

Giants Versus Grasshoppers

Numbers 13:32-33

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 There are many things I find encouraging about this congregation; one thing I really love about all of you is that you recognize the value of studying the Old Testament (**Rom. 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.”; **1 Cor. 10:11**: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”).
 - A. A congregation that does not see value in studying the Old Testament is weak and doomed to stay that way or worse.
 - B. A congregation that refuses to study the Old Testament is doomed to apostasy.
2. It is so important to consider the “types” and “shadows” of the Old Testament, because they establish timeless truths and principles concerning us as individuals, and as the church). OT examples:
 - A. Tell us of the spiritual dangers and pitfalls we all face.
 - B. Show us “real life” examples of how obedience/disobedience directly affects the lives of real people.
 - C. Tell us how God deals with both the righteous and the wicked: individuals, groups, nations, etc.
3. At the end of Genesis we see God’s providence sending Joseph to Egypt to preserve God’s people while God’s longsuffering allowed time for the inhabitants of Canaan to repent (which they didn’t!).
 - A. Israel ended up spending 400 years in Egypt and grew from a small band of 70 to a nation of 603,550 fighting-age men and over 2 million total men, women and children.
 - (1) Joseph delivered the children of Israel and the people of Egypt during the severe famine.
 - (2) However, when Joseph passed from the scene another Pharaoh arose who either forgot or did not care (or both) about the great leadership and positive contribution Joseph made to Egypt.
 - (3) The Lord didn’t forget His people or the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - (4) We studied in Exodus 7-15 how the Lord displayed His mighty power through the ten plagues and deliverance Israel from Egyptian bondage.
 - (5) Miraculously, Israel crossed the Red Sea and then journeyed to Mount Sinai (BTW: Can you imagine having been witness to those great deeds!)
 - (6) Israel then encamped at Sinai where God, through Moses, delivered them the Law (which, as Paul says, “...was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”; Gal. 3:24).
 - B. Israel then marched to the southern edge of the Promised Land and encamped at Kadesh Barnea.
 - (1) They were poised to enter the land promised long ago, the land “*flowing with milk and honey.*”
 - (2) In Numbers 13 the Lord commands Moses, “*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.*” (Num. 13:2)
 - (3) Note that the Lord had already given Israel the land; all they had to do was go in and take possession! Recall their witness to God’s mighty power through the deeds performed in Egypt.
 - C. The twelve spies went east, west, north and south scoping out the entirety of the Promised Land.
 - (1) In the process of their spying the land; the bounty of the land was confirmed; it indeed was a land “*flowing with milk and honey.*”

- (2) After spying out the land for 40 days the twelve “leaders” returned to the encampment of the Israelites, plus they brought back examples of the bounty of the Promised Land (huge cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs; Num. 13:21-25).

II. Discussion:

I. 4 The Report: Giants!

A. The report of ten of the spies: **Num. 13:26-29**; the ten further add: **Num. 13:31-33**

B. ** Synopsis:

- (1) The ten spies admit the land is fruitful, just as God had said; it was indeed a land “*flowing with milk and honey.*”
- (2) “*Nevertheless*”—big red flag! “*however, but!*” A clear signal for an excuse! Always watch out what comes after a “*nevertheless!*” It’s almost always negative! The Israelites “*nevertheless*” said:
 - (a) The people are strong.
 - (b) The cities are large and fortified.
 - (c) The land devours its inhabitants.
 - (d) “*...and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight*” (Num. 13:33).

2. 5 The Reaction: Moan, Murmur, Mutiny!

