

A Man to Match the Mountains

by David Roper

Caleb, an 85-year-old Kenizzite, was a man of faith who believed God's promises and took Him seriously, resulting in his success and influence on others.

Duration: 30:49

Scripture: Joshua 14:6, Matthew 5:14, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:12, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 2:14

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Victory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who was trying to reach out to a group of unresponsive young people. He realized that while they may not come to the light, they might come to the warmth, so he started a fire on the beach and people began to gather around it. Through this act of kindness, many of those kids found the Lord. The speaker then discusses the story of Joshua and Caleb from the Bible, emphasizing their faith and determination to receive the best from God. He encourages the audience to have a similar attitude and trust in God for victory over their struggles.

Transcript

I love to think about Caleb, the subject of our study this morning. I picture him in my mind as tall and skinny, kind of a tough old bird. He was 85 when the account that we read this morning took place.

He's described in the Old Testament as living to good old age. That expression always intrigues me. A number of the patriarchs are referred to as living to good old age.

You know, there's evil old age and there's good old age. Good old age is filled with good memories and assurances of the faithfulness of God through the past. And that was certainly Caleb's experience.

85 years old and yet he describes himself as one who was as strong as he was the day when he spied out the land. Caleb's an interesting character. He wasn't a Jew.

He was an Arab. It's interesting to reflect on. He was an Edomite.

He's described in this passage as the son of Jephunneh. He was a Kenizzite. The Kenizzites were the relatives or the sons of Esau and were related to the Edomites, the enemies of Israel for so long.

Ones who carried out throughout almost the entire history of their relationship, border wars and skirmishes. He was outside the covenant people of God. He wasn't a Jew.

It was interesting in tracing his lineage in the book of Chronicles to discover that sometime in the history of his family he was adopted into the tribe of Judah. And it struck me that there was no special category in Israel for people who formerly were Gentiles. As you know, the Jews looked at people in one of two ways.

Either you were a Jew or you were a Gentile. And Caleb was a Gentile and others who came into the God's community were Gentiles. But they didn't establish a 13th tribe for the Gentiles.

They were absorbed right into God's people. They became members of one of the tribes. And in this case, Caleb became a member of the tribe of Judah.

He was adopted into one of the families. And whereas he apparently didn't have a family before, at least not one that he could be proud of, he became a member of a family in Judah. A member of the aristocracy because the tribe of Judah, of course, was the tribe from which all the great leaders of Israel, the kings, came.

It struck me that of a number of the Gentiles that we know about in the Old Testament, whose names are given to us, for instance, Rahab, the Amorite, and Ruth, the Moabitess, and Caleb, the Kenizzite, these three at least were taken into the kingly tribe, the tribe of Judah, the Lord's line. And I was reminded of the statement in Hebrews that he's not ashamed to call us brothers. These people came right into the middle of the community.

They may have looked different, they may have dressed differently, they may have had different, they came from a different culture, but as far as God's people were concerned, they belonged. And this was Caleb. His name, interestingly enough, means dog.

And you can't help but wonder what sort of parents could saddle a child with that sort of name. And since dogs were outcasts in the Eastern culture, I wonder if he wasn't somehow cast out of his home, an unwanted child, and eventually found his way into the midst of God's people. And now in this passage in Joshua 14, he comes to claim his inheritance.

By this time, he is the prince of the tribe of Judah, the leading man in Judah. And he comes to claim an inheritance for the tribe and also for himself. And he asks for no small thing.

He actually asks for the best piece of real estate in the land of Canaan, Hebron. Hebron is one of the highest locations in Canaan, about 3,000 feet above sea level. At this time, it was heavily wooded.

It must have been a beautiful spot. And a place that was associated in the mind of any Jew with the patriarchs. That's where Abraham dwelt and others of the patriarchs.

That's where Abraham and Sarah and Jacob, Isaac and their wives were buried. The name Hebron means fellowship. It was the place where Abraham built his altar and where much of the Abrahamic covenant was given, the promise of the land and the seed.

