

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

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TEXT: Numbers 13 - 14

PURPOSE: To help instill genuine faith in God.

INTRODUCTION:

1) Many might **not** consider themselves “unbelievers,” yet in fact they could be scripturally noted as unbelievers.

(1) They attend every service of the church, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

(2) They might lead beautiful prayers.

(3) They assist on the Lord’s table.

(4) Yet, they are still unbelievers.

2) An unbeliever is not necessarily an Atheist.

(1) The atheist affirms he knows there is no God.

(2) The unbeliever, in our context, is one who believes in God, yet doesn’t have faith enough, when challenged, to obey Him.

(3) This unbelief could be demonstrated in various ways.

3) In this sermon, consideration is given to 12 spies who went to search out the land of Canaan and 10 of them came back as unbelievers.

4) The account of this is described in Numbers 13-14, Deuteronomy 1:19-40, and Joshua 14:1-15:19

I. THE SIN OF UNBELIEF. Numbers 13-14

1) The Lord instructed Moses to send men to search the land of Canaan, Numbers 13:1-20.

2) They find the land is a land that flows with milk and honey.

(1) They bring evidence of the fruit of the land. “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” (Numbers 13:23).

(2) They come back with their report after 40 days, “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” (Numbers 13:23).

3) The first indication of unbelief is in their objection – “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” (Numbers 13:28).

(1) Although God had brought them safely this far – they doubted God.

(2) They saw obstacles rather than opportunities, “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. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan” (Numbers 13:28-29).

(3) Do we find obstacles or opportunities??

4) Caleb stilled the people, “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” (Numbers 13:30).

(1) Caleb maintained faith in God in spite of others doubts

(2) He didn't allow the multitude to dissuade nor deter him.

5) The other spies (excluding Joshua), rise up in rebellion, (Numbers 13:31-33, see also. Deut. 1:26-27).

6) The whole congregation is swayed into unbelief and cowardness, (Numbers 14:1-4).

7) Moses, Joshua and Caleb try to persuade the congregation, but to no avail, “But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel” (Numbers 14:10).

8) The congregation suggested stoning the faithful! (Numbers 14:10)

9) Suddenly, the glory of God appears in the tabernacle (Numbers 14:10).

(1) God says the people were unbelievers, “And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” (Numbers 14:11).

(2) God is ready to smite them with a pestilence and disinherit them and make of Moses a greater and mightier nation than they, “I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they” (Numbers 14:12).

(3) Moses intercedes for them, “And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among

them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness” (Numbers 14:13-16).

(4) God pardons them, but says they will not enter the promised land (except Joshua and Caleb).

(5) All those who were twenty years and above would not enter the promised land.

(6) Their little ones, which they said would be a prey unto the people, will inherit the land, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.” (Numbers 14:29-33).

(7) That generation wandered in the wilderness for forty years (a year for every day that they searched the land).

(8) The spies, who brought up the evil report, died in a plague, “Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD” (Numbers 14:37).

10) The congregation, upon hearing God’s judgement, was now willing to go into the land, but Moses says it is too late, the Lord is not with you!

11) Some presumptuously attempted it anyway and were defeated.

II. HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THE SIN OF UNBELIEF?

1) By possessing real, genuine faith in God.

(1) Our faith is evidenced by our actions, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

(2) Joshua and Caleb were men who believed they could, with God’s help, take the land.

(3) They had seen the wonders in Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, and the events at Mount Sinai.

(4) The others had seen these things also, but did not have enough faith.

(5) The difference was - Caleb and Joshua knew that God would keep His promise.

(6) We, too, must have **faith**, “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” (Hebrews 11:6).

2) We must be people of vision.

- (1) Joshua and Caleb made the same trip as the other spies.
- (2) They saw the same walls, giants, etc.
- (3) However, they saw more, they saw GOD.
- (4) We must be a people of vision (concerning evangelism, etc.).

3) We must be a people of courage.

(1) Moses had instructed the spies to be of good courage, “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 firstripe grapes” (Numbers 13:20).

- (2) Unfortunately, they lost heart.
- (3) Faith dispels fear, “And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).
- (4) We too must be strong and courageous.

4) We must follow God wholly.

(1) Caleb’s example, “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 14:24); “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 1:36).

- (2) Do we follow God completely?, Or, do we attempt to justify our unbelief?
- (3) Salvation is for the obedient, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;” (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Conclusion:

1) Joshua and Caleb eventually entered the promise land. **God was true to His promise.**

2) The unbelievers died in the wilderness wandering. They did not enter the land that flowed with milk and honey.

3) The question is not, “Do you **believe in God,**?” The question is “Do you **believe God?**”