

# Two Ways of Looking at Giants

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please turn with me to the passage we read in Numbers chapter 13 and into chapter 14. I want to look at these two passages where we have a very obvious contrast between the report that the majority of the spies brought back and also the opinion and conclusions of Caleb and Joshua who together countered the unbelief and the reluctance of the 12 of their companions who did not actually want them to go further into the land of Canaan.

So we're looking really at what we could call two ways of looking at giants because they all saw the same things as they went through the land of Canaan, as they spied it out and yet they came to these very different conclusions in regard to what they had seen.

The one lot said, no, we just can't go into that land. There's fortified cities there. The people are huge. We met there the sons of Anak and there's no way we can actually overcome them and come to settle and occupy in the land.

On the other hand, Caleb and Joshua, they took a very different opinion. And as you know, they actually, in verse 30 there, for example, Caleb said, let us go up at once and occupy it for we are well able to overcome it.

And so as you come to look at these two contrasting opinions and conclusions, we want to try and learn from this tonight how we should face issues in our lives that confront us, that perhaps we may be intimidated by, and there will be many of those.

[ 1 : 5 4 ] And indeed, there might be, as it was for those 10 of the 12 who came back and said, these people in the land, they're giants and we are just like grasshoppers beside them.

And for ourselves, sometimes it may feel that life is really like that. And we will all at some point or other, I'm sure, have fears of the road ahead for us.

We will have things entering into our human experience that will look so large in our estimation that we feel intimidated by them. And that's very natural, even for believers, to actually see things in a way that sometimes makes us afraid.

Might be an illness, might be a serious illness, might be a bereavement, might be unemployment, might be some family issues, might be a question over, can we continue to keep the faith and be true and obedient to our God?

And a whole lot of other things you could think of along with that. And they might just look gigantic to us, these issues, all of them or some of them, as we think of facing the way ahead, taking steps from where we are now on into our future as Christians, as believers.

[ 3 : 0 9 ] And so I want to look at these two contrasting conclusions that they came to, looking at it in the context of this reconnaissance that was set up by God through Moses to actually go and spy out the land.

And it was a reconnaissance that ought to have reminded them of many things to encourage them. And it did that for Caleb and for Joshua, but it did not do that for the other ten, because they actually saw the giants as bigger than, well, effectively bigger than their God, or certainly bigger than what God was able to do for them.

That's where they didn't have the vision of the two. It was the giants and the sons of Anak that took up their vision, whereas for Caleb and Joshua, it was the gigantic power and presence of God that they were looking to.

So it was a journey or a survey or a reconnaissance, first of all, where they had opportunity to remember God's promises. Secondly, where they had opportunity to recall God's faithfulness.

Thirdly, where they had opportunity and indeed experience of receiving God's provision, the fruit of the land of Canaan. And in all of these areas of this episode, God was giving them opportunity to be encouraged to press on in dependence on himself and actually come and settle in this land that he had promised all these hundreds of years before to Abraham.

[ 4 : 42 ] Now, one of the things we'll see, we'll go and look into a couple of passages from Abraham's time and in the book of Exodus, because it's remarkable how you find details here in Numbers 13 and 14 that correspond very closely to the words of God to Abraham and the words that he spoke to Moses.

So that as you as you take that with you, you can see how wonderfully detailed this is. That reminds us of God's being true to himself, of God's faithfulness, and of God always bringing about what he has himself promised.

So they had to, first of all, go on this journey where they should have and had opportunity to remember God's promises. Go to the beginning of chapter 13.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. That was God's specific instruction.

He told them what to remember. They were to remember that God had already promised this land to them. And if you go back to Genesis, for example, Genesis 13, you'll see the words that correspond here, the words of God to Abraham at that time.

[ 5 : 59 ] Genesis 13 and at verse 16, verses 16 and 17, He says, An abundant offspring, descendants, but also an inheritance for them in Canaan that he is going to give them.

The two things that God had promised there, an increase in numbers greatly, but also a specific inheritance. The land of Canaan, the land that's flowing with milk and honey, as God described it elsewhere.

Now, the increase in numbers had already happened. They were a vast number of people that had come out of Egypt and were now here on their way to the promised land.

They had come already to be multiplied greatly, even despite the efforts of the Egyptians to keep down the numbers of the people of Israel. They hadn't managed it because God was committed to increasing them.

And where God has said, I'm going to increase them, there isn't a power in the world. There isn't a power anywhere that can actually thwart that, that can actually reverse that or stop that. And that's a great encouragement for yourself in your own life, even as an individual, where God is set on increasing your spiritual life and growth and understanding.

[ 7 : 42 ] All of these things that he's promised to do, well, there's nothing in the world. There's no power that can actually stop that. There will be attempts made, as you know, and your own heart will sometimes lead you astray and take you aside.

