

Wholehearted: The Story Of Caleb

Numbers 13:1-25

There is no getting around it—we live in a culture of compromise in the church today. So many leaders taking the fall for sin, the world, and all of Satan's schemes. We as the Body of Christ must stay the course and stay connected to Jesus, to each other, and stay faithful to the unchanging Word of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This is a story of twelve men sent:

We take our snapshot today from Numbers 13:1-25. Aaron and Miriam have just been chastised by God for challenging Moses and his leadership (Numbers 12:1-16). Now Moses receives instructions from God to send twelve spies/scouts into Canaan to observe the land and people and bring back a detailed report. Of course, God did not need a report as He already had set aside Canaan for His children the Israelites as the promised land flowing with milk and honey:

Exodus 3:7-8

And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Numbers 13:1

(KJV) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
(NIV) The LORD said to Moses,

Don't miss this: It is Moses alone God chose to usher the Israelites into Canaan. This is Moses—meek, humble, and obedient (Numbers 12:3)—whom God loved and entrusted with His people and their sojourn into God's promised land.

Numbers 13:2

(KJV) Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

(NIV) "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."

The sending of these men was more a test of faith and the Israelites' faithfulness than a need to test the suitability of their new home. God's promises do not require our analysis or debate. Simple faith and trust in Him is all that is required from us:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Nonetheless, the men chosen for this expedition were all leaders of families and communities—tested, tried, and true. They were not necessarily of any military or religious rank but were deemed acceptable by Moses. They were essentially to represent the cross-section of people.

Numbers 13:3

(KJV) And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.

(NIV) So at the LORD's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

It is interesting to note that the sending of the twelve men is a command to Moses from God. Again, this test of faith was part of God's sifting and searching of the hearts of His people. As we would expect, Moses carries out the Lord's command.

Important detail follows as the names of each of the twelve men sent is listed in Holy Scripture, inspired of the Holy Ghost:

2Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Why list all of these names?

Num 13:4 And these were their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

Num 13:5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

Num 13:6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

Num 13:7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

Num 13:8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

Num 13:9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

Num 13:10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

Num 13:11 Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

Num 13:12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

Num 13:13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

Num 13:14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

Num 13:15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

Every man listed here was pre-ordained of God to help carry out God's mission, God's will! And two of these men would have a special place above the others—with regards to their faithfulness.

Numbers 13:16

(KJV) These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

(NIV) These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

In a surprising act of obedience, Moses adds a prefix to Oshea's name—nothing less than Jehovah God—and he is now named Joshua. A leader now anointed!

Numbers 13:17

(KJV) And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this waysouthward, and go up into the mountain:

(NIV) When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country.

Some geographical instruction from Moses is in order.

Numbers 13:18-20

And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many: And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

Moses provides for the twelve men instructions of what to observe in Canaan and what to include in their report with regards to: people, land, defense, agriculture. We need to glean from these three verses an evil, deep unbelief in God's promise that Canaan was in fact a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). The critical criteria given here for their scouting was rife with doubt. Did God really say?

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Moses even commanded the men to bring back fruit as evidence of the bountiful harvest!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever doubted God at His Word to the point of testing Him? What was the result? What are the ways God has shown His faithfulness to You? Perhaps these are things worth writing down.

*STUDY POINT: Take the time to study out Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. Write down each person mentioned and the conflict they must have encountered between faith and sight.

Numbers 13:21

(KJV) So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.

(NIV) So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath.

Twelve men went in obedience to the command of Moses, travelling some 350 miles between the the Jordan River and the Mediterranean! They carried out the instructions given from Moses. So far, so good!

Numbers 13:22

(KJV) And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

(NIV) They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

The city of Hebron was the home of giants—descendants of Anak. The twelve men would have been shocked and terrified by the size (7-9 feet tall!) of these warriors. Fear would be the ultimate weakness and downfall of ten of these men.

Numbers 13:23

(KJV) And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

(NIV) When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.

At the request of Moses, the twelve men meticulously placed fruit on a branch to take back to show Moses and the congregation. The Israelites were used to a more modest harvest than the bountiful, robust fruit they were about to see!

Numbers 13:24

(KJV) The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

(NIV) That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there.

If the giants of Anak were symbols of opposition and foreboding, then the cluster of grapes these twelve men brought back to camp surely represented God's goodness, and His faithfulness to His promises. So, which influence would prove stronger?

Numbers 13:25

(KJV) And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

(NIV) At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

Forty days of scouting the land of Canaan. These men obeyed Moses, obeyed the Lord. But soon we will discover which of these men would reveal not just rote obedience to a command, but faith.

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Amen.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland