

## A Study of the Book of Joshua

### Sermon # 11

#### "Give Me That Mountain"

Joshua 14:6-15

After years of war and conquest the land of Canaan is finally under the control of the people of Israel. The land east of the Jordan River had already been allocated to Reuben, Gad half of the tribe of Manasseh by Moses before the Israelites crossed the river into the promised land (Number 32). Now with the fighting at an end, once the area east of the Jordan was distributed the work of dividing up the promised land between the remaining tribes had to be done. According to verses one and two of chapter fourteen the inheritance were assigned by the casting of lots by the high priest.

In almost every family, and my family is no exception, there are horror stories of horrific fights resulting from the reading of wills and the division of inheritance. In my family my grandfather had a falling out with his brothers and sisters over the division of the inheritance and he did not speak to them again for years. The mystery to me was how little money and property was involved. By casting lots for the inheritance, who got what was left entirely in the hands of God. There could be no objections. But remember that once the land was divided it would be the responsibility of each tribe, to complete the task of conquering the land that they had inherited.

Tonight I want you to see with me three qualities that God honors drawn from the life of Caleb.

#### *1. God Honors Obedience (vv. 1-9)*

According to verse six, apparently before the leadership had actually begun the process of allotting the land to the tribes, Caleb approached Joshua at Gilgal to remind him of promise given to him by God. *"Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh (je-foon'-eh) the Kenizzite (ke'-niz-ites) said to him: "You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea.*

Caleb then goes on in verse seven to tell the story of how he and Joshua had been two of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to scout out the land of Canaan. *"I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. (8) Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. (9) So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.'*

Not one of the spies disagreed on the value of the land of Canaan. It was every thing that had been promised and more, it truly was a land that *"flowed with milk and honey."* Nor did they differ on their description of the people and their cities. The cities were large and well fortified. The people of the land were numerous, and there were indeed giants in the land. The point is that ten of the spies saw only the danger, two (Caleb and Joshua) saw the opportunity. The majority measured the giants against themselves, Caleb and Joshua measured the giants against God.

In the midst of growing pessimism, Caleb dared to disagree with the majority report. With great boldness and confidence in the promises of God Caleb *“quieted the people before Moses”* and shouted to the people *“Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”* (Numbers 13:30). At that moment, Joshua was silent. He agreed with Caleb, but he remained in the background. Caleb was the spokesman. Joshua did stand with Caleb and challenged Israel to act on God’s promises (Numbers 14:8-9). Not only did Caleb’s and Joshua’s warning go unheeded they almost got stoned to death for their trouble (Numbers 14:10).

Can you name even one of the other ten spies? If you can, you are more of a scholar than I am or you have been playing Bible trivia too much. The point is that we seldom remember the name of those who blend in with the majority. Most of the heroes are people who stood against the popular philosophies of their day and chose to forge ahead no matter what others thought.

Caleb, however, had faith in the power of God. To Caleb, God was greater than the biggest giant. Caleb was not naïve about what they faced, giants and fortified cities, he did not minimize the problems, but rather he magnified God.

## *2. God Honors Faithfulness. (v. 10a)*

It is a difficult thing for many of us to be faithful when we are not in a prominent position. Somehow we function better when others know how well we are doing. This of course is a natural tendency. But the true test of our commitment to Christ is how well we function when we have operate behind the scenes, sometimes in so doing making it possible for someone else to be in the spotlight. In verse ten we find Caleb saying, *“And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness;”*

For forty-five years – the promise Moses had made to him (v. 10) that he would inherit the land he had spied sustained him during these discouraging, exhausting years.

## *3. God Honors Those Who do not Quit (vv. 10b-15)*

*“... and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. (11) As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. (12) Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said.”*

It is interesting to compare Caleb's attitude toward his inheritance to the attitude that the other tribes had toward their inheritances.

We also see a difference in the expectations that Caleb had toward his inheritance compared to the expectations the other tribes had toward their inheritances. Caleb expected the promise to be filled, and that he would receive his inheritance. The seven tribes were indifferent about their inheritance. Evidently, they didn't care if they ever received their inheritance. They were exhausted after the 7 years conquest of Canaan, and apparently they were content to continue a nomadic existence.

Now notice with me some of the obstacles that Caleb would have to overcome to take that mountain for God.<sup>1</sup>[1]

The first obstacle of claiming his mountain was the obstacle of Friends. You remember way back in Caleb's experience he had to stand alone, not only outvoted by his peers, but ridiculed by the masses.

