

HOW TO CLAIM VICTORY THROUGH FAITH

(Numbers 13; 14)

By Jon Quinn

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The writer of the book of Hebrews has much to say about faith. He talks of the necessity of faith in pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6), but we need to understand that he is not talking about just any kind of faith. It must be an enduring faith. The Scriptures say, "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised." (Hebrews 10:36). This helps us to understand what kind of faith the Hebrew writer is talking about in chapter eleven. "But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39).

To illustrate inadequate faith, the Hebrew writer appeals to the example of the unbelieving Israelites who were journeying in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. They were on their way to "the promised land", which in their case was the land of Caanan. God had promised Abraham centuries before to give this land to his descendants. The problem was that the descendants did not have Abraham's faith. They grumbled, complained and rebelled. In Hebrews chapters three and four the writer discusses how these people had failed to enter into Caanan because of their unbelief. The point made is that we, like they, could fail to enter heaven. It simply is not enough to start the journey; we must endure to the finish if we are to find our way to the better place that God has prepared.

Let us turn our attention now to the Old Testament record of this period in Israel's history, and draw out some needed lessons from it which apply so well to our own journey as disciples of Jesus, just as the New Testament encourages us to do (I Corinthians 10:1-13). We will find our text in Numbers chapters thirteen and fourteen.

## GOD WILL GIVE THE FAITHFUL EXACTLY WHAT HE HAS PROMISED

"Thus they told him and said, 'We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly flows with milk and honey...' (Numbers 13:27). It was from the burning bush that God had called Moses to lead His people to Canaan. It was then that the Lord described to Moses the land as "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). The first affirmation that these words were true was the report of the spies who said that it was so.

It is important to know what God has promised to those who live by faith.

Sometimes people accuse God foolishly because some tragedy strikes them and they think that God has failed them. But the fact is that God has never promised that tragedy in this life will not afflict the faithful. The promise is that when tragedy strikes, we will be better equipped to deal with it (Philippians 4:4-14).

Also, we need not fear that heaven will be any less than what the Scriptures of God promise us that it is. It is then that God promises to wipe away every tear. It is then, as we enter heaven's gates, that we will echo the words of the spies, "It certainly flows with milk and honey."

## THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT GOD'S PROMISES ARE REAL

"...they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land" (Numbers 13:26). It was not as if the people only had the spies' testimony about the richness of the land. The spies had brought back with them examples of the fruit grown in Canaan. The examples brought back served to confirm that everything was indeed just as the spies had said and as the Lord had promised.

Again, we see a parallel to our own journeys as Christians. We have not yet seen heaven, yet we have tasted of its goodness. It is by personal experience that those who truly live by faith are able to confirm "peace which passes understanding."

On the other hand, the things the Bible says about the consequences of sin is also confirmed. Sin has not made the world a better place. Hatred, pride, envy, scorn and cruelty abound among those who know not God (and this includes religious people as well as the irreligious). All this is evidence that God's word is true.

## THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

"Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.'" (Numbers 13:30). The spies gave their opinions about the matter. Ten of the twelve were convinced that if they went in to take the land God had promised them that they would fail. They advised doing nothing in that regard, and to search for an alternate course of action. Caleb (and Joshua) insisted that the time to act was now. There ought not to be any reason to doubt. God was with them. A debate ensued as to whether their action of obedience could possibly be successful. Two men of faith stood against the other ten spies insisting that with God victory was assured, but only if they acted. Unfortunately, the majority of the people were swayed by the doubters.

Likewise, the time for action is now with reference to our discipleship. How often that which needs to be done today never gets done because we put it off until "tomorrow." Its not enough to know the right thing to do; we must do it. Are we among the doubters, scoffers and doomsayers? Or are we among those who say, "We shall

surely overcome it."

## UNBELIEF IS A TRAGEDY

"And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes..." (Numbers 14:6). The people had determined to appoint another leader in Moses' place and return to Egypt. The tearing of one's garment signaled deep distress and sorrow. Joshua and Caleb knew that to rebel against God would bring disaster. Had these people forgotten so quickly the Lord's mighty deliverance at the Red Sea? Could they not remember how the Lord had sustained them and provided for them in the wilderness with food to eat and water to drink?

Likewise, today, it is a shameful thing when the people of God fail to believe. To hold back in fear does not speak well of one's faith. How much more could be accomplished in a disciple's lifetime if he or she has the spirit of Joshua and Caleb rather than the ten spies who doubted. What a waste to fail to act upon our faith in Heaven's Redeemer!

## TRUE FAITH BRINGS ABIDING CONFIDENCE

"If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us - a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord... the Lord is with us, do not fear them." (Numbers 14:8,9). Faith does not deny that there are difficulties to face. Rather, it expresses confidence in victory through the power of God in spite of the difficulties. It holds that there is nothing too difficult for God.

The problem with many today is that they often leave God out of the picture. Impossible things will always remain impossible apart from God. Overcoming is possible only "through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

## FAITH FOLLOWS GOD IN EVERYTHING

"But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it." (Numbers 14:24). Though most of that generation failed to enter the land, Caleb (and Joshua) survived the wilderness and accomplished the crossing of the Jordan River to inherit the land along with the children of the present generation. The reason the Lord allowed this was because of the fullness of Caleb's faith. He would not allow the doubts of others to cloud his perspective, and nor should we today.

Make no mistake about it; if the world has its way it will destroy your faith and confidence. It will seek to persuade you not to trust in Jesus as fully as you ought. It will weaken you and even destroy you if you let it. When the world insists that you not be so

fully committed to King Jesus, then it is time to say "no" to the world.

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