

Title: Unbelief and Faith (Believe God)

Text: Numbers 13: 1-33; 14: 1-12

Date: February 12, 2012

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

**Numbers 13: 1: And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2: 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. 3: 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.... 30: And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31: But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.**

As brethren together we are beginning to experience, and somewhat comprehend, that God joins together a family of believers to teach us by experience the reality that God is our Savior and our salvation.

God makes every believer to know that God will never leave us in eternal matters by showing us he never leaves us in earthly matters. By making good on the lesser promises he assures our hearts he has made good on the greater promises accomplished for us by Christ Jesus our Risen Conqueror.

In order to teach us this, God has to move us forward. As we move through this wilderness together the Lord uses props to teach us that our eternal salvation is sure--props like—*a land that brings forth briars, expenses we face, things we have to purchase for the church, various trials with our jobs, heartaches we experience in our families, with each other, as well as joy*—The things themselves are but props. It is what the Lord is revealing to the heart of his child that is important.

At times the Lord brings us right through the sea, lays waste our enemies and puts a song of rejoicing in our hearts—we remember the greater blessing that Christ has accomplished for us by bearing our sin away in his own body on the tree.

Then not long after the Lord leads us to bitter waters. Yet, he shows us once again our security is in Christ Jesus. Every chosen, regenerated child of grace has been in Christ from everlasting. He will not let us go. Then once again, the Lord cause us great rejoicing by faith in our Redeemer. The Lord, as it were, leads us to clear springs and palm trees--giving us times of refreshing, a time of quietness and peace.

But the Lord does not allow us to camp out at these earthly wells. The Lord does not allow us to take our ease or become too attached with the props. He keeps us moving forward, keeps us looking beyond ourselves, beyond these four walls, and keeps teaching us that he is our Substance, our Provider, our Salvation.

But we don't always like to move forward. Because sometimes it appears to us that there is very *little* water ahead, or even *bitter* waters. Yet, the Lord always provides plenty. **THAT IS THE LESSON—**

**Proposition:** CHRIST JESUS IS OUR PLENTY IN WHOM WE ARE COMPLETE AND ACCETED OF HOLY GOD—our justification is our Justifier, our sanctification is our Sanctifier, our deliverance is our Redeemer, our sufficiency is our God of all grace. **FOR HIS SAKE, FOR HIS GLORY GOD, SHALL PROVIDE FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE HIM.**

**Our subject is: Unbelief and Faith**

In our text, the Lord has led his children to the edge of Canaan. The Lord had promised to give them the land. He tells them to believe him and move ahead and take it. But the children of Israel proposed what was to them a better idea than what God commanded. Our text in Numbers 13: 1 does not begin here.

## **I. UNBELIEF PROPOSES A DIFFERENT APPROACH THAN WHAT GOD COMMANDS (Deut 1)**

How does God teach us to walk?

2 Corinthians 5: 7: (For we walk by faith, not by sight.)

Hebrews 11: 1: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Here was God's Command given by Moses at first.

Deuteronomy 1: 21: Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

But then came the proposal of the men in the camp.

Deuteronomy 1: 22: And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. 23: And the saying pleased me well:...

At first glance, what they proposed sounded like faith, Moses even thought so. "We will send these men that they may bring back word as we will know which way will is best to go up and into what cities to conquer first." But was it faith?

They had God's word concerning the land. Faith is not a blind leap; we have the word of God.

- God had told them what the land looked like.
- God had promised to drive out their enemies
- God had promised to deliver the land into their hand

Exodus 23: 27: I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

Ezekiel 20: 6: In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands:

God espied this whole world of time before time existed. God purposed what it would like. What enemies would be in it. He did so to show forth his salvation of his people through his Son. God has come to you who believe with his gospel and declared all our enemies are conquered, all things are ours, walk by faith, not by sight and God shall deliver us.

But we have a terrible tendency to want to know what lies ahead before we take the next step. When truly, better than foresight of what the future holds, we have the word of God. Faith is believing what God has said. We need no other argument. I do not see with the carnal eye, what I believe by the gospel of Christ. God says, "Christ put away my sin." I believe my sin is put away. God says "I am complete in Christ" I believe am complete in Christ. Likewise, God tells us who believe to take each step in this life trusting him—and God will provide.

Think about what the children of Israel were proposing: they wanted to spy out the land first then after convincing themselves they could provide for themselves they would believe the Lord. I think that is called self-salvation, works, the will of man, leaning to our own understanding—the same as attempting to come to God in ourselves rather than Christ Jesus the Word? The same as not trusting God to provide in temporal matters as we walk through this wilderness.

