

FBC, 10-9-16 AM NOTES
"THE PERSEVERANCE REQUIRED TO FULFILL THE VISION"
JOSHUA 14:6-16
#9 in Series, "A Vision Fulfilled"

Numbers 14:24 "But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it."

I. We Must Have a Faith That Never Wavers

Joshua 14:6b, "You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea."

Joshua 14:10a "Now behold, the Lord has let me live, just as He spoke..."

Joshua 14:10b "the Lord spoke this word..."

Joshua 14:12a "Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke..."

Joshua 14:12b "...as the Lord has spoken."

Numbers 14:24 "But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully..."

Numbers 32:12a "Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully."

Deuteronomy 1:36 "Caleb ... has followed the Lord fully."

Joshua 14:8 "I [Caleb] followed the Lord my God fully."

Joshua 14:9 "you [Caleb] have followed the Lord my God fully."

Joshua 14:14 "he [Caleb] followed the Lord God of Israel fully."

Romans 4:20-21 "yet, with respect to the promise of God, he [Abraham] did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform."

II. We Must Have a Courage that Never Weakens

A. The Obstacle of Age

"Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul... Whatever your years, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for 'what next?'"

General Douglas MacArthur

Joshua 14:11-12 (NKJV) “As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, **give me this mountain** of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.”

B. The Obstacle of Adversaries

Numbers 13:33 “There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Numbers 14:9 (ESV) “Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”

Joshua 15:13-14a “Now 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). Caleb drove out from there...”

III. We Must Have a Vision That Never Wanes

Philippians 3:10 (HCSB) “My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

First Baptist Church Powell 10 09 2016 AM

Sermon 9: The Perseverance Required to Fulfill the Vision

Series: A Vision Fulfilled

Joshua 14:6-15

Caleb is one of those characters in the Bible that you wish you knew more about. We first meet Caleb in the Scriptures about forty-five years before the events recorded in Joshua 14 take place. When we first meet Caleb, he is a forty-year-old man who was chosen by Moses as one of the twelve spies to scout out the Promised Land before the Israelites invaded it. A part of the purpose in sending in the spies was to bring back evidence of the richness of the land and the blessings that awaited the Israelites there.

One of the places that the Israelites spied out was mountainous area called Hebron. It was described as “a land flowing with milk and honey” – a description of a rich, fertile land. There were clusters of grapes so large that it took two men to carry them. When the spies returned to the Israelites, things didn’t go too well. In addition to the agricultural plenty, there were challenges – fortified cities inhabited by giants. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the spies chose to focus on the obstacles instead of God and stirred up the people with fear and unwillingness to trust and obey God to give them this land that He had promised them. As a result, all the people twenty and older (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) were told that they would die in the wilderness and never go into the Promised Land. Instead of a land flowing with milk and honey, all they would see would be desert, snakes, and manna twenty-one meals a week, 630 meals a month and 7,560 meals a year. God however made a promise to Caleb, this man of courage and faith. Numbers 14:24: “But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has

followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.”

Now, forty-five years later (the time in the wilderness plus the time the Israelites had battled together to drive a wedge into Canaan before each tribe went to claim their own inheritance), this eighty-five-year-old man says in Joshua 14:12a (NKJV): “Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day...” That mountain, that hill country was the land called Hebron.

The taking of this special section of the Promised Land was wrought with challenges and danger. It was well fortified and defended, but Caleb was not deterred because he had a promise from God; he had a God given vision of his descendants occupying this beautiful part of the Promised Land.

Here is what I want us to learn from this passage. When God gives a vision concerning where He wants his people to go and what He wants them to do, there will always be obstacles that will require God’s enabling and His peoples’ perseverance to bring the vision to pass. Our vision as a church is not some mystical direction we received through a literal vision. It is a prayed through plan for accomplishing what God in His written Word has commanded His church to do – make disciples and lovingly serve those around us. As we get serious about impacting our community, seeing God turn rebels into worshippers, and watch family after family disciple their children to send them out as arrows from a warrior’s bow to impact the world, we will face obstacles from without and within. We should never be surprised at that! The question is, will we persevere and trust God to do through us what we could never do ourselves?

If we would see God fulfill the vision He has given us, there are at least three things we need.

I. We Must Have a Faith That Never Wavers

People greatly used of God are not complicated. Caleb was a man greatly used of God. He was not complicated; he simply believed God and persevered. If we become a church of simple people who just believe God and persevere, God will use us in ways that will astound us and the world! We find one of the keys to Caleb’s greatness in observing two phrases used often in relation to him. Listen to a common phrase in these verses.

Caleb said to Joshua in Joshua 14:6b: “You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea.”

