

# CALEB'S INHERITANCE

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In Numbers 13:6, we are introduced to one of the greatest examples of faith and obedience to God in all of the Bible: Caleb the son of Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah. This first mention of Caleb is at the time when he was chosen as the representative of the tribe of Judah as one of the twelve men sent to spy out the land of Canaan. He, along with Joshua the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim and the other ten spies, spent 40 days in the land of Canaan and returned to report to Moses and the people of Israel (Num 13:1-29). Caleb encouraged the Israelites to trust the Lord and go up to possess the land that He had promised to them and their fathers (Num 13:30; 14:6-9). God rewarded Caleb's faith with a promise that he would be given an inheritance in Canaan (Num 14:24,30). Forty-five years later, God kept this promise and Caleb received his inheritance (Josh 14).

## **A man of another spirit**

Ten of Caleb's fellow-spies lacked faith in God and had a spirit of fear. To Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of Israel, they said, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num 13:31-33). In contrast, "*Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it*" (Num 13:30). After the Israelites spent that night weeping, they murmured and decided to appoint a captain to lead them back to Egypt (Num 14:1-4). In response, Joshua and Caleb "rent their clothes: and they spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, *The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not*" (Num 14:6-9). Instead of listening, the people called for Joshua and Caleb to be stoned to death (Num 14:10). Therefore, God determined not to let any of that generation enter the land of Canaan, but that they should wander in the wilderness for 40 years (Num 14:11-35). And God killed the ten spies who gave the evil report (Num 14:36-37). As for Caleb, the Lord said, "*But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it*" (Num 14:24). Through all the years of punishment that befell that rebellious generation, God preserved Caleb because he "wholly followed the Lord" (Num 14:30; 26:65; 32:8-12; Deut 1:34-36).

## **45 years of faith and patience**

God's promise to bring Caleb into that great land that he had spied out and to give him an inheritance there was not delivered overnight. In fact, it took 45 years! Joshua 14:6-8 says, "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, *Thou knowest the thing*

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(continued)

*that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God.*" In the next verse, "Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God" (Josh 14:9). Joshua 14:10-11 contains a truly remarkable statement by Caleb: "And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spoke this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: *and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.*" This tells us that Caleb had continued to "wholly follow the Lord" and patiently waited for 45 years for what God had promised him. And not only had God preserved Caleb's life for those 45 years, and then brought him safely into Canaan, but God also preserved Caleb's body and strength at the same level. God did not allow the years that it took to complete the punishment of a wicked generation to diminish the strength of one of its few faithful ones. Thus, Caleb was now an 85 year-old man with the strength of a man of forty! His faith had also not diminished during that time. When asking for his inheritance, the same man who was ready to fight the giants back in Numbers chapters 13 and 14, now said to Moses, "Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spoke in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: *if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said*" (Josh 14:12). Caleb still believed that God would give this now 85 year-old man a victory over an army of giants. According to God's commandment, Joshua gave Caleb "the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. *And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak*" (Josh 15:13-14). It may have taken 45 years, but those giants never had a chance! Caleb was then given the inheritance that he was promised so long ago (Josh 14:13-14). Caleb serves as a great example of faith. His example teaches us the important lesson that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), and we will receive none of God's promises if we do not believe (Jas 1:5-7). Also, Caleb exhibited a living faith. His was a faith that worked (Jas 2:14-26). He is truly one who "*through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens*" (Heb 11:33-34). As such, Caleb is part of that "great a cloud of witnesses" to encourage us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2). If we do, then we will one day receive that great eternal inheritance in Heaven!