

Numbers 13

4-15-09

“Walking by Sight & not by Faith!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. Heaven received a wonderful saint this Tues morning as our dear friend **Barbara Sylvester** went to be with her Lord. (John & Nina)
- B. **Illust: A shoe salesman** was sent to a remote part of the country. When he arrived, he was dismayed because everyone went around **barefooted**. So he wired the company, “No prospect for sales. People don’t wear shoes here.”
Later **another salesman** went to the same territory. He too immediately sent word to the home office. But his telegram read, “Great potential! People don’t wear shoes here!”
- C. The Promise land! The cov God made w/Abraham was about to be fulfilled. **Oh, so close!**

II. **WALKING BY SIGHT & NOT BY FAITH!**

- A. **A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION!**
- B. **Reconnaissance** - military observation of a region to locate an enemy or ascertain strategic features.
1. **Deut 1:19-33** is necessary to read to find out it was **the peoples** idea to do this (22). The command followed the people’s determination to do this very thing.
 2. God had already told them what he land was like, so **why did they have to investigate it? Faith takes God at His Word.**
- C. The **Israeli spies** saw **giants**, but **Joshua & Caleb** saw **God!**
1. Those who **doubt** today say, “**We can’t attack; they are stronger than we are**”.
 2. Those who **believe** say, “**Let us go up at once & take possession, for we are well able to overcome it**”.
- D. The **10 spies** walked by **sight** & not by faith; **Caleb & Joshua** walked by **faith** & not by sight.
1. Prov.3:5,6 **Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him & He shall direct your paths**
- E. **Unbelief & folly & falsehood** all are bound together.
1. (27) **it truly flows w/milk & honey**; (32) **its a land that devours its inhabitants**; (33) **we are like grasshoppers in their sight**. How did they know that?

- F. The 10 spies emphasized the **obstacles** instead of the **opportunities** & concluded that Israel was too weak to conquer the enemy.
1. **People** were too strong & too tall; **city walls** too fortified & too high.
 2. **Unbelief** blinds you to **God's greatness** & **magnifies** *your own weakness*.
- G. **Unbelief** sees giants & spells them with a big "G"; **Faith** sees God, & spells giants with a little "g".
1. **Abraham staggered not at the promise of God**. Rom.4:20
 2. How do you spell **giants**, with a big "G" or a little "g"?
 3. How do you spell **God**, with a big "G" or a little "g"?
- H. **Giants** represent great difficulties & they stalk us everywhere.
1. They're in our **families**, our **churches**, our **social life** & even our own **hearts!**
 2. We must overcome them **or** they will **devour us** like the 10 thought, "*it's a land that devours its inhabitants*".
 3. **Read** 14:8,9 - It's as if Joshua & Caleb said, "**We will be stronger by overcoming them, than if there had been no giants to defeat.**"
 4. Unless we have **overcoming faith**, we will be swallowed up - consumed by the giants who block our path!¹
- I. We encounter **Giants** especially when we are **servicing** God & **following** Him.
1. It's when Israel was **moving forward** that the giants appeared; when they **turn back** to the wilderness they found none.
 2. Many people think that the **power of God** in a person's life should **keep him** from **all trials & conflicts**.
 - a) However, the power of God actually **brings** conflict & struggles.
 - b) Was Paul kept from *violent storms, enemies, fierce winds, poisonous snakes*?
 3. **Does this sound like a God of infinite power?** Yes, it is just like Him!
 - a) For **Paul**, his **conflict** never ended from when Jesus 1st came into his life!
 - (1) **Pressure** was **persistent**, **but** he always emerged **victorious** through the strength of Jesus.

¹ Streams in the Desert; pg.253

(2) 2 Cor. 4:8-10 We are **hard-pressed** on every side, yet **not crushed**; we are **perplexed**, but not in **despair**; **persecuted**, but **not forsaken**; **struck down**, but **not destroyed** - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

- b) **Hard-pressed** - Enemies completely surrounding & pressuring you. {"we're crowded from all sides, but not defeated"}
(1) Do you feel **crowded in/pressed in** from all sides? (insurmountable)
- c) **Perplexed** - Someone whose way is completely blocked/thwarted by the enemy. {lit. "w/o a road, but not w/o a *side road* of escape"}
(1) Do you see big **road blocks** in your life? Can you see the **escape route**?
- d) **Persecuted** - Your enemy is in **hot pursuit**, while the **divine defender** stands nearby. {"pursued but not left alone"}
(1) Do you know you are **not alone**?
- e) **Struck down** - [vivid & dramatic illustration] The enemy has overtaken him, struck him, & knocked him down...**but** it's not a fatal blow. He's able to rise again! {lit. "overthrown but not overcome"}
(1) Do you feel like the boxer who's been knocked down & the ref is counting to 10, & he's on 8?
- f) **Carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus** - Gives us the **picture** that **appears** as *death itself*. Yet he **doesn't** die, as Jesus comes to his aid, & he lives through Christ's life, until his lifework is complete.
(1) Do you expect to receive all the **blessings** w/o any **struggle**?
(a) There is no land worth possessing that has **not** its giants; **but** like Caleb, faith looks not at giants **but to the living God!!!**
(b) Anything worth having is expensive.

4. Dear child of God, you may be **suffering**, **but** you *cannot fail* if you will only **dare to believe, stand firm, & refuse to be overcome!**

- J. Caleb was a man of faith who *didn't worry* about **the size of the problem** because he trusted a **great God!**
 - 1. The question in life is **not** "How big is the problem?" Or, "How big am I?" But, "How big is my **GOD?**" :)
- K. This is another case where there is a **majority** report & a **minority** report.
 - 1. And it was the **minority report** that was right!
 - a) Remember, "*Noah, went in a minority & came out a majority!*"

2. **The Majority** saw the **excellencies** for the land, **but** they had seen the **difficulties** & beyond these they had **seen nothing**.
3. **The Minority** first saw Jehovah, **& then excellencies**, & finally the **difficulties**
4. The essential difference is **the vision of God!** (Obstacles? oh you sure see them, but they become nothing, after seeing God!)
 - a) **What was the promise in vs.2?**

L. **Was Israel a great people?** Nope, but they were **loved** by a **great God**, who did great things for them, & thereby led them to marvelous achievements.

1. **Do not look at God through circumstances, but at circumstances through God!**

M. **Illust:** Several generations ago, during one of the most turbulent of the desert wars in the Middle East, a spy was captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army. The general, a man of intelligence and compassion, had adopted a strange and unusual custom in such cases. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. The prisoner could either **face the firing squad** or **pass through the Black Door**. As the moment of the execution drew near, the general ordered the spy to be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the query: **“What shall it be—the firing squad or the Black Door?”** This was not an easy decision and the prisoner hesitated, but soon made it known that he much preferred the firing squad to the unknown horrors that might await him behind the ominous and mysterious door. Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced that the grim sentence had been fulfilled. The general, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, **“You see how it is with men; they will always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet I gave him his choice.”** **“What lies behind the Black Door?”** asked the aide. **“Freedom,”** replied the general, **“and I’ve known only a few brave enough to take it.”**