



Following God Fully

Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #10

Numbers 13-14

Pastor David Sunday

November 6, 2011

Lord, we pray that in Your love and mercy You would drive the hardness of unbelief out of our hearts now and God, that You would grant faith in Your Word. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of Christ. We pray that today, Lord, we would grow strong in faith, giving glory to You. Being fully persuaded that what you have promised, You will perform. God we pray that our church would move forward through faith and magnify You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

The book of Numbers has been our reading this week. The book starts out in a way that might seem tedious but it's very purposeful as God gathers His people and forms them into an army so they can move forward into the Promised Land. As we read the first several chapters of Numbers with the census, the formation of the tribes, get this aerial view of Israel in your mind. As they are camped at Mt. Sinai for about 14 months, they're getting ready to move into the Promised Land. There are three tribes to the north. Three tribes to the south. Three tribes to the east. Three tribes to the west. In the middle is the tabernacle with God's presence. As they move forward—two million people—they move in a cross-shaped formation toward the Promised Land.

They start out well in chapter ten, they begin their forward movement with God leading them through the cloud and fire. Then they get stuck and a whole generation of people is put in a holding pattern that's going to keep all but two of them from advancing into the Promised Land that God had given to His people.

I'd like to read that section of Numbers 14, beginning at verse 20. God makes His tragic and sobering announcement that results because of the sins of unbelief that prevailed over and over again in the lives of the people at Mt. Sinai. As they move forward to this place—Kadesh Barnea—right on the edge of the Promised Land, God says, "You're

just going to stay here. You're going to stay in the wilderness. You're not going to move forward. All but two of you are going to fail to enter the land."

Listen to these words beginning with Number 14:20:

²⁰Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. ²¹But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ²² none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. ²⁴But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it. ²⁵ Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."

²⁶And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷"How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸Say to them, 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹ But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³²But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' ³⁵ I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die."

³⁶ And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land— ³⁷the men who brought up a bad report of the land— died by plague before the LORD. ³⁸Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive.

This is God's Word.

Have you ever sat been part of a church or fellowship of people and get this feeling that you're not going anywhere? That you're not moving forward? People are there; God's people are they. They are saying correct things. They have a form of godliness but it seems they are missing its power. They no longer seem gripped by the Great Commission and by

the great commandment the Lord has given us. It feels like everyone is wandering aimlessly. Just marking time. This can happen to churches. This can happen to whole generations. Why is it that it seems like some generations of believers are much more active and effective in advancing God's purposes than other generations? Why is it that some churches are more active and effective in advancing the gospel than other churches?

The book of Numbers warns us. It's here as a warning to us. It's here, 1 Corinthians 10:6 says, as an example to us that we might not follow the pattern of these Israelites. Hebrews 3 and 4 is an extended commentary on the book of Numbers, again serving as an example to the church today. The example we learn from the book of Numbers is that it is possible for a generation who has experienced God's power in a remarkable way to end up doing very little toward advancing God's purposes in their generation. The Israelites who passed through the Red Sea and experienced God's mighty acts of redemption in the Exodus, actually failed after the Exodus to advance God's purposes and to take possession of God's promises.

Colin Smith from Arlington Heights writes, "In a sense, Numbers is a book that need never have been written. It's the story of an unnecessary detour. Of a group of God's people who are faced with an open door of opportunity but held back when they should have pressed forward. Why did God give us this record? To warn us of the sad consequences of cowardly choices. To warn us that there's a danger that we could miss our calling and become a group of wandering, aimless people who mark time for a generation."

I don't want that to happen here. Praise God for New Covenant Bible Church! Praise God for what He's done here. We've been a church now for just a little bit longer than the Israelites camped at Mt. Sinai. They were there about 14 months; we've been a church for about 18-19 months. We have experienced God's blessing as a church in remarkable ways. God brought two congregations together with peace and joy and love and then has grown those two congregations by bringing in new people who were never part of either former congregation. There's an attitude of wanting to do what God calls us to do here that is admirable. I just want to say, I love pastoring this church. These 18 months have been a great joy for me and I give glory to God for what He has done. I love this place and if you're visiting today, I think you've come to a great place and I hope you'll stay. God has a purpose for this church.

