

**BEDWELL
GLOBAL
MINISTERIES**

**DEVOTIONAL
JANUARY 2011**

E MAIL

PKBedwell@hotmail.com

JANUARY 2011

WEB PAGE

Bedwellglobalministeries.com

THE FAITH THAT ACHIEVES

Scripture Reading – Numbers 13:25-33, Chapter 14:1-9. Text

Deuteronomy 1:19

Introduction

In this devotional, I return to one of my favorite periods in the history of God's people. It is a period which fascinates me, because the events, the crises, the pressures and their responses to those happenings are illustrative of what the Christian encounters on his journey with God. The life of faith is a journey. Paul writes that "walks or lives by faith." It is movement, and that is why the Exodus, this saga of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and

subsequent wanderings is so relevant to us. The events which occurred on that journey serve as instruction and warnings to avoid the pitfalls and temptations to which they often succumbed. Paul latches on to this and tells us in I Corinthians 10" verse 6 and 11. Referring to the Children of Israel he writes, "Now these things occurred as examples to keeps us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." Verse 11. "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us." And so we are learn from what happened to them on their journey. There is a simple phrase in Deuteronomy 1:19 that is an entry in the historical records of Israel. "And they reached Kadesh Barnea." They tell a large story. If you look at what took place in order for them to arrive at this point and what took place at this town and what transpired after they arrived there, you will discover that it became a watershed in the life of Israel.

Furthermore you will discover that these words have geography in them

because they announce the arrival of God's people at a particular point and a specific place on their journey. They also record a historical event. These words were written with almost a sense of relief. They had come through the great and terrible wilderness and now they were poised to inherit the land that God had promised them. This place called Kadesh Barnea, became a critical point on their journey. This insignificant desert town should have been a thoroughfare, but it became a dead end, a cul-de-sac because Kadesh Barnea became the place of disobedience to God. It was the hour in which doubt took hold of their hearts and it was in those critical moments when they refused to go into the land that God had promised them. The interesting point here is that they had followed God to this point by faith. God had displayed His mighty power on their behalf at the Red Sea. He had fed and protected them all the through the wilderness and brought them to Kadesh Barnea. But what may appear to be an insignificant

statement represents a tremendous accomplishment. Kadesh Barnea is place of

1. FAITH'S ACHIEVEMENT. Deuteronomy 1:19.

The New Testament confirms this in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Their arrival at Kadesh Barnea was no small achievement. They "reached Kadesh Barnea." It was not the achievement of an individual or single family. A nation had arrived at Kadesh Barnea. They had arrived by exercising their faith in God's power and providences. When they left Egypt they did not know what lay ahead of them, but by faith they followed the leadership of their redeeming God. "The African antelope, the impala can jump to a height of 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a three foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. In other words an Impala as beautiful as it is will not

jump where it cannot see. The Israelites could not see where they were going and they did not know how they would end up, but they trusted God enough to move out where He led them. They willingly followed the God who knew the end from the beginning, “they reached Kadesh Barnea.” They reached it by faith. There are three truths that come out of this statement which I want to impress upon you, for they apply to our walk with God. The achievement of faith was guided by the purposes of God. Note first,

a. Faith and Purpose. Deuteronomy 1:19.

The words of Moses make this clear.

“Then as the Lord our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through the vast and the terrible desert that you have seen, as we reached Kadesh Barnea..” The word says “....as the Lord commanded uswe set out from Horeb...” They had reached Kadesh Barnea by faith. This goal

was in the purposes of God. Moses said that God had brought the people out of Egypt in order to bring them into the Canaan. It was made clear that this was God’s redeeming purpose for them. He had promised them their own land where they would establish their identity as viable nation. They were to be His representatives in the world. They were His chosen people. They were to be the channel through which the promised Messiah the Redeemer of world would come. His purpose was clear. His promise revealed His purpose and by faith the nation moved forward to take hold of that purpose and in doing so fulfill what God had intended for them. And so, tremendous issues were at stake when they arrived at Kadesh Barnea. It was a flashpoint in the life of the nation. They had come to the crossroads of their destiny. It was the place of decision. They had reached the borders of the promised land. Achieving faith is always tied together with the purposes of God. Faith and purpose. Secondly note,

b. Faith and Persistence.

