**HEADING TO THE PROMISED LAND - EXIT RAMP 5 - Numbers 14**

When I was a child, bringing home the **school report** was a rather sombre day, and I dreaded getting it home. It used to come in a brown envelope, and once or twice I managed to get the seal opened with steam to see how much trouble I was in! Most of the time – it said things like; "Lloyd could do better. Has not reached his full potential. Needs to try harder. Is easily distracted". One year I got a prize for being the Most improved pupil! Indeed, reports were not my favourite day of the term. So when I first read this story in the Bible about bad a report, it was all too familiar. They were going to be in trouble. And they were.

**After coming to the edge of the new country God had promised them, tasting its fruit and being within its reach, the people are told to turn back and to wander in the wilderness for 37 more years.** Ten of their leaders had decided it was not possible, and they had convinced the people by their lousy report – that the giants in the land would win. Caleb and Joshua however, did believe it was possible. The stubborn unbelief of the people so angered God that he sends them south again into the desert until every one of them had died. It's more than tough love, and this is harsh – this is wiping the board clean and start again! **Makes you think doesn't it**, how often we come close to moving into something new God has for us, only to turn around and go the other way, because giants like **fear, apathy, complacency and compromise** win the day in our lives. I wonder how many times in my life or the churches I have led, have we stood like these people **on the edge of the 'new God wants to do'**. Only to allow the giants of unbelief, fear, cynicism or compromise to rob us of what God wants to give us. And we stay in the wilderness for months or years wandering, instead of living in the Promised Land. Kadeshbarnea was the name of the place where this decision was made. The people had their chance, and they blew it.

***Today's Exit ramp is No 5, "I will manage my repentance and my Christian life and monitor my commitment to it."*** *This God is too harsh, and the consequences of sin he deals with in my life are too significant for me to bear. I will, therefore choose my level of commitment I make, and it will likely ebb and flow depending upon what I need God to do for me.*

***Chapter 14 is summed up with seven one-line sentences.***

1. *Let's find a new leader and go back to Egypt!*
2. *Let's stone Caleb and Joshua – get rid of those who disagree with us*
3. *The prominence of the conjunction 'but' in the story – 7 of them!*
4. *Moses prays for the people to turn Gods anger*
5. *What the people spoke in anger will happen to them – wander v28*
6. *The ten leaders who stirred up people by their report died with a plague*
7. *They aborted the attempt to move into the land because their enemies beat them.*

***Firstly, there are seven 'Buts' in chapters 13 and 14.***

**The Buts in the narrative of the story;** they tell the story of the contrasting interplay between faith and unbelief.

**13:28** *Land of milk and honey* ***But*** *the people there are too strong for us*

**13:30** *We saw the giants there,* ***But*** *Caleb tried to quieten the people*

**14:10** *The Lord is with us, fear not* ***But*** *the whole community spoke of stoning*

**14:13** *I will disown them with a plague* ***But*** *Moses objected* and interceded

**14:24** *They will never see the land* ***But*** *Caleb my servant will be spared*

**14:41** *Lets go we are now ready* ***But*** *Moses warned the people* not to go

**14:44** *The Lord will abandon you* ***But*** *the people defiantly pushed ahead*

and were soundly defeated.

I must have been a rather difficult child. I had a rather scary uncle. He was blind, and he used to visit us from time to time and sit in the corner of the lounge in the sun, and he did have excellent hearing. Like any kid when asked to do something by my Mother, I used to do this annoying thing; **But why?** And after hearing this for the umpteenth time – the usually quiet pensive man could stand it no longer and shouted out "Because your mother says so"!!! I was like a stunned mullet; starring at him with great fear. Lord, I will follow you ***but*** let me first go and do something else first; we seem always to find good reasons why we cannot do what God asks us to do. Or why something else right now is more important. But God simply says to; trust me! I will bring you into this new place – these giants cannot overcome you because I will deal with them. The difference here was that the people had already made up their mind they were going in now or going back.

