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Numbers—Wanderings

It is a sad but very real picture of the possibility of being rescued from the world (the Exodus), but not entering into the promised land of God's blessings.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-11:1 often in this study.

Other Helpful links

Matthew Henry's Commentary

<http://www.ccel.org/h/henry/mhc2/MHC04000.HTM>

David Guzik's Commentary on

<http://enduringword.com/commentaries/04.html>

Daily Bible Study

Thursday, April 27, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 9**

Quick Notes

The second Passover was observed fourteen days after the tabernacle was finished. So they have been out of Egypt for a year now.

Questions to Ponder

They children of Israel have a question about the Passover, what is it?
How important was it for the children of Israel to celebrate the Passover?
How serious was it for them not to celebrate it? Why?
How is the Pillar of cloud/fire a good picture of God's guidance in our lives? What should that look like practically in your life?
They called the moving of the cloud a "command" from the Lord. Why?

Daily Bible Study

Friday, April 28, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 10**

Quick Notes

After final instructions regarding trumpet blasts to be used for signals (10:1–10), the Israelites moved out of their camp for the first time since the tribes had been designated specific places to camp and the order in which they would travel (10:11–36)

Questions to Ponder

Why were the silver trumpets quite practical to use to guide the children of Israel? What might these also be a picture of today—understanding that silver is a type of worship?

What does Moses' invitation to Hobab show us about following God's will? How does this practically complement following of the cloud?

What is significant about Moses' proclamations when he began and ended marching? How can these be examples to us each day?

Daily Bible Study

Saturday, April 29, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 11**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

When the people complained, how did God feel about it? Why? What should this teach us about complaining?

What was it that caused the mixed multitude to complain? What might that picture in our lives today? Why was it wrong?

How does Moses deal with their complaints? Is this a good example?

What does this situation cause Moses to realize he needs? How does God go about remedying this?

Daily Bible Study

Sunday, April 30, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 12**

Quick Notes

In his meekness, Moses did not rejoice at his sister's punishment; instead, he prayed for her (Matt. 5:43–48). Because of their sin, Aaron and Miriam delayed the march of the nation for a whole week. The sin of criticism is far more serious than most people realize (Matt. 7:1–5; James 4:12).

Questions to Ponder

- Who is doing the complaining in this section? What makes that worse?
- What do they complain about? Why?
- How does Moses deal with the complaints? How is this a good example?
- How does God deal with the complaining?
- What does God's judgment show us about who was really the instigator of this complaining? Lessons?
- How is Moses a good example as he responded to this?

Daily Bible Study

Monday, May 1, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 13**

Quick Notes

Ten spies emphasized the obstacles instead of the opportunities and concluded that Israel was too weak to conquer the enemy. They walked by sight and not by faith. The people of the land were giants, the city walls were high, and the men felt like grasshoppers! Unbelief blinds you to God's greatness and magnifies your own weakness.

Questions to Ponder

What were the practical reasons for sending in the "spies"? What should NOT have been the question they were determining?
What moved the ten spies to giving their bad report? What were they looking at? What were they reckoning on?
How did Caleb and Joshua advice the people? What was the basis of their advice? How do we apply this today?

Daily Bible Study

Tuesday, May 2, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 14**

Quick Notes

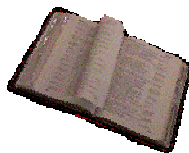
- Unbelief led to rebellion (1–10).
- Rebellion led to intercession (11–19)
- Intercession led to pardon (20–38).
- Pardon led to presumption (39–45)

Questions to Ponder

- What decisions do fear and unbelief lead the children of Israel to? What might such decisions look like in today's world?
- How does Moses rightly deal with this?
- What do the children of Israel lose at this point? Are they still God's people? What do they keep (for the next 40 years)? What is the spiritual application to this?

Daily Bible Study

Wednesday, May 3, 2006



Passage for today: **Numbers 15**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

As you consider the message of this chapter, what makes the word “when” in v. one so significant? How does the message of chapter 15 impact and given encouragement after what just too place? What issues does God tell them about in this chapter? Again, how does that fit the context of the moment they are in? What is the lessons in this chapter for us today?

The Danger of Complaining

Complaining. In one sense, it is so common, so normal, that for many of us—it is not shocking or even all that bothering to hear. But one of the lessons in Numbers for us to keenly pay attention to – is that God is bothered to hear our complaining!

