Rumble Strip - Part 3

# The Voices on the Outside

## (Numbers 13.25-14.10)

Today we’re on part three of our message series Rumble Strip and this is a very important series because nobody plans to run off into a ditch. Nobody plans to cross the centerline and have a head on collision, wrecking their lives and everybody’s life in their path. And we’ve been using a lot of analogies in reference to driving because for us that is synonymous to the many references in the New Testament to walking or living the Christian life.

Today, we want to plan ahead and do whatever we can do to avoid having an accident. And that is the purpose of rumble strips, a rumble strip is a strategic plan, and that’s why the apostle Paul tells us in verse 15,

“Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise…” (Ephesians 5:15).

And so, there are some wise things that we can do that will help prevent us from having an accident like not talking on the phone. We could drive safely, not speeding, and not driving drunk. And so, we want to be very careful how we live, not as unwise, but as wise. That’s a really good plan isn’t it?

Well, in the same way, if we’re going to be careful how we live, wouldn’t it make sense to have a plan not to make a wreck out of our lives? That’s the whole point of this series, trying to keep moving in the right direction, not drifting too far to the right or to the left, not wandering but doing everything we can to stay out of the ditch spiritually, in our finances, our marriage, or our health. And so, we want to have a game plan and we’ve been talking about rumble strips, those little grooves or bumps in the road that you can feel and hear when you drive over them.

Last week we talked about the inner rumble strip, that gentle whisper that you can hear, that little nudge that you can feel. And today I want to talk about the outer rumble strip, because whether or not you’ve been trying to ignore it, the reality is that we all have rumble strips in our lives. And so, we have the inner rumble strip and the outer rumble strip, just like there is one on our right on the white line, and the one on our left on the centerline; and you could say this outer rumble strip is the people and voices you allow into your life. These people, these voices will either rumble the right things or the wrong things and if you listen to the wrong voices you’ll most likely end up in the wrong place.

But when you listen to the right voices in your life, these rumble strips are extremely helpful, because when you allow the right people to rumble in your life they will help you avoid the wrong places. These outer rumble strips will keep you from drifting and keep you from living foolishly and dangerously. In fact, whoever you give permission to speak into your life to a large degree will determine the outcome of your life, because they will not only help shape your worldview, but wherever they’re going, you are most likely going to go too. And so, we have to be very careful in choosing who we allow to be that rumble strip in our lives, we want to listen to the right voices so that we can avoid the wrong places.

Today, if you could turn in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 13, there is a story in the Old Testament that really highlights the importance of listening to the right voices. As we come to verse 25, the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, they’re about to go into the Promised Land, but just before they went in Moses decided to send 12 spies to explore the land. And so, he’s expecting that they would come back and say, “This place God has for us is awesome, let’s go in,” but that’s not what happened. In Numbers chapter 13, verse 25, the Bible says,

“At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan" (Numbers 13:25-29).

In other words, these 12 spies are exploring the land God promised to give them, but they’re more focused on the opposition then they are on receiving the gift that God was giving them. And what we see illustrated in this passage is something that happens to us all the time, because whenever there is a promise from God that he’s going to deliver you from this or that, he’s going to bring you into the promise, there’s always going to be another voice to discourage you, defeat you, and destroy you. And so, let’s continue reading in verse 30, because you’ll notice they’re both right here.

“Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:30-33).

I want to pause right there and consider what just happened. You’ve got the report of ten spies and the report of two spies, but if you noticed there was never a conversation or confrontation between the Giants and the spies. In other words, they never faced off, they never weighed in, there was never any conversation, and so this wasn’t what they heard, it wasn’t even really what they saw, but it was what they thought.

And so, here they are standing at the edge of the promised land, in many ways just like we are today, poised to enter into all the blessings that God has promised to give them. And like us, to keep them from missing out on the blessings, to keep them from living foolishly, God placed a rumble strip in their lives to rumble some things. There were 10 spies who said, “No we can’t do it, we can’t enter the land,” and then there were two spies who said,

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

And so, there were two voices rumbling, one right and one wrong, there were people saying, “Don’t go,” and then on the other hand you have some voices saying, “Go.”