And so it had very important memories, evoked memories in the minds of God's people. It was the best. There's no place like it, any other place in Canaan.

And Caleb had seen it. Unlike most of the people who had not yet been into the land, Caleb had seen Hebron. Because going back into the book of Numbers, we discover that Caleb was sent along with 11 other men as a group of spies into the land of Canaan by Moses from Kadesh Barnea.

After two years in the wilderness, after they'd come out of Egypt, they came to Kadesh and Moses sent 12 young men, choice-picked young men, a prince from each tribe into Canaan to spy out the land. And Caleb and Joshua were two, and the others' names have long since been forgotten. I have a friend who regularly challenges people to give him the name of any other spy other than Caleb and Joshua, and he says, you'll pay a dollar per spy.

And so far, he has no takers. I've memorized a couple, and I'm going to take him up on it next time. But they've long since been forgotten, but Caleb and Joshua are remembered because they were the men of faith.

They went into the land, and they evidently partitioned up the land, and each spy took one portion of the land and investigated that section of the land of Canaan. And it appears from Numbers 13 that Caleb went to Hebron. If you have a New American Standard Bible and you have an opportunity this afternoon to read through Numbers 13, you'll notice that in the margin, there's a change from they to he.

They spied out the land, but he went to Hebron, and the he evidently refers to Caleb. When he reached Hebron, he discovered that as they had been promised, it was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a beautiful spot, heavily wooded, everything a person could want.

Wonderful piece of real estate. One problem, the sons of Anak were there. The Anakim were giants.

They'd been there for hundreds of years. They were descended from the Nephalem, the fallen ones from the time of the flood on. They're called by a number of different names in the Old Testament.

Some of the people from the countries surrounding Israel had different names for them. Moabites called them the M.M. That means terrors, the horrible ones. Other people call them the Rephaim, the ghostly ones, the shadowy ones, the mysterious ones.

Some call them the Zamzumim, those that speak gibberish, because they spoke a language that no one could understand. They were giants. One of them by the name of Og had a bed 12 feet by 6 feet, and they're described throughout Scripture as terrible giants.

They actually existed. In the London Museum, there is a femur, the upper leg bone of one of these giants. They're in a case.

It's about this long, and they speculate that the individual that this bone was taken from was some 9 feet tall. There's a whole civilization that they've uncovered in this area and across Transjordan that built with large stones, and so they actually existed. There were giants in the land in those days.

As a matter of fact, their name became proverbial for enemies that were impossible to conquer throughout the Pentateuch. They're described as terrible enemies, and there is a statement, Who can stand before the Anakin? And so along with the beauties of Hebron, there were the sons of Anak. And that's always the case.

Whenever you want the highest and the best, there are always obstacles. And that's what Caleb saw. And that's the report that Caleb brought back with him to Kadesh.

When the ten spies came back, they gave what the Book of Numbers calls an evil report. As a matter of fact, they lied. They said, all the people in the land are giants.

That's not true. There were only a few giants there. And though they correctly assessed it as a place flowing with milk and honey, the thing that bore most heavily on their mind was the fact that the giants were there.

And they said, we're unable to take it. And Caleb and Joshua stood before the entire multitude, a million and a half people. And these men of faith tried to convince them that they could go into the land and they could take it.

And but the people tried to stone them. And so God turned his people back from Kadesh. And for 38 years, they wandered in the wilderness.

And that entire generation from 20 years and up perished in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua watched them die. One at a time.

I determined one time that in order for a million people to die over that 38 year span of time, 73 people a day had to perish. That's a lot of graves today. They were preoccupied with death.

Caleb lived in the midst of death. And yet throughout that entire period, while his generation died, and you need to call to mind that when he went into the land, everyone else was at least 18 years his junior. He was the only senior citizen, along with Joshua, that made it into the land.

An entire generation died off. And as they died off, Caleb and his wife were drawing plans for their A-frame on Mount Hebron. And they were working out battle plans and preparing to take the land.