His purpose is not that we be like a sponge, just soaking in blessings. God wants us to be rivers of living water, dispensing His life, His gospel, His goodness, His power into a

dry and weary land where there is little water. God has a purpose for our church. As we look at the book of Numbers this morning, let's learn how a whole generation was put on hold—put in a holding pattern just like the planes circling above O'Hare, waiting to land in the middle of a snow storm but then get diverted to Detroit or somewhere else.

God put this generation on hold—they did not enter the Promised Land, except for two of them. As we look at their example, what are the marks of decline that we can trace through this narrative so when we see those marks of decline popping up in our life together as a church we can arrest the decline? We can arrest it and say, "No, we are not going to let that happen at New Covenant Bible Church by God's grace."

We're going to look at several things we must **beware** of as a church as we think about God's purposes for us, and then several things we must **believe** as we think about God's purposes for us as a church.

Beware

The first word is beware. Numbers is a sobering book. It's meant to warn us. What do we need to beware of as a church?

First of all, when grumbling and gossip are commonplace, it's a sign that the church is in decline. We see it in verse 27: "*How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me.*" God hears His people when they grumble and He takes it personally. It's against Him. Grumbling and gossip in the life of a congregation must be arrested before it takes over.

I'm thankful that in our life together, I have heard a lot more gratitude than grumbling in our church. I haven't heard gossip and I'm thankful for that. We're praying this month for a breakthrough in gospel-gratitude. Would you join us in praying that God would fill our hearts with gratefulness for who He is, for what He has done for us as a people and that we would be mindful, not forgetting all His benefits.

This attitude of grumbling and gossip didn't start in chapter 14. We could trace it all the way back to chapter 11. Look at how chapter 11 starts: "*And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD...*" There it is again, God hears their complaining. They "... *complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes...*" Instead of thinking, "Wait a minute, we just got delivered from Egypt, from slavery, from bondage. We just saw the Red Sea split in half and God is bringing us to a great place. Isn't this an exciting journey? Isn't He good?" They start complaining "*about their misfortunes*" and God's "*anger was*

kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down.”

Then they start complaining about their food later on in the chapter and they seem to remember these gourmet meals that their slave holders were giving them in Egypt. The fish and cucumbers and leeks and onions and garlic. “Oh, that was wonderful!” Maybe one time they got fed that kind of food and that was just to fatten them up for work the next day. This is not commonplace in Egypt but their memories are betraying them at the moment. And they’re complaining. They’re a “rabble” God calls them. A rabble. A bunch of rabble rousers. God is not pleased.

In chapter 12, if you’ve been following the Bible readings, you remember what happens to Miriam when she opposes Moses, grumbling against him. It says in verse one that it’s because he marries a Cushite a woman. Miriam and Aaron speak against him and they say in verse two, “*Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?*” Again the Lord heard it. They’re thinking, “Who does this Moses think he is? Such a big shot. God speaks through us, too. He’s getting a little too important.”

The truth of the matter is, God testifies that Moses is the meekest man on the face of the earth. Moses does not think he is a big shot. God raised him up to lead and Miriam and Aaron in jealousy, oppose him and grumble against him and she is struck with leprosy like snow. Until Moses prays for her healing, she looks like a goner. That’s the attitude that is prevailing in the lives of God’s people. They’re grumbling. They’re murmuring and they’re complaining.

And we need to be catching this at its very root as a church because grumbling and complaining and bad attitudes always precede bad decisions. When we are filled with a murmuring spirit, we are being blinded to the opportunities and the promises God has put before us as His people and we cannot move forward. A spirit of grumbling and murmuring and complaining is just like putting the car in reverse—you cannot move forward with that kind of attitude. Thank God for the fact this is not prevailing in our church right now but let us pray that God would fill us with gratitude this month.

Then the second warning is when tunnel vision takes over, a church is in decline. We see tunnel vision characterizing the people, keeping them from taking possession of the Promised Land. Look at chapter 13. It starts with the Lord speaking to Moses, saying,, “*Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel.*” There’s

no doubt they are going to enter this land—God has promised it. So there's no question whether or not they are going to go in. They aren't being asked to determine whether or not they should take possession. Instead, they are being sent on a reconnaissance mission because though the land is promised to them, they have to fight for it. God promises, "I will give you your inheritance in Christ but you must battle and lay hold of it by faith."

