

Do We Truly Trust in God?

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Numbers 13-14

Setting. It's been just over 2 years since Moses and the people of Israel were freed from Egypt. They've traveled to Mt. Sinai where they were given the 10 commandments and instructions on how to build the tabernacle. They've now come up to the edge of the promise land that God has been telling them that they're going to take and poses.

Numbers Ch13

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **2** "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them."

3 So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who *were* heads of the children of Israel. **4** Now these *were* their names: from the tribe of Reuben, **Shammua** the son of Zaccur; **5** from the tribe of Simeon, **Shaphat** the son of Hori; **6** from the tribe of Judah, **Caleb** the son of Jephunneh; **7** from the tribe of Issachar, **Igal** the son of Joseph; **8** from the tribe of Ephraim, [a]**Hoshea** the son of Nun; **9** from the tribe of Benjamin, **Palti** the son of Raphu; **10** from the tribe of Zebulun, **Gaddiel** the son of Sodi; **11** from the tribe of Joseph, *that is*, from the tribe of Manasseh, **Gaddi** the son of Susi; **12** from the tribe of Dan, **Ammiel** the son of Gemalli; **13** from the tribe of Asher, **Sethur** the son of Michael;

14 from the tribe of Naphtali, **Nahbi** the son of Vophsi; **15** from the tribe of Gad, **Geuel** the son of Machi.

16 These *are* the names of the men whom Moses sent to [b]spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea[c] the son of Nun, Joshua.

Caleb - “whole-hearted, bold or brave.”

Hoshea - “salvation”

Joshua - “God is deliverance”

17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, **18** and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it *are* strong or weak, few or many; **19** whether the land they dwell in *is* good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit *are* like camps or strongholds; **20** whether the land *is* [d]rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

21 So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. **22** And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, *were* there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) **23** Then they came to the [e]Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. *They also brought* some of the pomegranates and figs. **24** The place was called the Valley of [f]Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. **25** And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

So there first question that comes to my mind is...

Why did God ask the people to spy on the land?

My initial thought was that's an interesting command. We don't see God telling His people to do this at any other point in history. Typically what we see in scripture is God give the command to go and take the land and He delivers it into the Israelites hands.

There are several good tactical reasons to send spies, which were alluded to in the chapter, such as gathering intel about:

- whether the people who lived there were strong or weak and how many they were
- whether the land was good or bad
- whether the cities were like camps or fortresses
- whether the land was rich or poor

It all seems pretty logical, but still the question, why would God ask them to send spies into the land?

Lets turn to one more section of scripture in which the event is recorded.

Deuteronomy 1:19-25

19 “So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, **as the Lord our God had commanded us.** Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. **20** And I said to you, ‘You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, **which the Lord our God is giving us.** **21** Look, **the Lord your God has set the land before you; go up *and possess it*, as the Lord God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.’**

Ok, good so far...

- **God commands the people to go to the Mt of the Amorites**

- They obey
- They recognize that God has promised them the land
- God commands them to take the land saying, “Don’t be afraid or discouraged.”

22 “And every one of you came near to me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.’

23 “The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from *each* tribe. **24** And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. **25** They also took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought *it* down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, ‘*It is* a good land which the Lord our God is giving us.’

26 “Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God; **27** and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

Contradiction: So which is it? Did God command for the people to spy out the land, or was it the peoples idea and Moses went along with it? Israel’s history has been carried on by stories that were recited and retold with variation by different social groups in different time periods. These differing versions or re-tellings were preserved in the collection of writings that eventually became the Bible as we know it today. It is believed that Moses personally wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but there is some disagreement as to whether he wrote Deuteronomy. Some

believe that Deuteronomy was a recording of Moses speeches, possibly recorded by someone like Joshua. Its only been in the last 200 years that we've treated history as we do today. Most historians in the past were worried more about perspective than they were about facts or details. The overall picture of what happened was more important than the individual facts. It's much like getting witness statements after an incident happens. Everyone has a different telling of the same story. Even though some of those details might vary between each persons retelling of the story, you can still get an pretty good understanding of what happened.