But God is committed to glorifying his people. God is committed to bringing them home, bringing them into the inheritance that he has promised for them in heaven. So the increase of numbers had already happened.

And you see, that really should have been for the people. It should have been for these 12 as well, and for these 10 who really didn't make much of it. It should have been for them the basis for believing that God would do the other thing that he had promised, which was to bring them into the land of Canaan and settle them there.

You see, the first one being fulfilled was the basis for believing the second one would be fulfilled as well. He had fulfilled the increase in the numbers. So there you have it. He was bound then to increase, to actually settle them in the land, the second promise, to give them the land of Canaan.

But they feared the challenge. They feared the giants. The challenge that was set before them, they made it into an insurmountable problem.

[ 8 : 58 ] And we're like that ourselves. Sometimes, even though we believe in God and believe his promises, sometimes we let our own hearts just overwhelm us. And sometimes we let the world flood into our minds and our thinking as well.

So that what is a challenge, undoubtedly, as we face it by faith, it becomes then such a problem as gigantic. We just can't overcome it. And it's understandable that we are like that at times.

But the problem, the point is that the reality, as we apply this, as we look back daily on our lives and our experience, we get experience and are convinced of God's truthfulness.

Look at your own life tonight. Aren't you convinced that God has been truthful with regard to every single thing that he has set out for you in his word and in your experience of him in your life?

Whatever failures that are in myself and in yourself, there will never be failures that lead you to say, well, God has deceived me. God has been untrue to me and untrue to himself.

[ 10 : 06 ] Here are people who could very readily say God has been true to himself. He's brought us to this moment. He's brought us here in great numbers, just as he promised. He's been true to his promise.

So we have to look back daily at the evidence we have of God's truthfulness all the way through our life since we came to know him and to follow him. And you'll have evidence of that in your own life tonight, that God is a God of truth.

That God is true to his promise to you and to all of us as we seek to follow him. So, you see, the reality of that, knowing that today, should strengthen us for tomorrow.

The reality of knowing that God had been true to his promise to multiply the descendants of Abraham ought to have been itself sufficient to convince the people now.

Well, he's done that, so he's not going to actually leave us short of fulfilling his promise to bring us into the land. Whatever there is in the land that intimidates us, that seems so big, that is so gigantic in our eyes, we have God.

[ 11 : 15 ] We have God who promised this to us, so we can't fail. That's, of course, how Caleb and Joshua dealt with it. So, tonight you've got God's promises.

You've got God's promises of salvation for you. You've got God's promises of looking after you. You've got God promising to guide you through life safely, irrespective of what the experiences of life may be.

You have God's promise that he will give you grace every day, sufficient for the needs of that day. And that that experience of the grace that you have received today is itself a basis for believing, well, God is going to give me grace tomorrow as he's promised.

He's not going to be one thing to me one day and something else another day. He is the God of truth. Remembering God's promises, experiencing how they have already come to be kept by God, at least as far as our experience up to now is concerned.

There may be other aspects of God's promise, of course, that still lie in the future and wait to be fulfilled. But the fact that he's fulfilled some of them already is enough for us to say, well, he'll look after the rest in the future as well.

[ 12 : 29 ] So there's the first thing. Remembering God's promises and remembering how he had fulfilled the increase that he promised. It should have been enough for these people to understand and to be confident that God would bring them safely into the land, despite the sons of Anak, the Nephilim, the giants that were in the land.

Secondly, they had opportunity to recall God's faithfulness. Not only did he tell them what to remember, remembering God's promises from the past to Abraham and to Moses, but also he told them where to go.

Told them where to go. Verses 17 to 20 there of chapter 13. Chapter 13, verse 17. There is God saying to them, Moses sent them out to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, go up into the Negev, the south country, and go up into the hill country and see what the land is and whether the people who walk in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, whether the land they dwell in is good or bad.

And whether the land is rich or poor, whether there are trees in it or not, be of good courage, bring some of the fruit of the land. Now the time of the season was the time of first ripe grapes.

And you see, then describes how they went up and spied the land. It gives us the regions that they went through. They went up into the Negev and came to Hebron. As soon as you hear Hebron, it clicks in your mind and say, ah, Abraham.

[ 14 : 05 ] Because that's the feature of Abraham's life, isn't it? When you think about Hebron, it's really, in a sense, what they are doing here is retracing the steps of Abraham, the Abraham to whom God gave the promises that this was going to be the inheritance of his descendants.

And as they retraced these steps, they should have remembered God's faithfulness in bringing them to that point. Again, Genesis chapter 12 and verse 9 there, where you find Abraham went on his journey and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and I on the east.