Look at Joshua 14:10a: “Now behold, the Lord has let me live, just as He spoke...”

Joshua 14:10b: “the Lord spoke this word...”

Notice Joshua 14:12a: “Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke...”

Joshua 14:12b: “...as the Lord has spoken.”

Next I want to take you back to the book of Numbers and show you another phrase that is used repeatedly of Caleb.

Numbers 14:24: “But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully...”

Numbers 32:12a: “Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully.”

Deuteronomy 1:36: “Caleb ... has followed the Lord fully.”

Joshua 14:8: “I [Caleb] followed the Lord my God fully.”

Joshua 14:9 “you [Caleb] have followed the Lord my God fully.”

Joshua 14:14 “he [Caleb] followed the Lord God of Israel fully.”

Notice the simple key to Caleb’s fruitful, pleasing to God, amazing life. He heard the Lord speak, and he followed the Lord fully! In the wilderness wanderings Caleb didn’t participate in a rebellion against Moses by Korah; Caleb didn’t get involved in the scandalous behavior with the Moabite women orchestrated by Balaam. There is no hint of rebellion or even opposition to God’s choice in appointing

Joshua as Moses' successor. There is nothing complicated about understanding what it means to follow the Lord fully.

Today, we have it so much better than Caleb! The Lord speaks to us through His written, authoritative, totally trustworthy Word and we obey. On this side of Pentecost, we have the full written revelation of God, and we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us to enable us to "follow the Word of God fully"! That is how faith works! God gives direction in His Word, and in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we obey – we follow what He has said fully. That is the "secret" of Caleb's being mightily used of God. Caleb's faith reminds us of his ancestor Abraham's faith over 400 years earlier. Abraham's faith is described in Romans 4:20-21: "yet, with respect to the promise of God, he [Abraham] did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform." What an accurate description of Caleb's faith as well as his ancestor Abraham's faith.

Church history is filled with heroes whose story is just like Caleb's. They heard God speak through His Word, and they persevered in following the Lord fully. Allow me to give just one example. Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) was the first American "international missionary." He was called of God to go to Burma (modern day Myanmar) to take the Gospel to an unreached people. Burma was spiritually dark and after several years of faithfully translating the Scriptures into the language of the people and sharing the Gospel with the Burmese, there had not been a single convert. The living conditions were horrible beyond description and his sending mission organization suggested that he come home. Judson's reply was great! In refusing to give up and return home, he said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

God honored his faith and perseverance and today, over 200 years later the ministry of Adoniram and Anne Judson is evident in the churches and schools they started, many of them bearing his name. Even at eighty-five years old, I think Caleb could have easily used Adoniram Judson's reply – the enemy is powerful, the cities are fortified, I am eighty-five, but the future is as bright as the promises of God. I think that we could apply Judson's comment to our situation, "The evangelical church in America is in a drastic decline, the culture has adopted values that are the opposite of the values taught in Scripture and values that we hold dear. As we seek to be a light in the darkness, there are seemingly insurmountable financial challenges. As we go against the current of our culture and seek to make disciples and share the Gospel with the lost and sacrificially love our community, we will encounter opposition, But FBCP - lift up your eyes, the future is as bright as the promises of God. The only question for us to answer is this: Are we willing to persevere, believe God's promises, and wholly follow the Lord our God?"

Someone asked William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, "What is the secret of your success?" He answered simply, "God has all there is of me." Are you willing in these troublesome times to let God have all there is of you, and are you willing to say no to your fears and your sense of inadequacy to seek to make at least one disciple? Are you willing to believe Him to wholly follow Him and stay with the truth and persevere even though the truth is totally countercultural?

II. We Must Have a Courage That Never Weakens

Joshua 14:12-13: "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 will drive them out as the Lord has spoken.' So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance." At the age of eighty-five you might think that Caleb would have asked for an easy place where he could have a nice little garden and spend his last years growing organic vegetables. Not Caleb! Instead he requested the very place that that had struck fear into the ten spies who brought the negative report forty-five years earlier. Hebron was a land of fortified cities and giant sized warriors. We need to understand that in any great undertaking for God, there are going to be obstacles that must be dealt with.

I remember hearing long ago a quote of unknown source – "The door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition." In this courageous man named Caleb, we see two types of obstacles that he faced.

A. The Obstacle of Age (v 10)

As we get older, we have a tendency to become obsessed with being comfortable. That's why the older we get, the more we tend to hate change. The older we get the stronger our desire becomes for things to be predictable because predictability tends to make us comfortable. Being comfortable can easily become an idol. When we arrange our life in a way to make everything comfortable, we begin to die – spiritually, mentally, and even physically. Don't ever lose that spirit of adventure.