Webster’s dictionary defines complaining as “*to express grief, pain, dissatisfaction or discontent.*” You probably know perfectly well what complaining is...without the definition. Yet again, what I call you to see is that God sees complaining entirely different.

When we complain, it is often against circumstances or against “fate”, or against leaders that are over us and the decisions that they make. Somehow when we complain we feel that life is unfair or that we have been unfairly treated.

But here is the key issue—God sees every complaint that you or I utter...as complaints against Him! To complain...in God’s eyes—is to blame Him and complain about Him.

To complain about their leader—Moses—was to complain against God’s choice...about who God had put there—and God took it personally.

To complain about their food—was to complain against God’s provision and His care in their lives.

To complain about their situation—was to complain against God’s care and hand in their lives.

So again—to complain for God’s people...is to complain against God!

Now...that is not the wording they used—they did not tell God that they had a problem with Him...but that is how God heard it. I guess, if we are going to do it right...if we are going to complain—we ought to phrase it right and tell God that we have a problem with Him. Now, honestly...that is a lot harder to do—which is the point. God is calling us to a place not of complaining but trusting Him in our lives.

This does not mean it is wrong to talk to God about issues or problems—the Bible is replete with good examples of this. But such things phrased rightly...always have the underpinning of the simple phrase “Your will, not mine be done”. If that is your attitude...complaining becomes a reality that does not exist.

So complaining is bad—because it is an offense against God. But it gets worse—the message of Numbers is a message of wandering—of rebellion—of missing God’s best in our lives. Simply, that is where complaining leads. Complaining undercuts our faith and trust in the Lord. Complaining eventually leads to rebellion...which leads to losing the things God has for us. This is why it is so bad!

O how I challenge you this week—as you watch the events in Numbers to learn from their example. Learn the danger of complaining. Learn what it is to trust the Lord and to be content in the Lord! May God truly find the whine of complaining rising less and less in our lives and in our fellowship.

Manna Again

In Numbers 11, the menu grows old to the Hebrews. This was miracle manna—the Bible tells it was angels food. Truly a heavenly bread- but even miracles can get monotonous.

Each morning when they gathered the manna, they grumbled, "Oh, not the same thing again. Perhaps you have heard the jokes...or perhaps you could add to the list. The kids come in, the husband comes home and ask "what's for dinner?" The familiar reply...Manna. The complain rises over and over—manna again? I mean, how many ways can you prepare manna? Manna bagels, manna burgers, manna casserole, manna cookies, manna soup, manna sandwiches, manna waffles, manna burritos, manna enchiladas, hot manna, cold manna...O the list could go on. Perhaps you can imagine...have you ever had a LOT of Thanksgiving leftovers? I mean, even if you really like Turkey...you can only enjoy it for so long....

The right way to handle the problem—would have been to talk to the Lord about it—to pray and to ask what the Lord had in the lesson of the manna. But that is not what they did...they just complained and whined. They imagined what it would be like to have some "meat" and they sat and feasted their imaginations over pots of meat...only increasing their dissatisfaction for what God had provided them.

God has such a sense of humor. Moses tells the people, "Okay if it's meat you want, then it's meat you're going to get!" He says in verse 18, "Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you..." or until it comes out your snout, and you hate it.

Hey, Satan loves to breed discontent. All's fine with the Lord's manna until the enemy plants a suggestion, "if only you were driving a new car - or if you had just married her - or if you could just get out of your dead-end job - or if you could move to another town." This is how the advertising works. It creates discontent. Watch TV for an hour and you come away thinking, "Wow, I thought I was happy!"

It reminds me of the two tomb stones side by side. The first one read, "She died of want for things". The second read, "He died trying to give them to her."

I read where 100 years ago the average man had 70 wants. Today his grand-son has 500 wants. We live in the gimme generation! Everyone wants more and more and more.

Real faith is learning to be content with God's provision. Matthew 6:8 tells us, "Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." Real fulfillment comes not from satisfying a physical hunger, but a spiritual hunger. Jesus is the bread of life. He alone brings contentment!

A Gift for Everyone

In Numbers 11 Moses gathered all but two of the 70 elders, and stood before the Tabernacle. And just as God promised the power of the Spirit was poured out upon them. But verse 26 tells us that two of the men stayed in the camp. They too were filled with Spirit and prophesied.