Perhaps Joshua wanted to shift blame from God, as its recorded in Numbers, to the people who ultimately gave the idea to Moses. Regardless, did God allow for the spies to enter the land? He did. Sometimes we resist God to the point where He says "Fine. Have it your way." **This isn't a good thing.** It is similar to when a child says he wants to do something foolish. We keep telling them no, but when they keep asking we say ok. It's like the kid who wants to stick something into an electrical socket. Us men can only hold out so long until we say, "ok, go for it and see what happens." It's kinda a self correcting issue.

If you know what God is asking you to do. Then do it!

If not, then we need to be in prayer asking God, "What is it You want?"

An example of this is found in..

Judges Ch 20. A very messed up incident happens in the the land (ch19). All the tribes come together to hold the tribe of Benjamin accountable. Instead of listening, the tribe of Benjamin prepares for war with 26,000 men. The people pray and ask, "Who should we send first to battle Benjamin?" and God answers "Judah first!" They go up against Benjamin and lose

22,000 men in one day. Being pretty discouraged, they then seek God again asking, “Should we go up against them again?” and God answers, “yes.” They go up against Benjamin again and this time lose 18,000 men in a day. Now the people are really discouraged. They just lost 40,000 men in 2 days. They begin fasting, and offering burnt offerings to the Lord and then they ask God, “Do you even want us to go to battle with Benjamin?” They thought they were doing the right thing the entire time. To most of us we would probably agree that it seemed like the righteous thing to do. The problem was they never asked God “Do you want us to do this?” They just assumed God wanted it and said “who should we send first.” Once they finally asked the right question (Do you even want us to go?) God says “Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand.”

I can think of a time in my life where I was pursuing a career. I hit road block after road block, but kept pushing against the closed door. God eventually opened that door to me and I got to start in that career, but after some time I was made to give it up. I was left in a place of trying to understand why God ever let me have it in the first place. It took me years to see that it was never God’s desire that I pursue that career, but because of my relentless persistence He allowed me to have it. Once I had it, my life had become increasingly more difficult. It would have been better for me to ask God if it was His will in the first place.

Numbers 13 continued...

26 Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. **27** Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly [g]flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit.

28 Nevertheless (BUT) the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw

the descendants of Anak there. **29** The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”

So.. We got good news and bad news.

Picture of grapes - The grapes were a pretty big deal. It took two guys to carry them back to camp. It was a picture of how fertile the land was and what it could produce. This would be very desirable.



Besides the grapes the spies brought back reports of the people in the land saying they were strong. They live in large fortified cities. And there is giants in the land.

Have you ever stood next to someone 7ft tall? One of my earliest jobs was doing sound at Calvary Tucson. From there I got hired out to work part time at the McKale basketball center. My job was to put up images of the basket ball players on the Jumbotron any time they scored or did something significant. I remember one occurrence where I was walking down the hallway and I happened to walk by Coach Lute Olson as he was leading

the UofA Wildcat Men's basketball team down the hallway. I have never felt so small and insignificant. So I can kinda imagine being scared if I was told to go into battle against these guys. And these guys were not 7ft tall they were more around 9ft tall.

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we."

32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. **33** There we saw the [h]giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like[i] grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Caleb - "Let's go do it guys."

The other spies - "Are you insane?"

How did the spies know that the giants viewed them as grasshoppers? Did they overhear them? Talk to them? Have interaction with them? We don't know for sure, but what we do know is that what the spies saw, scared them.

Anybody ever spend too much time in their own head? Spend time doubting? Worrying? You know you have some task in-front of you that you know you're called to do but it scares you, so you do nothing.

Being Nervous vs Excited

A group of athletes was being interviewed as they were preparing to head to the Olympic games. The interviewer had asked each

of the athletes, “Are you nervous?” to which they all responded “No, I’m excited.” The feeling of being afraid or nervous can be very similar to the feeling of excitement. It’s more a matter of perspective.

The 12 spies all saw the same things but had different reports. Caleb and Joshua were excited to finally take the land, just as God had promised them. The rest of the spies chose fear. They chose to doubt God.

Do we see things the way God wants us to see them. Do we see barriers or opportunities?

trust and obedience isn’t something we’re born with, its something we choose to do.

Our faith is determined by what we fear the most. For 10 of the spies, they feared the large fortified cities and the giants in the land. For Caleb and Joshua, they had the fear of the Lord. Do we fear giants or do we fear God?

