

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor David Bennett

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Key Verses: Numbers 13

“Overcoming Obstacles”

Good morning Fil-Am it is so good to see so many of you here today, we just want to take a moment and say that your presence is greatly appreciated and not taken for granted.

This morning we are continuing with our series called Heroes of the Bible, and as Pastor Rolly stated from the beginning we are staying away from the Big names, like Jesus, Paul, Moses etc. and are looking for others that were not as famous but also played a big part by relying not on their skills but on Gods’.

Obstacles are something we will always contend with, it all boils down to perspective and focus as to how we let them control us or allow God to work through the situation.

Here is one example of obstacles; let’s see if you can guess who this is?

He was born of illiterate parents

At the age of 7, he had to go to work to help support his family.

At age 9, his mother died.

At age 22 he lost his job as a store clerk.

At age 23 he went into debt and became a partner in a small store.

At age 26 his partner died leaving him a huge debt.

By age 35 he had been defeated twice when running for a seat in Congress.

At age 37 he won the election.

At the 39 he lost his re-election bid.

At age 41 his 4 year old son died.

At age 42 he was rejected for a land officer role.

At age 45 he ran for Senate again and lost.

At age 47 he was defeated for the nomination of Vice President.

At age 49 he ran for Senate again and lost again.

At age 51 he was elected President of the United States.

During his second term of office he was assassinated, however his name lives on among the greatest in U.S. History. His name was (Abraham Lincoln)

This morning we are going to look back into the Old Testament to the book of Numbers, where we find the people of God have been freed from the bondage of slavery and led them out of the land of Egypt with many signs and wonders. Just to mention a few he parted the red sea and allowed the fleeing Israelites to escape the Pharaoh's army, and then closed the sea on the advancing army. He led them with a pillar of fire at night and a cloud of dust in the day; he fed them daily with Manna from heaven, and brought water from rocks to sustain them.

These people not only knew of God they could see and feel his presence among them daily.

And yet with all this proof that their God was present there were Obstacles in their way.

One of the tools that Satan has much victory with is the tool of **obstacles**.

Webster Dictionary defines obstacles as to stand in the way of or to stand in front of, to impede progress.

How many obstacles have you faced this past week? Those things that impeded your progress with the Lord, it steals our blessings, as we shift our focus on the Obstacle rather than the outcome, or the opportunity.

We let obstacles block our view of God.

Charles Stanley said, "In reality, if God has called us to do something, the only hindrance is **between our temples**."

God has already planned a way around or thru the obstacle that is in the way of doing his will. When we give in to fear and refuse to move forward we miss out on the **great reward** found in God's will.

I. Obstacles are Allowed to increase our Focus on God's Promises

Let us first look back and see what God told Abraham about the promise land.

Gen. 12:1-3, 7- God told this to Abraham

¹Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ²And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."

Now we fast forward to present time, and Moses sends in 12 spies into the land to scout it out prior to occupying the land.

Spies are chosen and commissioned.

Numbers 13:1-3

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ²"Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, everyone a leader among them." ³So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.

- ✓ Send men to spy out the land of Canaan: These men were on a reconnaissance mission; to observe the land of Canaan and bring back a report to the nation.
- ✓ From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, a leader from among you.

Look at the report the spies gave upon returning; Numbers 13: 25-29

²⁵When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, ²⁶they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to

*them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ Thus they told him, and said, “We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly **does** flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are **strong**, and the cities are **fortified** and very **large**; and moreover, we saw the descendants of **Anak** there. ²⁹ **Amalek** is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”*

- ✓ We went to the land where you sent us- They seemed to sense they were more on a mission from Israel than on a mission from God; we might already sense the report will be given according to a human perspective, not according to God’s perspective.
- ✓ It truly flows with milk and honey - what God had promised about the land was indeed true.

Now we come to point number two today being...

II. Human Focus leads to Defeat.

Bette Nesmith had a good secretarial job in a Dallas bank when she ran across a problem that interested her. Wasn’t there a better way to correct the errors she made on her electric typewriter?

Bette had some art experience and she knew that artists who worked in oils just painted over their errors. Maybe that would work for her too. So she concocted a fluid to paint over her typing errors.

Before long, all the secretaries in her building were using what she called “Mistake-Out.” She attempted to sell the product idea to marketing agencies and various companies, including IBM. They all turned her down.

Secretaries continued using her product, so Bette Nesmith’s kitchen became her first manufacturing facility that she started on her own.

When Bette Nesmith sold the enterprise, the tiny white bottles were earning \$3.5 million annually on sales of over \$ 38 million. The buyer was Gillette Company and the sale price was \$ 47.5 Million dollars.

- ✓ **Nevertheless:** “nevertheless” means “despite all of that.” At that moment, Moses, and every man of faith in Israel should have cried out and said, “**Nevertheless nothing!**”
- ✓ Despite God’s faithful promise, **the people who dwell in the land are strong.**
- ✓ Despite God’s faithful promise, **the cities are fortified and very large.**
- ✓ Despite God’s faithful promise, **we saw the descendants of Anak** [a tribe of large men] **there.**
- ✓ Despite God’s faithful promise, **the Amalekites dwell . . . the Amorites dwell, the Canaanites dwell** - all the land is taken up, there are no vacancies!
- ✓ **Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there:** It is hard to imagine a report *more* unbelieving and unfaithful to God than this; a report that recognizes the faithfulness of God’s promise, the truth of His word, and yet says, “Despite all that . . .”

Another way of looking at it is to ask, what the 2 spies were focusing on...