And now the time has come for him to claim his inheritance. He fought alongside the other Israelites during the five-year campaign that drove the Canaanites out of the larger areas, the fortified cities. And now they're ready to take some of the hill country.

And the tribes receive their inheritance, and they go to take what's rightfully theirs. Caleb says, I want Hebron. I want the highest and the best.

I won't be content with anything else but the best, even though the Anikim are there. And that's his request. Give me this Hebron.

That's what God promised him, because that's the best. And that's what God wants us to have--the highest and the very best. He doesn't want us to be content with mediocrity.

He wants us to have the best. He wants us to have the completeness of fellowship with Him. That's what maturity is--knowing the Father.

That's what God seeks. He seeks those to worship Him, those who will seek the highest and the very best. We've just recently completed a study of the book of Ecclesiastes on Sunday evenings, and we saw again the great theme that runs through that book--the highest good.

What is the highest good? Solomon had every resource that made possible that sort of quest. He had unlimited funds. He had a great deal of time.

He had power and influence. He had access to libraries that others did not have access to. So he read and he talked to people and he experienced life, and he spent a great deal of money and time to discover the highest good.

And having done it all, at the end of his days, he says, this is the highest good. Fear God. That's the only thing worth living for, is a relationship to God.

You see, God seeks men and women who seek Him with all their heart. He'll give them the very best. Unfortunately, the Lord will almost always give us what we want.

If we're content with mediocrity, that's what He'll give us. But if we want the best, He'll give us the best. Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God, and all these other things will be given to you.

And that was Caleb. He wanted the highest and the best, and he wouldn't be content with anything secondary. And as we'll discover, God gave it to him.

Now let's look at Joshua, the 14th chapter, beginning with verse 6. Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua and Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses, the man of God, concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea? I was 40 years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. It's an interesting play on the word, word here. God gave His word through Moses that you would have the land, and I came back and gave him the word as it was in my heart.

I want the land. Verse 8, Nevertheless, my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear. But I followed the Lord my God fully.

So Moses swore on that day saying, Surely the Lord on which your foot has trodden, the land on which your foot has trodden, shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God fully. And now behold, the Lord has let me live, just as he spoke these 45 years from the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness. And now behold, I am 85 years old today, I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me.

As my strength was then, so is my strength now, for war and for coming out, going out and coming in. Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke on that day. For you heard on that day that Anakim were there with great fortified cities.

Perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the Lord has spoken. So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the Lord God of Israel fully.

This was another of these monuments throughout the land of Canaan, which parents would point out to their children as indications that God was at work in their midst. Whenever they would pass Hebron, there'd be a sign that say formerly the location of the Anakim, now Caleb's home and his family lived there throughout the history of Israel. On down into the monarchy, this particular site was referred to time and time again as the Negev of Caleb.

It was known as the place where Caleb drove out the Anakim. Now here's this old soldier, 85 years old. He could well have retired to an old soldier's home by the Mediterranean Sea and lived out the rest of his years in peace, but he wants the best and he won't be satisfied with anything but the best.

Now there are a number of things that strike me about this man. Three come through very clearly. Number one is his optimism.

Verse eight, when he came back with the word, my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear, but I follow the Lord my God fully. And that's the characteristic of his life. He was positive.

He was convinced that God would do what he promised to do. He took God seriously. God said, you'll have Hebron.

Caleb said, right, I'll have Hebron, even though the Anakim are there because God had promised. God was true to his word and Caleb believed him. When he says later, perhaps I will gain the land, the term's not really well translated.

There's no thought in Caleb's mind that he might not receive the land. There was no doubt that he would have what God had promised and that gave him a spirit of expectancy and hope and confidence and optimism. A negative spirit is always a mark of the flesh.

The times that we get negative and critical, unwilling to act, it grows out of a spirit of distrust. Either we don't trust God or we don't trust God's ability to work in others. I have a friend from Texas who says that the biggest problem in the church is aginners.

