

Joshua 13–14

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[0 : 0 0] Again, our sermon will be from Joshua chapter 13 and 14, but we'll be reading 14, 6 to 15 this morning. Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal.

And Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, said to him, You know what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, in Kadesh Barnea, concerning you and me? I was 40 years old 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 my heart. But my brothers who went up with me, may the heart of the people melt. Yet I wholly followed the Lord my God.

And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land in which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.

And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these 45 years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day 85 years old.

[1 : 1 2] I'm still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me. My strength now is as my strength was then for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day.

For you heard on that day how the Anakim were there with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said.

Then Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, for an inheritance. Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel.

Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath Arba. Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim, and the land had rest from war. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

[2 : 2 0] This morning, we're going to talk about new lessons. We've all heard the saying, you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

It's usually used in a negative sense to indicate how difficult it is to teach some new skill, behavior, or change the habits of someone, especially an older person who's firmly set in their ways.

I remember one year buying a microwave for my mother for Christmas. Of course, this was at the time when they were much larger box-like countertop units.

But she seemed excited, and I thought I'd hit a home run. I was back in town to visit a couple of months later, and my mom asked me if I wanted some leftovers from what she cooked the day before.

Absolutely. Yes, I said. Then I saw her take the leftovers out of the refrigerator and turn on the oven. Mom, why are you turning on the oven when there's this big old microwave sitting right here?

- [3 : 49] I opened the microwave, and there sitting in the microwave were empty pots. She had turned the microwave into a storage cabinet for pots.
- I was furious, and I blurted out, well, I guess you really can't teach old dogs new tricks. But I was furious, and I was furious, and I was furious. Upon immediate reflection of what I just said to my mother, fear began to overcome me.
- But she calmly said to me, son, you're going to learn one day that faster is not necessarily better. Leftovers like this don't taste the same in the microwave.
- And while you may have to wait a little longer, I promise you the food will actually taste like it's supposed to. Perhaps there are some new things you can still learn from this old dog.
- She was so right. It's with this in mind that we look to this morning's text with this thought. New lessons from an old warrior.
- [5 : 17] New lessons from an old warrior. Now, the setting for our text actually begins in chapter 13, where, after many conquests, conquests, we actually see the beginning of the process of the dividing up of the promised land, the inheritance amongst the tribes of Israel.
- Two and a half of these tribes have already been given their land under Moses on the east side of the Jordan. And now the remaining allocations of land were to be on the west side of the Jordan, given out by casting lots, basically drawing straws or pulling names out of a hat.
- And here it is that we're introduced to a man named Caleb. I say introduced because this is the first time he's mentioned in the book of Joshua, but know that he is certainly no stranger or newcomer to our story or the children of Israel.
- In fact, next to Joshua, Caleb is the oldest man in the entire camp. Now, you know, here, our theme for this series in Joshua is promises kept.
- Well, today it is from this example of Caleb, this seasoned, faithful warrior, that we look to learn just four life-changing lessons about what to do in between the time the promise is given and the promise is kept.
- [6 : 55] Lesson number one, hold on tight to your promise. Hold on tight to your promise. Starting here in verse six, before they even started casting lots, we see Caleb, who led the tribe of Judah, approach Joshua to remind him of a promise.
- A promise he'd been holding on to for 45 years. Okay, let's stop for a moment. Who actually is this Caleb?
- And where did this promise come from? Remember, I told you he was no stranger. Caleb's story in relation to our text actually begins 45 years ago, back in Numbers chapter 13 and 14.
- Moses sent 12 spies on a reconnaissance mission into Canaan to check out the land. Joshua and Caleb were two of those spies. After 40 days, the spies came back to report, and 10 of those spies gave a horrible report, saying there were giants in the land and there were too powerful for us, and there was no way we'd be able to defeat them.
- But hear Caleb's response from Numbers 13:30. Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.
- [8 : 21] Well, the people of Israel got scared. They didn't listen. And as a result of their rebellion, God said he was going to force them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.
- And Caleb and Joshua were going to be the only two of their generation to live. And then he gave this specific promise to Caleb in Numbers chapter 14.
- But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring him into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

So here, back to our text in verses 6 through 9, Caleb recounts the events surrounding this promise back to Joshua. Joshua, bro, you and I go way back.

You remember what God told Moses concerning you and me all those years ago? I was a young man, 40 years old, when Moses sent us out to spy Canaan.

[9 : 32] I brought back a good report. The others brought back a negative report and had all of Israel in fear. But I wholly followed the Lord.

And then he recounts again the specific promise in verse 9. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.

For 45 years, Caleb held on to this promise. Through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Caleb still held on to this promise.

Watching everyone he knew, 20 years and older, die in the wilderness, Caleb still held on to this promise. Through battle after battle, conflict after conflict, Caleb still held on to the promise.

We need to hold tight to God's promises. Don't let go. We can't allow time or circumstance to shake our confidence in the promise.