1. ***Wrestling with God for a different Outcome***

Now here is something truly extraordinary. It's almost like God's mind is changed by Moses prayer. God intends to wipe out the people and start again. He is tired of the people's constant complaints and unbelief. Moses prays for the people and then **wrestles** with God over the situation. He reminds God of his character and what he has promised, and how this would look to the other nations around. Can we change Gods mind over something? Is intercession and prayer truly that powerful? Does God even present to us situations where we can negotiate with him over something? There is more than a few cases in the Bible where prayer changes Gods mind about something. Does what I do impact the Almighty God creator of heaven and earth? This is one of the truly unique things about God; it's almost like He wants us to wrestle with Him – to enter into this mystery of bringing change here. But I want you to note that the strongest argument Moses could muster is based around what? That this God who had delivered them from Egypt, was not able to complete what he had promised to do. (V16)

1. ***What you think and speak out you might inherit v3-4***

The people in their disgruntled and rebellious attitude over food and then leadership now believe that Moses has bought them out into the desert to die there – they say this as kind of a "is this the future God promised"? But their words will become prophetic for their future. They will do just that; every one of them except two will die on the way over the next 37 years. Words have great power in our lives, and we need to be careful of what we speak. How many times have you found yourself acting out or experiencing the very things you have thought or spoken? Sow a seed and reap a thought, sow a word and reap an action, sow an action and reap a destiny! Thoughts and words are powerful*.*

*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he!* **Proverbs 23:7**

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* ***2 Corinthians 10:5***

*Do not copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.* ***Romans 12:2***

*Today I have given you a choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! -****Deuteronomy 30:19***

1. ***You have the freedom to choose to go against what God wants for you***

Here is the most amazing of all. God gives us free will, not only to choose him but not to **choose Him**. He will let us choose evil with its consequences rather than force us to do the right thing. And this is one of the most compelling truths about God love and grace that draws us back. It was this that drew the prodigal back to the Father. You see our DNA is towards being independent from God and his ways. Left to ourselves, our broken-ness is bent towards being fallen. Our thinking is fallen, and following them, our actions are fallen. So you must ask yourself*…." If I was on this trek through the wilderness – what would I have done?"* Because these off-ramps appeal to us so much, when life is tough, or when we don't get what we want, or God appears to be absent, this free choice of our kicks in.

Having come so close after years in the desert, they decide they are going in now despite the warning from Moses not to.

V40 "we *realise* we have sinned" – but we think its time to go into the land.

v44 ***"****But the people defiantly pushed ahead."*

Its called **shallow repentance -** we do something spiritual that we think will impress God and then go and do what we want to.True repentance, is when we turn away from our sin and put ourselves onto Gods mercy. It has no rights or entitlements. You abandon yourself to God, ask for his mercy. Much of our **repentance is shallow**. We are a little bit sorry for our sin. We are fearful of the consequences of our sin. But we get good at managing our lives and our faith commitment. It's the fifth off-ramp on the path to life.

1. ***Defeating giants in our lives to occupy what God has for us.***

How do we defeat giants in our lives that stand in the way of us moving into what God has for us?

To defeat the giants in your life you need to do two things:

1. You **identify** them and **declare** them defeated. You do this because you have *chosen a destination* - (heart)
2. You **disempower** them by **activating** the opposite (head choosing and thinking)

If you are usually **silent – it's time to speak up**.

If you are **inactive, it's time to get moving**.

If you have a giant of **fear, then move in the opposite - faith** and courage.

If you're giant is **stinginess, then start being generous**.

If your giant is **apathy, then find something to do** which you would not normally do.

If your giant is **compromise, then make the choice to go 100%** in the opposite direction. God will empower you to do this if you truly choose to do it.

If your giant is '**wait and see' or procrastination** **then start activating**

The wait and see giant is alive and well in many churches, and he needs defeating. Its another name for this fifth off-ramp - "I will carefully monitor my level of commitment to truly being all out for God". Wait and see what the pastor does, what the new people in the church might do, what other people are saying and thinking. Jesus has not called us to be onlookers – he calls us to be followers. Jesus does not call us to stand back and observe from a distance. He calls us to go with him and occupy this new land and this new life. He calls us to engage the enemy giants in the land and take over their turf!

**Road to nowhere:** Some years ago I was travelling in Switzerland and my colleague and I were driving from one city to another for a meeting we were to take. He was driving, and I was the navigator. And I'm still not sure how it happened, but I got into my head that we could take a short cut up across a mountain range and save time. So up we went – after many kilometres, he said to me, Are you sure this road goes through? Yes, I replied with great confidence studying the map. More time went by, and the road narrowed more, and our progress is slowed, and doubts start to linger, which I don't admit. On we go until the road goes higher and higher up a mountainside and now it's only one way and pretty rough going. Finally, we come to a gate across the top of a ridgeway up this Swiss mountain, which we later we discovered was a road used in winter for skiing. But there was no alternative but to retrace our steps right to the base and start again. That's what happens when you take a path to nowhere, and sadly many people do this with their lives, and think there is a better, quicker, easier way only to find out later the road they took went nowhere. The fifth off-ramp – is a ramp to nowhere. Take it, and you will find yourself having to retrace your steps and start again.