Brethren, do you think we would believe that God has put away our sin in Christ if God allowed us to fully see just how truly hideous the sin we yet are in our flesh? Do we imagine we would believe that God shall deliver us into eternal glory if God allowed us just one glimpse of the powers and principalities and rulers of the darkness that surround us with baited breath?

God has promised every believer that he has made us *more than conquerors through him that loved us*, even as God told the children of Israel that he would conquer all the enemies in the land of Canaan. Must we see to believe or will we simply trust the word of God to hedge us about it and keep us as he has promised?

Now we come to our text in Numbers 13: 1. The Lord permitted them to spy it out to teach us a lesson: The LORD teaches us here that the only way we will stand is by faith, trusting God and his word.

**Numbers 13: 1: And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2: Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel:**

Now notice the instructions, the Lord gave them concerning who to send.

**Numbers 13: 2:...of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3: 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.**

1) God required they should send a man of every tribe so that each tribe will stand responsible for what is about to take place.

2) God required each spy must be a man of the highest personal dignity among them—a ruler.

3) And because the land would appear as exactly as God told them it would, God commanded them through Moses, specifically where to go, what to look for and what to report on when they got back--*Numbers 13: 17-20:...whether the people be strong or weak, few or many; cities, whether they dwelt in tents, or in strong holds; whether the land 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.*

Yet, even with these precautions in place the men still came back with an evil report that went directly against the promise and will of God.

**Here is the lesson:** There is no precaution that will overcome the wicked heart of unbelief: no popular opinion, no counsel of the wisest men, not even our natural eye seeing things to be precisely as God tells us it will be. The only way for us individually, and as a whole congregation, to stand IS BY FAITH ALONE BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD. Else the whole church will stumble, as did Israel that day.

Hebrews 11: 6: But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

## **II. UNBELIEF WILL NOT STAND BY SIGHT EVEN THOUGH THINGS APPEAR EXACTLY AS GOD SAID THEY WOULD APPEAR.**

**Numbers 13: 27: And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it. 28: Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.**

But that is exactly how God said it would be. God sent them to see that everything about the land was exactly as God said it would be. But seeing is not believing. All it did was feed the fear of the people. But listen to what it did to one with faith.

**Numbers 13: 30: And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.**

Caleb saw with his eyes the same things they saw. But Caleb had faith in his heart—he heard the word of God—**v20: And be ye of good courage**—and Caleb believed God and came back with good courage like he had before he went. The obstacles did not appear to him as they did to those in unbelief—

Believer, do you see in this life that things appear just as God said they would.

John 16: 33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: [But by faith do you hear Christ in your heart as Caleb did] but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Brethren, “the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5: 4) because Christ has overcome the world for us and continues to keep us as we pass through this wilderness.

1 Corinthians 15: 57: But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **III. UNBELIEF MAKES THE REPORT EVIL**

**Numbers 13: 31: But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we. 32: And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel**

The report turned evil when it went beyond what they were told to report on. They did not say it is exactly as it was told us, they interjected their unbelief and said, “We are not able to take it”—unbelief made the report evil. Faith says, God is able.

## **IV. UNBELIEF FORGETS THE WORD OF GOD**

**Numbers 13: 32: ...saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof;**

They were probably seeing the word of God beginning to be fulfilled in that land--*Ex 23:28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee...*

Unbelief causes us to forget the word of God. I wonder how often we look at some perplexing providence and become discouraged by it, when fact is, that perplexing providence is the very thing the Lord has sent to make the way for us.

## V. UNBELIEF EXAGGERATES THE EVIL REPORT

**Numbers 14: 32:...and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. 33: And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.**

There may have been many giants but everywhere in scripture that the sons of Anak are named, there are only three sons of Anak named who were giants. Their city's name meant "the city of four"—probably because of the three sons and Anak their father, were giants. Notice verse 20.

Joshua 15: 14: And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.

But they said, "all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature". When the heart is filled with unbelief a mole hill becomes a mountain.

Matthew 17: 19: Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Fast from sight and feed on the word by faith. God is delighted when we pray confessing our inability and casting all upon his sufficiency and strength. It is God alone who makes the mountain a plain and casts it into the sea

Their looking to that land was like us looking to this land of our flesh or to any substance—to anything but the word of God—to find encouragement or strength to believe God.

