

## ... AND WE BECAME GRASSHOPPERS

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**Scripture:** Numbers 13:1-2, 17-21, 25-33

Numbers 13

**13** Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, <sup>2</sup>“Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers’ tribes, everyone a leader among them.”

<sup>17</sup> When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, “Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country. <sup>18</sup> See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong *or* weak, whether they are few or many. <sup>19</sup> How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are *they* like *open* camps or with fortifications? <sup>20</sup> How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? <sup>21</sup> Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

<sup>21</sup> So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, at Lebohamath.

<sup>25</sup> When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, <sup>26</sup> they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> Thus they told him, and said, “We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”

<sup>30</sup> Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.” <sup>31</sup> But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.” <sup>32</sup> So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. <sup>33</sup> There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Heavenly Father, would You shed Your light, Lord, on this passage? Illumine our hearts and our thinking processes through Your Holy Spirit. Let Your words from Your holy word come alive, and show us our take away from it and how it needs to impact and change us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Let me pull out salient points from this passage.

Right in the beginning, v. 2, it says it was a land that God was giving them. Secondly, the descendants of Anak lived there. We see that in Numbers 13:28. The descendants of Anak were huge men; actually, they were like the Goliath that David met. And these were men who lived in that area. It was also a land filled with milk and honey and large fruit. In fact, they were told to bring back fruit,

and they did. And the fruit that they brought, they had to carry it on a pole. It was so big, two men on either side holding the fruit and bringing it back.

And then we see how they responded to seeing these huge men there. But we also find that Caleb hushed them and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it." We see that in v. 30. But the other spies, however, said, "We cannot. They are too strong for us." And they gave a bad report of the land. And they ended by saying, "We became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

I like this first bookend that we have in v.2 that the land was going to be given to them by God. God said, "I'm going to give you the land. This is your land. Go in and take possession of it." And then the other bookend at the end of this chapter says how they looked at themselves, and by the way they looked at themselves, the other people also looked at them. They were like grasshoppers.

Let's look at this in a little bit of detail. God told them it was theirs. But they didn't trust Him when they should have trusted God to deliver on His promise in spite of the daunting challenges that they faced. But the sons of Israel didn't trust God. And God punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all the men of that generation died. None of them got to see Canaan or the Promised Land. Only their children did, along with Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua believed God, and years later, we read in Joshua 11:21-22. At that time, Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country, from Hebron, Debir, and Anab, from the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. No Anakites were left in Israelite territory. It took 40 years for that to happen, something that could have happened right at the very beginning if they had trusted God. Joshua believed that it would happen, and he made that happen.

Caleb too believed, and requested actually, the hill country of Hebron as his inheritance. Despite the presence of the Anakim, Caleb trusted in God's promise. Joshua 14:12, "Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You, yourself, heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but with the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as He said." It was a test for the children of Israel, but they came up short. They failed that test. In fact, the closing words of this chapter gives us an insight into their thinking. They saw themselves as grasshoppers.

What could be our takeaway from this chapter? If we can leave Joshua and Caleb and the Anakites and all there, what can we learn from this passage. I think there are four areas that we can grow in if we look at this passage through the grip of this passage.

### **1. SELF-PERCEPTION AND SELF-WORTH.**

How we see ourselves and how we look at how worthy we are. Our self-perception significantly influences how others perceive us. This is a truism. How you see yourself is how others will see you. When we see ourselves as inadequate or inferior, we project that belief affecting how others see us as well. What should we do instead? We need to recognize our own worth, understand that our value and worth comes from God's view of us, not from our own insecurities or other's opinions.

What is God's view of us?

Psalm 139:14 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful; I know that full well."

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. If you were in another church with another theological persuasion, you have the pastor tell you to turn to your neighbor and say, "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made." But in this church, we only smile back at the Pastor and say, "If you say so!" That's something that we need to tell ourselves, forget telling anybody else. We need to tell ourselves, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Because that is who we are.

### **Challenge the negative thinking**

Beyond recognizing our worth, we need to challenge the negative thinking that may come. To combat thoughts of inadequacy by affirming our own strengths and capabilities. Thoughts of weaknesses will come, but we need to combat and address them.

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Every weakness, every inadequacy, we take it to the Lord and we say: Lord in Your strength, through Your grace, this is surmountable. There is never a problem that is insurmountable with God. And so we look at the way we see ourselves, our own perception of ourselves and our self-worth, and we say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and in God, I can do all things, and He will strengthen me."

## **2. KNOWING HOW TO FACE CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES**

We're constantly going to face challenges and obstacles. In the podcast that I'm doing on Nehemiah, we see what kind of opposition he had to building the wall. And yet, he built the wall – in a record 52 days, in spite of the opposition that came. "The good hand of the Lord was upon me," were his words. And so, we need to face challenges, however daunting. And how we perceive the challenge can affect our ability to overcome it. How do we do that?