“That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (Numbers 14:1-4).

Unfortunately, Israel made an important decision based on the report of the spies even though they never saw the Promised Land for themselves. They relied on the spies not only to give them a picture of the promise of God, but also to form their theology and give them a prediction of the outcome. And so, they made an important decision not because of what they saw, but because of what they heard.

Verse 32 says, “They spread among the Israelites a bad report.” And it was that report that caused the Israelites to rebel against Moses and kept them from going into the land that God had given them. Moses and Aaron were shocked by their response and the Bible says they,

“Fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them." But then verse 10 says, “the whole assembly talked about stoning them…” (Numbers 14:5-10).

The lesson here is that when you listen to the wrong voices you end up in the wrong places. The children of Israel had the opportunity to go into the Promised Land, but they listen to the wrong voices, they chickened out and took a 40-year long detour wandering in the wilderness. In other words, it is entirely possible to miss God’s promise and end up in the wrong place, not because of your giants, but because of the voices you’ve allowed to speak into your life.

On the other hand, the good news is, if we listen to the right voices, we can end up in the right places. And that’s so good, because God wants to bless you and cause you to prosper, he wants you to follow him all the days of your life. And so, what we want to do is lean into the voice of the people in our lives who will be real and tell you when you’re moving in the wrong direction. In fact, we need the right voices in our lives because there are a few things that can determine the course of your life as much as the people that you surround yourself with. In Proverbs chapter 13, the Bible says it this way,

“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20).

In other words, you’re going to drift towards and become like those you hang out with. And so, if you hang out with fools, eventually they’re going to rub off on you.

I was thinking about this as we were worshiping today, as we were lifting up the name of Jesus, enjoying God’s presence, because we were becoming more like each other, we were in rhythm, we were in sync with each other. And the reality is that those core relationships in your life, those voices you allow in your life, they’re going to rumble certain things, and inevitably you’re going to drift in that direction, because we become like those people that we spend time with. And so, if you’re hanging out with the wrong people, they’re going to rumble the wrong things, and they’re going to discourage your desire to serve and worship God. That’s why the apostle Paul warns us,

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Romans 12:1-2).

And so, if the voices speaking into your life are committed followers of Jesus Christ, they’re not going to be rumbling things that would be detrimental to you, but instead they’re going to encourage you to worship and serve Jesus together. That’s why it’s so important to choose to do life with the right people, because you’re going to become more like those you do life with.

Now, does that mean that you should move up on a mountain because you don’t want to be contaminated by the world? Absolutely not, Jesus said,

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5:14-16).

In other words, we’re in the world, but we don’t belong to the world because Jesus called us out of the world (John 15:19). The danger is that if we listen to the wrong voices, we can become so much like the world that we don’t have anything to offer the world anymore. What I’m trying to say is that you can’t be a light when you’re living in darkness, you can’t be an influence when you’re being influenced. And so, God wants us to be involved in people’s lives, but we just need to be careful not to allow the wrong voices to speak into our lives so that we ruin our witness and cause harm to the name of Jesus.

And so, you don’t want to get yourself in a place where you may have Caleb telling you that you can and you should, but then you’ve got 10 other spies telling you that you can’t, you’re not big enough, you don’t have enough. And so, now you’re wrestling between these two voices, and you could be swayed in the wrong direction, because even though one voice is God telling you…

“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten…” (Joel 2:25, NKJV).

The other voice is telling you that you’ve wasted too much time, it’s too late, nothing good can happen from your life. And so, on one hand, you can see the size of the grapes, the size of the promise, but on the other hand you hear all the reasons why God couldn’t use someone like you.

