

# Wholehearted Caleb

## Introduction

Christians are often dismissed as being weak and wimpy. In the Simpsons Ned Flanders, is painfully pathetic. The truth is we are called to be warriors in a spiritual battle, yes we need to be humble, but far from weak or spineless. We fight against this world, our flesh and the devil. We fight against the arguments of this world with the Gospel of Truth. We stand up to the spiritual forces of Satan with the armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Today we are going to look at the life of a hardened veteran soldier called Caleb. Caleb wholeheartedly fought battles because of his faith in God. Three times we read that Caleb followed the Lord wholeheartedly (Joshua 14: 8,9,14).

His faith in God's promise gave him the courage to fight for his inheritance. His faith in God inspired the next generation of Israelites to enter into their promised land. And today it inspires us as Christians today to fight the good fight of the faith. 1Timothy 6:12 says ***Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.***

Caleb taught us how to fight wholeheartedly. He was a hero of the faith. Joshua 14:6-10 ***Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, 'You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. <sup>7</sup> I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions. <sup>8</sup> but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people sink. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. <sup>9</sup> So on that day Moses swore to me, "The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly."*** Caleb's confidence was not that God would give him whatever he wanted if he have enough faith for it. His confidence was in the Lord's faithfulness to honour His promises. His faith removed any fear he had in any opposition that came against him.

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His faith was trust in the Word of God, v6 says *you know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me*. Caleb referred to this promise a number of times (vs 9,10,12). His faith was not optimism or bravery. He trusted the Lord to keep His Word and for God to overcome all obstacles and opposition.

You and I can trust the same Lord who has promised us an eternal inheritance. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,<sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. The Lord makes many promises in the Word of God and each one of these can be equally trusted too.

Caleb's faith altered his view of the opposition he faced. When He was sent with the other spies to reconnoitre Canaan they all saw the same: beautiful land, powerful warriors, walled cities. But they reported back quite differently. Caleb used this phrase *I brought him back a report according to my convictions*, he saw the opposition in light of God's promises.

Today we face powerful enemies that are increasingly hostile. Materialism has given birth to Hedonism. Secularism has tried to suppress Christianity. Atheism proclaims God to be a delusion of mental illness. The world is certainly a powerful enemy. Our sinful nature tempts us in all manner of selfish ambitions and envy. Our own flesh is a powerful obstacle. Satan promotes false teaching. He uses suffering to suggest that God does not care. He tells the same lies about sin he did in Genesis, **did God really say? You will not surely die?**

It seems the world, or flesh and Satan are a frightening tag team seeking to steal our inheritance. **But** God Himself has promised to take us to a home in heaven and He won't fail those who trust in Him. The truth is that we have nothing to fear from: this world, our flesh or the devil. The opposition is not so scary when we see with Caleb's faith.

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Caleb reported how his faithless fellow men report made the people's hearts sink in v8 *my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people sink. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.* They had felt like grasshoppers in their own eyes (Number 13:33). Numbers 13:30 *Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'* Caleb's faith set him apart from everyone else. He was criticised, unpopular and probably threatened. Church, today we can expect the same treatment today. Faith in Word of God will often mean us standing against the crowd as Caleb did. But it will be worth it in the end.

Caleb's faith was rewarded by God. Numbers 14:23-24 *But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.* God promised faithful Caleb the land. Caleb's faith is not optional. If we have the different spirit that Caleb had of confidence in God's Word then we can look forward to our eternal inheritance.

Nothing and no one can stop the Lord keeping His promises. One day when we meet the Lord face to face he will invite us to gaze out at the beautiful land we have inherited, to show us around the many rooms He has prepared for us. We will hear the words well done good and faithful servant because like Caleb we have followed him wholeheartedly.

Caleb's faith enabled him to wait. Joshua 14:10 *Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old!* Caleb had waited 45 years. Waited for all his contemporaries to die. So many funerals! Waiting in faith. As the years rolled by his generation reduced. There would be no entry into the Promised Land until they all died. We need to be clear that God keeps His promises of Judgement as well as promises of blessing. The response people make to the gospel still determines their eternity.

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Joshua experienced 38 years of slavery in Egypt, forty years struggling in the desert, seven years fighting in Canaan to take His inheritance. It can be like this for us as Christians to, as we wait in faith. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 *tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

But Caleb knew the only reason he and Joshua were alive was because of the sustaining power of God in keeping His promises. We need to be like Caleb to attribute everything to the Lord's faithfulness.

For Caleb the wait was almost over. Joshua 14:11 *I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then.* Caleb's faith gave him the courage to fight for his inheritance. He wasn't looking to fade away into retirement. His zeal to work for the Lord was as strong as ever. To many Christians think they are past their **best-before date** when it comes to serving God. You can make your own choice but I want to go out with a blaze of glory for Christ.

Joshua 14:12 *Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.* His faith provided the ambition of his life. He was determined to receive *hill country that the Lord promised.* Hebron was not only beautiful it was significant in the history of God's people. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob were buried there in the cave of Machpelah.

Our ambition is to reach our Promised Land, we are not to be driven by selfish ambition but by gospel ambition. We want to arrive in heaven with as many family, friends, neighbours as possible.

Being confident in God, Caleb welcomed the toughest challenge of all *You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.* With God's strength, nothing was beyond him. What others thought might be an obstacle he saw as an opportunity.

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When we have faith like Caleb's we see opposition as a wonderful opportunity for God to Glorify Himself. What we need is **not great faith in God but faith in a great God!**

Joshua 14:13-14 *Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. <sup>14</sup> So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. <sup>15</sup> (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.) Then the land had rest from war.* It all turned out just as the Lord promised. Joshua blessed Caleb with Hebron, just as our Joshua will bless us with our inheritance.

Caleb's daughter Ascah married Othniel, the first of the judges of Israel. Othniel was Caleb's nephew, who governed Israel for 40 years and restored peace to Israel. Caleb offered his daughter to whoever would capture a city for the Lord, and Othniel won the prize.

Caleb outlived Joshua and enjoyed living in peace in his inheritance for many years. Caleb followed God wholeheartedly.

## Personal Study Questions

- ✚ How can we see to see our problems in the light of our convictions?
- ✚ What does it mean to serve the Lord wholeheartedly?
- ✚ What are the struggles we face in the fight of faith?