

Message #26

Joshua 14:1-15

Most people do not realize that history is filled with many wonderful stories concerning older senior citizens. Socrates wrote his philosophy at age 70. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel while lying on his back on a scaffold near the age 90. Strauss was still composing beautiful music after his 80th birthday. Mr. Vanderbilt made his greatest fortune between ages 70-83. Mr. Webster wrote his dictionary at age 70. Senior citizens have made a great impact on history.

This is certainly true in the history of this church. One of the things I love about this church is that we have faithful older people who are on the front lines of this ministry. They pray for it and support it and because of that, this church has been used by God. When you look at the philosophy of many people, it is that which promotes the youth. In fact, for some churches their entire attitude is the older people don't really matter, it is the young people we are after.

But there is nothing more stable or more honorable than when an organization has faithful older people who are actively involved in the church who are still on the front lines, fighting a good fight.

When we search the Scriptures, there are many older people who were active in their twilight years of life. There was the Apostle John, who in his nineties was still ready to deal with trouble in the church. He was no quitter; but was a man given to doing the will of God until the end of his life.

The greatest personal example of this that I ever saw was John Miles. He retires from being President of a theological institution at age 70. He becomes an interim pastor of a church for about 8 years. He moves to St. George, Utah to help his son Tim in his church and then he moves to LaGrange, Wyoming to teach at Frontier School of the Bible. While he is there, he becomes a pastor of a church in Nebraska. This was a man in his 90's.

Caleb was like that. When we come to this episode in Joshua, Caleb is 85-years-old. In fact, this very story takes place on his 85th birthday (Josh. 14:10). What we learn is that Caleb was still strong and still on fire for God and frankly, he wanted more action. There is a tremendous lesson to learn here:

THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE GROWN OLDER AS A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD STAND TO RECEIVE EVEN GREATER BLESSINGS IN THEIR OLDER YEARS OF LIFE IF THEY REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD AND CONTINUE TO WAGE A GOOD WAR FOR GOD.

Older believers can learn more, grow more and even be used more in their older years of life. They are critical to the program of God. This passage concerning Caleb certainly proves this.

Joshua 14-19 contains a description of the division of the land west of the Jordan. We learn about the land inheritance allotment procedure in this text. Notice from **verse 1**, we read “in the land of Canaan.” So this is about land distribution concerning the land of Canaan. The land had been distributed to the sons of Israel.

There are three key parts to this:

PART #1 – The process for dividing the land. **14:1-5**

There are five observations we want to make:

Observation #1 - Eleazar the priest and Joshua and the heads of the tribes worked together to distribute the land. **14:1**

These are not novices involved in this. Eleazer was the son and successor of Aaron, the former high priest of Israel (Ex. 6:23; Num. 3:4; Deut. 10:6). He was a very faithful man of God. In fact, he was the chief leader of the Levites (Num. 3:32). It is clear that Joshua was surrounded by faithful men who were helping him handle this.

Observation #2 - The land was distributed by lot for the 9 ½ tribes. **14:2**

Now this business of casting lots for land was in full conformity to the Word of God through Moses. Numbers 26:52-56 informs us that Moses communicated God’s Word which revealed that the larger groups were to have increased inheritance according to their numbers but the specific land portions were determined by casting lots. 9 ½ tribes received specific land portions west of the Jordan.

Observation #3 - Moses had given 2 ½ tribes land east of the Jordan. **14:3a**

So 2 ½ tribes have land east of the Jordan and 9 ½ tribes have land west of the Jordan.

Observation #4 - The Levites did not receive a land inheritance. **14:3b-4**

The Levites were not given specific land as an inheritance, but they were given specific cities to live in.

Observation #5 - Everything was being in conformity to the Word of God and to the instruction of Moses. **14:5**

This is so important. These people were not just winging it. They were carefully understanding and following the Word of God.

PART #2- The request of a faithful older saint. **14:6-12**

According to **verse 6**, it now was time for the casting of lots concerning the tribe of Judah on the west side of the Jordan. The tribe of Judah traveled to Gilgal in order for the lots to be cast to determine which part of the land they would receive. But before the lots were cast, this older saint Caleb made a request.