III. God Focus leads to Victory!

Liu Chi Kung, who placed second to Van Cliburn in the 1948 Tchaikovsky competition, was imprisoned a year later during the Cultural Revolution in China. During the entire seven years he was held, he was denied the use of the piano. Soon after his release, however, he was back on tour.

Critics wrote in astonishment that his musicianship was better than ever. How did you do this a critic asked, as you had no chance to practice for the last seven years?

I did practice, Liu replied, every day, I rehearsed every piece I have ever played, note by note, in my mind.

- ✓ **Strength** of the **Enemy**. How many times when called upon to do a task by God and our first thought is on how hard this is or how we will not be able to do it, instead of God.
- ✓ **Condition** of the **Cities**. “The cities are walled and are great (mighty).
- ✓ **Size** of the **Enemy**- the opposition’s size is always a killer.
- ✓ **Numbers** of the **Enemy**- the whole country was filled with Israel’s enemy.

What should they have been focusing on?

The miracles the Lord had already done. **1 Sam. 17:34-37**. So much of the times we don’t get victory because we lose our steady focus.

They should have been focused on God’s power and resources.

- ✓ **Ex. 12:30-31**- How the Lord had changed Pharaoh’s heart
- ✓ **Ex. 12:35-36**- How the Lord had materially blessed them
- ✓ **Ex. 13:17-21**- How the Lord had led them.

In spite of the Obstacle in his way or fear Caleb faithfully objected.

Numbers 13:30

³⁰ *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “We should by **all means** go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”*

- ✓ Caleb - blessed forever! - commanded the people to immediately (**at once**) trust and obey God and to take the land, because God had made them able.
- ✓ **Let us go up at once and take possession:** It took great courage for this man to stand against the tide of unbelief, of doubt.
- ✓ Joshua and Caleb said to tell them the people in the land are the ones that should be afraid, not us!

The other spies respond to Caleb. Numbers 13: 31-33

³¹ *But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.”* ³² *So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.*

³³ *There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”*

It is amazing how a group of people can look at the same thing and come away with completely different outlook on what they saw.

They saw the same things on their reconnaissance

- ✓ The same grapes,
- ✓ The same men,
- ✓ The same land,
- ✓ The same cities
- ✓ The same Opportunities

One can come away singing in faith, and the other is filled with a sense of certain doom.

Both groups of spies saw the same things but drew different conclusions. As stated they both saw what God said was true about the land, (it was Awesome)

- ✓ The Ten measured it by the difficulties against them.
- ✓ The two measured it as difficulties against God, they put the Obstacles into proper perspective, (Conquerable with God)

Here is the million dollar question will you live by Faith or by Calculation? The Lord knew the Israelites would need another lesson in faith. Sometimes the Lord has to lead us on detours for his glory.

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength. – Corrie Boom

IV. Why are Obstacles so Effective?

One reason is **FEAR!**

Fear defined:

- ✓ A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger.
- ✓ Extreme reverence or awe, as toward a supreme power.

- ✓ Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. – Ambrose Redmond
- ✓ Your talent is God's gift to you, what you do with it is your gift back to God. –Leo Buscaglia
- ✓ To succeed you must first improve, to improve you must first practice, to practice you must first learn, and to learn you must first fail.- Wesley Woo
- ✓ The man who follows a crowd will never be followed by a crowd.-R.S. Donnell

The Right Kind of Fear;

- ✓ Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7)
- ✓ Fear of the Lord will cause one to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13)
- ✓ Fear of the Lord will prolong life (Proverbs 10:27)
- ✓ Fear of the Lord leads to satisfying life (Proverbs 19:23)

The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you gear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.

The Wrong Kind of Fear, Top 12 fears (phobias) of people today;

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Speaking before a group (40%) | Heights (30%) |
| Insects and Bugs (20%) | Financial problems (20%) |
| Deep Water (20%) | Disease (20%) |
| Death (20%) | Flying (20%) |
| Loneliness (15%) | Dogs (10%) |
| Driving or even riding in a Car (10%) | Darkness (10%) |

Fear = False Education Appearing Real.

Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is; fear makes man believe the worst.

(Unknown)

Fear is the sand in the machinery of life. (E Stanley Jones)

Here is a poll of teenagers and what they fear;

- Failing in School (44%)
- Loneliness (33%)
- Not Having a Boyfriend/Girlfriend (30%)
- Rejection (38%)

Such fears have often led young people to...

- ✓ Lie
- ✓ Cheat
- ✓ Steal
- ✓ Get in the wrong Crowd
- ✓ Give in to improper sexual advances

Similar fears have caused adults to do the same and more...
Saints we need to understand where there is Faith, fear cannot abide.
Feed your Faith and your Fears will starve to death.
Fear and Faith cannot keep house together, when one enters, the other
departs!

Here is a poem by Harry Emerson Fosdick;

Fear Imprisons, Faith Liberates.
Fear Paralyzes, Faith Empowers.
Fear Disheartens, Faith Encourages.
Fear makes Useless, Faith makes Serviceable.
Most of All...

Fear puts Hopelessness at the Heart of Life, while Faith Rejoices in its God!

V. Results of Disobedience

The Lord allowed his chosen people to wander the desert for 40 years, instead of taking them into the promise land. As a result of their disobedience and lack of faith no one above the age of 20 was allowed in the Promise Land, except the two spies that had a positive report, (Joshua and Caleb)

Philippians 4:13 ¹³ *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

1 John 4:4 ⁴ *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

Romans 8:37 ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*