Deuteronomy 1:19.

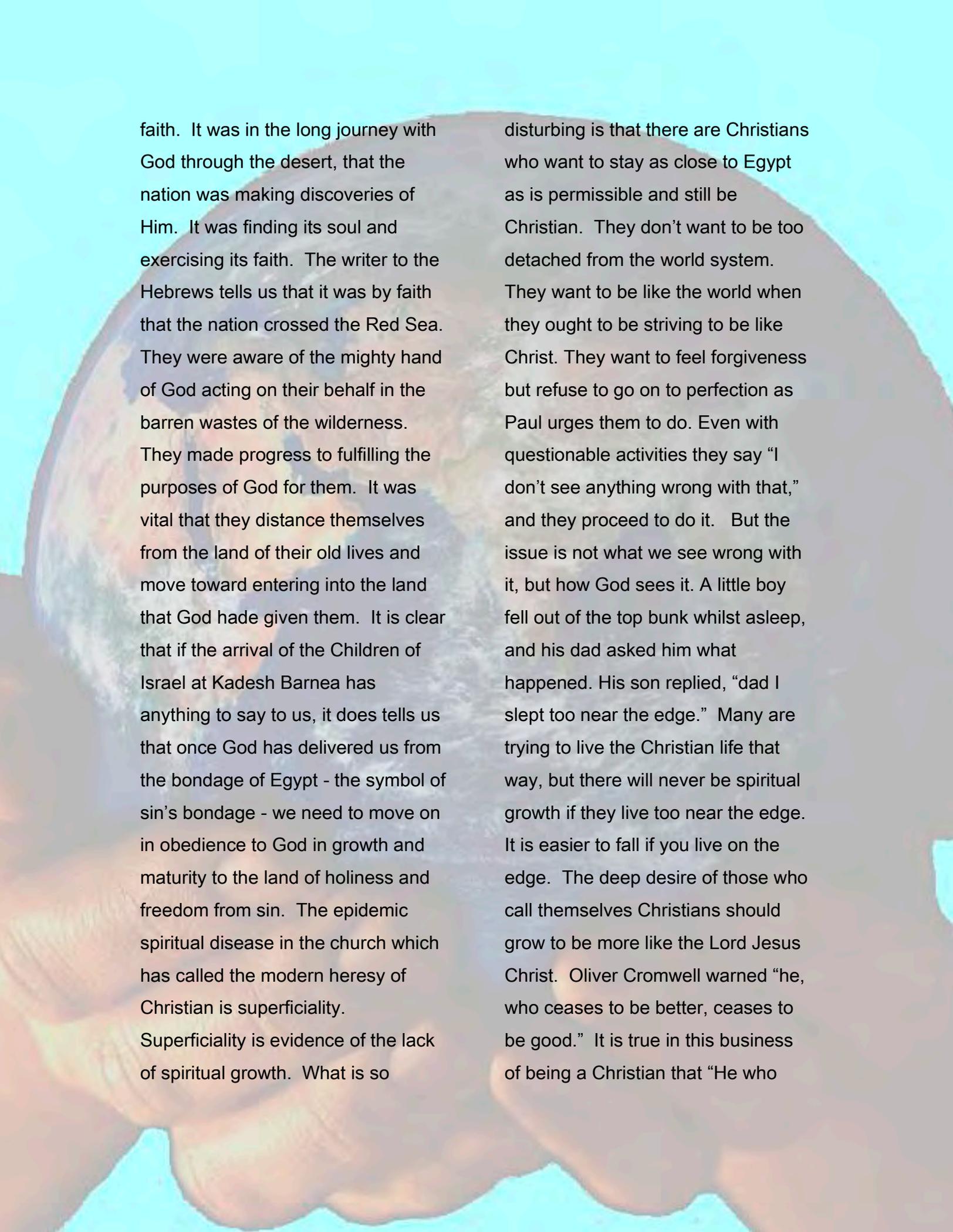
They reached Kadesh Barnea by the persistence of faith.

