

Caleb The Magnificent Old Man

Joshua 14:6-14

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Now I want you to follow me. I got a large passage to read. We're going to come back and we're going to break it down for you. Beginning in verse 5 of chapter 14, "As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, they divided the land." Now let me say something right here real quick. They have conquered the land. So we've skipped over several chapters. They've conquered the land. And what is happening right now is they're dividing the land. So the conquest was two stages. First the conquest, then the division of the land. Get a Bible map and look it up. The different tribes were given different land areas in the land of Canaan. So they began to divide the land and the first to get the inheritance was Judah, verse 6. "Then the children of Judah came into Joshua in Gilgal and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, is the man of God concerning me and you in Kadesh-barnea...". We'll come back to this, "...40 years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land and brought him word again as it was in my heart. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people to melt. But I...", now catch this phrase, it's going to be repeated three times, "my holy or wholeheartedly followed the Lord, my God. And Moses swore, and that day saying, surely the land from which thou comest out is thy inheritance, and thy children forever and ever, because thou hast holy followed the Lord, your God. And now therefore, now behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said these 45 years, and since the Lord spake his word into Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now I, and now lo, I am this day 85 years old. And yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me, and my strength was then, even so my strength is now, for the war, both to go out and to come in. Now therefore...", verse 12, "...give me this mountain, wherefore the Lord spake in that day, and thou heardest it in the day, how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced, if so be the Lord be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And so Joshua blessed Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and he gave him Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, unto this day because that he wholly followed the Lord, his God, of Israel. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba, which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war."

Every nation has its forgotten heroes, and the same is true of the nation of Israel. We all know the stories of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob and of Joseph and of Moses and of David, the great men and women of faith in the Bible, but very rarely do we hear about our man today, Caleb. I call him the magnificent old man. Now here's the question, why was Caleb such a magnificent man at the age of 85. Now I still have a little ways to go before I reach age 85, but at that age he was still ready, full of vigor and vision, and ready for new challenges. I like that. Give me the mountain as my inheritance. This area of Hebron, it was the descendants of Anak were there, who were the giants. The big guys, the spies that came back and said, "We can't take the land, it's full of giants." That's where those giants live. Now, 40 years later, 45 years

later, we see that he's come back. And now I want to take this land. I want to take this area. Give me the mountains, I'm going to take on these giants. So I believe that he was a magnificent old man because at the age of 85, at the age of 85, he was well past retirement age. When most people were looking for security and ease, Caleb was welcoming new challenges. Notice it in verse 12, "Now therefore, give me this mountain." So he was ready for a new challenge at the ripe old age of 85.

Last Sunday I shared some of the ways you know you're getting old, I got two more for you. Number one, your dreams are all reruns. You know you're getting old when your dreams are all reruns. And number two, you know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake, I like that. (Congregation Laughing) My dad just celebrated his 89th birthday. As we all gathered round and sang him happy birthday, you could just see the joy on his face and the joy of knowing that the Lord had kept him all of these years, and he loves the Lord. He served the Lord, and [is] still being used by God to be a blessing to his family, to his grandchildren, and his great grandchildren.

It doesn't matter, age is not a barrier to be used by God. At 85, Caleb says, "I'll take the mountain." So his age didn't hinder him. The disappointments of the past did not embitter him, and the giants in his future did not frighten him. How about you? Are you embittered over disappointments of your past? Have people wronged you or abused you or hurt you or ripped you off, and you become bitter and cynical and hard. We all know old people they're just grouchy, right? You know, grouchy old people. (growling) The secret of life is growing old and going through bitter experiences but not becoming bitter or sour yourself. Staying sweet even in your old age.

Caleb was that sweet old man. He was a victorious old man. He was a wonderful, magnificent old man. Sometimes we're fearful about the mountains and our future. Maybe right now you're getting old and you're wondering about "who's going to take care of me, what's going to happen to my health, will I have enough money to provide for my needs and old age, will my children take care of me or my grandchildren." Maybe you're worried about [a] new child, "I can't do that anymore. What am I going to do and how am I going to take care of myself?" Just getting old has its own challenges, amen. God has promised to be with us and to give us his strength, so if you are disappointed or embittered or fearful about the future, Caleb is your example.

