

9. Old, but not finished

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Some of you may disagree with me, but I think that many retirement communities and retirees have wrong concepts about maximizing their lives in their golden years. I sure don't have a problem for them visiting the people and places they couldn't because they were working previously or taking some time off for themselves. This kind of things can only go on for so long. It comes to the point where they don't have any more things to do. So their activities become limited to their pleasure only.

But if they start to volunteer to help others, they would feel much better and even feel that life is full again instead of feeling at the edge and going over.

While we study next four chapters of Joshua, we are going to meet two old believers of God who didn't take the word "OLD" into their vocabularies. To them, serving God, living for God and fighting for God were as strong as they were young men. They were Joshua and Caleb.

A. THE NORTHERN CONQUEST

Joshua 11:6-9 But the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." 7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them. 8 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining. 9 So Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

In v6, we can notice that Joshua and the Israelites were afraid of another confederated armies from north. Rightly so. But our gentle and mighty Lord assured them with a promise of victory.

Joshua fought with obedience, doing exactly what the LORD told them to do, even destroying the Canaanite horses and the chariots instead of taking them for his own army.

Here is a lesson in the matter of "taking the devil's tools." Many Christians do not hesitate to use the "horses and chariots" of their spiritual enemy.

Do you remember king Saul was told to destroy everything and everyone by the Lord when they attack Amalekites? Guess what he did. He spared Agag, the king of Amalekites, the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs and all that was good and unwilling to destroy them. When he was confronted by Samuel, he made an excuse they were "to sacrifice to the Lord your God." What a garbage excuse! God doesn't need our spiritual enemy's horses and chariots to do His work. What He wants from us is complete obedience like Joshua.

B. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO THEM

We find a lot of names and the geographical information for the division of the tribal territories from chapter 11 to 21. To be honest with you, chapters like these are boring to me. But the thing that impresses me is the detail that the God of this universe has given in items like this. We would think that He would constantly be dealing with

great issues in grandiose terms, but God gets right down to the nitty-gritty where you and I live.

We often forget that these OT scripture was not written only for the twenty first century people like us, but originally it was written for the Israelites who were living in that land and living within the confinement of their genealogical tribal relationship.

We could say, "Who cares about all these divisions of the land?" Obviously God did and the Israelites did. For those who really had their inheritance there, these were essential matters that touched every day life, answering the question: "What land belongs to Israel?"

Joshua and his army did take control of the whole land by destroying the key cities with their kings and people. Israel didn't take every little city or slay every citizen or ruler, but they did enough to break the power of the enemy and establish control over the land.

Once this was accomplished and there was rest in the land, Joshua was able to assign each tribe its inheritance. Within each inheritance, the tribes had to gain mastery over the remaining inhabitants who were still there. But they didn't do it and these cities became stumbling blocks later on.

C. JOSHUA, YOU ARE OLD

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

It has been said that if you can find the fountain of youth, you will be the richest man in the world. Many people would go a great length to be young or at least young looking.

But when God says, "You are old," there is no sense in denying it. Even while acknowledging Joshua's advanced years, God still tells him about a job that needs to be done.

No matter how much we have done in our Christian lives, there still remains much to do. While there is still much to do, there can be no satisfaction with a partial inheritance. God wants us to keep pressing on. What the land was to Israel, Jesus is to us. We are to possess all of Him, and to keep pressing on to have all that He has for us.

D. THE INHERITANCE OUT OF GOD'S WILL

Joshua 13:8 With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the Lord had given them:

Reuben, Gad and a half tribe of Manasseh had agreed to help the other tribes conquer the land before they returned to the east side of the Jordan to enjoy their inheritance according to Number 32. They had asked for this land outside the boundaries of Canaan because it was especially suited to the raising of cattle.

The fact that these two and a half tribes would not be living within God's appointed land didn't seem to bother them. Moses graciously agreed to their choice and let them settle across the Jordan. When we study Joshua 22, we'll learn that while their

choice may have been good for their cattle, it created serious problems for their children.

These tribes became a sort of “buffer zone” between the Jews in Canaan and the heathen nations like Moab and Ammon. Of course, their location made them extremely vulnerable both to military attack and ungodly influence. Both of these liabilities eventually brought about their downfall of idolatry.

This gives us a valuable lesson: We should not put what is beneficial physically, emotionally or financially over what is right spiritually. The will of God is the expression of the love of God and is always the best for us.

E. BALAAM HAD IT COMING

Joshua 13:22 The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them.

Since the tribe of Reuben had taken its territory from Moab, it was logical for the story of Balaam to be mentioned here. In Numbers 22, Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, bribed Balaam who was a prophet of God in Torah to curse the Israelites on behalf of them. But when Balaam saw that God was turning his curses into blessings, he advised Balak to entice the Jewish men with the Moabite women.

This resulted in many of the Jewish men taking Moabite women for themselves and violated the Law of God. When satan can not accomplish as a lion by attacking us, he accomplishes as a serpent by leading us into subtle and wicked compromises.

We should take a good lesson from the life of Balaam who became a soothsayer which means a fortune teller. That is quite a drop from a prophet of God who once was close to God to a demonic fortune-teller.

F. EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS YOUNG

Joshua 14:6-15 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. 11 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. 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.” 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.

Forty years ago he and Joshua and other ten spies were sent out to see how plentiful the land was. They were not asked to compare themselves to the inhabitants of the land, nor were they asked to make their comments. Guess what happened? All of them, exception of Caleb and Joshua were squawking in their weeping voices and cause such a disobedience and rebellion that all two million of them, except these two, couldn't enter into the Promised Land God gave to them. What a pathetic and sad story that is! I hope that none of us are disobedient to the Lord like them.

Here now he is eight-five years young and claims that he is as strong as when he was forty. He was not asking for an easy life of a rocking chair with a grandkid on his laps. He was asking for the mountains of Hebron for his inheritance, where the giants lived. He doesn't want to fight against some sissy boys, but the giants.

To Caleb, the giants in the land were no match for his God. There are freedom and peace in the heart of the man who put everything in godly perspective. As Martin Luther said, "One with God is a majority." God is bigger than any giant or any gigantic problem we face.

Caleb had determination. He had vision. He had a dream. Joshua tells us that Caleb took that land as his inheritance "because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." That is a secret of the victorious Christian living. Caleb didn't follow the Lord when it was convenient for him. At his old age, he wanted to serve his God with the same zeal as he was young.

I pray that all of us have the spirit of Caleb as we are getting older. Caleb is a man's man.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) We are never too old to make new conquests of faith in the power of the Lord.

2) We should not put what is beneficial physically, emotionally or financially over what is right spiritually.

The will of God is the expression of the love of God and is always the best for us.

3) When satan can not accomplish as a lion by attacking us, he accomplishes as a serpent by leading us into wicked compromises.