

The Twelve Spies?

Introduction

1. Review children of Israel's freedom from Egyptian Bondage
 - Began their journey to Mt Sinai
 - God provided food, water, and protection
 - Received the law that would govern them as a nation
 - After being numbered and organized, now ready to enter the land of promise

Deuteronomy 1:19-22
2. The people of God originated the idea to search the land. God agreed to it and said: "*spy out the land*" (Num 13:2). He also told them:
Numbers 13:18-20
3. After 40 days the spies returned and admitted Canaan was a wonderful land, but expressed doubt they could conquer these strong people.
 - A. Two of the spies objected and said:
Numbers 13:30
 - B. However, the majority prevailed and Israel wandered in the wilderness another 38 years while an entire generation died.
4. This account from Numbers 13 & 14 should be very familiar to most readers. But the question is: *What do we learn from it?*
 - A. Concerning the problems of Israel Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

- B. Regarding our approach to studying the Old Testament Paul also penned:

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

So what example is set for us in this account?

What admonitions do we receive?

What lessons do we learn from the twelve spies?

Two Attitudes

1. The outlook of the ten spies was not very bright.
 - A. Their report was one of gloom.
 - B. They could only see the problems instead of the possibilities, the giants instead of God, defeat instead of victory.

Numbers 13:32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad (“evil” KJV) report of the land which they had spied out....”

- C. Their attitude could certainly be called negative!
2. On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb, were very optimistic.
 - A. Their report was one of hope.
 - B. They saw the possibilities instead of the problems, God instead of giants, and victory instead of defeat.
 - 1) God said Caleb “*had a different spirit*” (14:24).
 - 2) It was definitely different from the ten spies because it was positive instead of negative.

3. Today, in the church, we have these two groups of people.
 - A. Some can see the good in people, opportunities to spread the gospel and the disposition that says “we are able.”
 - B. While there are others who can only see the bad in people, the flaw in any idea and say “we are not able.”

Traits of the Ten Spies

Let's look closer into this negative attitude of the ten spies and see what traits composed their character.

1. **Doubt:** They said “We are not able” (13:31). Doubt caused them to question their resources to take the land, as well as their God who was leading them.

2. **Self-Depreciation:**

Numbers 13:33.... “we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

- A. They saw themselves as teeny, tiny, little grasshoppers about to be squashed by the big, bad giants.
3. **Fear:** Joshua indicates in (14:9) that they were afraid. Fear naturally follows doubt and self-depreciation. Fear then will paralyze one and keep him from acting.
4. **Critical Spirit:** When people become negative and inactive, they turn to criticizing others who want to move forward.
 - A. The whole congregation was influenced by these terrible ten to murmur and complain against God's leaders, Moses and Aaron (14:1-2).

5. **Rebellion:** The preceding attitudes contributed to the spirit of rebellion against God. They said, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt” (14:4).
 - A. Can you imagine being on the brink of the promised land, and then wanting to return to the land of slavery?
6. **Ingratitude:** Implied is also a spirit that was not thankful for their blessings. They failed to appreciate all that God had done for them in the two years after leaving Egypt.
7. **Unbelief:** All of these negative traits can be summed up in one word---unbelief. The writer of Hebrews 3:18-19 says that unbelief kept them from entering Canaan.

Brethren, look at this list! It is not surprising that in many places the church of our Lord is not growing because of these types of attitudes.

- Attitudes that hold us back, that divide our ranks, that cause us to wander in the wilderness of sin and keep us from entering the land of promise.
- Several years ago James P. Needham wrote an article that described negativism this way:

“There is no place in the Christian’s life for negativism, yet this is the persistent attitude of many. It constantly talks down the great work of God. It is a prophet of doom, gloom and boom! It says nothing is useful or beneficial, no, not gospel meetings, Bible classes, etc. Everything proposed is a waste of time, effort, and especially money! That’s the most important. Negativism is not realistic, but materialistic. Negativism is an elephant on the road to progress; a millstone around the neck of usefulness; a cancer of the mind of its advocate; an ice pack on the fervor of the faithful. It sees thorns on the rose bush, never the roses on the thorn bush. Its parent is little faith, its child is discouragement, its grandchild is cantankerousness and its first cousin is stubbornness!”

Joshua and Caleb

These two men were “different.” They had a different disposition, a different focus on life, and a different attitude toward God and His work. Let’s look at some of the attributes of their attitudes.

1. **Faith:** They said, “*we are able to overcome*” (13:30). They believed in themselves, in their fellow Israelites and most importantly in their God.

2. **Confidence:** Concerning the Canaanites Joshua said,

Numbers 14:9 “Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. **Do not fear them.**”

- A. They had the confidence in the outcome of this undertaking, because they KNEW they were doing the will of God!

3. **Courage:** Joshua said, “***fear them not***” (14:9). He was not afraid of the giants, the walled cities or the strength of the people.
4. **Action:** Caleb said, “*Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it*” (13:30). Positive people say, “Let’s go and do it now!”
5. **Thankfulness:** They understood the land was a gift from God, a blessing due to His delight in them (14:7-8). True appreciation for one’s blessings will lead to action and obedience.

Today, as we face the giant problems of:

- Sin, suffering or sickness in our personal lives.
- The apathy, indifference and cowardice in the lives of our brethren.
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We need the **positive traits** of:

- Faith, confidence, and courage, coupled with action.
- An appreciation of God’s blessings to lead us to VICTORY!

Conclusion

1. Numbers 2:32 tells us there were 603,550 men of war. Of that number only two, Joshua and Caleb, entered into Canaan.
 - A. 603,548 fell in the wilderness.
 - 1) Now listen to the words of Jesus:
Matthew 7:13-14
2. Will you and I decide to develop the disposition like God's two heroes of old?
3. Or will we be like those shameful spies who brought back the negative report?
4. Don't be negative, Don't be a whiner! Be positive, Be a Winner for God!
 - God wants Joshua's and Caleb's in His kingdom
 - Are YOU ready to be one?

Invitation

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