[10 : 50] Why? Because Caleb knew, just like we know in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 23, that he who has promised is faithful.

Lesson two. Work faithfully while you wait for the promise. Work faithfully while you wait for the promise.

When you hear the word waiting, what comes to your mind? Yeah, well, I'll tell you what comes to my mind. I think waiting just takes way too much time.

And I bet many of you are just like me, whether it's waiting in line, waiting in traffic, waiting for an appointment, waiting for a package, waiting for our food.

Wait, several weeks ago, I pulled up to a drive-thru at Popeye's Chicken. Don't ask me why, I did. And I pulled up into the drive-thru and they said it was going to be a 20-minute wait for chicken.

[12 : 03] Okay, did you not anticipate selling chicken today at the place that sells chicken? We don't like to wait.

Certainly not in today's culture. But now in verse 10, Caleb is telling Joshua, it's been 45 years since the Lord spoke this word to Moses for me, and I am now 85 years old.

45 years. I'd be struggling with 45 days. But even more importantly, it's not just about Caleb's amazing example of his willingness to wait.

But what was he doing while he was waiting? Caleb worked and remained faithful for 40 years of wandering in the wilderness while he was waiting.

Caleb worked and remained faithful through the crossing over of the Jordan, the setting of the memorial stones, watching a whole new generation get circumcised, and Canaan's first Passover while yet waiting.

[13 : 15] Caleb worked and fought and battled and remained faithful in conflict after conflict, and the defeat of 31 kings summarized in chapter 12, all while yet waiting.

Psalms 37, 34 says, Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land.

You will look on when the wicked are cut off. What are you doing while you're waiting? Are you slamming your foot on the brake, slowing everything down?

Are you sitting on your hands and becoming idle? Or are you stomping around the house mad because it's taking too long? Or are you rushing just to try to handle it yourself because you're fed up?

That's not productive, biblical, faithful waiting. You have to remain faithful and work while you wait.

[14 : 20] Since we mentioned work, can I just add one brief note here? We'll call it lesson 2A. It's difficult to try to collect on a promise when your work isn't finished.

I remember our youngest son one day asking me to go to the mall or something, and I said, sure, as soon as your work is finished.

Five minutes later, he comes back, which is a sure sign there are about to be problems, and he says he's ready to go. I walk into his room and look around while he's putting on his shoes, grabbing his backpack.

I hear his friends pull up in the driveway and honk the horn. All the while, I'm looking around wondering what tornado just came through this room.

He's looking at me. I'm looking at him, wondering why he's looking at me. And he says, Dad, what's the problem? Well, needless to say, he didn't make it to the mall that day.

[15 : 29] You're trying to pull on a promise and look at all this work that needs to be finished. You and I are going to have the same problem, and we're going to have a tough time trying to speed up or shortcut the process to the promise without finishing the work and waiting faithfully.

Westminster theologian G. Campbell Morgan says, Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort.

Waiting for God means, first, activity under command. Second, readiness for any new command that may come.

And third, it's the ability to do nothing until the command comes in. That's waiting. Lesson number three, God will sustain, strengthen, and give you courage through your struggle of waiting.

In verses 11 and 12, Caleb tells Joshua, I'm 85 years old, and I'm as strong now as I was 40 years ago.

[16 : 47] I can still travel and fight as good as I could back then. How could this be possible? Well, first, from the time he received the promise to the time the promise finally gets fulfilled through all the waiting, wandering, working, and fighting, God not only sustained him, he strengthened him.

We see that back in verse 10 when Caleb says, God has kept me alive these 45 years, just like he said. And God didn't do this on happenstance.

He did this to make him ready for what was yet to come. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31 says, But those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

They'll mount up with wings like eagles. They'll run and not grow weary. They'll walk and not faint. Just like Caleb, church, God is doing something in us, building up our muscles and our stamina, even through the struggles and the trials for what is yet to come.

Romans chapter 5, verse 3 says, Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that the suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[18 : 24] Secondly, though Caleb in this verse talks about physical strength, the implications for us today are much broader than that. Most of us aren't able to do today what we could do just 10 years ago, let alone 45 years ago.

We have a rooftop deck on our building. It's technically, I guess, on the fifth, maybe sixth floor of the building.

And when we moved in, the people told us that not many people go up there, though it was incredibly beautiful. We wondered why and decided to go check it out for ourselves.

Then at about floor three, I started to figure it out. My wife was fine, but I was, oh my God, somebody get me some oxygen.

Anybody coming up here needs to bring a backpack, sleeping bag, tent, cooler, with provisions for at least two days if they're coming up here.

[19 : 37] I just couldn't do what I used to do. But please don't miss the greater relevance in Caleb's statement. This isn't just about physical strength.

First Corinthians chapter four, verse 16, so we do not lose heart. Throw our outer self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

As you get older, spiritually, you ought to be getting stronger. Stronger in your faith. Stronger in your walk. Stronger in your relationship.

