

The Cost of Unbelief: Deuteronomy 1:19-33 Explained

Scriptures for Today

Deuteronomy 1:19-33

And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20 And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. 21 Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. 22 And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. 23 And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe: 24 And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. 25 And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us. 26 Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God: 27 And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28 Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. 29 Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; 31 And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. 32 Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, 33 Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

INTRODUCTION: UNBELIEF MAKES GIANTS BIGGER THAN GOD

Let me ask you a question. How close can someone get to victory and still lose? Think about that. How close can someone get to success and still fail? How close can someone get to the finish line and never cross it?

Imagine training for a marathon. You run 26 miles. You're 100 yards from the finish line. The crowd is cheering. The finish line is in sight. And then you quit. Everybody would say: Why? You're right there! That's Israel. They're standing at the border of the Promised Land. The land God promised Abraham. The land flowing with milk and honey. The land God said was theirs.

They're right there. And they turn back. Why? Let's find out.

I. GOD BROUGHT THEM TO THE EDGE OF VICTORY

Deuteronomy 1:19-21

And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20 And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. 21 Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

Moses is reminding Israel what happened. They traveled through the wilderness. They arrived at Kadesh-barnea. And then God said: "Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it." Stop right there. What did God say? Go up. Possess it.

God didn't say: "Maybe." God didn't say: "If the giants aren't too big." God didn't say: "If the cities aren't fortified." God said: "Take it." The victory was already promised. Who gave them the land? God. Who promised them the land? God. Who brought them to the land? God. Then what exactly was the problem?

Here's the problem. Unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God. Your imagination makes all these other problems out there bigger than God. And then you see giants bigger than God.

II. FEAR SOUNDED REASONABLE

Deuteronomy 1:22-25

And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. 23 And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe: 24 And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. 25 And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us.

Now the people suggest sending spies. At first that sounds reasonable. In fact, Moses says the saying pleased him. But it pleased him because they said they were going to see what way to go and what cities are there. Twelve spies are sent. They search the land. And what do they find?

Exactly what God said they would find. A good land. A fruitful land. A blessed land. They bring back fruit. Not pictures. Not stories. Actual evidence. Good fruit. They literally carried proof. The land was everything God said it was. And today, when God says something is good, we should automatically know it's good without needing evidence. But they had evidence.

So what's the problem? The land is good. The promise is true. The fruit is real. What's the problem? God SAID the land is yours. The problem isn't the land. It's good. The problem, as we'll see here, is unbelief.

III. THEY BELIEVED THE GIANTS MORE THAN GOD

Deuteronomy 1:26-28

Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God: 27 And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28 Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

Now we reach the turning point. One of the saddest verses. "Notwithstanding ye would not go up but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God." Think about that. God said go. They said no. Just like God says to GO preach the Gospel and many say NO, I WILL NOT GO.

Imagine standing there. The Promised Land is right in front of you. The fruit is in your hands. The promise is in your ears. The victory is in sight. And you refuse to move. God is on your side, but you refuse to take the next step.

The people say: "The people are greater and taller. The cities are great and walled up to heaven." Who cares if someone is taller than you? Were the walls actually reaching heaven? No. Fear exaggerates. Fear always exaggerates.

Ever wake up at 3 AM worrying about something? At 3 AM it feels enormous. Then morning comes. And suddenly it doesn't look quite so big. Fear magnifies problems. Faith magnifies God. Unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God.

IV. THEY FORGOT WHAT GOD HAD ALREADY DONE

Deuteronomy 1:29-31

Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; 31 And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

Moses says: "Dread not, neither be afraid of them." Why? Because God had already proven Himself. He's God. "He shall fight for you."

Who brought them through the Red Sea? God. Who destroyed Pharaoh? God. Who fed them in the wilderness? God. Who gave them water? God. Who led them by day? God. Who protected them by night? God. Then why are they afraid now?

One of the greatest pictures in the chapter is in verse 31 right there. "The LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son." Think about that. A father carrying his child. Protecting him. Providing for him. Guiding him. That's how God treated Israel. That's how God treats us today.

How many times has God carried you when you couldn't carry yourself? How many prayers has He answered? How many times has He provided? How many times has He protected? But fear and unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God.

V. THE REAL ISSUE WASN'T THE GIANTS

Deuteronomy 1:32

Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,

This verse is the heart of the chapter. There's the issue. Not giants. Not walls. Not armies. Not cities. Unbelief. The problem wasn't outside of them. The problem was inside of them. **THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE GOD.**

Imagine a bridge engineered to hold 100 tons. You need to drive across it. The bridge can hold you. The bridge is strong enough. But you refuse to cross. What's the problem? The bridge? No. Your lack of trust. That's Israel. God was sufficient. They simply didn't believe Him. Unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God.

VI. GOD WAS ALREADY GOING BEFORE THEM

Deuteronomy 1:33

Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

One of the most overlooked verses. God was already going before them. Look at what He was doing. "Who went in the way before you." Before they arrived God was already there. Before they faced the enemy God was already there. Before they saw the giants God was already there.

Have you ever arrived somewhere and discovered someone had already prepared everything? That's God. Israel thought they were facing the future alone. God had already gone ahead.

The same is true today. You're worried about tomorrow. God is already there. You're worried about next year. God is already there. You're worried about the future. God is already there.

CONCLUSION

Imagine standing at Kadesh-barnea. The Promised Land is right there. The fruit is in your hands. The promise is fresh in your ears. The God who parted the Red Sea is standing with you. And yet you turn back. Why? Because unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God.

The giants were real. The walls were real. The enemies were real. But God was greater. And they forgot that. So let me ask you one final question. What giant in your life has become bigger than God?

What fear has become bigger than God's promises? What obstacle has become bigger than God's power? Because the great lesson of Deuteronomy 1 is simple: **Unbelief makes you see giants bigger than God.**

Were the giants real? Yes. Were the walls real? Yes. Were the enemies real? Yes. But God is far greater than all of those things. And God is more real than any giant, any wall, any people, and any enemy. The giants are big out there, but God is always bigger.

Let's pray.