And there he built an altar to the Lord and Abraham journeyed on, still going towards the Negev. When you go up to, when you then go to chapter 23 of Genesis, what do you find in chapter 23?

Well, you find an account of the death of Sarah, Abraham's beloved wife. What do you read there? Sarah lived for 127 years.

These were the years of the life of Sarah, and Sarah died at Kiriath Arba. That is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

[ 15 : 23 ] And that became, as that chapter later goes on, he bought a field there as a burial place for his family. And that is where the people of Israel, these spies, were standing as they went in to spy the land of Canaan.

This land that they were standing on wasn't just promised by God, but the evidences of God's faithfulness were all around them. Abraham's grave was there.

Sarah's grave was there. The descendants of Abraham, his sons were there. Isaac and then Jacob, his grandson, and his sons. And all the sons of Jacob were buried there apart from Joseph.

His bones were carried with them from Egypt into Canaan. See, that whole area just bristled with evidence of the promises of God being fulfilled in his faithfulness.

That land, remarkably, these areas so specifically mentioned, as they were too, for linking them with God's promise to Abraham.

[ 16 : 25 ] So they went forward, should have been in faith, and the evidence there for them to strengthen their faith and their hope in God. And yet for the 12, for 10 out of the 12, that really wasn't the case.

And then when you go to verse 29 there in chapter 13 of Numbers, where you find there the Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negev.

Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites dwell in the hill country, and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the Jordan. And then you come to Exodus, chapter 3, where God speaks to Moses, and where God says to Moses in verse 17, he says, Go and gather, verse 16, go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, You see the connection.

How precisely the description here in chapter 13 of Numbers, how it fits with that verse in Exodus and previously to Abraham before that as well.

And that should have really given encouragement to them. Instead, they were so taken up with a gigantic size of the sons of Anak that they just turned in fear and said, We can't go in there. We can't go in there. It's too much.

[ 18 : 07 ] They were taken up with the giants rather than with God. Now, that's so very clear to ourselves at times as well. We're facing giants. We're facing giants within the secular movements of our day.

We're facing giants as we seek to make the gospel known and praying that it be effective for our own generation as well.

But you can see the giants that you're facing. You can see the giants within government itself, within the secular movement of our day, within all the forces that are in our own land already, ranged against the advance of God's kingdom.

And they're out there to intimidate you. They're there to actually appear so gigantic that you will just say, Well, I'm fine where I am and I don't really want to go further and I don't want to take on these forces and I'll just leave things as they are.

I'll leave to somebody else. That's what these giants are hoping you will do. But friends, these giants are gaining ground.

[ 19 : 14 ] They're stamping all over some of our heritage already. They're stamping all over some of our heritage.

They do look so fierce. They do wound us. They do threaten us. There are some movements, as you know, in our country that will very readily blacken your name on Facebook or Twitter in massive amounts, massive numbers of people.

If you dare to stand up for certain issues or against certain issues such as you find currently in our land, well, don't give in to them. Don't invite deliberately such opposition to yourself.

But as you stand for Christ and as you stand for his kingdom and as you stand for his gospel and for his church and for his name and for his glory, you are going to face the giants.

But they're not bigger than God. You know, this is what this chapter is really telling us. And as you face these giants, recall God's faithfulness.

[ 20 : 50 ] Recall God's promises, God's truthfulness. Has that changed? Is that different to what it used to be? Of course it isn't. And that's what you take with you into your everyday life.

So it was a survey where they could remember God's promises, where they could recall God's faithfulness. And it was a survey or a reconnaissance in which they could and did receive God's provision.

They came to taste of the wonderful produce of Canaan. They came to the valley of Eshcol. Chapter 13 there, you find it in verse 23.

They came to the valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch and a single cluster of grapes. And they carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs.

The place was called the valley of Eshcol because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there. Eshcol in Hebrew means a cluster, the cluster. And obviously the cluster was large, large enough to be carried on a pole between two men.

[ 21 : 56 ] And that tells you it was something that they wanted to keep and to keep without damaging it till they got back to Moses and to their companions.

But also I think it really shows that it was large, it was huge, it was heavy. That cluster of grapes in the valley of Eshcol, the valley of the cluster.

See, God was already giving them a taster of what Canaan would be like. And it was the intention of Moses to actually encourage them as they went in there to taste it, to actually have a sample of the land for themselves to bring back.

That's why Moses encouraged them to do that. Be of good courage and go up. That's what he said. Go up into the Negev. Be of good courage. There in verse 20. And bring back some of the fruit of the land.

The time was the season of the first ripe grapes. How wonderfully detailed and precise is God's timing? You know, just think of all that's happened before now in the experience of these people, even since they left Egypt.

[ 23 : 06 ] And yet they're coming to actually spy out the land precisely at the time when the ripe grapes were beginning to just cluster in the valley of Eshcol.