Their journey had not been an easy one. The description of what they had come through enlightens us on the difficulty they had endured. Moses said that the wilderness was vast and dreadful. Jeremiah put in a more detailed description of wilderness, and from that description, it is clear that the desert was not the place to be. Jeremiah in his second chapter and the sixth verse describes the wilderness as a “land deserts and rifts, a land of drought and darkness, a land where no man passed through, and no man dwelt.” The desert was trackless, scorching, uninhabited and unfriendly both to man and beast. In spite of this, in that long and difficult journey the nation reached Kadesh Barnea. The people were persistent enough in their faith believing that God would bring them into the Promised Land. The difficulties did not dampen their faith. It is true that

while there were some hiccups on their journey, they persisted and battled through to Kadesh Barnea. Charles Kettering said “No one would have ever crossed the ocean if he could have gotten out of the boat.” Day after day Columbus entered these words in the log of the Santa Maria. This day we sailed on.” Moses said that “through the vast and terrible desert we journeyed on and so we reached Kadesh Barnea.” This is a bold testimony to the persistence of faith. The arrival of Israel at Kadesh Barnea speaks of,

c. Faith and Progress. Deuteronomy 1:19.

They reached Kadesh Barnea. Kadesh Barnea was a long way from Egypt. They had been slaves under the oppressive regime of the Egyptians. God had stepped into their misery, broke their chains, and under the leadership of His servant Moses, led them out of the land through the wilderness and they reached Kadesh Barnea. This is an evidence of the progress brought by



faith. It was in the long journey with God through the desert, that the nation was making discoveries of Him. It was finding its soul and exercising its faith. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that it was by faith that the nation crossed the Red Sea. They were aware of the mighty hand of God acting on their behalf in the barren wastes of the wilderness. They made progress to fulfilling the purposes of God for them. It was vital that they distance themselves from the land of their old lives and move toward entering into the land that God had given them. It is clear that if the arrival of the Children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea has anything to say to us, it does tell us that once God has delivered us from the bondage of Egypt - the symbol of sin's bondage - we need to move on in obedience to God in growth and maturity to the land of holiness and freedom from sin. The epidemic spiritual disease in the church which has called the modern heresy of Christianity superficiality. Superficiality is evidence of the lack of spiritual growth. What is so

disturbing is that there are Christians who want to stay as close to Egypt as is permissible and still be Christian. They don't want to be too detached from the world system. They want to be like the world when they ought to be striving to be like Christ. They want to feel forgiveness but refuse to go on to perfection as Paul urges them to do. Even with questionable activities they say "I don't see anything wrong with that," and they proceed to do it. But the issue is not what we see wrong with it, but how God sees it. A little boy fell out of the top bunk whilst asleep, and his dad asked him what happened. His son replied, "dad I slept too near the edge." Many are trying to live the Christian life that way, but there will never be spiritual growth if they live too near the edge. It is easier to fall if you live on the edge. The deep desire of those who call themselves Christians should grow to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Oliver Cromwell warned "he, who ceases to be better, ceases to be good." It is true in this business of being a Christian that "He who

ceases to grow ceases to be a Christian.” The children of Israel would have never reached Canaan if they had decided to live near Egypt. Faith and progress go together. Moses said “.....and so we came to Kadesh Barnea. The arrival at this desert town is the testimony to the achievement of faith. Secondly their arrival at Kadesh Barnea revealed,

2. THE PREDICAMENT OF FAITH. Numbers 13:27-33. Numbers 14:1-4.

Kadesh was not their final destination. They were destined to inherit the land which God had promised them. God had already given to them. All they had to do was to move in and take it. Kadesh Barnea was the last stop before they entered in. The story is a familiar one. Moses sent out 12 spies to survey the land. Two spies came back with the message of faith, hope and optimism. The ten however returned with the message dark with despair, fear and doubt. What filters through this event is that perception was important to achieving God's

goal for them. There are two ingredients in this perception. The first is that

a. Perception and Attitude are Critical in the Walk of Faith. Numbers 13:30-33.

Why is this so? It is so because perception to the individual is reality. That perception maybe divorced from reality. It may give a distorted view of reality, but the truth is that way the individual perceives to be life is reality him and will determine his attitudes. Two individuals can see the same incident or experience the same event and come to two entirely different perceptions or conclusions. Those individuals will be convinced that those conclusions are genuine and real. This happened to the twelve spies. There were two different perceptions that day.

i. There was the perception of doubt.

ii. There was the perception of faith.