And I asked him one time, what is an aginner? And he said, that's someone that's agin-everything, just negative. But God's people ought to be positive, not negative. God's promises are yea and amen.

Isn't that what the scriptures say? And therefore, believers ought to be the most positive, constructive, excited people in the world. Enthusiasm comes in different styles. There are people who are quietly enthusiastic and there are those that are exuberantly enthusiastic.

But in any case, we ought to be hopeful, constructive, positive people, right? Optimistic, not negative, not even neutral, but optimistic. I had a friend who used to live in Southern California. While they were building his house up on the side of the hill, he was living in a cottage that belonged to another friend right on the beach.

And we were down spending some time with them that summer. And he was telling me about his concern for the young men and women that were on that beach day after day. There were hundreds of them.

And virtually untouched, not too responsive to the gospel, and nothing seemed to work. He didn't know what approach to use, but there was about him a spirit of confidence that God's going to do something with these kids. And it occurred to him one day that while they might not come to the light, they might come to the warmth.

And so one night, as you know, it gets chilly at night on the beach, one night he went down to the beach right down the front of his cabin and he dug a hole in the sand and he put a bunch of tuba floors in it and squirted a little fire starter on it, started a fire and sat down and waited. And people began to drift over to his fire from all over the beach. And through the summer, many, many of those kids found the Lord to be their Lord.

And you see, he grows out of that spirit of confidence that God can do anything. And will do anything and do it in a creative and unique and unusual way. That's the first thing that marks Caleb.

And you can see it throughout his life. When the spies came back and said, we can't do it, Caleb said, we can do it. We're strengthened with strength in Numbers 13.

It's no problem. It may take a while. It may involve some struggle, but we can do it.

The whole nation turned sour and negative. We can't do it. They tried to stone him.

Caleb says, we can do it. Just have to wait. We'll do it.

And he waited for 45 years. And he did it. And that underscores a second characteristic in Caleb's life.

He was a man who was successful. What an anticlimax if after having received this promise and waited for 45 years, you would read in Joshua that he assaulted Hebron and got trounced. He had to run for his skin.

And the Anicom are still living there. But that's not what we're told. If you look at chapter 15, it says in verse 13, that he gave to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the Lord to Joshua, namely Kiriath Arba, Arba being the father of Anak, that is Hebron.

And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Shishai and Ahimon and Talmi, the children of Anak. These were the giants, three of the tribes of giants who lived in Hebron. He drove them out.

He built his aphorim. He settled down and lived there. And you see, that ought to be the hallmark of our life as well.

There ought to be consistent success. There ought to be victory. And someone has said, we are not intended to be monuments to God's impotence.

We are intended to be monuments to His power. When God promises, He comes through. Time is always an element.

It may take time. For Joshua, there was 40 years under the lash in Egypt. There was 40 years in the wilderness and there was five years of fighting.

But when he was 85 years old, he settled down. He was the victor. He won.

And that ought to be the characteristic of your life and mine. If we want the best, that's what God will give us. If we want victory over the bad habits and fears, the past, sins, whatever may be plaguing us, God will give it to us.

It may take time, but there'll be success. The third element that I see in Caleb's life is that he influenced others. He had an enormous impact upon his own family, and upon the nation.

In chapter 15, beginning with verse 15, it says, He, that is Caleb, went up from there against the inhabitants of Debor. Now, the name of Debor formerly was Kiriath-sephir. The word means city of the books.

This was evidently the depository of the sacred books of the Anakim. This was kind of the hotbed of wickedness. It's where it all emanated from.

It's where their priesthood lived. And it was a strongly fortified city. This is one of the cities in Canaan that they've done extensive digging around and in.

They've discovered some rather remarkable things. For one, they've discovered a destruction lair right at the time when you would expect the Israelites to have invaded. And below the destruction lair is a Canaanite city, and above the destruction lair is an Israelite city, just as you would expect.