So the mission is defined in verse 17,

"Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, 'Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, [these are leaders of the tribes going in to spy out and] see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.' Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes."

They begin to go up into the land and verse 22 tells us that they get to the place called Hebron, which was the highest point of that part of the country. It was the place where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah and 11 of the sons of Jacob had been buried. It was hallowed ground—a place that should have reminded them of God's great faithfulness to their forefather. Truly they find this is a land flowing with milk and honey. When they come back to the people some 40 days later, we read in verse 26 that, "*They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.*" You could just imagine these guys with these huge poles filled with these grape clusters from the Promised Land. That cluster of grapes is still the insignia of the Israeli tourist board today. They come back with this fruit of the land and everything's looking good.

Look at verse 27 of chapter 13, "*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.'*" And then look at the first word of verse 28, "*However*"...but, there's an exception. However. You know, someone has said that in every challenging situation, there's always someone with an apprehensive however. Someone who is saying, "Yeah, but I don't think we can do this. There are problems. There are obstacles."

A Frenchman whose name I cannot pronounce says, "In the Lord's work, pessimism has done infinitely more harm than atheism." Here they are, with all these blessings evident but there are obstacles. Look at what they are in verse 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. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites...the Canaanites...” and whatever other foreign nations are there. “We have no army. We’re just a bunch of shepherds. How are we going to do this?” The majority report in verse 31 is, “You know what, we know God has promised it but...’*We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.*” They magnify the problems—they minimize the resources. They stop asking, “What does God want us to do? What does He promise?” They start making their decisions based on what is manageable in their eyes.

Beware of that attitude taking hold in the life of our church. May we never look at just what we think we can do, what we can afford, what we’re able to do and leave God out of the equation. Where is God in the report of the ten spies? He’s out of their frame of reference. They cannot say, “Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.” They are totally focused on human problems and human obstacles and human weaknesses and they’ve lost the vision of God. When God’s people get that kind of tunnel vision, you know the church is in decline.

Thirdly, when survival becomes the controlling purpose of a church, the church is in decline. I know I look young and I am but I’ve been a pastor long enough now to see this kind of mind set in churches where we start worrying about how are we going to survive? How are we going to protect what we’ve got? Our traditions. Our preferences. We start ignoring the power of the Holy Spirit, forgetting the provision of our gracious Father and diminishing the glory of our Savior because what we’re really concerned about is the survival of ourselves—our institution. We can’t let that happen. The church exists for more than her own survival. If we lose sight of the purpose for which we exist, we don’t deserve to survive as a church. We must live for purposes bigger than ourselves.

Consider Numbers 14:1. After they hear that the inhabitants of the land are like giants and they are like grasshoppers, instead of saying, “Well, if God takes control of a grasshopper, He can use it to cause trouble to a giant. God can make a grasshopper a pain in a giant’s neck if He wants to.” Instead of thinking about what God can do, they “*raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this*

land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

So they despise God's generous provision. "Why is the Lord bringing us to this land?" It's like a brand new fiancé saying to her future groom, "Why have you given me such a nice diamond ring? Why have you planned a honeymoon to Hawaii? Why have you bought that beautiful condominium?" It's an insult. God is lavishly loving and providing for His people and they are despising His provision. They are questioning His protection. Do you think God would have really led His people out of Egypt just so they could die by the sword? Do you think that God who had taken such good care of them up until now doesn't care about their wives and their children? They're thinking that they care more about their wives and children than God does. They're doubting His unfailing love and they're disowning His redemption of themselves, saying, "It would be better for us to go back to Egypt; back before we were redeemed." Why? Because they're worried about their own survival. They're worried about the risk to their own lives if they go forward.

God frequently puts His people in positions where we must risk something that's been familiar to us, something that's been comfortable to us, something we tend to like and enjoy as a church. He does this so the mission of God can go forward. So new people can be reached with the gospel. So we can continue to display God's glory in this generation. As a church, we need to apply the teaching of Jesus, "whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake—for the gospel's sake—will find it." So we take all that is dear to us as a church and we say, "Lord Jesus, it's all for You and for the gospel. We want to live, not for our own survival but for Your fame."

