

IT Matters – Perseverance

6/28/26

Numbers 13-14

Sunday AM

There are moments in the life of a nation, a church, and in every believer when faith must become more than a feeling, more than a Sunday event, and more than a verse we know. There are moments when faith has to **stand** up, **speak** up, **step** forward, and **keep** going.

This is what we see in the life of Caleb in Numbers 13.

Caleb was one of the (12) spies sent into the Promised Land who walked the same hills, tasted the same fruit, saw the same fortified cities and giants – yet when (10) returned w/ fear, only Caleb/Joshua came w/ faith.

When the other (10) said, “*We can’t.*” Caleb said, “*We can.*” When they saw giants; he saw God. When they saw problems; he saw promise. When they saw obstacles; b/c of faith – he saw opportunity.

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” Numbers 13:30

This is belief that **perseveres**. It’s not pretending that the giants are small – it’s remembering God is bigger. It’s not ignoring reality, it’s interpreting reality thru God’s promises. It’s not one brave moment; it’s long obedience in the same direction – and it leads to perseverance – which is having a faith that overcomes.

This doesn’t mean perseverance is blind. It still counts giants; it just counts God into the equation. It doesn’t deny the opposition; it refuses to calculate the future as though God is absent or doesn’t exist.

In Caleb’s case, perseverance wasn’t proven only at Kadesh-Barnea. It was proven over the next 45 yrs as he walked thru the wilderness, watched a fearful generation pass away, and kept trusting in God’s promise. This is what makes **Joshua 14** so powerful. At 85, Caleb said – *Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day.* IOW – Give me the mountain, the hard place, the place of unfinished business where fear once spoke the loudest, b/c I still believe God keeps His promises. This is perseverance.

SEE – Caleb **started** w/ faith – **stood** in faith – **stayed** in faith – and ultimately, **finished** w/ faith.

On this patriotic weekend, as we thank God for our freedoms, we need to remember that nations don’t endure by accident, churches don’t endure by comfort, and believers don’t survive w/out perseverance b/c liberty comes at a cost that requires perseverance.

While we’re grateful to be Americans, our citizenship is in heaven. Yes, we love our country, but we worship Jesus. We honor the flag, but we bow before the cross.

WTM – there are (3) encouragements I want to offer to you today as citizens of heaven living in the U.S.A.

I **Perseverance Sees God When Others See Giants**

When Caleb stood at Kadesh-Barnea, the nation was standing at the edge of promise. God had already delivered Israel from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, provided manna in the wilderness and water from the rock. He’d already proven Himself faithful, yet when the other spies saw giants, they forgot God.

This matters b/c, as Caleb's story reminds us, *the mission began w/ a promise, not a poll*. God didn't ask Israel to vote on whether Canaan was possible. He had already said, "*I am giving you the land.*" The issue was never whether the giants were real – the issue was whether God's promise was reliable.

SEE – the (10) spies didn't lie about the giants or the fortified cities... but their conclusions were wrong b/c their perspective was wrong. They said, "*We're like grasshoppers, or so we seemed to them.*"

This is called the **Grasshopper Complex** – *it's when we define ourselves by our obstacles instead of by our God*. It's what occurs when we live by what we see instead of what God has said. It's occurs when our problems appear bigger than our God. It's *perspective*.

It's like the phrase: **GODISNOWHERE**. Some people see, "God is nowhere." Others see, "God is now here." Same letters yet a different conclusion.

Our nation's history contains moments like this. Think about the winter at Valley Forge. The Continental Army entered that winter cold, battered, and dejected. Supplies were thin, morale was low, and the cause of independence looked fragile. They hadn't yet won the war as they were trying to survive just to keep fighting.

I can assure you – Valley Forge wasn't glamorous. It wasn't a parade w/ a picnic and fireworks. It was endurance. Sacrifice. It was men holding the line when everything in them must have wanted to quit.

This is what perseverance does. It keeps perspective. It doesn't always remove the hardship, but it does refine us and strengthens our souls. It gives us the drive to run thru the tape and to scale the mountain.

On July 4, 1776, the signers of the Declaration of Independence penned – *w/ a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, fortunes, and sacred honor*.

This wasn't sentimental language but a costly pledge. They were saying – it matters enough to endure for it. **Church** – how much more should the people of God say the same about the gospel of Jesus Christ?

If those men could pledge their lives, fortunes, and honor for the birth of a nation – how much more should we offer our lives, witness, and obedience for the mission and glory of God?

Listen – we don't persevere b/c America is our savior, but b/c Jesus is our Lord. We don't place our ultimate hope in Washington, in elections, in courts, in political parties, or in policies. We must place our hope in the King of kings/Lord of lords.

Meaning – b/c Jesus is Lord, we should be the best citizens, the most faithful neighbors, the most prayerful people, the most hopeful witnesses, and the most enduring servants. But this requires perspective.

II Perseverance Chooses Virtue When Culture Chooses Fear

This is always the danger b/c fear creates spiritual amnesia. It makes us forget *who God is, what He's said, what He's done* – and *what He's doing*.

Caleb/Joshua tore their clothes before the people and pleaded w/ them not to rebel against the Lord. They said, "*Do not fear the people of the land... the Lord is w/ us; do not fear them.*" But the people didn't listen. In fact, Numbers 14 says they wanted to stone them.

Notice that Joshua/Caleb weren't opposed b/c they were wrong, but b/c they were faithful. They weren't rejected b/c they lacked courage, but b/c the people preferred fear over faith.

Sometimes persevering means standing w/ God when the crowd is moving in another direction.

George Washington understood this to be true. In speaking about the American experiment, in his 1st Inaugural Address, he spoke of the “*sacred fire of liberty*,” warning that no nation can expect – *the propitious smiles of Heaven* – if it disregarded the – *eternal rules of order and rights*.