Now, why was Caleb so effective in his old age? The answer is given three times in our text and I want you to notice it. In verse eight, Caleb himself says, "But I wholly followed the Lord, my God." Then again in verse nine, this time Moses is speaking, and Moses said, "Because you have wholly followed the Lord, my God." And then the third time Joshua spoke it about Caleb, it's in verse 14, "Because you have wholly followed the Lord, God of Israel." When God repeats something three times, He wants us to take notice. The number one characteristic of Caleb's life, and this applies to you whether you're young, middle age, or old, doesn't matter, every age in life, that he wholly, wholeheartedly, completely followed the Lord. Maybe you're a teenager this morning. I gave my life to Jesus Christ when I was about 18, 19. I just got out of high school. And I'm so glad that I did that. I've been able to walk with God all of these years and to

be able to serve the Lord all of these years. The Bible says, "Now in the days of thy youth, remember thy Creator." Take that to heart. Maybe you're in your sunset years, as some call it. You are older and you don't have much time left. There's more behind you than there is in front of you. Yet still, you can wholly or wholeheartedly follow the Lord and serve the Lord.

Now what I want to do is take this text and give you the marks of the man or woman that wholly follows the Lord, their God. What are the marks of the person that fully, or wholeheartedly follows the Lord, his God? Mark number one, write this down. It is a life full of faith. A life full of faith. The Bible says, "The just shall live by..." what? -By faith. There's no other way for the Christian or the child of God to live. Now, I can imagine as Joshua began to give his story and the backgrounds, verses six down to verse eight, go back there with me. "The children of Judah came to Joshua and Gilgal and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, said unto him, 'You know the thing that Moses, The Lord spoke through Moses, the man of God, concerning me and you at Kadesh-barnea. 40 years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land. And I brought them word again that was in my heart, but the brethren,'" verse eight, "that went up with us the other 10 spies, they made the heart of the people to melt, but I wholly followed the Lord, my God."

I almost imagine that when Caleb stepped up to get his lot or his inheritance, his area, and he asked for the mountain and he started telling his old man's story. You know old man's stories when I was a boy, 40 years ago. It's like grandpa, we've heard that story a thousand times, "I used to have to walk 10 miles in the snow to get to school, young man." Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, gramps. This is the old man's story and I can imagine the youth were kind of rolling their eyes like, "Oh, here goes Caleb again," you know, this 85-year-old guy's getting off on 40 years ago when I was a whippersnapper. Actually 45 years earlier, he was 40 years old. So he's midlife. God sent him and 10 other spies, or with Joshua, 10 other spies, 12 of them, into the land to spy it out. They went and spied out the land, and ten brought back an evil report. Ten brought back the [bad]report, but Caleb's faith had to overcome some great obstacles.

Number one, he was born a slave in Egypt, just a little synopsis of his life. He was born in Egypt in slavery. Born a slave, yet died a hero. You think you have a difficult past or a hard beginning? He was born in slavery. And then secondly, he believed, or it's believed, excuse me, that he was a mixed parentage for this reason. His father being a Kenezite, the Bible says, but he was of the tribe of Judah, so it's believed that his mother was Jewish and that he was from the tribe of Judah. So he was a half-breed. He was not a full Jew. He was born a slave and he was of mixed race. Then thirdly, it didn't help much, his name Caleb. It sounds pretty cool, right Caleb? But you know what the name Caleb means? It means dog. Poor guy. Can you imagine his little name tag first day in a kindergarten, you know, "come here dog." The dude was named dog, Caleb. So I mean, he didn't have an easy start in life. He's born a slave, he's a mixed race. His name means dog and I'm sure he got ribbed at school for that, but then also his faith put him in the minority. His faith and trust in God put him in minority.

What is this Kadesh-barnea episode that Caleb is talking about here, verses six down to verse eight? That's when the children of Israel had come out of Egypt and they were going to go into

the promised land, but before they went into the promised land, they sent 10 spies in to check out the land. Now God had promised them the land. God had told them it's a land flowing with milk and honey. So they could have just gone in, but they go in and they're spying it out and Caleb went into the area of Hebron, the hill country. There were giants there, there were cities that were fortified. When they came back, the spies, all 12 of them agreed on a few things. Number one, they agreed that it was a land flowing with milk and honey. They agreed on that. And number two, they agreed that God had promised them that land and that God would give them that land. But the 10 spies, they saw giants there. They agreed that there were giants there. They all agreed that there were walled cities, but what they disagreed on was the fact that we could take the land. The 10 spies actually said "No way, we're like grasshoppers in their [sight];" the grasshopper complex, and "They can squish us between their toes. We're just going to squish like a little grasshopper." They were fearful and they spread this unbelief and fear through the congregation of Israel. People started to cry and they wanted to go back and they didn't want to go into the land.