There are five facts we want to observe about his request:

Fact #1 - Caleb makes his request in view of his pedigree. **14:6a**

Caleb waited until it was Judah's turn. He is identified as being "the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite." According to Genesis 15:19, Caleb had ancestors who lived in the Promised Land in the days of Abraham. Caleb's family was not originally part of the Abrahamic family, but obviously at some point, his family linked itself with Judah, like Ruth the Moabitess or Uriah the Hittite.

This fact makes this request even more remarkable. For we have a man speaking up and asking for specific land when he was not even originally part of the family of Abraham. It is possible he is asking for land that was connected to his distant relatives.

What this shows us is that it does not matter what side of the tracks you are from; if you purpose to put God first in your life and purpose to obey Him, wonderful blessings will be yours.

Fact #2 - Caleb made this request in full conformity to God's Word. **14:6b**

Caleb's request is not out of the will of God. Some 45 years earlier, God had made a special promise to Caleb in Deuteronomy 1:36. Caleb was now getting well along in years and he decided to remind Joshua of the Word of God. God gives certain promises to His people and frankly this is one time when Caleb is claiming his promise.

Fact #3 - Caleb made this request in total honesty of his life's history in Kadesh-barnea. **14:7-9**

Caleb is not some delusional name it and claim it believer. Joshua knew that Caleb was a very solid and faithful man of God. When he was 45, Moses selected both him and Joshua to spy out the land. These two came back and said what was in their hearts—that they could take the land. All the other spies melted in fear, but not Joshua and Caleb (Num. 13:25-33; 14:1, 6-9).

Joshua and Caleb were in the minority, not the majority. Those two stood their ground and they knew God would give victory. As a result of this, God told Caleb that the land on which his foot walked would be his. It is obvious that this land turned out to be the hill country of Hebron.

Notice carefully **verses 8 and 14**, Caleb fully followed the Lord. He did not partially follow the Lord; he fully followed the Lord. He did exactly what God's Word told him to do. The blessings of God came 40 years later. Because of His faithfulness, he would receive his reward.

Fact #4 - Caleb made his request in view of what God had done. **14:10-11**

Caleb is a man who gives all the glory to God for everything. There were two personal realities Caleb mentions:

(Personal Reality #1) - God had granted Caleb a long life. **14:10**

When Caleb appeared before Joshua, he was 85-years-old. If you asked Caleb what the secret to his old age was, his answer was God. God let him live. He did not credit some exercise program, or some special diet, or some medicine; he credited God. God determines how long a person lives.

(Personal Reality #2) - God had granted Caleb strength. **14:11**

It is estimated that people begin to lose strength in their upper 30's. But it did not work that way with Caleb. Caleb wandered in a wilderness for 40 years, which killed most people. Most people grew older and Caleb seemed to grow younger.

He was as strong at age 85, as he was when he was 40. His ability to fight wars for God had not deteriorated with age. He could fight for God as intensely at 85, as he could at age 40. What is amazing is that Caleb is saying this in the context of war.

One of my favorite movies is White Christmas. In that movie a retired General asks to go back into duty and he gets a letter saying he is too old. It was not that way for Caleb. He was not too old because God gave him strength.

Caleb found the real secret to the fountain of youth—a relationship with God. What we need is faith in the Lord and in the Word of God. That is the key to everything.

Fact #5 - Caleb makes a request for specific land. **14:12**

Caleb asked for the specific hill country that featured the Anakim, who were giants. He does not ask for the plush valley; he asks for tough hill country that has giants in it. He was apparently not going into retirement; he was going into war.

At the end of **verse 12**, he tells Joshua that if he will give him this land, he will drive out the enemies. This is an 85-year-old man. He is promising Joshua that he will take care of the Anakim, which he did (Josh. 15:14).

This is one impressive man. He still wants action for God when he is 85-years-old. Caleb was ready for a new fresh battle. You could not put Caleb in some nursing home; he wanted in on the action. It is clear from **verse 12** that he did not rely on himself for any victory; he relied completely on the Lord.

PART #3 – Caleb’s request is granted by Joshua. **14:13-15**

Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the land he wanted. The reason why Caleb was so successful is that “he followed the LORD God of Israel fully.” This faithful old man was rewarded by God.

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1) Obedience in the past is the key to blessings in the present and future.**
- 2) Age should never be an excuse for a lack of intensity in understanding God or His Word.**
- 3) As long as God grants us life, we need to be faithful warriors for Him and do our best to follow God and His Word fully.**