See, God's timing is always right. God's timing is always precise, always for the benefit of his people. And there's in verse 27 there, you'll find again, they told him, we came to the land to which you sent us.

It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. And you see the description there is the description that God gave them, that he was going to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

And what they're saying now is we found it exactly like that. And yet, in other respects, they don't actually follow with faith and with strength and with courage the promises that God had given to them.

And when we find in our present day and present life, the grace of today, when you find that God has been exactly as he promised, when he gives you to taste already in this life of the fruit of Canaan, when the blessing of God reaches your soul, when you know that something has happened and God has brought the blessing of his word into your experience, and you have tasted and you have seen that God is good, and you say, well, if it's as good as this now, and I'm only getting a little sample of it, how good must it be in the whole inheritance when it comes to be inhabited?

[ 24 : 44 ] Why has God given you that particular experience now of a foretaste of heaven, of a foretaste of the things that he has promised for his people? Why? So that you will actually use that present evidence and put it along with a fulfillment of past promises in God's faithfulness and God's truth and say, I have to press on now because I know God, having been this to me up to now, is not going to be different to me tomorrow.

It's going to be the same all the way through till I reach home. Now notice how different those 10 out of the 12 spies actually concluded.

This was something they should have immediately, like Caleb and Joshua just said, let's go in. God is going to give it, has given it to us anyway. That's his promise and he's faithful and he's truth.

We're well able to actually take it. But we're not, they said. People there are stronger than we are. So they brought out a bad report.

And you see what they're saying is, they told him, we came to the land which you sent us, it flows with milk and honey. And then verse 28, however.

[ 26 : 02 ] And your heart sinks when you read that, however, or could be translated, but. Because despite all that they have seen and all of the acknowledged in verse 27, there it is, however.

Although this is the case, however, this is also true. And what follows the however overtakes everything else that they've experienced. And there will always be that in our own lives as well.

And there will always be people, of course, that you come across that will always have a however in their conclusions. We have it ourselves from time to time. We know God is good.

We know God has looked after us. We know God is always going to be true to his promise. However, the giants look big. The giants just are formidable.

And before you know it, what God has proved himself to be is overwhelmed by your view of the giants. And you know, they ought to have reversed this as Caleb and Joshua did.

[ 27 : 09 ] What they ought to have said was, well, yes, there are descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, they're huge people.

They're stronger than we are. They're fortified cities. But we are well able to overcome because we have God on our side. Because we have God with us.

And we carry God's promises. And God is true. And God is faithful. But that's, of course, what they didn't do. Just like all too often myself and yourselves.

So here for us tonight, we take remembering God's promises and how truthful God is. We remember God's faithfulness and how he is always faithful all the way through our life.

And how God's provision as we presently experience samples of it is designed to make us face the giants and say, Well, my God is faithful.

[ 28 : 14 ] My God will bring me through. And this is what lies in store for me. The fullness of what I'm now sampling of the produce of Canaan.

Now, there's a powerful sequel to this whole event. This whole event, of course, was hugely significant in the experience of the people.

Because their refusal here, their acceptance of the reports of the ten rather than the two, is what led to the 40 years wandering in the desert for them.

So they're at a crossroads. They have a choice to make. They've made the choice. Unfortunately for them, it's the wrong choice. And they've chosen to listen to the bad report rather than the good one.

But there's a powerful sequence to it. And that's in the book of Joshua. When you come to Joshua, of course, you led the people into the land of Canaan. In chapter 14 of Joshua, you have a wonderful sequel here.

[ 29 : 16 ] For here you find the same man, Caleb, from verse 10 to 14. In Joshua chapter 14. Let me just read these in conclusion.

Joshua 14 from verse 10, or the second part of verse 10. This is Caleb, where he's saying, I followed, wholly followed the Lord my God.

And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land on which your feet have trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said these 45 years, since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses.

I am this day 85 years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me. My strength now is as my strength was then for war and for going and coming.

So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day. For you heard on that day how the Anakim were there with great fortified cities.

[ 30 : 26 ] It may be that the Lord will be with me and I shall drive them out, just as the Lord said. So Joshua blessed him and he gave Hebron to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, for an inheritance.

What a wonderful sequel for that man who had been one of the 12 spies and had given that wonderful report. And yet his report had been rejected.

But there he is. His faithfulness to God rewarded. And so for us remembering and recalling and receiving God's promises, God's faithfulness, God's provision.

Like Caleb, we press on and we say on a daily basis, Lord, give me this land. Give me this inheritance.

May You bless His word to us. Let's conclude this evening by singing in Psalm 105, Psalm 105 in the ■ Sylgangskans.

[ 31 : 28 ] Thank you.