

Message #15**Numbers 14:1-45**

Let me begin this by asking some rhetorical questions about God. Do you believe God created the heaven and the earth out of nothing? Do you believe that God has all power to do whatever He wants to do? Do you believe that God is the God who ordained your life? Do you believe that God is the One who saved you from all your sins? Do you believe that God is sovereign over all things?

Well then why don't most people think that God can deliver them from some bad medical report? If you really believe these things about God, then why don't most people turn to Him and trust Him and talk to Him and believe in Him to help you? The truth is most people have a problem with unbelief and that unbelief can become very emotional and very irrational. If ever you want to see that, just look at Israel.

When the ten spies came back with a negative report and two came back with a positive report, the people did not listen for one second to anything positive, but they took the advice of the non-trusting majority and responded with "fear and frenzy."

What happens here is critical to us. This is one of the most important chapters in the entire book of Numbers. This chapter is referred to in the New Testament in I Corinthians 10:1-5 and Hebrews 3:7-19. God warns us to learn a N.T. lesson from this, which is this:

UNBELIEF WILL CAUSE THE ENTIRE GROUP TO MISS EXPERIENCING THE ULTIMATE BLESSINGS OF GOD THAT COULD HAVE BEEN THEIRS.

If we do not take God's Word seriously and obey it, we will cost ourselves. Now this chapter may be analyzed under seven main sections:

SECTION #1 – All of the people in Israel listened to the bad report, lost faith in God and started weeping and grumbling against Moses and Aaron. **14:1-4**

After the children of Israel heard the spy report, instead of believing Caleb that God would give them the land, they believed the ten other spies who said they couldn't take it. There were two emotional reactions:

Emotional Reaction #1 - The people were weeping. **14:1**

As a result of the report, the people were crying and weeping (**14:1**). There are two different Hebrew words used for crying and weeping, which means this group is intensely wailing and lamenting and sobbing. Do you see that? Do you get that? This is some group. They spend the night like a bunch of crybabies weeping and howling and screaming. Not only are they not happy they are about to get the Promised Land, they are weeping because they think there is no chance they will ever get it. These people are emotional wrecks and none of it is based on reality. They are inventing and imagining every bit of this and are weeping.

This is what can happen when God's people take their eyes off of God and His Word and look at themselves and their circumstances. People can become emotional and irrational.

If you read much on the subject of depression, you will learn that the central thing that causes depression is loss. Loss of something typically causes depression. Now the key to emotional stability is to determine if the loss is real or imagined. Many people are depressed because they imagine things that aren't even real. I am totally convinced that there are many people in mental institutions who are emotional wrecks who have imagined and invented things that aren't reality.

This is what happened here. You have an entire nation that is in a state of depression over something that is not real. What is so troubling about this is that these are the people of God. You would think by looking at these people that God had never done one thing for these people and that God was not even connected to these people. This is totally pathetic.

Emotional Reaction #2 - The people started grumbling. **14:2-4**

They started grumbling and saying ridiculous things. They are so emotionally lost that they were sorry that they didn't die in the land of Egypt. What we have here are emotional, irrational, spiritual wrecks who have lost their spiritual bearings.

Then they started grumbling against Moses and Aaron saying stupid things like wish we would have died in Egypt or the Wilderness (**14:2**). These people are a bunch of "Debbie Downers."

Then they start making up crazy theology. They started saying God has brought us here to kill us. In other words, God was not a God of life, but a God of doom and death. We are going to be killed and they are going to take our wives and children; maybe it would be better to return to Egypt (**14:3**). **What they are saying here is let's reject the whole plan of redemption and return to our old way of life.**

In fact, according to **verse 4**, they said let's elect another leader and he can lead us back to Egypt. They knew that Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb didn't agree with them so they wanted to get rid of their godly leaders and replace them. Do you see that? This is how irrational these people had become. They were ready to elect a new leader to reverse the entire Exodus.

SECTION #2 – Four men humble themselves and speak to the sons of Israel and try to convince Israel to trust God and not rebel against God. **14:5-9**

Keep the numbers in mind. There are over 600,000 warrior men plus another 22,000 priests and out of those numbers only four believe God and believe His Word. The rest are weeping and emotional wrecks. This is the first time when all four of these leaders are named together.

When Moses and Aaron heard this idiotic talk, they fell on their faces before God in the presence of the entire nation (14:5). Joshua and Caleb who had spied out the land tore their clothes (14:6). **These were godly leaders and Israel was blessed to have them. All four immediately got them to refocus their attention on God.**

They reminded them that the Promised Land was wonderful land and that God would give it to them if they were pleasing to Him (14:7-8). They described the land as “exceedingly good” which in a rare Hebrew construction means it was “exceedingly, exceedingly good way above all expectations.” **All they had to do was to obey God and be pleasing to God and He would give them every bit of that land.**

They warned them in **verse 9** not to rebel against God and do not fear the people in the land because God will give them the land, He will protect them and deliver the enemies to them as their prey.

So Israel was at a crossroad. They would either believe God and His Word or they would believe the negative report of the ten who do not believe God and His Word.