You can imagine how Caleb and Joshua were freaking out. "No, don't do that. We can take the land, we can conquer land. God's promised us." So they had their eyes fixed on God, not on the giants. They had their eyes fixed on the promises of God, not on the obstacles of the fortified cities. I love what Alan Redpass said, he wrote and said, "The majority measured the giants against their own strength. Caleb and Joshua measured the giants against God. The majority trembled, the two triumph. The majority had great giants, but a little God. Caleb had a great God and little giants." I love that. It's all a matter of perspective. What are you looking at? Are you looking at the giants? Are you looking at the obstacles? Are you looking at the fortified cities? Or are you looking at God, who is a big God and a great God, and nothing is too hard for God? So the majority, God was not a part of the equation. They had the Grasshopper Complex. Caleb and Joshua were not intimidated by the Anakim, because they had faith and a divine perspective. Their devotion though required them courage and a willingness to stand alone, and I like that. Too many times we want to be a part of the crowd. Too many times we want to be liked and accepted, and especially young people. You know, you want to be cool and sit in the right spot on the quad and hang out with the cool people, and you want everyone to like you and invite you to the parties. You come to realize how vain and empty that is. Someone said, "I'd rather walk a lonely road with Jesus than be without Him in the crowd." I love that. Jesus will never leave you, forsake of your friend's will. Don't worry about what the crowd thinks. Don't worry about being popular. Fix your eyes on God, and like Caleb, wholeheartedly follow the Lord and then when you're old, you will be a blessed person. Start young, give Him all of your heart, all of your energy and all of your time, your talent and your treasure devoted to living for God and serving the Lord.

So Caleb was a man who was in the minority because he was a man of faith. In spite of the obstacles and the multitude who wanted to stone him and Joshua. They said, "Let's go for it." The unbelieving 10 were saying, "We're grasshoppers in that site." Joshua and Caleb said, "No, it's a piece of cake." They said, "They're like bread for us." Kind of an ancient way of saying, "It's a piece of cake. Let's go in, it's a cake walk, we can take them. Let's conquer that land." So my question to you is, are you living by faith or fear? Do you walk in faith, do you live in faith? Are

you afraid about the future? Are you embittered over your past? Are you worried about obstacles that lie before you? Or can you say, "God, I trust you, I believe you, I know you've promised to be with me, to give me strength, and I'm going to move forward and conquer new territory as I put my faith, my hope, and my trust in you." So it's the devotion of faith that made Caleb a magnificent old man.

The second thing that made him magnificent was that he kept his heart and mind fixed on the inheritance. He was a man who wholly followed the Lord because though his body was in the wilderness for 40 years walking in circles, his mind and his heart was in the promised land. That's what kept him going all of these years. How did Caleb maintain a spiritual life surrounded by so much carnality and unbelief? His heart was in Canaan. Promises of God. Notice in verse nine, "God promised him the land." Go back with me to verse nine, "And Moses swore in that day saying, 'Surely the land wherein thy feet have trodden shall be yours, it'll be your inheritance. And thy children and forever, because you wholly followed the Lord, my God.'" So God made him a promise, the land of Hebron, and that he would go in and possess it. You know God has given us a promise. Jesus said in John 14, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there you may be...", what, "also." That's a promise of heaven. Heaven is a place. Heaven is a real place. Heaven is a prepared place. What motivates the believer today is I'm going to heaven. We need to be heavenly minded. Colossians chapter 3 says, "Set your affections," which is your mind, "on things above, not on things of the earth, because you are dead and your life is hid with Christ and God." So we need to, even though we're on this earth and our bodies are here, guess where our hearts should be in, heaven. Guess where our minds should be in, heaven. I think that we are so earthly minded, we're no heavenly good, as opposed to so heavenly minded, we're no earthly good. We need to keep our minds focused on the promise of God, that He's preparing us a place and He will come again to take us to be with Him.

Notice that God promised Caleb longevity or gave him longevity, I love it in verse 10. He said, "And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive." Stop right there, isn't that cool? All the battles, all the fighting, all the wars. By the way, let's footnote seven years of fighting. Seven years of hand-to-hand combat to take the land. He's 85 years old. Dude, it's like I would be saying, I want a chariot RV right now. I don't want any land, I just want to drive around the land in my chariot RV, you know, I can park it at the beach and just go surfing and kick back and just have a good time. When most people were asking for their slippers, Caleb was asking for a sword. Give me the sword. Let me have the mountain. What an awesome guy he was, Caleb.

