

A Lost Generation

Text: Numbers 13-14; cf. Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:1-12

Introduction

1. No word in any language arrests attention and quickens interest more than “lost.”
 - a. A lost child causes an entire community, state or nation to conduct a frantic search.
 - b. The Lord knew this.
 - 1) He told of a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost boy in order to let people know heaven’s attitude toward the lost. (Luke 15)
 - 2) He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)
2. One of the most tragic accounts in the Bible is that of a lost generation—an entire generation that failed to enter the promised land. (Num. 13-14)

I. Background and Summary

- A. After their long bondage in Egypt, God delivered Israel.
 1. He brought them through the Red Sea, led them to Mt. Sinai, gave them the law, and fed them with manna.
 2. He graciously attended to their needs and led them to the promised land.
- B. To reassure them of the promised land of rest, God told Moses to send out twelve spies to inspect the land and give their report. (Num. 13:1-2)
 1. They were to:
 - a. See its inhabitants—whether they were strong or weak.
 - b. Check its cities—if they were walled or of tents.
 - c. Examine its soil as to its fertility and productivity.
 2. They completed their assignment but went too far in presenting conclusions they had reached and offering recommendations for action.
 - a. This was not within their jurisdiction.
 - b. These matters belonged to the Lord.
- C. The reports of the spies.
 1. The majority report.
 - a. It is summed up in Numbers 13:27-33.
 - b. As you consider their report, keep in mind that God had promised them this land.

2. The minority report.
 - a. It was given by Joshua and Caleb.
 - b. It concurred with the majority in what they saw.
 - c. It did not agree with the conclusions drawn and recommendations offered.
 - d. Caleb and Joshua had seen the obstacles which had been reported, yet they urged Israel, with the help of God, to go up and possess the land. (Num. 13:30; 14:6-9)
3. Why did the reports differ?
 - a. Both sides had seen the same land, cities and obstacles.
 - b. The difference:
 - 1) While both saw the same picture, the majority failed to see the most important element—God.
 - 2) The picture is always brighter if we include God—what He can and will do. (Phil. 4:13; Heb. 13:6)

II. Why This Generation Was Lost

- A. They drew back.
 1. When they refused to go up to possess the land, God withdrew His promise. He declared:
 - a. They would not enter in until all those who had murmured had died in the wilderness.
 - b. They would wander in the wilderness a year for each day they had spied out the land. (Num. 14:26-35)
 2. The same will happen to us if we “draw back.” (Heb. 10:35-39)
- B. They were satisfied with the majority report.
 1. They rejected the minority report without consideration or investigation. (Ex. 23:2)
 2. They became angry at the opposition. (Num. 14:10)
 3. It is dangerous to blindly follow the crowd for often the minority is right.
 - a. Noah was a small minority.
 - b. Elijah stood alone against 450 false prophets of Baal.
 - c. Barabbas got more votes than Jesus.
- C. They magnified their difficulties.
 1. They saw only trials and hardships while closing their eyes to blessings and opportunities.
 2. They saw giants and walled cities but forgot God and His providence.

3. The apostle Paul forgot his “thorn in the flesh” because of assurance from the Lord. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
 4. With every difficulty, God makes provision for His own. (Rom. 8:31; cf. Phil. 4:13; Heb. 13:6)
- D. They did not respect themselves.
1. “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight.” (Num. 13:32-33)
 2. They should have remembered:
 - a. They numbered 603,500 warriors who had never been defeated.
 - b. The same God who delivered them from Egypt was still with them.
 3. Self-renunciation and humility do not mean selling God short!
 - a. We must never cast aspersions on that which God has given us.
 - b. We must never belittle our worth. (cf. 1 John 3:1-2)
- E. They murmured and turned from authority.
1. They planned an insurrection against Moses and Aaron, thus against God.
 2. Their constant whining and bickering provoked the Lord. (Num. 14:11-12)
 - a. They offered nothing constructive.
 - b. They loudly criticized anything offered to better their lot.
- F. They were looking back not ahead. (Num. 14:1-3)
1. They turned their attention back to Egypt.
 2. They remembered the experiences of yesterday but did not look with anticipation to what lay ahead.
 3. God’s people must look to the future. (Luke 9:62; Col. 3:1-2)
- G. They were unwilling to pay the price.
1. The cost was reckoned and considered to be too much.
 2. They might have become too soft from accepting free manna and many of God’s providential blessings.
 3. We must:
 - a. Be willing to meet the demands of God. (Luke 9:23; Rom. 12:1-2)
 - b. Count the cost but be willing to pay the price. (Luke 14:27-33; Rom. 8:18)

Conclusion

1. It is pathetic that an entire generation was lost.
2. We must apply the lesson to ourselves. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11)
3. We must not be unmindful of the warnings given to us. (Heb. 4:1-2)