Israel Refuses to Enter Canaan

14 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. **2** And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! **3** Why has the Lord brought us to this land to [i]fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” **4** So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

This begs the question “Do we trust God?”

Is there time's we've displayed a lack of faith in our own lives?

If we look back at the history of Israel we see many times where God displays His power and a short time later the Israelites are questioning God. For example God displays His power by unleashing the plagues upon Egypt so that Pharaoh would release them from slavery.

- The Nile river being turned to blood,
- Frogs,
- Lice
- Flies
- Diseased Livestock
- Boils
- Hail and Fire
- Swarms of Locus
- Darkness
- Death of first born children

They're then released by Pharaoh but then see the Egyptian army coming after them and question Moses saying "Because there were no graves in Egypt, you've taken us out into the wilderness to die. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

If only we had died? I can see that being a common bumpersticker on every Israeli wagon. **"If only we had died"**

From a leadership perspective I actually prefer the opposite whenever someones complaining around me. I prefer the phrase **"But did you die?"**

I can just imagine Moses at some point saying, "Yes I brought you out here to die. All you do is complain." I seriously don't know how Moses did it. I don't have the same level of patience

that Moses has. I probably would have been, “yeah, no. Go ahead and just wipe them out God.” But instead Moses actually says, **“Do not be afraid. Stand Still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.”**

As the Egyptian army approaches the Israelites, God comes and stands between the Egyptian army and the Israelites as they’re standing in front of the Red Sea, causing the Egyptians to only see darkness and the Israelites to see light. The Israelites then witness the splitting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. What amazing acts of God the children of Israel got to witness.

Only three days later... they’re walking around the wilderness near Marah running out of water. So what do they do? They sought God in prayer asking for water. No, they complain to Moses saying what are we supposed to drink?

How forgetful the children of Israel are and so too are we. In all reality we are just like them, having to constantly be reminded about the provisions of the Lord.

Numbers 14 continued...

5 Then Moses and Aaron [k]fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were* among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; **7** and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. **8** If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ **9** Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear

the people of the land, for they^[l] *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord *is* with us. Do not fear them.”

They were pleading with the people. Trying to remind them “The Lord is with us. Do not fear.” But it didn’t matter the people wouldn’t listen.

10 And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

Caleb and Joshua are ready to be obedient and trust in God. The rest of the people of Israel succumb to fear and doubt to the point of wanting to kill Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua. It takes the presence of God showing up to defuse the situation.

Moses Intercedes for the People

11 Then the Lord said to Moses: “How long will these people reject^[m] Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the ^[n]signs which I have performed among them? **12** I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”

13 And Moses said to the Lord: “Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, **14** and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, *are* among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. **15** Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying,

16 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' **17** And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, **18** 'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.' **19** Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

Do we have the ability to get God to change His mind?

Moses pleads once again for God to spare Israel. This isn't the first time. In Exodus 32, Moses is up on Mt Sinai for 40 days spending time with God, and receiving the 10 commandments. The people of Israel get tired of waiting for Moses to come back down, so they form a calf made out of gold and say, "**This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt.**" God gives Moses a heads up saying "**Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.**" God pretty much tells Moses at this point, "They've messed up. I'm going to wipe them out and start over with you."

Kinda reminds me of what Bill Cosby joke when he's speaking about kids being difficult. "You know, I brought you in this world, and I can take you out. And it don't make no difference to me, I'll make another one look just like you."

So once again, Moses is pleading for God to spare the Israelites. God does spare them, but not without consequences. With the golden calf, Moses ground the gold into powder, added it to water and made the people drink it. The Levites also went out

and killed 3,000 men that day. This time in Numbers, the consequences were different.

20 Then the Lord said: “I have pardoned, according to your word; **21** but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord— **22** because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, **23** they certainly shall not see the land of which I [o]swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. **24** But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. **25** Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.”

God says, “I have spared you, but there’s a change in plans”.