They all went in to the same land and saw the same problems, the same difficulties and obstacles, but they came back with different conclusions. The perception of the two spies was of optimism and faith in the power of God. They saw the land as God saw it. They saw the possibilities as God saw them. The perception of the 10 spies, however, was of gloom and doom. They talked about the giants, the great well fortified cities too difficult to tackle. When they saw the giants, the Sons of Anak, the perception of them-selves was that were like grasshoppers in their own sight, as well as in the giants sight. The ultimate conclusion was that this was too much for them; they would not be able to take the land that God had promised them. And so in this group of twelve spies there were two contrasting perceptions of that which faced the nation in the land of God's promise. They remind me of the poetic sentence that "two men looked through prison bars one saw mud and the other saw stars." One has said that it is true "that one gets

nothing but discord out of a piano, another gets harmony. Yet no one claims that the piano is at fault." And again "If you only see the holes you will think that the screen is useless, yet it keeps the flies out." The two spies had the star perception and the ten had the mud perception. The ten allowed the mud to overshadow and destroy their faith. It limited their actions. That is why perception is so critical in the walk of faith. Secondly,

b. Perception and Attitude are contagious in the walk of faith.

Numbers 14:1-4.

When the 10 spies gave their negative report the scriptures inform us in Numbers 14:1-4 that ".....the people of the community raised their voices and wept loud. V.2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in the desert v.3. "Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?" Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt? V. 4 and they said to each other; "we should choose a leader

and go back to Egypt. What is amazing is that they would rather fault God than follow Him into the land. Every where they looked their perception was that giants were bigger than they were and consequently bigger than God. In their minds there was not a glimmer of hope. Faith had lost its vision of God because it had been overwhelmed by the contagion of doubt. The ten spies had started the avalanche of over estimating the power of the enemy. Their lack of faith and dark dismal attitude was contagious. It was infectious and it swayed a nation to step out of God's will and purposes for it. This is the predicament that faith faced. Furthermore Kadesh Barnea was also the place of,

3. THE ASSESSMENT OF FAITH.

Numbers 13:30. 14:9.

Two assessments had been made by the 12 spies. We have already seen that the ten spies were negative and pessimistic. Their assessment was dominated by doubt

and unbelief. The minority assessment made by the 2 spies was positive, aggressive and optimistic. It was full of faith, hope and courage. They had a vision of God who was greater than their difficulties and problems. A God who would not be overwhelmed and defeated by the great walled cities and frightening giants. He was a God who had defeated the giant of Egypt, the Red Sea and the foreboding desert. It was He who brought them to Kadesh Barnea. Who would stop Him from taking them into the land of Canaan? After all it was His promise to them. Caleb and Joshua and Caleb believed this and stated it clearly. We read in verse 30 "that Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said we should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." The K.J.V. reads, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." This is the assessment of faith and it is a powerful statement of a robust faith. Note,

a. What Faith Decided!

Numbers 13:30. "We should go up..." or "we should go up at once."(K.J.V.)

This is what the two spies decided to do. It was the commitment of faith.

"We should go up." It is a significant commitment when you consider the context in which this faith operated. They made the commitment against the odds. The majority report was that they should not go up. They came up against insurmountable difficulties. In the face of overwhelming despair and pessimism, faith stood up and decided that it was completely able to overcome the giants in the land. This courageous faith flung it self into the purposes of God for His people. It is the kind of faith Peter initially exercised when he dared get out of the boat in the midst of a furious storm and begin to walk on the turbulent waters at the invitation of Jesus. One has said if "you want to walk on the water get out of the boat." This is the action of faith, but before you take that action make

sure that it is God who is calling you out. Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water and he walked. Each action of faith in the New Testament was preceded with either the clear call of God or founded on His unshakable promises. Faith without these assurances is presumption. God had told Israel that the land of Canaan was theirs and all they had to do was move in and take it. The promise was that every inch of the land they trod upon was theirs. If you want to take the land move in and take it. This is what Caleb and Joshua were saying. Let us go up at once."(K.J.V.) This is what faith decided. It is the full commitment to the will and purposes of God and an unreserved trust in the goodness of God. Charles Wesley wrote a beautiful hymn in which one of the verses expresses this vibrant faith.