Now to whom would you rather listen? To Moses, who actually knows the Word of God? To Aaron, who has served in the Tabernacle and seen the very presence of God? Would you want to listen to Joshua and Caleb, who also knew the Word of God and will of God and had actually been there to see the people and land? Or would you rather listen to the people running their mouths and inventing insane things like God brought us here to kill us?

This always amazes me in churches. Some people listen to spiritual duds who haven't done anything for God as if they are going to give some godly counsel.

SECTION #3 – All the people of Israel would not listen to the Word of God and wanted to stone them so God threatens to destroy Israel. **14:10-12**

Well the people made their choice. They decided to believe the liars. They wanted to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. Do you know why these people want to stone them? They want to stone them because they trust in God and believe the Word of God literally. They believe in a grace redemption that God can give to people.

Before they could utter one more Word, God's glory appeared in the Tent of Meeting. God was about to take over this evil group of vigilantes. In **verse 11**, God says in spite of all the miraculous things I have done, they still refuse to believe in Me.

Now just think of what these people have actually seen God do. He sent a series of plagues; He parted a sea; He destroyed the Egyptians; He miraculously supplied food and water in the middle of a desert and He visibly displayed Himself and His glory to this nation. Frankly, God was fed up with them.

So God says in **verse 12**, I am going to smite these people and strike them down with a plague. I will replace them with some other group.

SECTION #4 – Moses intercedes to God in behalf of Israel to ask that He spares Israel.
14:13-19

This is an amazing intercessory prayer that Moses prays in behalf of Israel. Moses is one of the most amazing leaders that any could have. He cared about these people even when they had gone berserk. Moses knew God and he knew the Word and will of God. That is very clear in this prayer. It is carefully thought out and it is sound. This is a very personal prayer as illustrated by the use of the second person pronoun “you.”

Intercessory Message #1 - The Egyptians will hear that you struck down your own people and they will tell it to the people living in the Promised Land. **14:13-14**

If God were to destroy His own people, it would be cause for heathens to develop a faulty theology about God and that land. To this very day, nations realize that land belongs to Israel and one day they will give it to her. Had God not answered this request of Moses, they would not think that way.

Intercessory Message #2 - The nations will say because the Lord is not strong enough to bring His people into the Land, He had to slaughter them. **14:15-16**

If God destroyed His own people, the godless nations would say it was because He did not have the power to save His own people, so He killed them. This would attack His omnipotence. He was not strong enough to defeat enemies, so He dropped His own people.

Intercessory Message #3 - Let God’s power and attributes be greatly displayed by saving this people. **14:17-18**

If God would spare His people, it would make a powerful statement about the attributes of God.

(Attribute #1) - It would display God’s power. **14:17**

(Attribute #2) - It would display that God is slow to anger. **14:18a**

(Attribute #3) - It would display that God is abundant in mercy. **14:18b**

(Attribute #4) - It would display that God forgives iniquity and transgression. **14:18c**

(Attribute #5) - It would display that God does not ever clear the guilty. **14:18d**

The reason Moses brings up this point is that he is expressing to God that he realizes that God's forgiveness is not a license that condones sin. God will chasten those who rebel against Him, but He will forgive those who fear Him and turn from sin, even to the third and fourth generations.

Since we all have received a sin nature from our parents, we are responsible for what we do in our relationship with God.

Intercessory Message #4 - Moses asks God to pardon the people by His great mercy and grace and forgive them as He had since they left Egypt. **14:19**

Moses' final argument is God, you have forgiven your people many times since we left Egypt, please do this once more.

SECTION #5 – God decides to pardon Israel but decides there will be consequences for her unbelief. **14:20-25**

God responded by saying I have pardoned Israel. **Verse 20** makes it clear this is due to the prayer of Moses and his wise request. Moses humbly went before God, not as some name-it-and-claim-it arrogant charismatic minister.

God says there will come a day when My glory will fill the whole earth but those who have rebelled against Me in what they have already seen Me do will not see the land (**14:21-23**).

But Caleb will go into the land. So in **verse 25**, God told Moses to turn to the wilderness by way of the Red Sea. In other words, instead of going forward into the land, they were turning around and they would wander around for the next 40 years.

SECTION #6 – God decided to implement more negative consequences on Israel because she did not learn her lesson and kept complaining against Him. **14:26-35**

God says this nation will wander around for 40 years, one year for each day they spied out the land and did not believe Me (**v. 34**). They would all die in the wilderness and not step one foot into the Promised Land. The only exceptions would be Joshua and Caleb.

SECTION #7 – God struck down the negative spies and when the children of Israel finally admitted their sin, it was too late to regain the blessings of God. **14:36-45**

The actual perpetrators were struck down. But notice **verse 40**, they admitted they sinned and then they decided that they would go up and take the Promised Land contrary to what God just told them.

God said you go up and fight if you want, but I will not be with you. But **verse 44** says they went up anyway and were beaten.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS:

- 1. God wants His people to trust Him and by faith go forward, obeying and applying His Word in any context of life**
- 2. God's people need to continually remember what God has done and Thank Him.**
- 3. God's people can experience God's mercy, grace, forgiveness and pardon if they confess.**
- 4. The majority of people and churches may be wrong and the minority may be right.**
- 5. Be careful not to let irrational emotions govern your life; stick to the reality of the Word of God regardless of what others feel or believe.**