Joshua was appalled that Eldad and Medad were filled with the Spirit while still in the camp - among the common people. Here was his concern, "What if everyone thinks he can receive supernatural power and spiritual gifts?" Joshua wants Moses to stop them.

I love Moses response, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD'S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" Rather than view the power of the Spirit as the exclusive property of an elite few – Moses longed for the day when all God's people would be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Moses was way ahead of his time. In the Old Testament select people at select times were empowered by the Spirit, but in the New Testament all God's people can be filled with the Spirit. The wish of Moses became the promise of the Father.

This was fulfilled and began to be a reality on Pentecost—when the wonder of the infilling of the Spirit became a reality in all of God's kids. Now, each and all can be filled with the Spirit.

Are you enjoying and fulfilling this great potential in your life?

When you can't go up

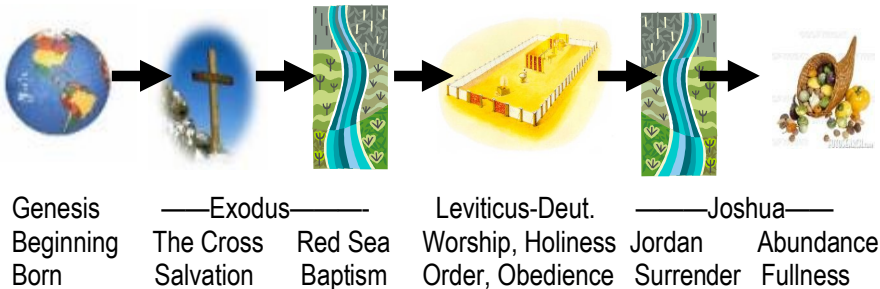
Perhaps one of the key understandings for you in the book of Numbers is what takes place in chapter 14. The children of Israel push God until He in a sense says “enough is enough”...and they are disqualified from entering into the promised land. The spiritual picture you can gain here will be very helpful...and a very concerning if you see it correctly.

First—lets get the big perspective. The pattern in the books of the Bible are vivid pictures of our lives.

We have all had a Genesis. Genesis was the book of beginnings, the beginning of life and yes, the beginning of sin. So it was true for every single person reading this booklet. You have had a physical beginning—you were born. But you also had at that same moment—the beginning of sin in your life.

Many of us have had an Exodus. Exodus was the book of salvation, the book of redemption. It powerful showed God rescuing His people out of Egypt—yet in so doing, also gave a vivid picture of how he would save His people from sin, from the world. Exodus is a picture of the world. The children of Israel were brought out of Egypt through the final plague given—and they were protected by the blood of a lamb. So today—it is through Jesus—the Lamb of God—that we are brought out of the world today.

Picture it like this:



So, if you are following me—all of us have had a Genesis, some of us have had an Exodus.

If we have had an Exodus—if we are Christians in and through Jesus Christ—then we have been rescued from this world and the consequences coming upon it by the blood of the lamb. If we are Christians—then we have in one sense crossed the Red Sea. God tells us in 1 Cor 10—that the Red Sea pictures Baptism for us—a crossing from one life into the next.

God is then teaching us Leviticus—God is guiding us as unholy people how to approach a Holy God. God is at work in our lives drawing us to Him.

God is seeking to build in us Numbers...or the first part of it—order, structure and more.

God will be working in us Deuteronomy—which is summed up in one word—Obedience.

Yet before us—stands what God wants to take us into—pictured as the promised land—the land of milk and honey. If you are following the analogy, know this—the promised land is not a picture of heaven—but a picture of entering into the life God really has for us. Over the years, that promised land in the Christian life has been called a lot of things: the Spirit-filled life, the consecrated life, the exchanged life, the surrendered life, the full life and many more. But if you are looking at the graphic—there is another river to cross. The first river, the Red Sea pictured baptism from the world. What does the Jordan picture? I believe it pictures what Jesus called “the Baptism of the Spirit” (Acts 1)

There is much more we could talk about in this picture...but here is the real key for you this week. Here in Numbers 14—the children of Israel are refused entrance into the promised land—they “cannot go up”. God closes the door for them here...and there is nothing Moses or anyone can do to open it. I want you to consider that there is a profound spiritual picture, reality and warning in this. I believe that much of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament is dealing with this reality—the danger of not entering His rest...not entering all God has for us.