And they also found that the people at Kiriath-sephir had built a very unusual sort of defense. They had an outer wall that was quite easy to breach, and an inner wall that was much, much stronger, and in between a sort of an arrangement that led into blind alleys so that anyone climbing over the fence, over the gate, would be trapped. And this is extraordinary.

It's not found anywhere else in Canaan. But this was what they were faced with, this sort of fortified city. And in verse 16 we read, And Caleb said, The one who attacks Kiriath-sephir and captures it, I will give him Akshah my daughter as a wife.

And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it. So he gave him Akshah his daughter as a wife. And it came about that when she came to him, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field.

So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, What do you want? Then she said, Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev. Give me also the springs of water. So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs, and the springs are still there today.

Hundreds of gallons of water gushing out of these springs because the area around Debora or Kiriath-sephir is barren. So they needed the springs. And you can see what occurred.

Here is this strong Canaanite city. And Caleb says to his younger brother, You can take it. And his younger brother, seeing the results of faith in Caleb, took the city.

And then his young bride asked for the springs. He's not afraid to ask for the best, for the highest either. And Caleb became a source of encouragement and strengthening and blessing to his own family.

I couldn't help but think of Jesus' words in John 7, He who believes in Me, out of his innermost being, shall flow rivers of living water. That men and women of faith will be a source of blessing and encouragement to others. You'll influence others.

You'll have impact on their life. You can't miss. You'll stir others up to faith.

They'll believe as well. I just finished reading the first couple of chapters of Mr. Stedman's new book, Authentic Christianity. And he takes one verse in one of those chapters, 2 Corinthians 2.14, and he says there are three characteristics of the New Covenant type of person.

He describes them as unquenchably optimistic. That's Caleb. And unvaryingly successful.

That's Caleb. And having unforgettable impact upon others. And again, that's Caleb.

And that's why I chose these three terms exactly, because the same principle you see in the New Testament, you see in the Old Testament in the life of Caleb. There's nothing new. In fact, the term that's used, the New Covenant or the New Testament, really means the renewed covenant.

There are two Greek terms that are translated new. One means new in the sense of something brand new, and the other means new in the sense of renewed. Well, it's that latter term, renewed that's used.

It's a renewed covenant. What God did in the life of Caleb, he's doing today in the lives of his people. But the secret, you see, of this quality of life is found in another statement that's made of Caleb.

Six times in these accounts, we read that he wholly followed the Lord his God. Six times. God must mean it.

The term actually means he was filled to the full with God. He was a man who was filled and flooded with the very presence of God, which again is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians when he describes the minister of the New Covenant as one who is optimistic and successful and influential. He says, who is sufficient for these things? Not that we have any sufficiency from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God who has made us ministers of the New Covenant.

And that was the key, you see, to Caleb's success. He wholly followed the God. He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

He was filled and flooded with the presence of God himself. Caleb's always looked upon in the Old Testament as a hero. In fact, there's only one other person in the Old Testament who's described in the same terms as one who wholly followed the Lord, and that was David, who was the hero par excellence until Messiah came.

And the characteristic of his life that sets him apart from everyone else is that he wanted the very best. He wanted nothing less than the best. In order to accomplish the best, he let God fill him and flood him, pervade every area of his life.

His strength, his sufficiency, his dependency was in God. That was the secret of his life. That's what made him a man of influence.

That's what gave him the victory and the optimism that he experienced. Now, that was Caleb, the outcast, the one who, from the standpoint of resources, didn't have much to offer, didn't have much of a family background, didn't have anything within himself. To give.

And yet, because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel, he was a hero, both in the eyes of God and in the eyes of God's people. Let's stand together, shall we? Father, we're told that you said of Caleb that he had another spirit within him. And we're thankful this morning that we have not the spirit of the world, nor a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and of wisdom and discipline and love.

We would ask that as Caleb wholly followed you, that that also would be our attitude of heart. And Lord, along with Caleb, we want the very best. And we thank you that because we want it and because we're willing to trust you, you'll provide it.

We thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

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