**"Faith Mighty faith the promise sees
And rests on that alone.
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done."**

This is what faith decided. "Let us go up." Furthermore look at,

b. What Faith Determined!

Numbers 13:30. Caleb said "Let us go up at once..." (K.J.V.)

The King James Version uses the words at once. Let's go up at once.

Once the decision was made to go up into the land it was determined that they should do so immediately. It speaks of the urgency of faith. God had made the promise of the land to His people. He revealed His purpose that the land would be their inheritance. He had led them to the borders of the Promised Land. Now they were at the borders of that land. Why wait any longer? The time is now to inherit the land. Caleb and Joshua realized that this nation which had been delivered from the Egyptians did not belong to slavery and the binding subjection to foreign rulers. They did not belong to the place from which they came; they belonged to the place where God was taking them. They were neither the sons of Egypt nor the children of the wilderness but heirs of the Promised Land. God had already given it to them. It was a divinely given inheritance. This being true

Caleb's reasoning made sense. Why wait any longer. Let us go up at once. Caleb challenge was to urgency. It is said the "procrastination is the thief of time," which means it can be thief of the future. It can rob us of what God has promised us. Kadesh Barnea points two ways, on to Eshcol in Canaan, or back to the wilderness. Every soul makes its own choice. Every child of God comes to their own Kadesh Barnea. It is the place of alternative possibilities. Which is it to be? Forward in obedience to God or back to the place from which we have come. The Israelites faced these alternatives and their choice eventually put them back in the wilderness, and the wilderness is a worse place than Egypt ever was. Hebrews tells that they died and their bodies fell in the desert. They were heirs of God's inheritance and yet that generation ended up still born people. Doubt and disobedience had put them there. In our daily walk with God our faith needs to possess an intense sense of urgency to fulfill the commands and purposes of God

for our spiritual lives if we are to inherit all the He has promised us, in vast resources of His love and grace. In this moment at Kadesh Barnea, Caleb's faith determined that the nation should move in obedience go into the land immediately. This is what his faith determined. Finally note

c. What Faith Declared!

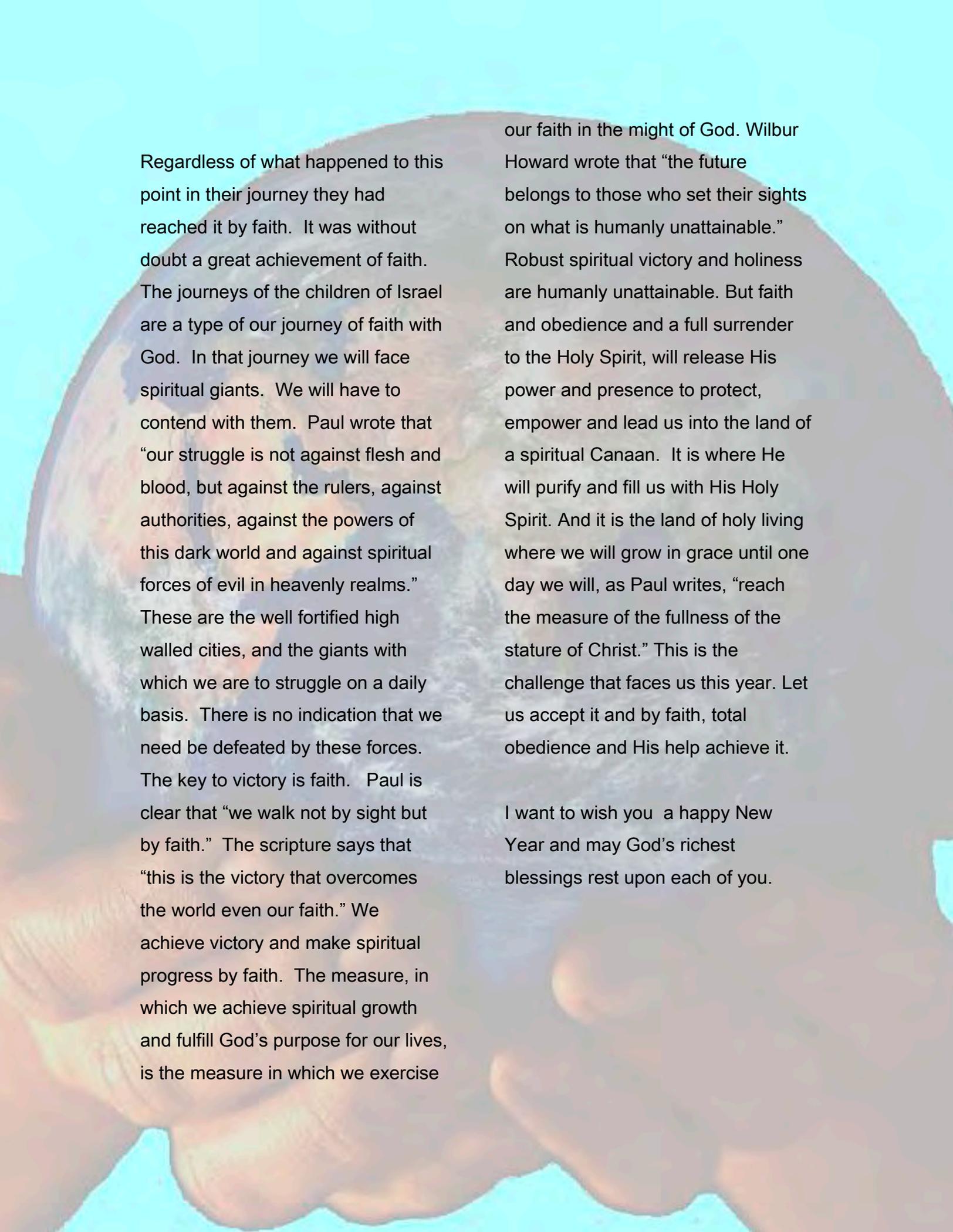
Numbers 13:30. 14:9. Numbers 13:30.