I don’t know who I’m speaking to, but maybe you’re a lot like me, because sometimes I feel like I’m caught between Caleb saying, “We can” and the other spies who say, “We can’t.” And so, I’ve got this tug-of-war going on in my mind, this rumbling on the left and a rumbling on the right and I don’t want to be deceived. We don’t want to make a train wreck out of our lives, and so we’ve got to learn from the Israelites who wandered around and around in the wilderness for 40 years, not because of their enemies, but because of the voices they listened to.

The good news is that if we listen to the right voices, allowing the right people to speak into our lives, we can end up in the right place, but that doesn’t mean that it’s always going to be easy. In fact, the apostle Paul had to fight against opposing voices that were threatening to undermine his teaching of grace in the church he planted in Corinth. And so, he would write to the church about the grace of God and then false teachers would come in and twist his words in an attempt to deceive them. So, Paul wrote to them saying in second Corinthians, chapter 11,

“I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

And again, he is referring to those two opposing voices, because if you remember way back in the beginning, back in Genesis when Eve was deceived by the serpent, God said,

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:16-17).

But then Eve allowed another voice, something that was beneath her, to speak into her life and her destiny. The Bible tells us that the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman,

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).

And so, there were two voices rumbling, God’s voice and Satan (the serpent) who introduces a doubt into the possibility and potential of faith causing Eve to focus on the one thing that’s not available rather than everything that is. And so, Paul says, “I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray” because there were these spies in the church at Corinth who were leading the Christians astray. They were causing doubt, introducing the idea that you need something other than Christ to justify you before God.

It began as just a rumble, one on the right and another on the left, and it can happen to any of us at any time. And that’s why it’s so important that we’re not led astray from our sincere and pure devotion to Christ, that we listen to the right voices and we ignore the wrong voices. You see, it’s the right voice that’s going to encourage you, where you know that God’s got you, and everything is going to be all right. It’s leaning into the right voice where you can experience God and his grace and his love and his mercy, moving you to worship him in the beauty of his holiness and the splendor of his majesty.

And if you hold onto that one word, rest on that one word, one word from God can lift you above the wind and the waves of any storm because the Bible says he is:

“A refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat” (Isaiah 25:4).

As you lean into the right voice, the word of God, listening to that word of encouragement, focusing on the goodness of God, you’ll remember the victories and the battles he’s brought you through. You’ll see the way that he made for you as David said,

“He lifted me out of the ditch, pulled me from deep mud. He stood me up on a solid rock to make sure I wouldn't slip” (Psalm 40:2, THE MESSAGE)

“He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God” (Psalms 40:3, NLT).

You see, it’s the right voice. David said, “he lifted me” and this may be your word today, because there may be a voice whispering in your ear. There’s a rumbling, “You’re not enough, you can’t do it, this isn’t going to end well,” but there’s another voice in you that’s greater (1 John 4:4). He’s the bread of life, he’s more than enough, and David said he pulled me out of the ditch. He set my feet upon a rock, he established my steps, and he has put a new song in my mouth.

I wonder how many of you today know that deep rumble of God, you know the voice of God that is deeper than a feeling. I mean, you can feel it, but you can also hear it. You’ve known it since you were a child, you’ve known it deep in your soul, it’s in your spirit, and as the psalmist said,

“I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. But each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life” (Psalms 42:7-8, NLT).

It’s listening to the right voice, it’s rumbling, you can hear it and you can feel it. And so, there is an amazing promise before you, Caleb is saying, “You should and you can,” those other 10 spies are saying, “You shouldn’t because you can’t.” But if you follow the right voice, following Caleb into the promise, not being foolish, but understanding what the Lord will is, the Bible tells us in Ephesians,

“Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20).

As we listen to the right voice, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, we’re going to worship the Lord. And worship is more than just singing, worship is doing everything you do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, we want to speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord. But it is so much more than that, it’s leaning in, listening to the rumble, tuning out the wrong voices and tuning in to the right voice.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

March 21, 2021

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*