

Synopsis: The story of Caleb, Joshua and the ten other spies is recorded in Number 13 and Deut 1. It is a good example of faith and faithlessness. Two groups see the exact same challenge from completely different viewpoints. In this story, two men see that God is greater than any challenge. Sadly, the other ten think the challenges are greater than God. The ten live in fear and lead the whole nation astray resulting in 40 years of lost blessings.

This study will answer the question, “Why can two sets of Christians see the same situation differently?” Purpose: May today’s study help you discover the depths of your faith, help you see if you are walking in faith or faithlessness, and inspire you to trust God more.

Story: God brought the children of Israel, through a miserable wilderness, up to the edge of the Promised Land. The people were called to leave the wilderness and go forward to the place of blessing, God’s Blessing! Going in only required enough faith to face great enemies, but God promised to be with them and give them complete victory. What would you do?

The Lord allowed the people to send 12 spies into the land. The spies were to determine the routes for their specific families to go into the promised land. Each tribe was promised various lands by God. All they had to do was walk forward into the Promised Land to receive it. The 12 spies were given the opportunity to go in early, determine the best paths of travel and bring back samples of the abundance of the Promised Land. The priority was not to size up the enemy, but to prepare to inherit the promises.

Apply this to your story?

- Have you responded to God’s offer to walk in faith and receive his victory?
- Are there sins and enemies in your homes and lives which you must prepare to face?
- Has God promised you victories that you have yet to realize?
- Have you begun to taste the abundance God offers for faithful living?

Consider: The 12 tribes sent one man each into the Promised Land and they came back with a great abundance of fruit and harvest. They reported the land was flowing with blessings; yet, they also came back with bad news. The land had enemies, some who were giants, and others who were entrenched in fortresses in the land.

Read their return report delivered to Moses. Consider that Caleb (and Joshua, though not mentioned in this passage) were undeterred from going in, even though the other ten were too afraid to trust God. Consider on which side of faith would you have stood.

Numbers 13:25–33 At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. ²⁶ And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the

Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.”³⁰ But Caleb quieted the people before Moses {obviously the people were afraid} and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”³¹ Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.”³² So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Application points:

P1: When our eyes are on the enemy we often live in fear and this fear spreads.

I’ve met so many people who obsess over the details of every challenge. When you ask them if they have faith in God, their response is often, “Yeah, but... But there is no way I can pay this... But my boss is rude... But the prognosis is horrible... but the system’s unfair,” etc...

As Christians we are called to keep our eyes on our God who is bigger than our enemies.

- God is sovereign—He is above all
- God is sufficient—He will meet all our needs
- God is sweet—He loves us and has reserved great blessings for us
- But God is also firm—He rarely gives blessings that do not require faith.

Instead of encouraging the tribes to trust God, then ten gave a bad report. If you read all the references to this story, you will see the report caused the people to be distressed, depressed, doubting then then despising God. They literally accused God of bringing them to the promised land to die. Instead of trusting God who already carried them through great difficulties, then turned on him and accused him of treachery. What would your story say?

Ask:

- Have I let problems define my God or does my God define the problems?
- Do I needlessly obsess and fear over the details of a promise God has given?
- When I live in fear, does my faithlessness cause others to stumble?
- Have I come to the place I desire to inherit the promises, or must I spend more time wandering in the wilderness to learn to trust God?

If you realize you have faced your challenges with little faith, turn to God. He is faithful to his own characteristics of mercy, grace, and provision. He doesn’t abandon us when we fail. Instead He waits to help us. Turn to God. Repent and return to the source of your strength.

P2. When we keep our eyes on God our enemies appear much, much smaller

I’ve met many women and men who have faced great challenges, death, sickness, abuses and the like, and their faith carried them through. They discovered a secret; God is above

all and He loves his children and He works through the problems for their sanctification, character development and wellbeing. A fantastic example of this is Caleb and Joshua. They were ready to inherit the promises. They urged others to trust God. When the nation refused to obey, Joshua and Caleb had to return to the wilderness too! But of the 12 spies who went into the land and left, only Caleb and Joshua returned to inherit the promises.

Caleb came back to the Promised Land forty years later. He was now an old man. What did he do? Did he say, "It's too late?" No, he went to the promised land as a warrior and God gave him victory. Because of his faithfulness, he and his family inherited the promises.

Joshua came back into the land the leader of the Nation of Israel. He was firm, weathered, and matured. God instructed him *"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."* *Deuteronomy 31:6 .*

In Joshua 1 we read, *"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua ... "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses... No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:1–7)

Joshua's faith caused him and the nation to inherit the promises. His faith helped others to be strong and courageous. When the people trusted and obeyed God, they inherited God's promises.

Gang, none of us know our lot in life, but any plan of God is better than every plan we can make for ourselves. Yes, faith requires courage, but courage doesn't seem so difficult when our eyes are on almighty God.

Consider:

1. You can be confident of God's goodness because he has promised.
2. No matter where you are, realize God will never leave you or forsake you.
3. It's not the quantity of faith you have, it's the quality of faith. Simple faith placed in almighty God is much better than lots of faith based on your own insights and plans.
4. Trust God; yes, He will lead you into combat, but also through it. He has brought you here today so you can learn to trust, love, and serve him, in obedience to his plan.

Resolve to say with Joshua and me, *"Choose this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* (Joshua 24:15)