't be reformed, it must be put to death and then and only then can the new man walk!

VERSES 36-38

1. So the ten spies that brought a bad report were killed and only Joshua and Caleb, of these 12 spies that went into the land, lived. Why was God so harsh? Because as leaders they had a big responsibility and by their actions they caused an entire nation to stumble and they were judged for it!

VERSES 39-45

1. Here it does seem like the people repented and wanted to obey the Lord, to go into the Promise Land and when they do, they are defeated. Why is that, why were they defeated when they seemed to be obeying the Lord? Because this was not true repentance in their lives. If it was, then they would have never gone into the land at this time but obeyed the Lord. But they did their own thing and they ended up getting defeated! When God was with them and told them to go into the land, they refused. Now, when God was not with them, when He told them not to go into the land, they went! You can't succeed in the flesh, by your own efforts, but you must walk by faith in the power of God!

NUMBERS 15VERSES 1-5

1. The children of Israel failed to walk by faith and were judged for their unbelief, but now God tells them, "**When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you.**" Numbers 15:2. Yes, they failed to enter by faith and will be judged for it, but their children, having to endure these desert wanderings, will enter into the land one day! And then He speaks of the various sacrifices, the offerings that they were to take with them into the land of Canaan. Those for fellowship and for sin needed to be offered as God was preparing this generation to enter in.

VERSES 6-10

1. We went through these offerings and sacrifices when we were in Leviticus and as I have said, here the Lord is just teaching the next generation what He requires of them when they enter the land. And the idea in this is that our offerings to God should be filled with thanksgiving and joy!

VERSES 11-16

1. Again, the sacrifices to God should be made with thanksgiving, the grain offering; and with joy, the wine offering. God does not want us sacrificing to Him as we complain about this and about that, but with thanksgiving and joy! It is as we are told in Psalm 100, **“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.”** Psalm 100:1-5. If you can’t serve the Lord with thanksgiving and joy in your heart, don’t serve Him at all!

VERSES 17-21

1. Notice that the Lord does not say, “If I bring you into the Promise Land” but, **“When you come into the land to which I bring you.”** You see, it is a done deal and thus, this is what you need to do when you enter in, bring in the firstfruits of the land as a heave offering to the Lord. The heave offering was waved up and down, kind of a vertical motion while the wave offering was waved back and forth in a horizontal direction.

2. When it comes to our salvation, it is a done deal folks. We don’t have to worry if we are good enough because we are not. It is not about what we have done but what Jesus has done for us, and God is faithful to fulfill His promise to us, He will finish in us what He started and He will lose none of us! Peter tells in I Peter 1:3-9, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”**

Keep in mind that this section deals with our salvation and as Peter speaks of what God does in our lives, what comes forth from the lips of Peter? Praise unto God for His abundant mercy that He has bestowed upon us! Now Jeremiah illustrates the problem for us as he tells us, **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.”** Jeremiah 13:23. Obviously an Ethiopian can’t change the color of his skin nor can a leopard change or remove his spots, it is part of their make-up.

What does that have to do with us? Simply, apart from Christ we are dead in sin and the flesh controls our lives. Thus, we can’t do anything good because it is not part of our nature apart from Christ. You see, whoever is on the throne of your heart will be manifested in your actions. Now here is the thing. God has **“begotten”** us or we are born again in Christ. That old flesh nature is now dead and the spirit controls us. That is Paul’s point in II Corinthians 5:17.. Paul said, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”** We are a new creation in Christ, not because we can change our ways, but God can and He has!

Now think about our earthly inheritance, is it safe, is it everlasting, will it not fade away? Of course not, nothing of this world will last, it is always moving from order to disorder, from new to rotting and decaying, from yours to someone else's. You can't take it with you. But look at our heavenly inheritance, it is "**incorruptible**" or it will not be destroyed, it will never be lost. Our heavenly inheritance is "**undefiled**" or it is unstained or unpolluted. And our heavenly inheritance will not "**fade away**" which speaks of a flower that does not wither and die. The kingdom of this world, the things of this world, the things we tend to treasure and hold onto so tightly will all go away but what God has for us will not!

And folks, if you think you can lose your salvation, think again because Peter tells us it is reserved in heaven for us. If God has a place reserved for us do you think He will lose it or give it away to someone else? Of course not because our salvation is based upon His finished work, His faithfulness and all we must do to receive that gift is to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior!

Notice again that Peter says that we "**are kept**" or PHROUREO, (froo-reh'-o) in the Greek, and it was a military term used to refer to a garrison within the city. (The same Greek word is used in Philippians 4:7). If God is on guard over our salvation do you really think the enemy is going to be able to take it away? Of course not. Paul said in Philippians 1:6, "**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**" Do you see that, He will complete the work He has started in our lives! What peace that should bring to each of us!

VERSES 22-29

1. Even if you sinned unintentionally, it must be atoned for, the sacrifice had to be made, there had to be the shedding of blood for the remission of sin!

VERSES 30-31

1. The word “**presumptuously**” speaks of a “high hand” or a willful disobedience, an arrogance you might say in committing the act! You know what is right and you do the opposite! It really is a flagrant rebellion against God and you really don’t care. For this person, they were to be “**cut off.**” Now, does that mean cut off from his people or put to death? **YES!** Truly, it can mean both and we will see an illustration of this in a minute. The idea is that this person is not to be flaunted or rewarded for his actions, but ostracized, put out of the camp or to be put to death!

VERSES 32-36

1. Obviously this was an example of someone who sinned presumptuously. The Sabbath Law forbids work on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was to be a time of rest, of family and fellowship with God. And here is a man who knew the Law and chose not to obey it. Now they arrested him and they waited for God to direct them in what they should do, cast him out of the camp or put him to death. And the Lord told them that he must be put to death for his actions, for his presumptuous sin, and that is exactly what they did!

VERSES 37-41

1. Why did God instruct them to put these blue tassels on the four corners of their robes?

Blue speaks of heaven and thus, it was to remind them who they belonged to – **GOD!** It reminded them of where they were headed – **HEAVEN!** Thus, it reminded them to live lives that were pleasing to God because they belonged to Him and one day they would be with Him!

2. As I close this evening let me leave you with this to think about. Yes, Christian tee shirts, and things like that, can remind us of who we belong to, but I have something that is even better for us. In I John 3:1-3 we are told, **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

You see, we belong to God. We are His children! And one day we will be with Him in heaven. But until that time, we have the promise of His return and as we look at the signs of the times, we see that it is getting closer and closer. Thus, this should help us to live holy lives, a life that is pleasing to God because He is coming back soon and we belong to Him and we are headed for Heaven one day! May we live accordingly!