Listen to what Jack Miller says. This is from a book *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* that has been influential to me for the last 15 years. He says, "The church becomes a club where the members are attempting to defend traditional group values in the face of outsiders who are perceived as likely to subvert their traditions. At the center of this tribal exclusiveness is the fixed order: Sunday worship, sociability, devotion to the church building as the sacred clubhouse. Where this distortion of purpose prevails, the danger is that eventually the church will make its own life—programs and traditions—into its object of worship. The church will give to itself the honor that belongs to God alone."

That's what happens when we're all about our own survival. May we always remember as a church that God didn't bring us together to protect something that's dear to

us. He brought us together to proclaim that which is dear to Him—the glory of His Son. To magnify His glory in this community, in this world.

The fourth sign of decline that we see in this passage deals with the leaders. Verse 4: “*They said to one another, ‘Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.’*” Point number four: When pace setters are set aside, the church is in decline. They don’t want the leaders they have. They don’t want leaders who call them forward, leaders who demand change, leaders who call for costly obedience. They want leaders who will preserve the status quo. Leaders who will follow *their* agenda and not set the pace.

I love how Moses and Aaron and Joshua and Caleb respond to this. May God give us who are leaders in this church this kind of heart. In verse five, “*Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel [crying out to God]. And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes...*” in a symbol of mourning because they realized these people are rejecting God. They are blind to God’s purposes for them.

You can tell a lot about the future of a church based on these two criteria:

- A. Do they have leaders like this who will cry out to God on behalf of the people, not striking back in anger and resentment? Not taking personal offense, but crying out to God that the people might follow the purposes of God? Does the church have that kind of leader?
- B. Are the people of the church following that kind of leadership? Or are they doing what the Israelites wanted to do in verse ten: “*Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.*”

When pacesetters are set aside, the church is in decline. May God give us pace setting leadership and the grace to follow it.

Fifthly, when unbelief becomes a core value, the church is in decline. We believe in the functional centrality of the gospel at New Covenant Bible Church. That is the hub on which everything else revolves. The functional centrality of the gospel. These people, the Israelites, believed in the functional centrality of unbelief. For everything God promises them, they find a reason to disbelieve and the Lord took it very personally.

Look at verse 11: “*And the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among*

them?" You see, when we choose our own comfort and our own convenience instead of God's purposes and God's glory, God says, "That is treating Me with contempt. It's not believing Me. Unbelief is a way of despising Me."

The last thing we see in this passage, Numbers 14, is that when repentance is superficial, we know the church is in decline. Look at verse 39. After Moses tells the people that God had decreed, "You're not going to enter into the land"...*"the people mourned greatly."* They are disappointed. *"And they rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, 'Here we are. We will go up to the place that the LORD has promised, for we have sinned.'"*

"We're ready now, God. We're ready to take the land. We'll follow You now God."
"But Moses said, 'Why now are you transgressing the command of the LORD, when that will not succeed? Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.'" The reason is in verse 43: "Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.' But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed out of the camp."

You know what happens to them. They get creamed. They are destroyed. They are disappointed over the consequences of their sin but they remain disobedient. Their repentance is superficial and when repentance is superficial, you know a church is in decline.

So God is speaking to us through this narrative. He's speaking to New Covenant Bible Church. He's doing a good thing in our midst but He's saying, "If you want to know what will keep your church from being put on hold and what will keep your church from failing to advance God's purposes in your generation, here are some things for you as God's people to watch out for. Beware of these things. Beware of grumbling and gossip. Beware of tunnel vision that bases your decisions on what you're going to do, on what you think you can handle instead of on what I have promised in My Word. Beware of a survival mindset that just lives to protect yourself. Beware of rejecting pace setting leadership. Beware of cultivating unbelief which holds Me in contempt. Beware of superficial repentance, being disappointed over sins' consequences but still remaining disobedient to My commands. Beware!"

That is the tone of this passage. It's a warning. Is there any good news in it? Any good news at all? Any hope? Any gospel? Anyone see any good news in this passage? I bet it's there.

Look at verse 24: "*But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.*" That's good news! That's hope. That's grace. You see in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, God will save those who trust in Him. You don't have to go with the tide of everyone around you. If you will believe in the promises of God and trust in Him and follow Him fully, God says, "You will not fail to receive the inheritance of those who believe, even though everyone around you is failing." That's grace. That's good news. God is able to preserve those who trust in Him in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

So yes, **beware** is the tone of the passage but there's also a strong, strong emphasis on the word **believe**.