A. The reaction of the people to the report of the ten spies: **Num. 14:1-4**

B. ** Synopsis:

- (1) **Moan:** Notice the immediate effect the report of the ten spies had on the people: “*all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.*” Form a mental picture of that scene! The entire group of over 2 million weeping!
- (2) **Murmur:** After the people finished their moaning, they then began to murmur: “*If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!*” They complained that their wives and children were going to be slain and plundered. They even went so far as to complain that they had been better off in the harsh bondage of Egypt!
- (3) **Mutiny:** The report triggered moaning, the moaning led to murmuring and the murmuring quickly turned into a mutiny: v. 4: “*Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.*” The people were plotting against Moses to overthrow their own divinely appointed government. Moses later recounts this rebellion and says it was not only against him, but it was also against God:

Deut. 1:25-28: “*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. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, ‘The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.’”*

3. 6 The Result: Failure

A. The rebellion caused the adult generation rescued from Egypt to fail to gain the Promised Land: **Num. 14:26-35.**

B. ** Have you ever heard the saying, “Be careful what you ask for because you just might get it!”

- (1) That's exactly Israel's case. Remember what they said when receiving the bad report? *"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!'"* (Num. 14:2-3)
- (2) God gave the people exactly what they asked for!
 - (a) They asked to die in the wilderness, so God granted them their wish!
 - (b) God answered their prayer: *"Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in the wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above'"* (Num. 14:28-31).
 - (c) They complained they would lose their children: *"Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?"* (Num. 14:3).
 - (d) God answered that prayer also: *"But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised"* (Num. 14:31).
- (3) ** So, do we remember: *"whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."?*
 - (a) Do we learn anything from this about rebelling against God?
 - (b) Do we learn anything about disobeying God? Yes! F-A-I-L-U-R-E!
- (4) It is said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting a different result.
 - (a) We cannot continually rebel against God, we cannot continually disobey His word, and expect anything else but failure!
 - (b) We also cannot continually fail to give *"all diligence"* to add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Pet. 1:5-11) and expect anything else but failure!

4. 7 Giants Today?

A. Consider the Christian life.

- (1) Through the mercy and grace of God Christians are delivered from the bondage of sin and from the taskmaster Satan with God's mighty hand demonstrated in the glorious resurrection of Christ (**Rom. 6:6-11**; **Col. 2:12**: *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."*).
- (2) Israel was delivered from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2: *"all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,"*).
- (3) Likewise, Christians are delivered from the bondage of sin through baptism: **Rom. 6:17-18**: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*
- (4) After Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their salvation through the baptism of Moses in the Red Sea notice their initial zeal:

Ex. 24:7-8: *"Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.'"*

They were now prepared to enter the Promised Land.
- (5) Likewise, after our sins are washed away in the watery grave of baptism, we are full of a similar zeal and love as we proclaim we are no longer slaves of sin and *"All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient."* We too stand ready to enter the sweet Promised Land of heaven.

- (6) Like the Israelites we have seen the promises of the inheritance that awaits us. We know the captain of our salvation (Jesus) has already spied out the Promised Land of heaven and sent back a good report.

B. ** “Nevertheless”

- (1) Like the Israelites, many Christians pause and hesitate in uncertainty and doubt: “Nevertheless” yet, but, however (Get ready for trouble, get ready for an excuse!)
- (2) After our initial zeal in obeying the gospel: “Yes, we have seen the land and we confess it is a good land. “Nevertheless” we have also seen the obstacles standing between us and our inheritance; the people are strong, the cities are large and fortified, the promise devours and there are giants and we are but grasshoppers in our own sight!”

C. **8 Our Report: Giants!**

- (1) All newly baptized Christians are more than ready to possess the promises of God, but then they confront a dirty little four letter word: “work.” “Work” becomes many a Christian’s “Nevertheless”! It becomes our “giants.” We become in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we become in the sight of the work!”
- (2) I don’t mean to imply we “earn” our salvation through “works,” but there are “works” God requires of us: **Eph. 2:10:** “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” We are to be “His own special people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)
 - (a) **Phil. 2:12:** “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*”
 - (b) **Col. 1:10:** “*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*”
- (3) ** Are there other giants in the land?
 - (a) Teaching others?
 - (b) Attendance?
 - (c) Giving?
 - (d) The little distractions of life? (e.g., job, housework, car, recreation)
 - (e) Family? Some allow their family to become an obstacle to the eternal Promised Land.
 - (f) Some “besetting sin”? Some sin that is particularly troublesome to us, hold us back just as much as fear of the giants held back the Israelites.

D. **9 Our Reaction: Moan, Murmur, Mutiny:** Unfortunately some Christians are like the ten spies; all they can see are the obstacles and problems. They are overtaken by the bad report!

- (1) **Moan:** Many Christians when confronted with the obstacles and problems lift up their voices and cry all night long: “*We cannot face it, we will not go up.*” The progress of their spiritual lives and the church is stopped, their religion loses its power. Some never seem to be capable of having a positive thought; everything is negative. They never want to talk about what can be done, only what can’t be done.
- (2) **Murmur:** After moaning, the murmuring begins. Murmuring over little things of life just irritate, distract and destroy. All some do is express dissatisfaction over anything and everything concerning other Christians, the church, the preacher, the elders, faithful members, etc.
 - (a) When I think of murmuring, I cannot help but think of a Christian couple I knew several years ago. They were in their late 50’s or early 60’s and moved to the town in which we

lived and placed membership in our congregation. At first, they were a welcome addition. For all appearances they were mature Christians and perhaps the husband was even elder material. There were a lot of young couples in the congregation and it was anticipated this couple would provide leadership and the stability of the wisdom gained by years of experience. Well, the exact opposite turned out to be the case. Nobody could do anything that pleased this couple. They constantly complained about the Bible classes, the preacher, even the order of worship didn't please them. They constantly compared our congregation to the one they had moved from, and the comparison was not kind. Complaint after complaint. Finally they created a huge "stink" over absolutely nothing and tore apart the church.

- (b) Often we look upon grumbling as but a minor vice, that is until we try to check ourselves in it and find how completely it possess us, and how it is ready to spring upon us at all hours of the day under the slightest provocation: "The preacher preaches too long, the preacher preaches too short, such and such a family is too stuck up, such and such a family is too outgoing and friendly, people are too friendly, no one is friendly to me, yada, yada, yada!"
 - (i) Don't think murmuring is serious?
 - (ii) Adults were condemned to die in the wilderness (14:26-5).
 - (iii) And the ten unfaithful spies died of the plague! 14:36-38
- (c) Israel's downward course in Numbers led to discontent, discontent led to lust, lust to despising the Lord, speaking against His servants, provoking, tempting, and doubting God; rebellion, presumptuousness, discouragement, striving with and speaking against God; and then finally to gross whoredom and idolatry. Seen it in other organizations! Are we part of the problem, or part of the solution?!

Phil. 2:14: *"Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."*

(3) **Mutiny:**

- (a) Once the moaning and complaining becomes established, mutiny surely follows. "The problems are too great and we are too small. There are giants and we are like grasshoppers in our own eyes. We need a new preacher to take this congregation in a 'new direction.'"
- (b) The rebellion spreads; overnight ten men converted a camp of over 2 million to unbelief. It is amazing how quickly a congregation can be embittered and destroyed by a handful of people or even fewer. Discord is sown, doubt is promoted, division often results.
- (c) Some just get discouraged and quit God. I don't want to see this, but I would rather this happen than discord be sown and the entire congregation torn up (e.g., murder-suicide).

E. 10 Our Result: Failure!

- (1) When our problems close in and we remove God from the equation, failure is inevitable.
- (2) The downward spiral of moaning, murmuring and mutiny will take us to the level of grasshoppers in our own sight and in the sight of our problems.
- (3) The Israelites thought the solution to their problem was to take matters into their own hands.
 - (a) The "people mourned greatly" and admitted their sin (Num. 14:40), but they mourned with "the sorrow of the world [that] produces death" rather than "godly sorrow [that] produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).

- (b) “But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop.” (Num. 14:44) They were attempting to take the Promised Land on their own strength (14:39-45).
 - (c) Their presumptuous plan resulted in utter failure. Why? When we engage in moaning, murmuring and mutiny, we “have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.” (Num. 14:43)
- (4) The same is true with us today: We cannot give in to moaning, murmuring and mutiny as it will result in spiritual failure (individual Christians & congregation). No matter how difficult the obstacles may seem to be, we need to trust in God and move forward (**Col. 1:21-23**).

5. **II Right Reaction: Action, Assurance, Allegiance**

A. **Action:**

- (1) Instead of moaning, we need action! No hesitation, no backsliding; just determination and enthusiasm. Caleb and Joshua had seen the same giants in the Promised Land, but due to their faith they would not allow any obstacles; be it strong cities or giants, to stop them from entering. **Num. 13:30**: “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.’”

Like Caleb we must be of the same mind to constantly move forward in a positive direction!

Phil. 3:13-14: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- (3) Why wouldn’t a Christian be a person of positive action, especially in consideration of the goal? (**1 Cor. 15:50-54**; **1 Jn. 3:2-3**; **Phil. 3:21**: “who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”).

B. **Assurance:**

- (1) That’s what Moses gave Israel: “Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes,’” (Deut. 1:29-30).
- (2) Murmuring is the coward’s way of showing dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction shows a lack of faith. We need to replace murmuring with a bold and courageous faith. A faith that provides us with the assurance and confidence that God is with us and no one can stand against us (**Rom. 8:31-33**: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”).
- (3) In regards to God’s promises the Hebrew writer calls on us to have “full assurance of faith”: **Heb. 10:22**: “let us draw near with a true (sincere) heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”; **James 1:6-8**: “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”; **1 Peter 1:3-4**: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”).

C. **Allegiance:**

- (1) In the face of a mutinous mob, Joshua and Caleb showed their faith and their allegiance to the Lord and that allowed them to boldly stand their ground.

- (2) Joshua expresses his allegiance to God: **Num. 14:8-9**: “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 are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”
- (3) We need to have the same spiritual mindset! A mindset that we are so dedicated to the Lord that we will not allow anything to block our path to the goal!
- (4) Did you ever face a really tough situation and come out victorious? How did you achieve success? How did you achieve victory?
 - (a) We must grit our teeth, clench our fists, bow our backs and attack every obstacle with the zeal and conviction that God will give us the victory! **Personal story I John 5:4**: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.”
 - (b) **Heb. 13:5-6**: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ 6 So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”
- (5) The day is coming when all of the toil, all of the sorrow, all of the frustrations, all of the disappointments, and all of the pain of this life will be over and forgotten. What a day of rejoicing that will be! **2 Cor. 4:16—5:2**: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,”

D. 12 God’s Result: Success!

- (1) Submitting to God’s will and serving God in His way will result in success!

Psa. 31:23-24: “Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, And fully repays the proud person. 24 Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the LORD.”

Psa. 46:1-2: “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;”

Jer. 17:7-8: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.”
- (2) God gave Joshua the prescription for success (**Josh. 1:1-9**); the same principles apply to us today!

III. 13 Conclusion:

1. **Rom. 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.” It is so critical we learn from this great lesson! **Heb. 3:7—4:2**
2. Does the word profit you? For you and me: is the word “mixed with faith”?
3. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, vol. 1, p. 178

*Ten men failed to see God
Saw cities impregnably high;
Two men, “looking off” unto God,
Saw doom for those cities draw nigh.*

*Ten men who failed to see God
Saw giants affrightingly tall;
Two men, “looking off” unto God,
Saw giants as grasshoppers small.*

*Ten men who failed to see God,
Reported, “We’re certain to fail”;
Two men, “looking off” unto God,
Cried, “Up! For with God we prevail.”*

*Ten men who failed to see God
Discouraged their brother men;
Two men perceived God everywhere;
Are you of the two—or the ten?*

Adapted from a sermon (“Giants and Grasshoppers”) by Wayne Greeson in *Sowing the Seed* 3, pp. 38-43.