Surprisingly, friends often stand in the way of our spiritual progress. They give us bad advice, they discourage us with their words, and they often even encourage in the taking the wrong path. True friends always encourage us to do what is right, encourage us to follow the Lord. But sometimes, as Caleb and Joshua experienced they are the very ones who will turn against us.

Second, is the Obstacle of Racial Prejudice. It may surprise you to find out that Caleb was not a Jew, he was according verse one he was a *Kenizzite* (ke'-niz-ites). That means he was a Gentile. Perhaps there were those who looked down on him because of his race, and I suspect there were. But Caleb did not let this deter him from following the Lord fully.

Racial prejudice dies hard, if at all. There is something deeply demeaning in judging people on the basis of their ethnic background or the color of their skin.

Born a Gentile and an outcast he became a child of the promises of God. According to Hebrew customs if you joined Israel you were adopted into one of it's tribes and your name was added to the genealogy. We too were born outside the family of God, when we accepted Christ we too are adopted into the family of God. Paul says in Romans 8:15-16, *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"*

Third, is the Obstacle of Age. At age eighty-five Caleb is not ready to quit. Even at the age of eighty-five he had not lost his enthusiasm for the Lord or his faith in God's power. And his boast was not idle (15:13-14).

Age is no barrier in doing God's will. God keeps His people alive as long as they need to be in order to fulfill all that He has planned for them.

In our society when speak about planning for retirement we think of setting money aside so that we can have an enjoyable, stress free life in our final years. But I am more and more convinced that we should be thinking about how we can use those last years for our most productive service to God.

#### *Illustration*

*"Dr. Paul Brand, a well-known doctor & author, was raised in India. His parents were missionaries there. In his book, "In His Image," he writes about his mother. It is one of the most touching stories I've ever read. He writes that when his mother was 75 years old, she was still walking miles every day, visiting the villages in the southern part of India, teaching the people about Jesus. One day, at age 75, she was traveling alone & fell & broke her hip. After two days of just lying there in pain, some workers found her*

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*& put her on a makeshift cot & loaded her into their jeep & drove 150 miles over deep rutted roads to find a doctor who could set the broken bones. But the very bumpy ride damaged her bones so badly that her hip never completely healed. He said, "I visited my mother in her mud-covered hut several weeks after all of this happened. I watched as she took two bamboo crutches that she had made herself, & moved from one place to another with her feet just dragging behind because she had lost all feeling in them."*

*He said, "At age 75, with a broken hip, unable to stand on her own two legs, I thought that I made a pretty intelligent suggestion. I suggested that she retire." He said, "She turned around & looked at me & said, 'What value is that? If we try to preserve this body just a few more years & it is not being used for God, of what value is that?'*

*So she kept on working. She kept on riding her donkey*

*to villages until she was 93 years old... And she continued to tell people about Jesus Christ until she died at age 95." 2[2]*

The Final obstacle is the obstacle of the enemy. We need to see that just because God had made a promise to Caleb does not mean that he could just sit make and watch it happen.

Caleb asked for the hill country surrounding Hebron – land that had not yet been conquered and still inhabited by some of the strongest people of Canaan (v.12). In fact Caleb requested the very location that had put the most fear into the hearts of the other ten spies.

When Caleb says, *"...It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said"* (v. 12) he is expressing humility not doubt.

Now Joshua responds by granting Caleb his request in verse thirteen, *"And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb ...."* I like the way one author sees this conversation going in his sanctified imagination. *"Caleb it's yours. You deserve it. I'm sorry I forgot. It's because of you that I mustered enough courage to take a stand against Israel's hostility and disobedience. It was because of you that I spoke out against their rebellion and unbelief. You helped me become the man that I am – a man that God could trust to lead Israel in place of Moses. I drew strength from you, Caleb. And you have been faithful to me. You've supported me, helped me, encouraged me. You've never shown jealousy or resentment because you were not chosen to lead Israel, even though you were a stronger man than I, both physically and psychologically. I'm sorry I didn't remember God's promise myself. I'm glad you reminded me! It's yours! Take the mountain that God promised you!"*3[3]

Verse fourteen says *"...Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb ..... because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel."* The secret of his success was that over his many years of service was that he wholly followed the Lord. The word "wholly" means "wholeheartedly" or "with you whole heart." In fact if you look back through chapter fourteen you will see that the key word about Caleb's service before God was the word "wholeheartedly." Caleb had followed God with his whole heart and he is still doing

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that at the end. Can you say that? Are you a Caleb? Does God have your whole heart without reservation.?

1. These obstacle drawn from [Gene Getz. Joshua: Living as a Consistent Role Model. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1995) pp. 158-170]
2. Paul Brand. "In His Image."
3. Getz. p. 166