

Roger Simpson : Serving till the end : Caleb

INTRODUCTION CALEB.

Last Sunday- Moses . The Sunday before.-NOAH. People who served well to the end.

He was one of the outstanding Christian leaders of the 20th century. I remember hearing about a talk he'd given to over 1500 young people in a church in central London.

They were spellbound. he was 85. Almost totally blind. He had no notes, because he could no longer read. He gave two talks.

The first one, a breathtaking summary of the OT. the second, an equally brilliant summary of the NT. no hesitation. No stumbling. No word out of place. The distilled wisdom of a man who had followed the Lord. WHOLEHEARTEDLY. All his life.

His name? LESLIE NEWBIGGIN . he had been made a Bishop in South India when he was 36. His writing and speaking had influenced thousands of Christian leaders around the world.

For this man who had achieved so much in his life, it was not over. His autobiography was entitled. UNFINISHED AGENDA. There were still so much to hope for. So much still to be done.

Today I want us to look at a person of whom it was said" he followed the Lord WHOLEHEARTEDLY. His name was Caleb. He's not well-known in the Bible. But he is a great inspiration to us.

Let us pray

Can you turn in your Bible to Numbers 13.26-33 and Joshua 14 v 6- 15?

A few background facts.

Caleb was born while the nation of Israel was enslaved in Egypt under pharaoh.

He spent his first 40 years in obscurity. He was a slave in Egypt. Probably why his father called him Caleb."Dog"

When he was 40 God powerfully and miraculously freed Israel from slavery. The EXODUS. He was part of that.

As they journeyed through the desert to the land that God had promised Abraham, their FOREFATHER. 12 Leaders were chosen. They were to go into the land and see what its occupants were like. This story is recorded in Numbers 13 and 14.

Caleb and Joshua stood out from the rest. In the reading from Joshua , 45 years later when Caleb was 85 there's a little word that stands out it comes twice (v 8 and v 9) describes him.

Did you notice it ? WHOLEHEARTEDLY. Caleb followed the Lord wholeheartedly. Why did he do that ? How can we follow the Lord wholeheartedly and be vigorous in our old age

like him. ?

Three things stand out about him. Which we can learn from.

A. HE TRUSTED IN GODS FAITHFULNESS

to keep his promises.

Let's go back to Numbers 13 .1 “ the Lord said to Moses ‘send some men to explore the land of Canaan which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.’ From the tribe of Judah Caleb was chosen. From the land of Ephraim Joshua (Hoshea) was chosen.

They were to see what the land was like.v18 -20 Were the people there strong or weak? Is the land good or bad, what kind of towns do they live in? Are they Walled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.

V21-25 describes the route that they took. They go as far as ReHob in the far north. It takes them 40 days to spy out the land.

V26-33. They gather together with Moses and Aaron and all the Israelite community.

They met at a place called KADESH. it was a desert Oasis. But it becomes a CROSSROADS in Israelite History. They had a choice. Either they could go in to the land or they could retreat.

10 out of the 12 spies said that the people of the land were too strong. The descendants of ANAK. Then there were the AMALEKITES , and the HITTITES and the JEBUSITES.

Cities were fortified and very large. Some of the walls were 20 feet thick. Over 25 feet high.

They couldn't possibly be taken. We are like grass hoppers

But Caleb had a different view. He said in essence.” Yes the people are big, the cities are fortified, but the God of ISRAEL the God of CREATION is far more powerful .

What had caused CALEB to come to such a conclusion.? He'd seen the same things that they had seen. They had witnessed the parting of the Red Sea. The miraculous deliverance from pharaohs army They had seen it all. They had seen God's provision for them in the wilderness. How he had looked after them.. He had fed them and given them manna and quail. Their clothes had not worn out.

There were over 2 million of them in the desert! If you find it difficult to imagine 2 million people. A line 4 abreast over 110 miles long !!

The difference between CALEB and the other spies was that he believed God's promises to his ancestor ABRAHAM specifically that God would deliver Israel from oppression and bring them into the land, that he had promised to give them .

But they chose to retreat. as a result, they were condemned to wander in the desert for 40 years! Why. Because they didn't believe in the promises of God.

