

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Recently I was fascinated to hear some college students respond to a TV interviewer's question. They were asked to comment on the President's State of the Union message and many had basically the same message of disapproval. Now everyone is entitled to their own opinion. But the reason for my fascination was rooted in the fact that the President had not yet given the address. These students had opposing viewpoints to a view that hadn't yet been revealed! I'm learning that we can be so closed off to an alternative viewpoint that we believe we already have the answers to questions that haven't yet been asked or opinions about commentary yet to be spoken. In case we think that this kind of disconnect just happens in the world of politics, the Bible has many examples of this sort of thing.

Consider the story of the twelve spies as the nation of Israel stood at the threshold of a promised future. The negative report was the majority report. They declared defeat before they even entered the battle. Caleb declared that they should go up into the land for they would surely prevail when they obeyed the Lord. Joshua agreed. But the majority declaration followed:

So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." (Numbers 13:32-33)

Then there is the inspiring story of the rebuilders of the wall in Nehemiah's day. Even though there was a God-given vision and passion for the restoration of Jerusalem, it doesn't mean that it would be easily achieved. The enemies of God's will and His workers are often experts in sowing of seeds of discouragement and despair. *Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building — if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!" (Nehemiah 4:1-3)*

Now I know these are stories of faithful people in the past. And some people would say that was then and this is now. What hope does that give me for the problems I am facing? For those fearful folk I would like to say...let's consider the past as we look into the future. The common thread that runs through these and other stories of our faith is the radical idea of trusting our God. Our problem with moving into what God has revealed as a bold direction is that we often cannot know everything for sure. We can be so fearful of the future that we don't realize the paralysis of the present. And when we think of painful past experiences, the experience is often distorted. The children of Israel desired to go back to Egypt...back to bondage...rather than trust the Lord. Here's the thought that is staying with me lately...

We can miss the future before us when we remain focused on the past behind us.

Let's trust God and follow His direction...even when our less than faithful memories tell us a different story.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam