

Caleb- Serving the Lord Wholeheartedly --- Joshua 14:6-15
by Evangelist Rod Farthing

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLDER WHEN:

- Everything hurts and what doesn't hurt doesn't work.
- The gleam in your eye is just the sun reflecting off your bifocals.
 - Your little black book contains only names ending in MD
 - You get winded playing chess.
 - You sink your teeth into a nice juicy steak and they stay there.
 - The flight attendant asks, "Coffee, Tea, or Milk of Magnesia?"
- You see a pretty girl walking down the sidewalk and your pacemaker makes the garage door go up!

But aging is inevitable in spite of working out, eating right, or plastic surgery. Our bodies are temporary, built to wear out, BUT the good news is your faith can remain vibrant. Caleb is a great example of serving the Lord through the aging process.

PROP. The key to conquering aging is being wholly committed to the Lord just like Caleb.

The theme of the book of Joshua is modeled by Caleb- We must be willing to take what God is willing to give. NOT WANTING MORE, BUT NOT SETTLING FOR LESS

We first were introduced to Caleb in Numbers 13-14. 10 spies saw giants and two saw the Promises and the Power of God. God made a special promise to Caleb- Numbers 32:11,12 & Deut. 3:35,36

For the next 40 years what did Caleb do? He lived in tents and went to funerals of his comrades- people he had grown up with in the slave pits of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea with. When plagues came, Caleb never got sick.

THE KEY- He was wholeheartedly committed.- Numbers 14:24 That phrase keeps coming up in reference to Caleb.

Maybe the reason the church today seldom takes more mountains is that we don't have more people like Caleb. We live in the valley so long that we think it is normal.

TS. What does it mean to follow the Lord wholeheartedly? Five things-

I. WHOLE-HEARTED MEANS THAT YOU ARE COMMITTED TO FOLLOW GOD, EVEN GOING AGAINST THE FLOW.

All 12 spies were leaders in their tribes, but ten became afraid and only two stood for God against the majority.

1 Peter 4:3-5 The majority doesn't like it when you stand up against their way. Our culture talks tolerance, but is tough on Christianity. Do you think that Caleb suffered scorn from those who weren't going to the Promised land with him?

Leaders- Elders- You need to understand that those who walk by sight will always be the majority. Vision is the ability to see above and beyond the majority. (Opinion polls must never be what leads the church.)

During the years in building the ark, Noah was very much in the minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When Joseph was sold by his brethren into Egypt, he was in a decided minority. But he fought to take

what God had given and he won!! When Moses appeared before Pharaoh and demanded the freedom of the Israelites, he too, was very much in the minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When Joshua crumbled the walls of Jericho with the blasts from a handful of ram's horns, he was in the minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won. When Gideon and his three hundred followers with their broken pitchers and smoky lamps put the Midianite host to flight, they were an insignificant minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When Elijah brought down fire from heaven and put the prophets of Baal to shame, he was a notable minority -- But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When Samson crushed the temple and destroyed his enemies, he was very much in the minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When David, ridiculed and laughed at by his brothers, went out to meet the giant, Goliath, in size he was in a decided minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! When Jesus Christ was crucified between two thieves, he was a conspicuous minority. But he fought to take what God had given and he won!! Many times, we, too, find ourselves in the minority. It may be at the office, in the shop, at school or even in the home. May we take strength and courage from those who found themselves in the minority and won!

Let us, like them be found in God's service, fighting to claim the victory God has given and gain that victory. Being wholehearted for God means swimming upstream against the flow.

II. WHOLE-HEARTED MEANS THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO ACCEPT THE SOVEREIGN CHOICES OF GOD.

Back in Numbers 13:30 it was Caleb who took the lead in trying to convince Israel to go and conquer. Yet, when God chose a leader to invade Canaan 38 years later He chose Joshua. Caleb would have been a fine leader.

But there is no record of Scripture of any friction between these two men. Caleb accepted his behind the scenes role and followed. You cannot be a leader in you're not willing to be a follower. I.E.: The Marines ...

1 Pet 5:5-6

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time (NIV)

I don't know why God chose Joshua over Caleb- I imagine that Caleb wondered about that too, but he didn't make the mistake of growing bitter about the choices of God.

III. WHOLE-HEARTED MEANS THAT YOU ARE EAGER TO ACT UPON GOD'S PROMISES.

The thing that kept Caleb going for 45 years was that he never doubted the integrity of God and His word. (Joshua 14:9,10,12)

He is now 85 years old and still anxious to go into battle and claim what God had promised him. The facts seem to be going against Caleb. Can you see at least 3 reasons he WOULDN'T WANT TO FIGHT?

1- 85 years old- 2- Hill country- 3- Giants in that part of the land. But Canaan conquerors don't let human facts cancel God's promises.

I.E. Romans 4:18-21- Against all hope, Abraham believed Isaac would come.

Could it be the church stays in the valley instead of going up on the mountain where we belong because we worship a little God, with little promises. Caleb worshipped a big God and followed Him up the mountain. And that leads us to point in Vs 12...

IV. WHOLE-HEARTED MEANS THAT WILLING TO TACKLE TOUGH TURF.

THE HILL COUNTRY??? (14:12) Anakites were giants, but that is the land Caleb wanted. The same land he had spied out 40 years before and had struck terror in the hearts of the other spies.

Caleb refused to suffer from the "Grasshopper Complex" --magnifying the adversary, minimize God. Caleb didn't minimize the difficulties, he magnified his God.

Joshua 15:13-17 Caleb did what most did not do, he drove out the Canaanites, many of the rest let them stay there and they compromised with them. The man with the most difficult inheritance to claim was the one who totally claimed it.

POINT- When giants stand today against the church, it is not because God's promise has failed or God's arm is short. It is because we have not surrendered enough to God.

I love the story of John Patten, the Englishman who was the first missionary to the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific. These islands were inhabited by cannibals. Before he left England a Mr. Dixon wrote urging him not to go. He wrote back and said, "Mr. Dixon, you write and say that if I go I will be eaten by cannibals. You are an aged man. Soon you will die and you will be eaten by worms. As long as I can follow the Lord, it makes no difference whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms."

So he got on the ship and sailed halfway around the world. As he got to the islands, the captain of the ship tried to keep Patten and his wife from getting off the boat. He said, "SIR, IF YOU GO INTO THAT ISLAND YOU WILL DIE." Patten replied, "Sir, I died before I came."

Sometimes we want the Christian life to be easy, but you can't follow a man with a cross on His back and stay away from the tough turf.

V. WHOLE-HEARTED MEANS THAT YOU ARE DETERMINED TO BE A LIFER.

LIFER??? IN PRISON OR IN SERVICE You are in the Christian life for the long haul.

1945 was a great year in America for young evangelists. Three powerful young evangelists in their mid twenties burst onto the scene. Billy Graham started preaching in stadiums with crowds as large as 30,000, but he wasn't considered the best of the three. Chuck Templeton was considered better. Everywhere he went the place was packed. But some said he wasn't as good as: Ron Clifford who packed people in Miami arenas by the thousands. and they would stand 10 or 12 deep on the outside trying to get in. When Clifford went to Baylor University they turned the bells off and let the kids stay in chapel over 3 hours just to hear the man.

But, you probably have never heard of Templeton or Clifford. Five years later Templeton decided he no longer believed in the divinity of Christ and he became a journalist. Clifford started drinking and 9 years later he died in a run down hotel outside of Amarillo, TX of cirrhosis of the liver after leaving his wife and kids. I admire Billy Graham, not because he started fast, but because he is finishing strong.

Caleb finished strong! He didn't look for retirement, but for reassignment. Age has little to do with achievement. Being wholehearted has everything to do with it.

Ps 92:12-15 12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;

13 planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,

15 proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him." (NIV)

How about these names? - Shammua, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, Geuel? Recognize any of them? They are the ten who didn't have faith in God.

How about Joshua or Caleb? I think we remember them. Their names are still used for baby boys. All 12 began as strong leaders of their tribes but only two of them finished strong.

Conclusion:

Caleb received the promise of God. Caleb blessed his family with a heritage of courageous faith. Older saints who are faithful are an inspiration to those who follow behind.

When FB Meyer was in his 80's he still preached a little, but his voice was weak and soft. One day he was preaching to a packed house. Two young men had come to hear him and had to sit in the back. One turned to the other and said, "I can't hear him." The other said, "Yes, but it does you good just to look at him."

I have a feeling that if you saw 85 year old Caleb going up the mountain, it did you good to look at him. Caleb gave his family something to look at -- and his son-in-law became one of the judge of Israel (Judges 3:7-11).

What do you want to leave your kids? A will to fight over? or an example to follow?

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