

Talks – Joshua and Caleb – myfishbites.com

Bible – Numbers 13.1-2 and 16-33

The Lord said to Moses, ¹‘Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.’ ¹⁶These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

¹⁷When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, ‘Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.’ (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

²¹So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, towards Lebo Hamath. ²²They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

²⁶They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷They gave Moses this account: ‘We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.’

³⁰Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, ‘We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.’

³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.’ ³²And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.’

Moving Forward

Say that today you're going to look at the stories of Shammua, Shaphat, Igal and Sethur... No-one has heard of them? That's for a reason. These were good men of God but obedience is what really counts. If you want to make a huge difference for God then your answer needs to be yes and you need to line up your thinking with God's thinking, as Joshua and Caleb did.

All those sent to check out the Promised Land were already leaders. Yet they came back with negative reports. They were unwilling to move forward in the purposes of God. We need to check with ourselves about what kinds of leaders we are. Do we walk forward when God says go? Are we willing to do what God says, even when it looks different to what we are doing or what we have been doing?

When we fail to line up our thinking with what God says, we hinder ourselves and those we lead.

But...

The speaker Creflo Dollar once said, "don't be led by your 'but'" (he didn't say don't be led by your 'butt'!!) What did he mean? He meant that often we say 'yes, but...' I would do this for God but I can't... The thinking we need to have is 'I would do this for God and he will take care of my worries.' It's a 'can-do' attitude and not a 'can't-do'....

"Two men looked out from prison bars,
One saw the mud, the other saw stars."

Dale Carnegie, 'How to stop worrying and start living'

Moses was exactly obedient to God in getting a man from every tribe to go into the Promised Land to explore. He asked them to come back with answers to a number of questions. The only answers the 10 men came back stated the positive but focused on the negative:

"But the people were too powerful."

"The cities were large."

"The cities are fortified."

Many times when something is wrong in us or around us, we get focused on that. And it's understandable. But there is another way. In Luke, when Mary heard she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit, she said that her soul magnifies the Lord. Whatever we focus on we magnify. As hard as it is, a good choice is to magnify what is of and from God.

J John says that when David faced Goliath he could have said 'look at big he is, I'll never bring him down.' Instead he looked and said, 'he's so big, how can I miss!'

As Christians we have to have a can do attitude. We can do all things God calls us to through Christ. Many times in my life I've seen a downside to things and that has dominated my thinking and held me back, stopping me moving forward.

Other people facing them same opportunities look and see what could happen and what is possible. I've had to start fighting, with God's help, to change.

Growing, Growing, gone...

The leaders didn't stop with their bad report. It grew and grew. When we worry about things they often grow. The report was that the people were big and the cities were fortified. But this became the people are stronger than us and the land devours those living it. Many times we have to use the power God has given us to stop negative and wrong thoughts in their tracks before they build in our mind.

Most people have 'floaters' in their eyes, small 'bits' that are there but your brain generally learns to ignore them. But my brain started to see them because I once saw a leaflet and started focusing on them. God promised me healing from a Bible verse that came to me one day when listening to a talk at my church, so I'm standing on that. But a simple leaflet built in my hand led to thoughts building in my head and then the very thing I worried about actually manifested in my eyes.

We need to guard our thoughts and stop wrong thinking at the moment it threatens. We can say 'no' to bad thoughts, wrong thinking and sinful ideas (2 Corinthians 10.4-6)

Instead, let's think about what is good, right, honourable etc as Philippians 4.8-9 says. And let's see those good, God things come to pass. This kind of thinking is simply called 'faith' by the Bible. Both faith and hope are needed (along with patience as Hebrews 6.12 says – faith and patience inherit the promises). What is faith? Faith is the confident expectation of good, or as Romans 4.21 says 'being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what he has promised.' We need to live lives of faith and not of fear. They are opposites. Faith is from God and wrong fear is from the devil. Faith moves us forwards, fear holds us back and can even drive us backwards. So right thinking leads to right actions.

'The beginning of fear is the end of faith and the beginning of faith is the end of fear.'

George Mueller

Fruit but not fruitful

The men brought back the fruit from the land. Sometimes we forget that we have the fruit of the Spirit, the spiritual weapons God has given us. But we don't use them in the right way. We display them only in name only and don't walk in the fullness of them. How many times do we go to God immediately in the face of need? An old worship song says this:

"O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer."

Alan Jackson, What A Friend We Have In Jesu

Can you imagine having a bowl of fruit in front of you but saying 'I wish I had some fruit. If only I had some fruit. I'm craving fruit. If only there was some fruit.' All the time, the fruit is right there in front of you, ready to be eaten and your body infused with its life-giving nutrients. There are too many times that Christians fail to walk in the power that God has given us and that is in us.

Ephesians tells us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in us. It's just that we fail to use it because we don't know, don't understand, are worried, don't realise its potential or worse still – some people refuse to use the power of God citing church tradition rather than Bible truth. It's time to know the fruit we carry ('Christ in us, the hope of glory' – Colossians 1.27).

"Get the fruit out of the basket."

Rebellion, lack of vision...

The refusal to hear what Joshua and Caleb said led to consequences of rebellion. The Bible says where there is no vision the people perish. It's also true where there is lack of or poor leadership, the people perish.

At one church I attended, the leadership went through a season of transition. Some strange things happened. We went for a 2-3 month period with almost no Bible teaching, with people instead getting up and giving 'words' (personally I prefer to hear God's words!) One week people even started doing the conga around the room, saying they felt God was saying to do the conga. Without wanting to limit God, it didn't seem to be much of a God-thing to me and neglecting the Bible was much worse.

Back among the people of Israel, the unbelief of the ten leaders actually meant that the people of God couldn't go forward in the purposes of God. This actually hindered God's people moving forward into their destiny and promises. It stopped Caleb and Joshua moving forward even though they alone were allowed to enter the land (from the 12 spies). It delayed the fulfillment of God's promise to them, even though they had been obedient!

It's worth remembering that God calls unbelief a sin and it's a huge hindrance to us moving forward with God (see Hebrews 3 for example).

Joshua and Caleb had a different spirit and must have been so frustrated. Just imagine being someone who believed God, said yes to God, obeyed God and yet saw people fall back into unbelief, fear and stagnation. They were ready to move forward with God but were held back. They did eventually walk in God's promises because God is faithful. But let's do all we can to help others walk forward in faith.

Let's never be leaders who hold back spiritual forward motion. If people around you want to grab hold of what God is doing and saying, help them run with it. We shouldn't impose our personal or spiritual limitations onto others, unless they are genuinely doing something against God's Word. This is what holds back churches, stops the moves of God and sees people leave church.

I once ran a youth service which was growing and going fairly well. It needed some new energy but instead it was assimilated into the church's evening service for various reasons. The young people stopped coming. The forward motion was stopped.

Think

Being a Caleb or a Joshua means thinking beyond your limitations, having a 'yes' attitude to God and being prepared to walk forward in faith and not being held back in fear. What can we do to be like this and help others to be like this? God and our world needs Godly world shakers and world changers!