- **Focus on God's power.**

Remember that God is greater than any obstacle. Trust in His strength rather than your own.

1 John 4:4 "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." What a wonderful verse! One who is in us, God residing in us, is greater than any problem that can come your way. Any situation, however daunting and formidable it may be, God is greater.

- **Change the way you think.**

After focusing on God's power, change the way you think. Take on more of a growth mindset. See challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as insurmountable problems or barriers. It's the way you look at it that will help you to overcome it as well.

James 1:2-3 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Testing – the issue that you are facing, the problem, the situation, is a test of your faith. The Bible is saying it must produce perseverance. What is perseverance? It is going through; not giving in, not giving up, and not standing down. That's perseverance. The test of faith, any test that you're facing, you must walk through it. We never back down and say: I'm defeated by it. We always move forward. He says that the testing of our faith produces perseverance, and let the perseverance finish His work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. It's the perseverance that helps us to be complete in God. So, when our faith is tested, we press on knowing that it is completing His work in us.

## **3. HAVE COURAGE AND FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES.**

We need to be aware and have courage and faith in God's promises, the things He has promised to you. He promised the children of Israel that this was the land that He was giving them. They didn't believe it. Joshua and Caleb did. They didn't believe it and they lost out. And sometimes, we lose out on the promises of God because we don't have enough courage or faith to believe and trust Him.

The Israelites' fear prevented them from entering the Promised Land despite God's promises. And similarly, fear can hinder us from achieving God's promises and purposes in our lives. And when God's promises don't get fulfilled in our lives, we are living less than the ideal that God would want us to live. We're not fulfilling our potential as sons and daughters of the Most High God. Imagine God says: This is your package; this is the potential you have. And we live at 50% of that potential. It's like having a 200-watt bulb and saying: I'll just use 50.

- **Trust in God's promises.**

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord, Your God will be with you wherever you go.

Wherever you go. He was with Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego in the fiery furnace. He didn't douse the flames. He just got in there with them and said, "I'm with you. Nothing is going to happen to you." That's what perseverance is, that God is with us in that caldron, in that situation, and He says, "I am with you. Don't be fearful. Let's walk through this. I will never leave you; I will never forsake you.

- **Remember past victories.**

It's always good to remember what God has done for us in the past. Remember the Ebenezers, the stones of remembrances that we have dotted along the past, all those years where God has come through for us. Cast your mind back to one of those memories and say: God came through so beautifully for me then. He can do the same today. Why? because He's the same unchanging God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Deuteronomy 7:18 "But do not be afraid of them. Remember well what the Lord, your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt."

So trust in God's promises and remember past victories to help you to have courage and faith in His promises being fulfilled.

#### **4. WATCH OUT FOR THE INFLUENCE OF PEOPLE AROUND YOU.**

Watch out for peer influence. What happened to the children of Israel? The spies' negative report influenced the entire Israelite community, leading them to despair and rebellion. Similarly, negative thinking by people around us can affect our own attitudes and decisions. What do we do instead.

- **Seek God's perspective.**

Instead of conforming to negative opinions that we hear around us, seek God's perspective and wisdom.

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Make sure that you don't conform to the negative, rather lean into God and ask Him what His will is. What does He think about the situation rather than being influenced by people

around us. So often, public opinion is never the opinion of God. Somehow it seems that the fish that come from heaven swim against the current of popular opinion.

- **Surround yourself with faithful people.**

Surround yourself with faithful people, people who think positively, people who can influence you for good.

Proverbs 13:20 “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Look around the people that you are with and say: Are they adding to who I am, or are they diminishing me? Are they wise people who input wisdom into the things that I’m doing, or are they foolish people who bring me down and keep me at a below-par level? So seek God’s perspective, especially when it comes to the influence of peers.

We became like grasshoppers in our sight, and so we were in their sight. Beloved, maybe today you walked into this place feeling very small. Maybe the week has taken its toll on you. Maybe you started out doing well, but by the end of it, you’re feeling down, you’re feeling low, you’re feeling very small, you’re feeling belittled. You came in here thinking: I can understand what it means to be like a grasshopper because I’m facing a lot of giants in my life. And yet, the Bible is saying those giants will find their proper place if you look at them through God’s strength, God’s wisdom, God’s grace.

So, as we look to see what is daunting in front of us, remember that we need to align our view of the problem with God’s truth. We need to trust implicitly in God’s promises. And we need to make sure that we are positive and not let the negative thinking factor into the way we look at things.

Then beloved, we can overcome the giants that threaten our lives. We never need to look and think that we are grasshoppers because in the light of who we are as God’s children, we can walk as spiritual giants in this world.

Amen.

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