

A Giant From The Past

Introduction. There are many Old Testament characters which are distinguished by imperfections, such as Samson, Solomon, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron. Yet there are a few whose lives were exceptionally godly, such as Enoch, Samuel and Daniel. Caleb, one of the twelve spies which Moses sent into Canaan, was also a very worthy man in the sight of God.

The study of this man's character will show us how we can serve God to the best advantage. This man, mentioned 30 times in the Old Testament, had a remarkable life and he teaches us how to have one also.

I. ***Caleb Was Joyful***

- A. Caleb was all heart. You will search his life and will not find an instance where he was pessimistic, cheerless or dejected at all, but rather, the opposite shines forth in his life (Nehemiah 8:10; Philippians 3:1, 3; 4:4, 10).
- B. The dejected, moping, cheerless Christian is not the one who makes a gracious impression upon an unbelieving world.
 - 1. Joy is more than just a "good feeling." It is an emotion which sustains and nurtures the Christian. The joy in a Christian's life should exist whatever the circumstances.
 - 2. The New Testament is filled with the examples of those who had joy because of the blessings of Christ (Acts 8:39; 16:34). Henry Ward Beecher said, "There are joys which long to be ours. God sends ten thousands truths, which come about us like birds seeking inlet; but we are shut up to them, and so they bring us nothing, but sit and sing awhile upon the roof, and then fly away." Jesus and Paul both taught that joy should be an integral part of your life even if it means tribulation (Matthew 5:12; Romans 5:3).
- C. Caleb is a man, with all that hearty and cheerful life, who gives us an understanding as to how healthy and happy it is to be a Christian.

II. ***Caleb Was Composed***

- A. Caleb also had the power to calm people (Numbers 13:30). Caleb and Joshua did not minimize the difficulties of taking possession of the land at all. They said, "There are difficulties. The men are mighty. Their cities are well-fenced. Their surroundings will need our full attention, but we are able to overcome all the obstacles."
- B. All of them agreed that Canaan was a wonderful land (Numbers 13:27), but the ten were overwhelmed with pessimism and unbelief (Numbers 13:31). When they had given their pessimistic report, all the people broke down and cried with dismay. Caleb then stood up and calmed the whole crowd in a time of dejection and gloom. Publius

Syrus stated, "Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm."

- C. We need people who can calm others. We need priceless people who can handle frictions in the family and in congregations. We need voices of reason in a turbulent storm (Proverbs 15:1; 25:15).

III. ***Caleb Was Courageous***

- A. When the ten gave their report, the hearts of the children of Israel were ready to faint. They were ready to give up before they had even started, but not Caleb (Numbers 14:6-9). Caleb said, "We will be able to defeat these people." This was a man of courage (cf. Ezra 8:22-23; Daniel 3:16-18)!
- B. The church is in need of people who are courageous. The world is tired of whining, crying, pessimism and discouragement (Psalm 31:24; Proverbs 28:1; Philippians 1:27-28). We need courage to fight the daily battles of life. We need courage to fight indifference and other temptations. We need courage to fight for what is right and truthful. Winston Churchill said, "This is no time for ease and comfort, it is a time to dare and endure." Our religion means battle, suffering and service (Deuteronomy 1:34-36; Matthew 10:38).
- C. Every one of us must realize that we are in for a fight and for that fight, we need help. If we use His help, we will be victorious (Ephesians 6:10-17; Revelation 17:14).

IV. ***Caleb Was Resolute***

- A. This was a man who could go against the crowd. He had his convictions thoroughly rooted and firmly defined as what God required of him. He dared to be in the minority.
 - 1. In politics, men and women cringe rather than go against the majority. People constantly sacrifice truth and principle simply because they do not want to be alone.
 - 2. Caleb was a man who was willing to stand in the minority and be patient for tomorrow, because he knew that God would vindicate the truth in due time. Thomas Carlyle wrote, "The block of granite which is an obstacle in the pathway of the weak, becomes a stepping stone in the pathway of the strong."
- B. When Jesus hung on the cross, He proved that sometimes the minority is the winning force because it is what God desires. Caleb's fidelity to duty against the majority was both a powerful and a priceless characteristic (Numbers 14:24; cf. Ezekiel 2:6; 3:9).
- C. We have a lot of modern day examples of people who can "swim against the stream." The question is, will you be one of them? Can you count the cost and then stand up and be counted Mark 10:28-31)?

V. ***Caleb Was Energetic***

- A. One of the most beautiful attributes of Caleb was that he was perennially young. He was a man who never did get old. He lived until the last breath of his life. He was young in spirit and enthusiastic in his work.
- B. At the advanced age of eighty-five, he asked Joshua for the hardest job in all the kingdom (Joshua 14:10-14). A lot of older people talk about "already finishing their part." Although one's energy may diminish, there is no need for anyone to get old in this world.
- C. Moses worked for God until he was 120 years old. At a similarly advanced age, Caleb said, "Let me have Hebron." Hebron meant difficulty, battle, exacting work, awful conflict and a fight to the finish (Joshua 15:13-14). He won everlasting credit to his name.
- D. Do you want to make the most out of your life? If you do, then get the viewpoint of Caleb and do not look for the easy and soft places in life, but look for the places where you can really serve God. Victor Hugo wrote, "Adversity makes men, and prosperity makes monsters." This is where many Christians fail. We look for ease and then lay down and say, "I have given my all."

Conclusion. Barnabas is the Caleb of the New Testament, while Caleb is the Barnabas of the Old Testament. Both will go down in infamy as ones who encouraged. Not much is said in the scriptures about Caleb, and yet enough is said to put him before us as one of the most inspiring examples of dignity, devotion, faith, courage and conviction in Old Testament history.

Caleb's spirit is the spirit for us all -- a whole-hearted devotion to God. We should pray that Caleb's spirit would find its expression in all of us. In how many ways are you like this giant from the past? If you are here with all of your excuses, evasions, speculations and doubts in your life, get rid of them and be straightforward and devoted to God.