

Caleb • Joshua 14:6-15

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Where Do you Want To Retire?*

1. Where do you want to retire?
2. Hawaii? Scottsdale? Escondido? South Beach?
3. In the news rack at the local bookstore you can find a half dozen magazines catering to the retirement crowd.
4. The articles range from real estate to motor homes, from travel to health & financial planning.
5. The retirement market is one that's likely to *expand*.
 - a. The population of older Americans is growing *dramatically*.
 - b. In the year 2000, those 65 & older were only 12% of the population.
 - c. But by the year 2030, they'll be 20% of the population.
 - d. And those over 85 will have grown at an *even faster rate*.
6. At the turn of the century, the average age at death was 47. Today it's 77. [\[1\]](#)
7. That's *an additional 30 years* that have been added to our lives!
8. From the perspective of someone a hundred years ago, that's an additional adult lifetime!
9. Think of it. An *extra lifetime* in which to live & experience the reason for which we were created.
10. So, what's the plan? What do you plan to do with *your* future?
11. If you follow the route *most* take in our society, you'll retire when you get to your late 50's.
12. Where will you go? What will you do?

B. *Another Way*

1. I want to suggest another way to think about our later years.
2. We find it in our text today in the story of Caleb.
3. Now, if you're young & retirement seems a long way off, don't tune out.
4. I know the tendency is for those who are still young to think that decisions about their later years are so far off there's no point in thinking about them now.
5. There are many older folk here today who *wished* they'd been more thoughtful about their future when they were young.

6. They have deep regrets they didn't plan better.
7. So this message is for all who take the name of Christ, regardless of their age.

II. TEXT

A. Set The Scene

1. As always with these narrative passage of the Bible, we need to set the scene.
2. The main campaign of wresting control of the Promised Land from the Canaanites is now complete.
 - a. Joshua has defeated the southern & northern alliances & conquered the major cities with their rulers.
 - b. The land is by no means *cleared* of the presence of Canaanites,
 - c. But the main obstacles *have* been overcome.
 - d. All that's left is for the 12 tribes of Israel to be given their regions.
 - e. Each tribe will then be responsible for the mop-up campaign of the remaining smaller cities & Canaanite hold-outs in their own territories.
3. But before Joshua starts assigning the tribes to their places, his old friend Caleb approaches him with a special request . . .

B. Vs. 6-10

⁶ Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. ⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. ⁸ Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. ⁹ So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' ¹⁰ And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel

wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old.

1. Caleb reminds Joshua of the history they had shared.
2. Caleb was one of the original slaves in Egypt who'd witnessed the plagues and the mighty deliverance of the Exodus.
 - a. He seen **God's protection** at the Red Sea.
 - b. He'd fought at Joshua's side during the battle with the Amalekites at Rephidim. ^[2]
 - c. He'd seen **God's provision** through the manna & water from the rock.
 - d. He'd witnessed **God's presence** at Mt. Sinai and heard the voice of God speaking the 10 Commandments
 - e. He'd known God's leading through the pillar of fire & cloud.
 - f. He'd seen the glory of the Lord descending upon the tabernacle in the wilderness.
 - g. Then, when Israel finally arrived at Kadesh Barnea, the border of the Promised Land, as one of the leaders of the tribe of Judah, he'd been selected to scout it.
 - h. He was 40 at that point – already a mature man.
3. Caleb then recalled how the scouting report **was received** by the people.
 - a. While he & Joshua were gung-ho to take possession of the land,
 - b. The other 10 scouts discouraged the people by saying the native Canaanites were too fierce.
 - c. They said the Canaanites were all warriors who lived in fortresses, and were reinforced by the **Anakim**; men who were so huge the title 'giant' was no exaggeration.
4. Despite Joshua's and Caleb's protests about the faithfulness of God, the people listened to the 10 spies discouraging report & refused to enter the land.
5. God's judgment on their unbelief was to wander in the wilderness until that entire generation of adults died off.
6. The only two to remain were Joshua and Caleb.
7. God rewarded them for their faithfulness, and Moses had made the promise that when the land finally became theirs, Joshua & Caleb would be allowed to make their choice about where they wanted to

- settle.
8. Well, now that the land *has been conquered* and it's time to start settling the tribes in their regions, Caleb comes to Joshua & *reminds him* of the promise Moses had made.
 - a. Another 45 years have passed since the promise at Kadesh Barnea.
 - b. Caleb is now 85! But he's not forgotten & he claims what is his.
 9. There are some stunningly beautiful places in Israel as we'll see in the Fall when we go.
 - a. There are some spots along the Mediterranean Coast that are gorgeous.
 - 1) Beautiful beaches, that temperate Mediterranean climate.
 - b. The whole region of Galilee is picture postcard stunning.
 - 1) A nice lakeside house would be nice.
 - 2) Or a bit farther north near Tel Dan and the foothills of Mt. Hermon.
 - c. These were places that the wealthy of the ancient world built their mansions *because* of their beauty.
 - d. There were resorts at these locations where people would go to vacation.
 10. Certainly at 85, Caleb is going to retire at one of these prime spots, right?
 11. After all, when he was 40 he'd traveled the length of the land & knew its prime locations.
 12. Caleb's choice of retirement homes proves a surprise . . .