"We should go up and take the land for we can certainly do it." And in Numbers 14:9, Caleb and Joshua said to the entire nation; "do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them." The K.J.V. uses a vivid phrase, "We can overcome because "they are bread for us." Their faith was robust and strong and aggressive. The reason it is made clear, in those revealed in those reassuring words "Their protection is gone from them, but the Lord is with us." The roots of their faith went deep into the promise

and power of the presence of God. The "Lord is with us" is the final argument that reduces the might of the enemy to nothing and levels the walled cities to the ground. Israel had already discovered and experienced this truth. It is incredible that the same nation who God delivered from the Egyptians, led by God in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day, should shrink back in fear at the prospect of taking the land of Canaan. It is hard to understand why having been led, fed and protected all the way from Egypt by the Lord, they would fear the next step into their promised inheritance. They were at Kadesh Barnea because of the faithfulness of God. They were constantly protected by the presence and power of God each step of the way. There was no reason to draw back in fear. They had every reason to move forward into the future. That is why Caleb and Joshua challenged the nation to move onto and take the land.

Conclusion

"And they reached Kadesh Barnea."



Regardless of what happened to this point in their journey they had reached it by faith. It was without doubt a great achievement of faith. The journeys of the children of Israel are a type of our journey of faith with God. In that journey we will face spiritual giants. We will have to contend with them. Paul wrote that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.” These are the well fortified high walled cities, and the giants with which we are to struggle on a daily basis. There is no indication that we need be defeated by these forces. The key to victory is faith. Paul is clear that “we walk not by sight but by faith.” The scripture says that “this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith.” We achieve victory and make spiritual progress by faith. The measure, in which we achieve spiritual growth and fulfill God’s purpose for our lives, is the measure in which we exercise

our faith in the might of God. Wilbur Howard wrote that “the future belongs to those who set their sights on what is humanly unattainable.” Robust spiritual victory and holiness are humanly unattainable. But faith and obedience and a full surrender to the Holy Spirit, will release His power and presence to protect, empower and lead us into the land of a spiritual Canaan. It is where He will purify and fill us with His Holy Spirit. And it is the land of holy living where we will grow in grace until one day we will, as Paul writes, “reach the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ.” This is the challenge that faces us this year. Let us accept it and by faith, total obedience and His help achieve it.

I want to wish you a happy New Year and may God’s richest blessings rest upon each of you.