- **Surely it floweth with milk and honey--**there is fruit in a believer by the Spirit of God working in us and God provides fruit for us in temporal things every day just as he said he would, yet looking to these fruits, will not even give us encouragement, it did not in them—look to Christ in whom all Fulness dwells.
- **We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we**—there are giants our flesh stronger than we and giants in every direction in this world, just as God tells us—but look to Christ who holds all Power in heaven and earth.
- **A land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof--**The land of our flesh is full of briars, the same as in the world around us, just as God said it is, but don't look to the land, it will eat us up, look to Christ our Bread, our Shield and Defender. Paul was given a thorn in the flesh but God said:

2 Corinthians 12:9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

## VI. UNBELIEF DISCORAGES BRETHREN, PROMOTES REBELLION AGAINST GOD, PROMOTES MUTINY AGAINST THOSE SENT TO LEAD, AND DRAWS SINNERS BACK TO BONDAGE.

**Numbers 14: 1: And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2: And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3: And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4: And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.**

Hebrews 10: 38: Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Do we realize the peace we often forfeit by simply not believing on God. We bear needless pain by trying to spy out this land, trying to find strength by what we see, in our wisdom, or in our works, rather than trusting Christ by faith. Cast everything into Christ's hands and LEAVE IT THERE! His command, "*Look unto Me and be ye saved,*" is not only the hope and strength of the seeking sinner, but it is the constant hope and strength of the believing sinner. The Author and Finisher of our faith, never changes. His gift of life and calling of grace is without change.

## **VII. UNBELIEF MAKES IT SO WE CANNOT HEAR THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL**

This is the worst of all, unbelief makes it impossible to hear the gospel of God. Listen to this word of faith, this word of the gospel, spoken by Caleb and Joshua...(14: 7-10)

**Numbers 14: 7: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land--**Believer, the LORD has promised us an inheritance that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for you. It cost him giving his only begotten Son. It cost his Son that shameful death on the cross—he said, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also." (Joh 14:2, 3).

**Numbers 14: 8: If the LORD delight in us,...--**What makes the LORD delight in us? Believing him: Numbers 14: 24: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed ME FULLY, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

**Numbers 14: 8: If the LORD delight in us, [if we believe the Lord] then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey--**God will receive the glory—*God will bring us into this land.* It will not be by our wisdom, will or works—*God will GIVE it us.* God's gifts are better than we could get by leaning to our own understanding-- *a land which floweth with milk and honey.*

**Numbers 14: 9: Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.** While the children were murmuring in unbelief listen to the faith of Rahab and what their enemies were saying.

Joshua 2: 9: And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10: For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11: And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

But unbelief can't hear the good news: **Numbers 13: 10: BUT all the congregation bade stone them with stones.**

## VIII. NOW LET'S HEAR HOW GOD REGARDS UNBELIEF

Unbelief provokes God--**Numbers 14: 11: And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me?**

Unbelief provokes God because it is in the face of all the evidence God has shown us—**14: 11:...and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?** We have more than they had:

- Christ's incarnation
- Christ's pierced hands
- Christ's word, "It is finished!",
- "In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world",
- "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,"
- "Lo, I am with you always."
- Christ's ascension
- The Spirit of God bearing witness in our hearts
- The gospel we hear continually

Numbers 14: 11:...and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

Unbelief is the thing which causes God to disregard those who do not believe him--**Numbers 14: 12: I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.**

### APPLICATION:

Faith is substance and evidence to the believer because God who promises is the Substance, the Sufficiency, all the Proof we need that he will make good on his promise. End of discussion.

Romans 4: 3: For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness—*he went out not knowing whither he went*. The children of Israel were trying to work for their deliverance, to walk by sight not by faith.

Romans 4: 4: Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Are you happy? Believe God and you will be. Happiness is believing God? Not in what we accomplish by our spying out the land.

Romans 4: 6: Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7: *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8: Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

All David had was God's word, God's promise—but that was All to David! David saw trouble and uphill heartache all his days—but he said, "Happy is the man!"

2 Samuel 23: Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.

God is not a man that he should lie. *In this world you shall have tribulation.* Why lie about what we and I are? The tribulation comes from our sin, from people like us...

- There will be briars
- There will be bills to pay
- We will have to put our hand to the plow
- There will be setbacks—

*But be of good cheer—I have overcome the world—*what reason would God have to make that promise if it were not so?

I want to end by reminding you of Paul's words when he faced the stormy sea: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Ac 27:25.) BELIEVE GOD!

AMEN!