Believe

Let me give you three things from Caleb's life that we are to believe as God's people. Three things that if we believe, we will not be put on hold as a church. We will not fail to advance God's purposes as a church. We will continue to go from strength to strength. Decline is not inevitable. It wasn't for Caleb. Three things that we are to believe.

First, believe that there is more for us in Christ than we have yet apprehended. There is more for us in Christ than we have yet laid hold of. Believe that God still wants to unfold more of His glory, more of His goodness to us. Believe that He wants to use us in new ways. There are people He wants to reach through us. There is new ground He wants us to break open. When we believe there is more for us in Christ than we have yet apprehended, it keeps us pressing on. You can read Philippians 3 for a New Testament commentary on that truth.

Caleb, when he heard the people before Moses, he "*quieted the people*" (13:30). He quieted their hearts. A panic was taking over when they heard these ten spies but Caleb quieted the people and the very first words out of Caleb's mouth in the Bible are these in Number 1:30: "*Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.*" He

believes. There is more for them than they had yet apprehended. He loves the promise of God.

He treasures the inheritance. He is like that person in Matthew 13 in the parable about the kingdom of heaven being like a treasure in a field. When a man found it, he hid that treasure and then he went and sold all he had so he could buy that field. He gave up everything because he treasured the promise of the kingdom. Caleb is like that. “Don’t fear. Let’s go now and occupy the Promised Land. We can overcome it because we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Secondly, believe that what God has promised, He will perform. Look at Numbers 14:6. After Caleb and Joshua tore their clothes in mourning at the unbelief of the people, he “*said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, ‘The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD.’*” Just believe Him. Believe that what He has promised, He will perform. Others are full of fear. Caleb is full of faith in God’s promises.

Thirdly, believe that those whom God has redeemed, He will protect. Your security—your well-being—is in His hands. He hasn’t redeemed you to destroy you. You belong to Him. Verse nine: “*Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.*” Caleb says, “Do not fear them. He is the high King of heaven. He is my battle shield. He is the sword for my fight. He will protect me. I’m not afraid though evildoers surround me to eat up my flesh.”

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?”*

(Psalm 27:1)

Caleb had a different spirit, God says. It’s a spirit of faith, of believing in the promises of God. It was the Holy Spirit in him that gave him that faith. Through that faith, he followed the Lord wholly, all the days of his life, with all his heart, against enormous obstacles.

Look at Joshua 14. I want you to see where Caleb is at as an old, old man. This is 45 years later and they are in the Promised Land. They've taken possession of the land and Caleb—this old man of about 85 years old— comes up to Joshua and he says in verse seven, “Joshua, *I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God.*”

That's what God keeps saying about this man. He “wholly followed the Lord his God.”

“And Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has 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 forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness” (Joshua 14:9-10).

And here's a word for those of you men and women who are older in our church.

Listen: Caleb says,

“I am this day eighty-five 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. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said. Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron [that sacred, hallowed ground] to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel.”

You know what this tells us? Decline is not inevitable for those who trust in the Lord. Psalm 84:7 says, “*They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.*” You don't have to drift backwards. You can go from strength to strength as you trust in the Lord, as you believe in Him.

The book of Hebrews looks at this whole story in chapters three and four and gives a commentary on it. Here's the lesson for the New Testament church today. Hebrews 3:1 says, “*...consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...*” He's better than Moses. The promise God has given you in Christ is greater than the promise God gave through Moses. Consider Him. Listen to Hebrews 3:12: “*Take care, brothers [watch out—*

be warned], *lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*"

Caleb by God's grace is kept by God in the midst of a perverse generation and he's being kept by God through faith in the promise of God. And because of faith in the promise of God, he does not decline but goes from strength to strength until he's an old man.

God will do that for all who trust in Jesus. The exhortation from God to us today as a church is, "Keep believing in Jesus. Keep laying hold of Him. Do not turn back. He will give us a great inheritance. You must follow Him wholly."

Let's stand together and whole heartedly ask the Lord to fan into flame the spark of faith in us.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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