

HOW CAN WE BEAT IT?

Scriptures: Numbers 13; 14; Deuteronomy 1:19-46

Many complexes concern us:
inferiority complexes,
superiority complexes,
the Oedipus complex, etc.

But none can be so devastating to the Christian as *the grasshopper complex*.
It can devastate the Christian life.
It can keep a church from growing.

In this day, some are happy just to “be faithful,”
to protect and hold on to what we have.

But I believe God wants us to *grow*—not just grow for growth’s sake, but to reach out to all the people about us with the gospel (Acts 1:6-8).

And what will keep us from achieving this growth? *The grasshopper complex!*
Let’s discuss *the grasshopper complex*.

THE GRASSHOPPER COMPLEX: WHAT IS IT?

The Bible story is found in Numbers 13, 14 and Deuteronomy 1.

The Sad Reality: The People Hesitate

The Israelites had come out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses.
They were now on the southern border of the land of Canaan, at the edge of the Promised Land, on the threshold of victory.
Everything that has happened has been leading up to this moment.

Now Moses says:

You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the Lord our God is about to give us. See, the Lord your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed (Deuteronomy 1:20, 21).

But on the verge of victory the people hesitate.

They suggest that a committee be appointed to investigate the matter (Deuteronomy 1:22).

(Someone once said: If you want to kill something, appoint a committee.)

Twelve men are selected—one from each tribe.

They are told to go throughout the land, checking on whether the land is really worth fighting for and how hard it will be to take the land.

Now God has already told them these things:

He has said that the land is good (Exodus 3:8; 33:3), and

that with His help they will be able to drive out the inhabitants and possess the land (Exodus 32:34; 33:2, 14; 23:20ff.).

But the people say in effect,

“We want to check it out for ourselves.”

So God agrees (Numbers 13:1ff.).

If we do not want to do God’s will, God does not force us to.

The Sad Report: We Cannot Take the Land

When the twelve men came back from their mission, they gather the people together.

They are ready to give their report.

First of all the **majority report** “signed” by ten members of the committee was given.

They present their report and say, in effect,

“Yes, the land is fruitful” (Numbers 13:26b, 27).

But then comes the fateful word *nevertheless*:

Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan (Numbers 13:28, 29).

And it is all true—as far as it goes.

Is it not amazing what a difference it makes in *how* you present the truth—and what you select to tell and not to tell?

Then Caleb comes in with a **minority report** “signed” by two members of the committee—Joshua and himself (Numbers 13:30).

In effect he says, “OK, so what? We can still do it.”

Now the ten get excited:

(1) They had said the land was full of good things to eat (Numbers 13:27); now they say that it is a land that will eat *us* up (Numbers 13:32).

(2) They had said that among the inhabitants were “the children of Anak” (Number 13:28); now *all* the people are either “men of a great stature” or else they are actually *giants* (Numbers 13:32b, 33).

So: “We became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:33b).

The Sad Result: The People Are Cursed

Like many before and after them, the people of Israel believe the majority report. They became the “Boo-hoo Brigade,” crying all night. Privately they begin to complain about God’s plan and plot to overthrow God’s appointed leaders.

At least twelve times in chapter 14, it is stressed that *all* the people, the *whole* congregation, was involved.

Moses and Aaron fall on their faces at this display of unbelief. Caleb and Joshua try to dissuade the people, but the only result is that they prepare to stone Caleb and Joshua to death.

Then God steps in: “*The glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel*” (Numbers 14:10b).

God is ready to wipe out the people, but Moses intercedes for them.

But the results are still tragic:

The ten spies are killed immediately.

The Israelites as a whole will never enter the promised land.

They will wander forty years in the wilderness—one year for each day spent in spying out the land—until their bones are scattered all over the desert.

Only their *children* will inherit the land.

All because of *the grasshopper complex!*

Many parallels can be drawn from this story.

In the midst of our struggles, it is easy for us to get *the grasshopper complex*.

Our trials can seem so big and we can feel so small.

Two basic mistakes were made by the ten spies—mistakes we can also make.

They magnified the problems.

The fact that a few people were extra tall, they thought everybody was a giant.

It is easy for us to also magnify our problems.

That's why those ten spies (the one that made the negative report) still lingers around us up to these day.

Let's us hear their report:

(1) "We can't grow because the world around us is so *ungodly*."

(2) "The world is not only ungodly; it is also totally *indifferent*."

Materialism is rampant.

People are interested in the physical, not the spiritual."

(3) "The people who *are* interested already have their own religion."

(4) "No one really wants what *we* have."

People are turned off by our message regarding morals, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, church discipline."

The ten spies not only magnified their problems;

they also minimized their own resources: (2nd basic mistake)

"*We became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight*"

(Numbers 13:33b).

Often we, too, minimize our resources.

Let's continue to hear the report of the ten spies nowadays:

(5) "We are too small to do much."

(6) "We don't have what it takes to attract the crowds:

A gymnasium, art classes, 'children's church,' exercise classes."

The *reason* the Israelites magnified their problems and minimized their resources is because they wanted a good excuse not to possess the land.

We need to be so careful lest we magnify our problems and minimize our resources to give us a good excuse for not moving out on faith.

THE GRASSHOPPER COMPLEX: HOW CAN WE BEAT IT?

After forty years, a new generation at last entered the land under the leadership of Joshua.

How had they beaten the grasshopper complex?

The secret is in the attitude expressed by Caleb and Joshua in Numbers 13 and 14.

After the first majority report, Caleb said,

"We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it" (Numbers 13:30).

In effect he says, *"Don't minimize what we are capable of."*

"Let us. . . ." He stresses togetherness.

"Go up *at once*. . . ." He urged urgency.

"And *possess* it. . . ." He did say conquer it. But God had already given it to them.

"For *we are well able* to overcome it." He said, "We can do it!"

But the real secret is found in Joshua's and Caleb's impassioned appeal in Numbers 14:6-9:

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

They cry, *"Don't minimize what God can do!"*

Why did Joshua and Caleb have such confidence in the Lord?

They had assurance because of *God's promises* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to them.

They had confidence because of *God's performance*.

Cases in point would be crossing the Red Sea, the miraculous pillar, the manna from heaven, and water from the rock.

They had confidence because of *God's presence*.

God was still with them and He was still God!

Are not these three realizations also the key to our success?

Yet we hesitate because of *the grasshopper complex*. [How can we beat it?](#)

First of all, let us not minimize what we are capable of.

Flavil Yeakley's mentioned these words in his book, *Why Churches Grow*,

"We have the manpower.

We have the communication power.

What is most important: We have the gospel power.

All we lack is will power."

But above all, don't minimize what God can do with us.

Faith in God is what the story in Numbers 13 and 14 is all about:

Note Numbers 14:11:

"And the Lord said to Moses, `How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?'"

Our God has said:

If you go and teach, I'll be with you! (Matthew 28:18-20).

If you plant and water, I will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Through Me, you can do all things (Philippians 4:13).

You will have the *victory* through My Son! (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Your labor will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

We have every reason to believe God:

We have His *promises* to us,

His *performance* in our lives, and

His continued *presence*.

CONCLUSION

We can be like Shammua, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, Geuel (men who gave the majority report)—or we can be Calebs and Joshuas (men who gave the minority report).

We can overcome *the grasshopper complex!*

Let us keep that fire burning in us, and don't let it become to just a flicker.