C. Vs. 11-12

11 As yet I am as strong this day [@ 85] 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.

12 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."

1. Caleb didn't ask for a beach or lake house.
2. He didn't ask for a nice, quiet retirement in some safe little valley.

3. In fact, he didn't ask for retirement at all – he asked for battle.
4. He didn't ask for a valley; he asked for a mountain –
5. The one crowned with the capital of the giants that had struck such terror in Israel 45 years before.
6. As far as Caleb is concerned, the conquest of Canaan isn't over & won't be until God's faithfulness has been vindicated!
7. Caleb still had a score to settle. There was something incomplete in his mission & calling in life – & it had to do with the Anakim, the giants.
8. Years before, Caleb had measured the Anakim against God's strength and knew they couldn't stand.
9. Israel had measured themselves against the Anakim's strength & determined they couldn't prevail.
10. Caleb knew God had promised that as His people moved forward by faith in Him, no one could stand in their way – not even the mighty Anakim.
 - a. the men of Israel might be *grasshoppers* in the giants eyes,
 - b. But the giants were *germs* compared to God's power & Israel was His anti-biotic.
11. Caleb tried to convince them they were looking at the whole thing from the *wrong perspective*, but they wouldn't listen.
12. As long as the Anakim still lived in Canaan, the question about God's faithfulness remained unsettled, & this just plain *grated* on Caleb's whole sense of what was right.
 - a. He'd been happy during the days of war with the Canaanites because each victory was a vindication of God's *glorious* name.
 - b. But now that the main conquest coming to an end & the land being split up among the tribes,
 - c. He sees one last challenge that *has* to be settled – What about the giants & the lingering issue of God's promise to give them victory over *ALL* their enemies?
 - d. the BIGGEST enemy, *literally* lives smack dab in the center of the land, in a mountain fortress.
13. You've heard the phrase, "It's not over till the fat lady sings"?
 - a. It comes from the opera where the diva, usually a large woman playing the part of a Nordic queen, sings the final song over the slain hero, commending his soul to Valhalla.

- b. For Caleb, the war wasn't over when the large lady *sings*, but when she's *dead*, 'cause she's one of the Anakim!
14. The key for understanding Caleb is found in vs. 8 & 9, where twice it says he "wholly followed the LORD his God."
- a. Caleb was one of the few who understand what it means to believe in God.
 - b. He'd come to realize that if God was real, then the only rational response was to give himself *completely* to Him.
 - c. Most of the people of Israel approached faith as just one dimension, one part of their lives, the religious part.
 - 1) God was real, but rather than giving themselves *to Him*, they just attached Him *to* themselves & took Him along with them as they went about the rest of their lives.
 - 2) In other words, *instead of following Him*, they allowed Him to tag along with them.
 - 3) God was there to bless them, to rescue them, to provide & protect them – but *it was all about them!*
 - d. Caleb's approach to faith was very different – it was *all about God*; about *His* plans, *His* purposes.
 - e. Caleb's whole life was centered on God's glory.
 - f. He knew he'd been created by God for a special purpose & his whole life revolved around one thing – doing it!
15. Settling down & living out his last years in quiet contemplation of his navel didn't fit in at all with what Caleb understood the plan of God for him to be.
16. He knew he had a job to do for the Kingdom of God, & when that job was complete, then God would take him home, to his one & only retirement home – a mansion in glory.
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17. There are two things I want to draw from this, two lessons I think are crucial . . .
18. **First** - In your relationship with God, are you wholly following Him, or is He just tagging along with you?
- a. Does your life center on how God wants to use you in *His eternal plan*,
 - b. Or do you merely want Him to bless *your plans*?
 - c. Are you seeking to fit into God's work, or fitting Him into yours?
 - d. Is *God* your end, or just the *means* to an end.

- e. Caleb didn't just fit God into his plans – He sought to fit into God's plan & was willing to be consumed in its fulfillment.
19. **Second** – Show me where anyone retired in the Bible.
- a. I realize this might be a proverbial sacred cow because so much of our society is given to the idea of retirement, but where in scripture does anyone retire?
 - b. Where do they ever say, "I've done enough. Now it's time to kick back, take my ease & ride out my sunset years in comfort."
 - c. Peter never built that little seaside house in Galilee. He preached till his crucifixion in Rome.
 - d. Paul never returned to his childhood home in Tarsus to write his memories & enjoy the royalties. He was beheaded for preaching Christ against the commands of the Emperor.
 - e. John didn't retire to an estate on a hill overlooking Ephesus. He went to a cave on the island of Patmos as punishment for proclaiming the gospel.
 - f. At 85, Caleb didn't say, "It's been a long haul & I've served God long enough. I deserve a nice retirement." He said, "What else needs to be done? Let's do it!"
 - g. We spend so much of our lives living for *the next thing*.
 - 1) When we're little and have to go to bed at 8 o'clock, we can't wait till we're old enough to stay up till 9.
 - 2) Then we can't wait till we're teenagers.
 - 3) Next we can't wait till we turn 16 and can drive.
 - 4) The next stage is 18 – and official adulthood.
 - 5) We ache for graduation from high school, then college and our degree.
 - 6) We yearn for our first job, then the next promotion.
 - 7) When we're single we long for marriage.
 - 8) Then it's the hope for kids. After that, for the day they move out!
 - 9) So much of life is looking forward to the next thing.
 - 10) After 25-30 years of work, we look forward to retirement –
 - 11) But what do we look forward to after retirement? Death!
 - h. I submit to you - God never intended that we would retire, that we would come to some arbitrary age at which we would just call a halt to being productive & wait to die.

