

Week 24
164/201

Transforming Daily
“ . . . *the Lord is with us. Do not fear . . .*”
Numbers 14:9

The book of Numbers is referred to by various names, but the gist of the book is based on the two censuses that are taken in chapters 1 and 26. The account of the book of Numbers is the story of the children preparing to enter into Canaan. As Scripture records, in various places, the children of Israel disobeyed God and as a result weren't permitted to enter the Promise Land. Therefore, the book of Numbers primarily stands as a reminder to that generation and the generations to follow, even unto our generation, that there are consequences related to obeying and disobeying God.

The most difficult consequence of the Israelites disobedience was the 40 years of wilderness journey. Some scholars refer to it as the wilderness funeral march. Literally hundreds died daily throughout their pilgrimage of 40 years. Everyone over the age of twenty at the time of their rebellion, in chapter fourteen, would die in the wilderness. Of the twelve spies who were to search out the land only two, Joshua and Caleb, would enter (even Moses was not permitted to enter because of his personal disobedience to God Numbers 20:12). As a matter of fact, Joshua would be the one to lead the following generation into the Promise Land.

One single factor kept the children of Israel out of the Promise Land – fear. Because the spies feared the inhabitants of the land, and reported it to the people, the people feared and complained against God. Fear was the single motivating factor to keep the Israelites from experiencing the greatest event of their collective lives. Of course the one they should have feared the most, or even at all, was God. Why didn't they fear God? It might have been that they had forgotten who God was and what He had done for them. But how could that have happened? In a word, familiarity, in a phrase, “familiarity breeds contempt.”

The children of Israel mistook the spiritual leaders for God Himself. They were used to speaking out toward, and in defiance against, Moses and Aaron. However, when God had enough, He reminded them of who He was and who they were. God hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The people of God got in the habit of taking God's grace and mercy for granted. Oversimplified, they didn't think they would have to take responsibility for their actions, or be held accountable for their conduct.

If God is the same yesterday, today and forever, what can the church learn from the book of Numbers? One lesson to be learned, whether by individual or corporate body, is not to take God's grace and mercy for granted. Another lesson to be learned is to live responsibly according to the Word of God as one who will have to give an account for the faith that lies within them. A third lesson to be learned is not to allow our compassion for God to turn to contempt by keeping in mind that the Lord is with us. Do not fear.