

CALEB: TAKING A MOUNTAIN AT 85

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Joshua 14:4-14**. From Roy H. Enoch (03-12-1995).
- B. Thesis: To get older people excited about serving the Lord.
- C. A very strange and interesting thing is occurring in America.
 - 1. In a little more than three decades we have moved from an emphasis on youth to "the graying America."
 - 2. The number of youth is declining and the elderly are the fastest growing segment of our population.
- D. One of the greatest challenges facing the church is to harness the energy of our older people:
 - 1. It has been traditional to think of "old people" as those unable to care for themselves and in need of help.
 - 2. This is still true of some, but more and more are retiring early and in good health.
 - 3. Many are financially independent and able to do a great deal.
 - 4. The church needs to realize the potential of the older people and find ways to use them on individual bases.
- E. Caleb, an OT character, who was very active and able to accomplish a great deal.
 - 1. Some time ago, I presented a lesson on Abraham entitled, "God Calls a Senior Citizen."
 - 2. Now, another "Senior Citizen" named Caleb, and what he did at the age of 85.
 - 3. A review the account in Numbers 13 and 14.
 - a. At the age of 40 he was selected as the representative from the entire tribe of Judah (Jo. 14:7; Num. 13:6).
 - b. He and the representatives of the other 11 tribes scouted the land for 40 days and brought fruit from the land.
 - c. When the ten spies said that they could not take the land, Caleb showed great faith (Num. 13:30).
 - d. Then Joshua and Caleb tried to convince the people to go up and take the land (Num. 14:6-9).
 - e. The Lord gave a special commendation to Caleb (Num. 14:24).
- F. Two main lessons from the example of this godly man.
 - 1. Caleb illustrates the characteristics of a great person.
 - 2. He looked for a challenge.

I. CALEB ILLUSTRATES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT PERSON.

- A. He is great because he relied on God's word.
 - 1. This is emphasized many times in these verses (Jo. 14:6,10,12,14).
 - 2. God is real to those who rely on His word.
 - 3. God is faithful to bless those who do what He says.
 - 4. God's promises are precious to those who are faithful (2Pet. 1:3).
- B. Caleb is great because he stood by his convictions (Jo. 14:7).
The pessimism of the other ten spies did not sway him.
- C. Caleb wholly followed the Lord.
 - 1. Caleb said that he did (Jo. 14:8).
 - 2. Moses said it about Caleb (Jo. 14:9).
 - 3. Joshua said it about Caleb (Jo. 14:14).
 - 4. People still need to **wholly follow the Lord** today.
 - a. We need to "obey from the heart" (Rom. 6:17).
 - b. We need to be committed wholehearted to worship and Bible study.
 - c. We need to be committed wholehearted to live his teachings.

- D. Caleb was great because he trusted in God's providence (Jo. 14:12).
 - 1. He did not trust in his own power or strength.
 - 2. We must trust God to enable us to do what He tells us.
 - 3. We must trust God to give us what he promises.

II. CALEB LOOKED FOR A CHALLENGE.

- A. Many 85 year olds have little purpose in life.
 - 1. Even at 65 some retire w/ no interests and nothing to do.
 - 2. Some sit down and wait to die.
 - 3. Some look for opportunities for service as Jesus described greatness. Mt. 20:26-28
- B. Caleb said, "...give me this mountain..."
 - 1. He was not asking for a handout, but permission to take it.
 - a. Some have a warped perspective that assumes that if there are any conditions or effort, it isn't a gift.
 - b. It reminds me of a story that grandfather Holland used to tell of a family in the neighborhood who would not work and were on welfare. A neighbor had a good garden and as the woman was passing by one day, asked her if she would like to have some nice beans. She asked if they were shelled, saying that she would certainly like to have some, but that she did not have time to shell them. The man replied that he worked for a living and worked to tend the garden, and that he thought she had as much time to pick and shell beans as he did.
 - c. Some people are like that in religion--they want God to do it all for them so that they will not be inconvenienced.
 - 2. But Caleb was asking for permission to take the mountain by warfare as an inheritance.
 - a. He knew that "the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified" (Jo. 14:12).
 - b. He trusted the Lord to be with him: "It may be that the Lord will be w/ me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said" (Jo. 14:12).
- C. We need older people today who are looking for a mountain of service.
 - 1. Many Elders "retire" to be able to serve better.
 - 2. Some have retired and enrolled at a Bible College or School of Preaching to increase their abilities in the church.
 - 3. Some who are shut-ins have taught hundreds through correspondence courses and Bible tracts.
 - 4. Some regularly write notes and make phone calls to check on others, and to encourage them.
 - 5. A sweet lady in Sullivan lost her husband and had no children, and after her husband's funeral she told me that she had decided that every day she was physically able to get out she was going to visit some elderly shut-in.
 - 6. Older people can be such an encouragement to young people.
 - a. Many young men have become gospel preachers because older members, whom they respected, encouraged them.
 - b. Our Xian youth camps have benefited greatly from retired men and women working in the kitchen, on the grounds and in the cabins.
 - 7. The older and more mature Xians are admonished to teach and encourage the young and restore the wayward.
- D. But there are still "giants" to overcome.
 - 1. Some become bitter and cynical as they grow older.
 - a. I once hear that the way to become a sweet old person, and grow old gracefully is to be a sweet young person.
 - b. People usually do not become very different as they grow older--their disposition becomes

- emphasized.
2. Some become depressed as they feel that they no longer have any worth or usefulness.
 - a. Focus on what you can do rather than on things you can no longer do.
 - b. Those who have been the greatest servants, often seem to have difficulty. (They may have the mistaken idea that they have worth only when they are helping others. But we should learn to show gratitude to others who serve us.)
 3. Loneliness is a serious problem for all ages.
 - a. Learn to see needs of others and try to find ways to help.
 - b. We are happier when we are productive than when idle.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Some say, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."
 1. They are not talking about dogs--or tricks.
 2. We can learn new interests, and ways to serve.
 3. We need a desire to show our appreciation to God and man.
- B. Bro. J.C. Bailey pioneered the productive work in India when He was in his 70's.
- C. Young or old, we will be happier when we are dedicated in the Lord's work.
- D. Be like Caleb: Find a mountain and conquer it.