Does this mean that these who don't enter the land are no longer God's? In New Testament terms—would we say that these are not Christians? NO! That is what is key. See, for the next 40 years—that generation is going to have God's presence with them in the pillar of cloud and fire. That generation is going to have God's provision in the manna. That generation is going to have God's protection—even in caring for their clothes. But here is the issue—they cannot go up into all that God has for them!

There sin, their rebellion and their rejection of trusting in God finally closes the door for them...and they cannot go up to God's promised land. Even when they try to...God will not go with them.

I challenge you to take a little time this week to ponder what this means for us today...and what it means for you today.

What does entering God's promised land look like for us today?

What would it look like to rebel against God today, like these here in Numbers did?

What are the lessons and even more the warnings that we need to heed from this?

What is God talking to you about from this?

Devotion from Charles Spurgeon

“Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” — Numbers 11:23 (from Morning and Evening)

God had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled.

He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil his promise for him? No; he who makes the promise ever fulfils it by his own unaided omnipotence. If he speaks, it is done—done by himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfilment upon the co-operation of the puny strength of man.

We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator’s work.

Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as he hath said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: “Has the Lord’s hand waxed short?”

May it happen, too, in his mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, “Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”

“He had married an Ethiopian woman.” — Numbers 12:1 (from Morning and Evening)

Strange choice of Moses, but how much more strange the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than he! Our Lord, who is fair as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black, because the sun has looked upon her.

It is the wonder of angels that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men. Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love, be also overwhelmed with astonishment that such love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it.

Knowing as we do our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace. Jesus must have found the cause of His love in His own heart, He could not have found it in us, for it is not there. Even since our conversion we have been black, though grace has made us comely.

Holy Rutherford said of himself what we must each subscribe to—
“His relation to me is, that I am sick, and he is the Physician of whom I stand in need. Alas! how often I play fast and loose with Christ! He bindeth, I loose; he buildeth, I cast down; I quarrel with Christ, and he agreeth with me twenty times a day!”

Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls, pursue thy gracious work of conforming us to thine image, till thou shalt present even us poor Ethiopians unto thyself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder if this vain world opposes Jesus and his spouse, and especially when great sinners are converted? for this is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, “This man receiveth sinners.” Still is the old cause of quarrel revived, “Because he had married an Ethiopian woman.”

**“And all the children of Israel murmured.” — Numbers 14:2
(from Morning and Evening)**

There are murmurers amongst Christians now, as there were in the camp of Israel of old. There are those who, when the rod falls, cry out against the afflictive dispensation. They ask, “Why am I thus afflicted? What have I done to be chastened in this manner?”

A word with thee, O murmurer! Why shouldst thou murmur against the dispensations of thy heavenly Father? Can he treat thee more hardly than thou deservest? Consider what a rebel thou wast once, but he has pardoned thee! Surely, if he in his wisdom sees fit now to chasten thee, thou shouldst not complain. After all, art thou smitten as hardly as thy sins deserve?

Consider the corruption which is in thy breast, and then wilt thou wonder that there needs so much of the rod to fetch it out? Weigh thyself, and discern how much dross is mingled with thy gold; and dost thou think the fire too hot to purge away so much dross as thou hast?

Does not that proud rebellious spirit of thine prove that thy heart is not thoroughly sanctified? Are not those murmuring words contrary to the holy submissive nature of God’s children? Is not the correction needed? But if thou wilt murmur against the chastening, take heed, for it will go hard with murmurers. God always chastises his children twice, if they do not bear the first stroke patiently.

But know one thing—“He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” All his corrections are sent in love, to purify thee, and to draw thee nearer to himself. Surely it must help thee to bear the chastening with resignation if thou art able to recognize thy Father’s hand. For “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.” “

Murmur not as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer.”

**How long will it be ere they believe me?" —
Numbers 14:11 (from Morning and Evening)**

Strive with all diligence to keep out that monster unbelief. It so dishonours Christ, that he will withdraw his visible presence if we insult him by indulging it.

It is true it is a weed, the seeds of which we can never entirely extract from the soil, but we must aim at its root with zeal and perseverance. Among hateful things it is the most to be abhorred. Its injurious nature is so venomous that he that exerciseth it and he upon whom it is exercised are both hurt thereby.

In thy case, O believer! it is most wicked, for the mercies of thy Lord in the past, increase thy guilt in doubting him now. When thou dost distrust the Lord Jesus, he may well cry out, "Behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." This is crowning his head with thorns of the sharpest kind. It is very cruel for a well-beloved wife to mistrust a kind and faithful husband.