Can I ask you this morning a question? Do you believe in the promises of God. Do you believe in his faithfulness to fulfill them. You can either have BIG PROBLEMS and a SMALL GOD. Or you can have a BIG GOD and SMALL PROBLEMS. We all have a choice. Either we can choose to follow Jesus Christ. To surrender to him. To obey him and make him our Lord. Or we can reject him and his promises in which case we will spend our lives walking around in circles. Beware of a divided heart. Jesus says “ no one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

In the Aramaic, the word means literally” the world system” A heart that is divided is like a kingdom with two kings both of whom cannot rule the same subjects.

The choices is ours. Either We serve Jesus Christ. Or we serve the world’s system. That’s why David prayed.” Teach me your way. Oh lord that I may rely on your faithfulness, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.”

I have seen many people in the course of my life who have taken Jesus Christ at his word. They’ve put their trust in him and he has blessed them. I’ve also seen many people reject him and spend their lives running around in circles, pursuing other things.

So the first clue to Caleb’s life, and why he served God wholeheartedly all his life was because he trusted in GODS FAITHFULNESS to keep his promises And we can too !!

B HE WAS A MAN OF CONVICTION

We see this again and again in the story. Notice three things the text tells us.

a He had a DIFFERENT SPIRIT.

that is what the Lord said about him (Numbers 14.24) he has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly. And because of this God says I will bring him into the land he went to and his descendants will inherit it.

Caleb and Joshua had a completely different attitude from the other 10 spies. They saw only. OBSTACLES. To entering Canaan. Caleb so beyond the obstacles to God, and the great ability he had fulfil the promises he had made.

b HE HAD LEARNT TO RELY ON THE PROMISES OF GOD. They were his Anchor. His bedrock. God had promised Caleb an earthly inheritance. He never forgot it. He claimed it and he recieved it.

God has given us as Christians a far greater inheritance than land. He has many wonderful promises in Jesus Christ. (They are far greater. We are going to live forever. We are going to be resurrected, we are going to be reunited with those who have loved Christ and gone before. We will see Christ and be made like him !

I found a very interesting verse in Peters second letter (2 Peter 1.14) he writes “ through through these. He has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

But these promises are linked with being wholehearted in our approach to Jesus Christ.

If we trust in them,(in his promises) God by his HOLY SPIRIT will produce in us qualities that we need to stop us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of Jesus Christ. For this reason he says “ make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love “ And the incredible truth is, that as we persevere in them, we will never stumble, and we will receive a Rich welcome into Christs eternal kingdom when we go to be with him.

c HE WASN'T PUT OFF BY THE NEGATIVITY OF OTHERS.

Joshua 14.8 “ I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people sink”. What the other spies said wasn't an exaggeration. It was all accurate.

But they left God out of the picture.! They walked my sight. CALEB walked by FAITH.

Don't get put off or discouraged from following Jesus Christ because others are negative or fearful. It's so easy to give in to them.

Let us be people of conviction. People with a different spirit from the world around. God needs people like that today in Grenoble.
FINALLY and Briefly

C HE WAS FAITHFUL TO GOD OVER THE LONG HAUL.

He was a man of prayer. (chatting to a friend yesterday where we are going to lead a mission. Described An incident when Billy Graham invited to lead a mission in the U.K. Richard Bewes chairman of the mission knocked on door went straight in Billy Graham lying face down on the floor praying.)

This was in our reading from Joshua 14.

Years later , 45 years to be exact. Caleb is 85 years old. Israel has entered the promised land. That they had spied out 45 years earlier. All that generation had died in the desert. Only Caleb and Joshua had entered the land.

They now began the hard work of driving out the people from the land God had given them. Caleb reminds Joshua three time that he had served God “ wholeheartedly “and so he is given the Hill country to settle in.

But what I want you to notice is that Caleb had followed God as a 40 year old leader. He is still following God wholeheartedly at 85 !

He's still going strong. He still wanted to accomplish great things for God. He was faithful to God over the long haul.

I know people like that. Serving Christ into their 80's and their 90's. Their lives, their godliness, their prayers are an inspiration. Their confidence is not in themselves. It is innGod who enables them to do great things by his HOLY SPIRIT.

Do you think you will be going strong for God in 10 years ? In 20 ? In 30?

Let us pray.

Planted your flag ? Made a commitment?

Turned your back on those things that divide your loyalty ? Close the door on the past.

Have you got Involved ? Are you connected with some one else who you can pray with. Be accountable to. Are you wholehearted ? Or half hearted.

Send your Holy Spirit Lord.