See – he was saying that freedom w/out virtue will eventually become license, and liberty w/out duty and responsibility will always collapse into chaos – b/c rights w/out righteousness can never sustain a nation.

Yet to possess such virtue and liberty requires courage. It requires fortitude, conviction, and perseverance.

John Adams said it plainly: “*Public virtue can’t exist in a nation w/out private virtue*” – b/c public virtue is the essential foundation of a republic is based on private virtue and morality.

IOW – a nation isn’t made strong by its documents, economy, or military. A nation is strengthened or weakened by the character/stamina of its people.

In Caleb – his conviction was wholehearted. Not flawless but undivided. He had no longing for Egypt, no split loyalties b/w fear and faith, and no admiration for giants – he had the courage to seek God alone. In like manner, a wholehearted believer determines to choose *truth over trend, promise over panic, and obedience over optics* – and *faith over fear*!

This is where the church must hear the challenge: we can’t call the nation to righteousness while excusing unrighteousness in ourselves. We can’t lament culture’s confusion while tolerating our compromise. If we want God’s blessing, it must begin w/ us – w/ the courage to pursue godliness amidst of godlessness.

On this patriotic weekend, the question isn’t – *what’s wrong w/ America?* The question is – *where must God’s people become more faithful? Are we persevering in prayer? In holiness? In love? In the G.C. and in courage* – when silence is safer?

Truth is – if we’re going to be a persevering people – we may need to check our “but.” “*I’d speak, but...*” “*I’d forgive, but...*” “*I’d serve, but...*” “*I’d go, but...*”

Caleb teaches us to replace fear’s “but” w/ faith’s “b/c”: *b/c the Lord is w/ us, we’ll obey; b/c Jesus is risen, we’ll not despair; b/c the gospel is true, we’ll keep on keeping on.*

Listen – it’s easy to look at our nation and see the giants. To say – I’d help BUT our divisions are too great, confusion is too confounding, families are too broken. Yet Caleb reminds us: ***don’t let the giants write the report.*** Let your perseverance drive you.

God isn’t finished. He’s not absent, weak, or worried. He’s not waiting on a better news cycle. God is looking for people w/ a different spirit – a Caleb-spirit.

III Perseverance Finishes Faithfully

The most powerful part of Caleb’s story isn’t what he said at 40, but what he said at 85. At 40, he said, “*We are able.*” At 85, he said, “*Give me this mountain.*”

This is remarkable. For 45 yrs., Caleb waited. For 45 yrs., he wandered b/c of someone else’s unbelief. For 45 yrs., he carried a promise from God in his heart. And when the time finally came, he didn’t ask for easy or safe assignment. He asked for Hebron – the mountain country where the Anakim lived. He asked for the very place that once made Israel tremble.

Why? B/c Caleb still believed God. He said, *“It may be that the Lord will be w/ me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said.”*

This is perseverance. Perseverance keeps trusting what God said even when years have passed. It keeps walking when the promise is delayed. It keeps obeying when the assignment is hard. Perseverance refuses to retire from faithfulness.

This is a needed word for the church in America today.

Some of us are tired and discouraged. Some of us look at the world and wonder what kind of nation our children/grandchildren will inherit. Some of us are tempted to retreat, complain, or disengage – pining for the good ole days that weren’t really that great.

But Caleb will not let us do that. Caleb says, “Don’t spend your last year longing for Egypt or mourning over giants. Ask God for your mountain.”

There are still children to disciple, neighbors to love, prodigals to pray home, wounds to heal, gospel conversations to have – and mountains still to claim.

The question isn’t, *“Is the culture too far gone?”* But, *“Will the church be faithful?”* It’s not, *“Are the giants big?”* But, *“Is God still w/ us?”* It’s not, *“Can America save itself?”* But, *“Will God’s people humble themselves, pray, seek His face, turn from wicked ways, to live as faithful witnesses in this generation?”*

So – what does Caleb teach us on this Fourth of July?

Our nation needs churches filled w/ Caleb-like senior adults who say – *I’m not done serving Jesus*, parents who say – *As for me and my house, we’ll serve the Lord*, students who say – *I’ll follow Jesus even if I stand alone*, and churches that say – *Give us this mtn.*

The hope of America isn’t going to be found in the White House, statehouse, courthouse, or schoolhouse. The hope of America is in the power of God working thru the gospel of Christ in and thru the people of God.

So – let us be patriotic – not idolatrous. Grateful – not complacent. Concerned – not hopeless. Engaged – not consumed. Courageous – not cruel.

As you’re likely aware... in baseball, games aren’t usually decided in the 1st inning. They’re decided late, when the pitch count is high, the lineup has seen your best stuff, and the tying run is standing on second. This is when the manager wants the one who will not flinch. Caleb was that kind of man for God. At 40, he said, “We can certainly do it.” At 85, he was still asking for the ball: “Give me this mountain.”

Church, the innings have piled up, the culture is tense, and the hour is serious. But this is no time to hand the ball to fear. This is the time for persevering faith.

May we persevere in faith. Endure in prayer. Stand in truth. Serve in love. Let us bless this nation by being wholly surrendered to God. **Perseverance Matters!**

Footnotes

[1] National Park Service, "What Happened at Valley Forge," *Valley Forge National Historical Park*, May 30, 2025, www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/valley-forge-history-and-significance.htm.

[2] National Archives, "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," *America's Founding Documents*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

[3] George Washington, "First Inaugural Address," April 30, 1789, National Archives, "Transcription: Washington's Inaugural Address," https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/inaugtxt.html.

[4] John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, April 16, 1776, *Teaching American History*, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/john-adams-to-mercy-warren-2/>.

[5] National Archives, "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," *America's Founding Documents*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.