The sin is needless, foolish, and unwarranted. Jesus has never given the slightest ground for suspicion, and it is hard to be doubted by those to whom our conduct is uniformly affectionate and true. Jesus is the Son of the Highest, and has unbounded wealth; it is shameful to doubt Omnipotence and distrust all-sufficiency. The cattle on a thousand hills will suffice for our most hungry feeding, and the granaries of heaven are not likely to be emptied by our eating. If Christ were only a cistern, we might soon exhaust his fulness, but who can drain a fountain? Myriads of spirits have drawn their supplies from him, and not one of them has murmured at the scantiness of his resources.

Away, then, with this lying traitor unbelief, for his only errand is to cut the bonds of communion and make us mourn an absent Saviour. Bunyan tells us that unbelief has "as many lives as a cat:" if so, let us kill one life now, and continue the work till the whole nine are gone. Down with thee, thou traitor, my heart abhors thee.

The Spies
June 6, 1858
C. H. SPURGEON
(1834-1892)

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature."—Numbers 13:32.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land."—Numbers 14:6-7.

The unbelief of the children of Israel, prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land, and he had promised to drive out their enemies, they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and "alas, for human nature," ten of these were faithless, and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative, and mark the ill effect of the lying message, and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion; I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven, certainly in heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in

order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful, no, he reads the living Bible—Christ's church—and if the church is inconsistent he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it. Ungodly men of course do not come and by repentance and faith make a trial of the love of Christ; they do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that floweth with milk and honey; but instead thereof they stand still, and they say, "Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do they find it to be a happy thing? Does it succor them in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort them in the midst of their trials?" And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside, and they say, "It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few."

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness, and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from other persons. Then secondly, I shall endeavor to describe the evil reporters, the evil spies, which are in the camp; then we will mention some good spies, who bring a good report of the land; and, in conclusion, bring a few weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land.

I. In the first place, then, **THE UNGODLY WORLD ARE NOT TO BE EXCUSED** for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that **INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.**

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be joyful. "By this," says he, "shall I know whether there is that in

religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing." But hark, sir! hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved him? And hath he not declared himself, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile?" Doth not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it hath the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars? Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on his naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when he declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the holiness of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove his goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of his gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, he intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading men. There is his Holy Spirit; you are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others, your only power to know true religion is, by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart, that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If

you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people, and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters; he has given you his own Word; a more sure word and testimony, whereunto you do well if ye take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, "Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion." Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to Confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the cares of this life, you were independent enough; in your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat; and, therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course even against the example of others, in business, in politics, and such like things; you certainly had enough of mental vigor, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, and to have searched for yourselves.

If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment; for Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers—you are asked to follow Christ himself. Until then you can find a flaw in his character, a mistake in his conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of his followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from him because his disciples forsake him and flee. To their own Master they stand or fall; they must bear their own burden, and you must bear yours too. "Every man shall bear his own burden," saith Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil" You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for

your own; and if another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth **THE BAD SPIES**. I wish that the men mentioned in the text, had been the only spies who have brought an evil report: it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort; but alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endureth, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by what they do; for to a worldling, words are nothing—acts are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses, and the every day business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for he is of a dull and heavy spirit. If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's tried children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering: he never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become more gloomy still. See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion. they think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say; "he pulls the blinds down on the Sunday; he tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day;" he thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven. Ask his wife what she thinks of religion: she says, "I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were be little more cheerful." "Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most

religious." Hear him pray: when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles; but he never says at the end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca, and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeared before God." No, it is just the black part of the story.

If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Saviour, and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine, and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah!" says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet; you will have more troubles than you dream of."

Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine: did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions; the lions! the lions!" he cries; however says "The lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! the giants!" he exclaims. He never saith, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their report, that they form themselves into a little knot, and they cannot hear any preacher except his face he of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old.

Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward; but it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, his religion is good. and as God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play, and the sea in which his lovingkindness swims. Oh, come, ye dreary professors, take away those storm-clouds, and wreath a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you

appear not unto men to fast; take those harps from the willows; down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody.

And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in his footsteps, for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meekface, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

*"He can a hair divide,
Betwixt the west and north-west side."*

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite; and he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him, and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication, but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed; only that is in a quiet way,

therefore nobody sees it, and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society.