So he had the promise of longevity, God keeping. I believe that God keeps us. By the way, as they allotted the land, God was in control of where they got to inherit. You know, God is in control of your life. God is in control of your life. God has given you your lot. Learn to embrace your lot. Learn to accept your lot in life. Learn to accept what God has allowed in your life for your good and for His glory. If we respond properly to the trials and the hardships of life rather than growing bitter, we will grow better. We will become more like Christ. So Caleb had longevity as well as a promised land.

Then thirdly, those who based their lives on God's promises and follow the Lord fully, find themselves empowered by God. I want you to notice that in verse 11, he says, "As yet, I am as strong this day as when I was the day that Moses sent me as thy strength was then, so is my strength now, both to war and to go out and to come in." So Caleb's 85 and he's saying, "I am as strong today as I was these 45 years ago." So God gave him promises, God gave him longevity, and God gave him strength. Now I do believe that we find strength, when we live by faith. When we live by fear and doubt and focus on the giants and the walled cities and the mountains that lie before us, we lose strength. When we trust in the Lord, he's the strength of my life. He's my fortress, my strong tower, my shield and my defender. Though any other people come up against me, God is with me, He will strengthen me. So I don't care what age you are, you don't need to fear the future. If you walk by faith and you trust in the Lord, God will take care of you, and God will provide for you. God kept him alive and took care of him. I love Psalm 92, verses 12 to 14, "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree. He will grow as a cedar in Lebanon, planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God, they will still be fruitful in old age, they should be full of sap and very green."

Now a lot of old people are full of something. This guy's full of sap, that's what you want to be. If you don't get anything else I say this morning, just go home from the service saying, "I just want to be full of sap, I want to be full of sap." (congregation laughing) King James translates that, "Fat and flourishing." I don't know if I need fat and flourishing, but full of sap, I like that, and fruitful, very green. Psalm 1 tells us, "Blessed is a man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Doesn't stand in the way of sinners. Doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is...", where? –"In the law of God of the Lord. And in his law, does he meditate...", how often? –"day and night." What's he going to be like? "Like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Whose leaf will never wither and everything he does shall prosper." You want to wholly follow the Lord? You want to be a man or a woman full of sap in your old age? Become a person of this book. Feed on this book, read this book, live by this book. God's word will make you strong and give you vitality and give you a full future and a hope. So he was a man of the word, therefore he was full of sap and flourishing in his old age. Serving the Lord brings a renewed spirit. The word of God brings a renewed spirit in the satisfying life. Are you fully or wholeheartedly serving the Lord?

Let me give you the third mark of someone who wholeheartedly follows the Lord. Not only do they live by faith, not only do they look to the promises of God, but they are willing to welcome new challenges, and this is my favorite. I so relate to this. They're willing to welcome new challenges. Look at verse 12. He says, "Give me this mountain, wherefore the Lord spoke in that day, again the promise of God, that thou heardest, in that day, how the Anakims, the giants were there, and that the cities were great and fenced, but if the Lord is with me, then I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said." I believe Joshua was so blown away, it says, verse 13, "that he blessed Caleb by giving him the inheritance of Hebron." No doubt, Joshua said, "Oh, Caleb, my old friend, and I'm sorry, I forgot." You know, Joshua was about 10 years older than Caleb, it's believed. So he's pushing this, you know, a mid-90s or so. He's getting up there and he said, "You know, I'm not remembering things as good as I used to." I mean, I'm not even close to that and I forget stuff all the time. Back at the former church I pastored, we left our kids

at church quite a bit when we would come home. We'd get home and then we'd get a phone call, "Are you guys missing something?" We'd like count the heads, "Oh no, we left Jared at church, he was eight years old." We left him three times at church." (congregation laughing) "Sorry, sorry, sorry, can you bring him home?" Yeah, we'll bring him home, you know. The only, who remember to bring your children home from church, the pastor's leaving them into church.

So Joshua is almost 100, he goes, "Oh, sorry, bro, yeah, that is yours, I forgot about that promise." Guess who hadn't forgot about the promise? Caleb, his eyes sparkled with excitement. Remember that promise, Joshua? Remember what the Lord said through Moses about you and I? Everyone else had to die off 40 years and old, but we get the promised land. We get to enter in. Only two people who came out of Egypt over 40 wondered in the wilderness were able to enter in. That was Joshua and Caleb. Even Moses didn't get to go into the promised land. He remembered the promise of God, and then he takes on a challenge. He didn't ask for the easy spot or the cushy life. He said, "Give me this mountain." Caleb had not only vitality, he also had vision. Instead of asking for his slippers, he asked for a sword. Age is no barrier for making conquest for the Lord. Caleb wasn't ready to retire. At 85, he wanted new horizons and new battles. He didn't even look for the easy task, but he asked for a challenge.

