

Caleb followed the Lord completely and received what God had promised him decades earlier

FIRST THOUGHTS:

A lot of us are like the little boy who prayed, “God give me patience, and give it to me right now!” The Bible teaches us that we need to learn to trust God’s promises and at the same time trust God’s timing. For instance, thousands of years passed from the time God first promised the coming of the Messiah until Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Yet the Bible says God sent His Son at just the right time (Gal. 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law”). We can depend on God to keep His promises—no matter how long He takes to do so. What God has spoken in His word over the lives of His people, it will come to pass because He is always working out His plans for each of us whether we can see it or not. In **Jeremiah 1:12b** *“Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am [actively] watching over My word to fulfill it.’”* In 2 Chron 16:9 *“For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth so that He may support those whose heart is completely His. In other words, God actively searches for people who are wholeheartedly devoted to Him and He personally intervenes in their lives with strength, help, and favor. He tells us in His word that our obedience to His commands is expected. He repeats this theme throughout the book of Joshua. Our obedience must be complete and sustained if we are to grow strong in the Lord and please God. Our God is faithful and consistent with us. Let us be found to be faithful to Him.*

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Chapter 13 of Joshua serves as a dividing point in the book. Whereas chapters 1–12 deal with capturing of Canaan, chapters 13–24 detail the distribution of Canaan among the twelve tribes. Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan River. The remaining tribes (except for the priestly tribe of Levi) were given parcels of land on the west side of the Jordan. Levi received a collection of priestly cities spread out around the nation. The Levites were set aside to serve the Lord. Most of Joshua 14 focuses on Caleb’s inheritance. Caleb was one of twelve spies sent by Moses to scout Canaan. Only he and Joshua brought a positive report that the Israelites could conquer the land with God’s help (Num. 13:30). As a result, God allowed Caleb to enter the promised land and gave him the courage and vigor to capture the stronghold of Hebron at the age of eighty-five. Joshua 21 provides a summary that emphasizes again the book’s major theme; the Lord fought Israel’s battles and fulfilled all His promises to their ancestors. Joshua and Caleb remained faithful and obedient to the Lord’s commands and by God’s power and grace, He gave His people victory over their enemies (Josh. 21:43–45). God is still doing the same for us today.

KEY DOCTRINE: God

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. (See Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Luke 14:27.)

MEMORY VERSE: Joshua 14:8

“My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the Lord my God completely “

Obedience (Josh. 14:1–5) We will face daily opportunities to obey or disobey God’s instructions.

The allotment of Canaan, west of the Jordan River begins. The men responsible for parceling out each tribe’s portion were Eleazar the High Priest, Joshua, and the family heads of each tribe. Eleazar was Aaron’s third son and became high priest upon his father’s death (Num. 20:28). His involvement in the land distribution emphasized that this was a sacred activity based on God’s promises, not just a real estate transaction. Joshua, of course, led the nation in the conquest. His role in the distribution had long been determined (Deut. 3:28; Josh. 1:6). The family heads consisted of leaders from the twelve tribes. As the Lord directed Moses, the leaders cast a lot to decide how the land would be shared by the nine and a half tribes west of the Jordan River (Num. 26:52–56). God was in complete control, so casting lots left nothing to chance (Prov. 16:33). God ensured the outcome He wanted. Moses already had given land to the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan: Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. The Levites received no land inheritance. Instead that tribe acquired forty-eight cities distributed throughout the twelve tribes (Josh. 21:41–42). By scattering the Levites around the promised land,

each tribe would have ready access to a teacher of God's laws (Deut. 33:8–10). The Levites' special inheritance is elsewhere identified as the Lord Himself and service to Him (Deut. 10:8–9). The people and their leaders did things exactly as the Lord directed them. We daily face opportunities to obey or to disobey the Lord's instructions. Like them, obedience to the Lord should characterize our words, actions, and attitudes each day.

Devotion (Josh. 14:6–9) We can be assured that God knows and rewards those who follow Him wholeheartedly.

Caleb son of Jephunneh was one of twelve spies Moses sent to scout Canaan in Numbers 13. Upon the spies' return, only Caleb and Joshua expressed faith that Israel could conquer the land (Num. 13:30). The Lord rewarded Caleb by allowing him to enter the promised land. When the time came, the descendants of Judah approached Joshua to receive their inheritance, and Caleb got the region of Hebron (Josh. 14:13). He conquered Hebron, even though he was eighty-five years old (15:13–14). Caleb next recalled how Moses swore a lasting inheritance for you and your descendants. Moses too had depicted Caleb as a man who had followed the Lord completely. Throughout his life Caleb kept his focus on the Lord. He followed God with unwavering determination. Though it had been 45 years since Caleb had scouted out the land, he was still not afraid to tackle any problems that might come up. If anything, his longstanding relationship with God gave him even more confidence of what the Lord could do. Today, believers still can be assured that the Lord knows and rewards those who follow Him wholeheartedly. Our God is still powerful and able to fight for us, keep us, and He has already given us the victory in this life and the life to come.

Inheritance (Josh. 14:10–15) We can be assured of God's presence and aid when we follow Him wholeheartedly.

Not only did the Lord keep Caleb alive at eighty-five years old, but He also kept Caleb as strong as he was forty-five years prior. Caleb was not too old or too weak to do what God had promised him he could do. Moreover, Caleb was eager to go to the hill country, the location of the fortified cities of the Anakim. Caleb was eager to take on the same giants that had terrified the other ten spies who caused Israel to be too frightened to trust God and conquer the land. Joshua 11:21–22 indicates Israel had already defeated the Anakim, but some had gotten away only to return later. Caleb was ready and eager to go in and finish them off. The Anakim were “long-necked” or “strong-necked giant men. Many scholars associate the Anakim with the Nephilim, another group of powerful people who lived before the flood (Gen. 6:4). In addition to being a race of giants, they lived in large fortified cities. Such cities were strategically important because they were almost invincible. Caleb possessed confident faith in God and wanted the biggest challenge available in order to bring glory to God. After he blessed Caleb, Joshua gave him Hebron as an inheritance. The Hebrew verb translated “blessed” means “to grant power for success or to accomplish a purpose.” There is a third reference to how Caleb followed the Lord completely and the last verse states that the land had rest from war.

Caleb is the model for true believers today. He was totally faithful, committed and obedient. He was consistently and continually devoted to God, no matter the challenge. Because of Caleb's unwavering determination, God rewarded him with an inheritance promised many years before. Just like Caleb, God has given us a great inheritance in Christ Jesus. I pray we will be found committed and obedient until the end. Glory Hallelujah 🙌.

APPLICATION:

Our God is the promise keeper! God honors wholehearted followers and gives them strength for every assignment-no matter their age, no matter their stage of life, and no matter the size and scope of their obstacles. What God has spoken in His word over the lives of His people, it will come to pass according to His timing. He is always working out His plans whether we can see it or not. In Jeremiah 1:12b God said, “...*for I am [actively] watching over My word to fulfill it.*” God preserves the strength of those who walk in obedience. And finally, God will transform the very thing or place that intimidated you into your testimony of His greatness, faithfulness, and His great love for you.

Next week: Joshua chapter 24, “Vital Decision”