Allow me to quote one of America's noted military leaders, General Douglas MacArthur. He said, "Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul... Whatever your years, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for 'what next?'" [General Douglas MacArthur, source unknown]

Before Christopher Columbus, the Spanish Empire had as its motto, "No more beyond." Then Columbus discovered the new world. After that, their motto changed to "More beyond." Too many people have looked at their lives and said, "No more beyond." Caleb's motto could have been, "More beyond." At eighty-five, Caleb says in Joshua 14:11-12 (NKJV):

As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.

When John Wesley was eighty-three he was annoyed that he could not write more than fifteen hours a day without his eyes giving out on him. At eighty-six he was ashamed that he could not preach more than twice a day. He complained in his journal that there was an increasing tendency to lie in bed until 5:30 AM. Moses was eighty when God called him to lead Israel out of Egyptian captivity. Michelangelo (1475-1564) was still composing poetry and designing structures in his eighty's. Tennyson published *Crossing the Bar* at eighty-three. The Bible commentator Thomas Scott began the study of Hebrew when he was past seventy. When you lose the adventure, you are old at twenty-five!

B. The Obstacle of Adversaries

Caleb had a faith that did not waver and courage rooted in that faith that allowed him even in old age to go against a seemingly stronger adversary and come out victorious. As we saw earlier, Hebron was the toughest to conquer piece of real estate in the Promised Land. That didn't deter Caleb, because his courage was rooted in the promise of God that He had given them the land. The main adversary was the giants that inhabited Hebron. The ten spies that went to scout out the land together with Joshua and Caleb some forty-five years earlier had what some call "a grasshopper complex."

Numbers 13:33: "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Listen to Caleb's response in Numbers 14:9 (ESV): "Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

Caleb said that when he was forty and he is still ready to take on these giants at age eighty-five! What happened? Joshua 15:13-14a: "Now 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). Caleb drove out from there..."

III. We Must Have a Vision That Never Wanes

From the moment Caleb saw Hebron, he desired to take it for his tribe, the tribe of Judah. Because God had given it to him, nothing could stop him in his vision for this city and the fertile ground around it. Hebron also had special significance in Israel's history. "Hebron" means fellowship or communion. Abraham and Sarah were buried there. It was at Hebron that God spoke to Abraham. I am cautious about spiritualizing historic events, but I think that some of that is warranted here. This longing of Caleb for Hebron could parallel our longing for fellowship and communion with God. We see that longing in the Apostle Paul's life – a longing that seems to have motivated him in all that he did. He said in Philippians 3:10 (HCSB): "My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Just as many obstacles, many giants stood between Caleb and Hebron, even so many obstacles stand between us and knowing "Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." There are the giants of fear, unbelief, materialism, the love of being comfortable, and a host of other giants that seek to keep us from this fertile Hebron, this fellowship with God that comes only through seeking Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Conclusion

Let's tie this all in to our vision. As we begin getting serious about making disciples of Jesus Christ which starts with seeking to lead people to Jesus for salvation and then simply helping them to follow Jesus, the Lord is going to call us into territory where we are as uncomfortable as an eighty-five-year-old man seeking to take a city away from a bunch of giants. I really believe that this vision to make disciples may involve what we have talked about so many times – the revitalization of a dying church.

On January 1, 2017 we will celebrate the end of our revitalization process with FBC Fountain City. All of their properties and assets will be turned back to them as they are now a healthy church. We believe that there will soon be another church that is close to death that will be willing to let us be the instrument that God will use to bring back life and vitality. That will involve many of you facing the challenge of investing your life, your family in the hard task of pulling up roots and stepping into a Hebron that is filled with giants and obstacles. For some the making of disciples will mean overcoming the fear of sharing the Gospel with others as a way of life. For some, it will mean finding a struggling Christian and taking some basic truths of Christian growth and teaching them.

The enemy will tell you that you're not ready for that – all you need to be is just one step ahead of the other person in your walk with God. This will involve all ages, but I especially want to throw out the challenge to those who are older, with children gone, or perhaps being retired from a full time vocation so that there is more time to make disciples. In addition to discipling others, there is the ministry of serving newcomers to our area, serving the schools and serving in a thousand other ways.

Your Hebron is waiting for you to take it. Yes, there are giants there, but God has promised Hebron, fellowship with Him, joining Him in His work for all who will dare to step out in radical obedience. Don't be left behind because you aren't willing to persevere in difficulties and step out of the status quo and believe God to empower you to take down the giants.

Unless otherwise stated all Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB. (www.lockman.org)

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®)

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