

Numbers 14:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

Analysis

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.' Joshua and Caleb urge Israel not to rebel against God's command to enter Canaan. The phrase 'rebel not ye against the LORD' identifies refusing God's command as rebellion. Their military assessment 'they are bread for us' uses a metaphor suggesting the Canaanites will be easily consumed. The statement 'their defence is departed from them' indicates God had removed His protection from Canaan's inhabitants—their time of judgment had come (Genesis 15:16). The assurance 'the LORD is with us' makes victory certain regardless of enemy strength. This demonstrates that faith considers God's presence more significant than circumstances. The contrast between 'fear ye the people' and 'the LORD is with us' shows faith and fear are incompatible. Caleb and Joshua's minority report illustrates that truth and faith don't depend on majority opinion.

Historical Context

This plea came after the ten spies' fearful report about Canaanite giants and fortified cities (Numbers 13:28-29, 32-33). Joshua and Caleb gave the minority faithful report. The phrase 'their defence is departed from them' (literally 'their shadow,' *tseḥ*, תֶּשֶׁח) suggests protective covering or military strength. God had indeed determined Canaan's judgment—'the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' (Genesis 15:16) referred to waiting until their sin warranted destruction.

Archaeological evidence confirms Canaan's Late Bronze Age cities were fortified, making the spies' report factually accurate but faithlessly fearful. The people's response was to threaten stoning Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:10), showing how unpopular faith can be. God's judgment meant the entire unbelieving generation died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:29-30). Their faith was vindicated forty years later when they entered Canaan. Hebrews 3:18-19 uses this incident to warn against unbelief.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Joshua and Caleb's confidence in God's presence despite obvious obstacles illustrate genuine faith?
2. What does the people's desire to stone the faithful minority teach about the cost of standing for truth?

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Deuteronomy 7:18 (References Lord): Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;

Romans 8:31 (Parallel theme): What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Deuteronomy 31:6 (References Lord): Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Psalms 74:14 (Parallel theme): Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 31:8 (References Lord): And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

2 Chronicles 20:17 (References Lord): Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and

Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

2 Chronicles 32:8 (References Lord): With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Numbers 24:8 (Parallel theme): God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.

Joshua 1:5 (Parallel theme): There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Psalms 121:5 (References Lord): The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.