- i. He created each & every one of us for a unique purpose. *You* have a special mission to fulfill.
 - j. Your days here on Earth, every one of them ought to be totally devoted to pursuing that mission.
 - k. And when it's done, *then* He'll take you home.
 - l. The Christian's retirement home is not on this Earth – It's God-made & lies in Heaven.
 - m. What word of commendation do we long to hear as we step from this life into eternity?
 - 1) "Well done, My good & _____ = FAITHFUL servant."
 - 2) There's a service we're to render to God & the crucial issue is faithfulness!
 - 3) "Well _____ = DONE" There's a work to DO.
20. As I said at the outset, compared to a hundred years ago, life expectancy has lengthened by 30 years.
- a. that's an additional lifetime!
 - b. let me encourage you senior saints & those of you who are approaching your elder years, don't retire.
 - c. Don't ride off into the sunset in your Winnebago.
 - d. Become the Caleb of this generation.
 - e. Be an example of someone who says, "What's the greatest challenge facing the people of God today?"
 - 1) "What stands like a mountain of opposition to God's will?"
 - 2) "That's where I'll go and finish out my days – making sure God's glory is manifest there."
21. There are some here today who've been Christians for a long time.
- a. They've come a long way, & like Caleb, they've seen God do a lot in their lives.
 - b. But now they think they've come *far enough*.
 - c. Compared to the average Christian they're a saint.
 - d. And as they look around the Body of Christ they're familiar with, they think they gone about as far as they *need* to.
 - e. But truth be told, there's one last holdout left unconquered, a mountain of the giant called *self* they've left untouched.
 - f. They know this thing is contrary to God's glory, and they know they ought to end it – but it would require so much of them to do it.

- g. They've gotten by this long as is – why not just let it lie?
- 22. Look at Caleb! He saw the mountain of the Anakim in the center of Israel as a dangerous & damaging abomination because every moment it existed it put God's faithfulness and power into question.
- 23. Had God not said He would give them victory over ALL their enemies?
- 24. Then why were the Anakim still there?
- 25. Listen to what the Word of God says –
 - a. 2 Cor. 10:5 • We are to take every thought captive to Christ – **EVERY** thought.
 - b. Rom. 8:37 • We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.
 - c. 1 Cor. 15:57 • Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - d. 1 John 5:4 • Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. Our faith in Jesus *is* the victory that has overcome the world.
- 26. Caleb understood this nearly 1500 years before these things were written.
- 27. He understood them because *he wholly followed the Lord his God.*

III. CONCLUSION

A. Vs. 13-15

¹³ And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. ¹⁴ Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁵ And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the land had rest from war.

1. Hebron was the place where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac & Jacob were buried.
2. It *irked* Caleb to no end that the resting place of the Patriarchs of Israel was the headquarters of the very guys who epitomized opposition to God.
3. It was an outrage he could not let pass. So he asked Joshua for it, then went & took it.

4. I find the description of the battle of Hebron fascinating. Did you catch it?

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. 14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb.

- a. There's *no* description of the battle.
 - b. Some of the details are given in ch. 15, but they're pretty brief.
 - c. Personally, I'd like to know *how* Caleb whopped these guys, but we're not told.
 - d. All we get here is the statement of fact that it happened.
 - e. That's notable – and what it teaches is that when we move forward in faith in God, the outcome is so certain, that from the divine perspective, *it's already done*.
 - f. Because Caleb wholly followed the Lord, he had that perspective; there was never any doubt Hebron would become his.
5. Listen Christian – as you walk by faith in God – Things are going to turn around at work.
- a. Your marriage is going to become a blessing.
 - b. Your children are going to succeed.
 - c. And if it seems like it's already too late in these things – know this – it's not!
 - d. For God takes even the defeats and turns them into glorious victories,
 - e. If like Caleb we will wholly follow Him.

B. Hebron

1. Under the Anakim, Hebron was known as the City of Arba, the most famous of the giants.
2. Caleb renamed it **Hebron**, which means “Community.”
3. Under the enemy, the city had stood as a memorial to *one man's greatness*.
4. Under God's control it became a place for many to make a life *together*.
5. If the city had been known by one former great man, when it's conquered, why not just put *the conqueror's* name in his place? Kirjath Caleb?
6. The fact Caleb didn't do this is another evidence he understood

what his life & mission were about.

7. He was called to live for God's glory, not his own.
8. His purpose was to fit into God's plan, not fit God into his.
9. May we all learn, then live that same truth.

[1] <http://www.state.nj.us/health/chs/lifexp/>

[2] Exodus 17