Now, I've been pastoring now for over 40 years. I don't look that old, right? You're supposed to go, "Ah." (congregation laughing) But before I came to this church, I haven't shared this the first couple of services. Before I came to this church, I was seriously contemplating retiring. I felt like my job was done, my task had been complete, I've been preaching for 40 years, I've been battling in ministry for a long time and I was ready to retire. Then the Lord opened this door to come to Revival Christian Fellowship. I'm like, "I'm old." I know some of you know, three years ago I had a stroke, I didn't think I'd ever preach again; I was ready to retire. And I've taken on a larger church, a bigger staff, greater challenges, more preaching. I'm preaching now more than I've ever preached in my life. It was like this soul ministered to me because I was like ready, "Lord, I'm tired. I've battled the years. I've preached for a long time. Can I just get an RV and just go sit on the beach for a while?" (congregation laughing) And the Lord said, "No, I got a job for you to do." That required me saying goodbye to my other church and the people we loved, 39 years, going on 40 years there that I've been their pastor, and going to a place I didn't know anybody. I was a guest speaker for the whole first year I was here. I didn't know anybody. Saying goodbye to our friends and our home that we raised our kids in and get to, you know, new, blue, planted. So I know what it is later in life to take a step of faith. I know what it is later in life to say, "God, give me the mountain, give me a new challenge. If you can use me, here I am, Lord. What do you want me to do? Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to say? What do you want me to be, Lord? I'm ready for that new challenge."

I want to encourage every one of you today to come to that same place where you step out of faith and go, "Okay, I'll serve the Lord, or I'll give to the Lord, or I'll pray, or I'll make those phone calls, or I'll give my time and talent and treasure to the Lord." And you might say, "Well, I don't have the health that Caleb had." He said, "I'm as strong today as I was 45 years ago." You don't have that health. It doesn't matter, but you can have his faith, right? You may not have the physical stamina that Caleb had, but you can have his faith. You can believe today that God

wants to use you. I had a godly grandmother on the Miller side of my family, my dad's mother, Ada Miller. Loved the Lord, prayed for me, and she died at 93. Just right up till the time the Lord took her home, she always said, she called me Johnny Paul. Paul's my middle name, she said, "Johnny Paul, if the Lord isn't going to use me, I want him to take me home. I want the Lord to take me home. But I want him to use me as long as I'm in this world." Right up until she passed, she would get up every day and the church would give her a list of other shut-ins that she could call on the phone. And she would go through this long list. She used to show me the names and she would call every day all of these people and she would read the Bible to them and she would pray with them and she would encourage them over the phone. Maybe you can't get out, maybe you can't drive, you can't go be a missionary, but you can pick up a phone and you can call other people who need an encouragement. Amen. There's always something you can do. So even at that age we should take on new challenges and be willing to let God use us like Caleb. We can capture mountains, conquer giants if we wholly follow the Lord no matter how old we become. We must never retire from trusting and serving the Lord.

Now there were three things that marked Caleb's life. I want to remind you of. Number one, he was full of faith. Number two, he focused on the eternal reward. And number three, he was willing to face new challenges. Full of faith, look to God, trust in God, hope in God, believe in God. Then secondly, he was focused on the eternal reward. The cool thing about being a Christian is the older you get, the closer you are to heaven. The older you get, the closer you are to heaven, right? And you reach that tipping point. I remember my grandmother used to say, "Johnny, I know more people in heaven than I do on earth." (congregation laughing) "I have more family and friends waiting for me in heaven than I do down here. I just can't wait to go to be with them." I mean, that's perspective. When you grow old and you're looking forward to dying and going to be with the Lord. The Bible says to be absent from the body is to be what? Present with the Lord. So the future's always bright for the child of God. Do you have that hope? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your savior? Have you turned from your sin and trusted him who died on the cross for you? And then thirdly, he was willing to face new challenges. I love that. He didn't ask for the easy road, he didn't ask for the easy path, he said, "I'll take the hill country, give me Hebron. I know the giants are there, I know the cities are fortified, but I want to wholly follow the Lord." You want to wholly follow the Lord? You want to live for Him, love Him, serve Him, and obey Him? That's my passion, I pray that for you today, let's pray.