Don't you know any such people? I hope you do not; but I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living; men that make grand professions, and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as hell is opposed to heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." Says the business man, "I could not do what So-and-so does, it is true, I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book." We have known many men say; "I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does." We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil.

Horrible shall he that man's fate, who thus ruins other men's souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out to-day, like Joshua and Caleb of old; let the Church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men. For, indeed, religion is holy; as Christ is holy, even so do his people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which bringeth salvation is pure and peaceful; it produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel; you have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

*"Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was"
I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the
hypocrite, and the unholy man.*

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all in some measure we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavors uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently there are times when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, "The Gospel is holy" for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known, when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us, and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, do not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse us, but do not abuse our Master: say what you will concerning us, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our religion, for saints are sinners still, and the most holy men have still to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the gospel of Christ.

I could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow any one to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No, Christ is holy; the gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves, for indeed it is a good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report. and now, thank God we have some GOOD SPIES too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony; though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you; and they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an aged Christian. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow, and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord, and thus addressed us:—"Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you; in a few more months I shall gather up my feet upon my bed, and sleep with my fathers. I have not the tongue of the learned nor the mind of the eloquent but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty and six years have I served him, and I have never found him once unfaithful. I can say 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of my life, and not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God has promised.' "

And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul; and though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, "Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste."

There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for his service was pleasant and his wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the sufferer. "Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline, all droopingly she lieth, as a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with

unhealthy moisture." I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life; and I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." I have sat down and spoken to her, and have said to her, "Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?" "Oh, Sir," she has said, "what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed; but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness. he has put his left hand under my head, and his right hand has embraced me; he has given me joy in my sorrows, and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance." Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the gray-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city, and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house. He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do; but he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in; but at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there; or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake, and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow, for he is upright in his dealings. There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God, and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith. and when his prosperity returned to him, he

dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord, not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-so gave a hundred a year to a society, but he gave five hundred and nobody knew of it.

Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." When they saw him, they said, "There is something in religion. We have watched him; we have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God, and fearing no man."

Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report; not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers, and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house; for their house has run to riot, and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman, was plucking everything down at home, while trying to do good abroad.

We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly, gay man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, "You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may

put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women." "Well," said they, "let us all go to supper with you to-night." They did. In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little; but she and her maid set to with all their might, although it was past twelve o'clock, and very soon had supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come, and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband. I was not converted before I was married, but ever since I was converted, my first endeavor has been to bring my husband to know Jesus. and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness." Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her; his heart was touched; next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her, and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts.

She was a good spy, and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She hath done what she could;" and when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoeblick ought to black shoes better than anybody else. If there be a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off.

You know the negroes' piety in America is such, that a religious negro is worth many dollars more than another and always sells well; so that the masters like them to get religious because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently, and the men who, finding themselves slaves, much as they may hate their position, yet regard one to be their master who is higher than all, and "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavor to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here, THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION. Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here to-day, there are some of us who love him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiter, rather than he should be smitten.

One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between him and insult, yea, between him and death.

Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ; but remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you—they lay it all to your Master. If you make a slip to-morrow they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature;" they will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it; they will be sure they put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully; but do not allow Christ to bear the blame—do not suffer his escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit his banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags: in the bag at the back they put all the Christian's virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men; all the courage of martyrs and all the fidelity of confessors, and all the holiness of saints, is nothing to them; but our iniquities are ever before them.

Please to recollect, that wherever you are as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you; the Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind the world is not. It is a common proverb, "As sound asleep as a church," and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep; but it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, "As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And

remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults.

If a man trips who makes no profession, oh! it is nothing—you never hear of it; let a minister do it, let a Christian professor do it, and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us. There are two codes of morality in the world, and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children, and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong in the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good.

All the saints in a church but one may be faithful to Christ, and the world will not honor the church for it; but let one professor in that church turn aside to sin, and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us, and we do not note it; all things continue as they were: the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet: but there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history that such-and-such a remarkable day occurred at such-and-such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is.

The world will only note the evil. You may cross through a country, and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures, who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock, and a waterfall dashes there; you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths, it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure to hear of him, if he makes a fall.

Be watchful, therefore; your Master cometh. Be watchful: the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate, and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief. I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life, and you shall never have a ticket of leave."

It will be of no use for you at the last day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured he will have short work with you. You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! Thou didst make no profession of loving me, and now thou shalt have no possession of my glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire.

May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.