



April 6, 2008

Be Of Good Courage

In **Numbers 13.20**, Moses encourages the spies to “*be of good courage*” as they are sent forth with instructions to view the land that God had promised them. Their task was to report on the state of the country and it’s people and to bring back a sample of the “*fruit of the land*”. These were not idle words since God knew that they would see people and cities that might frighten them. In the end they allowed themselves to focus on the negative aspects of the experience. Ten of the twelve spies did not foster this good courage but allowed themselves to fall into the trap of thinking that God was powerless to do as he stated he would. Only Joshua and Caleb maintained the presence of mind to remember the power of the Lord and were assured of the fact that they could indeed accomplish what God had told them to do. We might look at this story and think that had we been there we would not have been distraught by the things that they saw. Who could blame them for thinking the way they did? After all, there were giants in Hebron (**Num 13.33**) and they viewed themselves negatively stating, “*...and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers...*” (**Num 13.33**). Today we do not have to go into a foreign land to see the way in which we can proceed to take it by force as they were to have done nor are we displaced, seeking a home after leaving the only one that we have ever been accustomed to. Like the children of Israel however we may lose sight of the power of God and his blessings. We will not have to face a race of hostile giants as we go forth but we may create giants of our own if we are not careful. The children of Israel began to think that the task ahead was one which solely rested on their abilities. What they forgot was that God promised to be with them. Christians in the first century were faced with persecution and death for their faith in Christ. Paul reassured the Romans “*...If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (**Rom 8.31**). During these times there were many who turned away while others, like Joshua and Caleb, trusted in the power and promises of God to accomplish what they needed to do. A powerful lesson from the

children of Israel is that they allowed their fear to cause them to draw back and shrink from doing what they had been told they could do. It is interesting that they were told to be of “good courage”. Many people can be brave when times are good and hardships are not being faced. During periods of trouble it takes a great deal of determination and strength to do what needs to be done. We are given the task of teaching the word of God to those around us. Too many times we allow fear and the trials of the times to cause us to divert our energies in the wrong direction. Solomon states, “*If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*” (**Prov 24.10**). Another lesson from the episode of the spies, is that the majority gave in to despair while only a few resolved to move forward with the task at hand. We are not faced with giants but there are large numbers of individuals who are influenced by false doctrine. There are others who, faced with economic uncertainties, family problems and the general chaos of life, reject the idea of God. They are not able to see past the momentary difficulties that affect all of us from time to time and reach a state of despair. At such times it is easy to fall prey to the negativity of the day, to fail to acknowledge the power of God through his word and just simply let opportunities to reach others pass us by. How powerful is the God we believe in? How strong is the faith that we have? It is not when things are going well and there are no obstacles facing us that we can answer these questions. It is only during the less favorable situations and times that the strength and resolve that we really have will come forth. It is the negative that will expose the positive. One thing that we need to remember is that the Lord is with those who will do what he says. Isaiah states, “*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” (**Isa 55.11**). We cannot reach others, but God’s word can and will but we have to put it into action and overcome the negative.

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