Death Sentence on the Rebels

26 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **27** “How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. **28** Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: **29** The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. **30** Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I [p]swore I would make you dwell in. **31** But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall [q]know the land which you have despised. **32** But *as for* you, your[r] carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. **33** And your sons shall be [s]shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until

your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. **34** According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your [t]guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My [u]rejection. **35** I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.’ ”

God says, “You’ve rejected me, so I’ve rejected you.” Your kids will enter the land but not you. One day we will all stand before God and be held accountable. Have we lived a life of obedience, or have we rejected Him? This is not to say that God will not forgive us for our sin and times of disobedience, but we are much better off choosing obedience in the first place. In the old testament, **Moses is functioning as an intercessor on behalf of the people because its before the time of Christ. Today we don’t have to trust in a person to intercede for us because we can all directly go to Jesus. Jesus take the penalty for us allowing us to be spared judgment for our sin and disobedience.**

The evil report of 10 men caused over a million people to die in the wilderness. Its interesting that in Numbers Ch1, God had the people do a census of all the men of fighting age (20years old and higher) not including the tribe of Levi. This amounted to 603,550 men. It’s been estimated that once you add in the tribe of Levi and women, that the number would be just over a million people.

The people listened to the majority of the spies and from that they were left with fear and depression. Is our negativity and complaining affect others around me? It’s not to say that there are not difficult times we go through but this is different than that. Do you know someone who is always complaining, always down. It’s contagious. Are you draining the life of those around you or

are you building people up? I've often been guilty of this and had to catch myself as I would complain a lot. Are we always giving an evil report? Ask those around you. Am I that person? If you're married ask your spouse. Spouses have grace on each other.

I can bet that without looking that no one here could mention one of the 10 names of the spies who gave a bad report. No one looking back through history remembers the names of the complainers.

I believe that the worst part in all this is that God had been promising the Israelites the land for quite some time. He promised to give them the land of Canaan as their own in Exodus 6, and assured them total victory over the people in the land in Exodus 23.

How does this relate to us? Do we trust in God?

I believe one thing this passage highlights is that we tend to idolize comfort. Not everything we're called to by God is going to be comfortable. We tell God, sure I'll do whatever you ask as long as it's in my comfort zone. How many times have you said, "I don't have peace about this situation. It must not be from God." There are times where it is God telling us not to do something, but there are also times where it's more about us stepping out of our comfort zone, saying, "Yes Lord, I will trust in you to pull me through this because I believe you have asked me to be here." How can we know the difference? By knowing God's word and spending time in prayer seeking God for His discernment. We have to ask, God is this what you have for me, and if yes, then grant me the courage to face it. One thing that helps with fear is meditating on scripture. Like what Moses tells the people as the Egyptian army is coming up on them. **"Do not be afraid. Stand Still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today."**

We are going to face many situations in the near future that will be uncomfortable. Will we trust that God is in charge and will bring us through these difficulties.

It's normal to feel fear. It would actually be really odd if you told someone to go attack a bunch of giants and they were like, "sure. ok, I got that."

I don't often listen to the radio, but in a rare moment I was listening to AirOne this week. A story came on about a parent who had asked their child to do something to which their child responded, "But I'm scared." The parents response. "That's ok. Do it scared." The parent helped their child understand that its ok to be scared sometimes, but that we shouldn't let fear stop us from being obedient. **Trust and obedience isn't something we're born with, its something we choose to do.**

36 Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, **37** those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the Lord. **38** But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

A Futile Invasion Attempt

39 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. **40** And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!"

41 And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. **42** Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord *is* not among you.

43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you,

and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.”

44 But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. **45** Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

The 10 spies are now dead (death by plague) and the people realized they've sinned. So now they say, "We were disobedient, we realized we messed up so now we'll do what we were told to do." The problem is that God had already told them that its too late and that they were not permitted to enter the land. They still said "We're going to do it anyways," even after Moses told them to not further sin against the Lord.

- We need first time obedience. Same things I've said to my kids many times. They eventually did what I asked them to do, but I had to ask them several times to do it, and there's a consequence for that.

After 40 years of doing circles in the wilderness and after the death of Moses, Joshua finally leads the people into the land and leads them into battle with all the inhabitants. There is still the fear of going into battle, but the people are obedient and God brings them victory. Even though the giants are scary and the fortresses are mighty, they took while being scared.

The final take away from this passage:

Do we fear God or do we fear the things of this world?

Do we trust that God is going to do what He's promised?

Do we idolize comfort?

Are we so settled into our comfort zone that we're not willing to do things that are scary. Ex. Serving in the church? Sharing Christ with your neighbor? I don't know what those individual things are for each one of you, but seek God to reveal the things He's called you to, and ask for the courage to step up and do them.