Stronger in your prayer life. Stronger in the word. Stronger in your temperament. If the same things are tripping you up and making you mad today as they did five years ago, there might be a problem.

But take this story as an example. Mary is talking to her girlfriend one Sunday after church. Hey, Mary, did you enjoy the service today? Girl, I couldn't even get into the service today.

[20 : 43] Why, Mary? Well, look, when I came into the church, somebody was sitting in my seat. Now, everybody at Christ Church knows that's my seat.

Why would anybody take my seat? And from that moment on, they just lost me for the whole service. Mary, how long have you been a Christian?

Girl, I've been walking with Jesus a long time. Well, the girlfriend replies, sure doesn't look like that walking has taken you very far.

We should be getting stronger. Thirdly, as God strengthens you, you also gain courage.

Look at verse 12. So now give me this hill country, King James says, mountain, of which the Lord spoke on that day. For you heard on that day how the Anakim were there with great fortified cities.

[21 : 56] It may be that the Lord will be with me and I shall drive them out, just as the Lord said. Now, here we are at the end of Caleb's appeal to Joshua, where he comes right out and requests his promised portion of the promised land.

Now, wait. Caleb doesn't just request some lush, serene spot overlooking the lake. He doesn't say, I'm 85 years old and it's time for me to retire to a peaceful spot where you can bring on the milk and honey.

He asked for the hill country, the rough terrain, where the Anakim, the giants, still live in fortified cities.

Where have we heard about this before? Yes, it was this same land the spies saw back in Numbers chapter 13 and 10 of them came back saying there were giants in the land and there was no way we could defeat them.

Caleb now asks for this very same land and says, with God's help, I will drive them out.

[23 : 11] What boldness, what powerful faith, what tenacity and courage. Ah, so this is why Caleb needed this strength and endurance because the work wasn't finished and in order to attain his promise, he was still going to have to run off some giants.

Hear me, Christ Church. In our spiritual walk, we will all have hills to climb and giants to face on our way to what God has for us.

But like Caleb, hold on, don't quit, don't be intimidated. I guess I'm preaching to myself. or look for the easy way out. Face the challenge and with God's help, you too will see your promises fulfilled.

Hebrews 6, 11 says, and we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Joshua gives Caleb the requested land in verse 13. You'll read a little more about Caleb's actual conflict and victory in the next chapter, chapter 15.

[24 : 34] And then this chapter ends with, and the land had rest from war. Here's a side note. It's one thing to rest because you're tired.

And it's another thing to rest because you're finished. Finish the work. That leads us to our final lesson.

Lesson four. Follow the Lord no matter what. Here's Caleb's secret weapon. And it's the last lesson we all must learn.

You see it three different times in our text today. First in verse eight, yet I wholly followed the Lord. Then again in verse nine, because you have wholly followed the Lord.

And then again in verse 14, because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel. Caleb's life was one complete of obedience, allegiance, and surrender to God.

[25 : 42] His example shows us that to wholly follow the Lord means to follow regardless of three things, duration, desertion, or difficulty. You follow regardless of duration.

That means you follow all the time, not when it's just convenient for you. Caleb had been following faithfully, following the Lord for years before he attained the promise.

Maybe it's regardless of desertion. You follow the Lord even when others are not. Ten of the twelve spies brought back a report of unbelief, but Caleb stood faithful to God.

You follow the Lord despite the difficulties. Caleb didn't ask for an easy piece of land. He still had to take on giants, but those challenges did not stop him from following God.

In all your ways, acknowledge him, follow him, obey him, serve him, and he will direct your path. in closing, Caleb waited 45 years for the fulfillment of his promise.

[26 : 56] Some promises may indeed take a lifetime to fulfill, but Caleb's promise is just a part of an even greater promise that took 42 generations to fulfill.

The promise given to Abraham back in Genesis chapter 12 now fulfilled in our Savior, Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is good news for us.

Why? Because 2 Corinthians 1 20 says, for all the promises of God now find their yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory.

I know why you may not be more excited. Pastor Pace, no one has ever come to me like Moses did to Caleb to directly give me a promise from God.

Yeah, but today you have what Moses didn't. The complete word of God, chock full of promises to every believer.

[28 : 09] Whatever your station in life, wherever you find yourself today, whatever you're going through, there's a promise. Don't believe me? Look, Romans 8 28 says, and we know for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

That's a promise. Hold on to it. Philippians 1 6 says, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

That's a promise. Hold on to it. Philippians 4:19 says, and my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

That's a promise. Hold on to it. There may be some in this room and they're wondering what on earth are you talking about?

Maybe it's because you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Well, I've got good news because there's a promise for you as well. First John chapter 1 verse 9.

[29 : 18] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's a promise.

Hold on to it. We must follow Caleb's example, adopt and apply these lessons in our lives. Hold on to the promise.

Work faithfully while you wait for the promise. Let God sustain and strengthen you through the struggle and follow him no matter what.

This is the way. It's the posture we should take in between time until we ultimately realize the fulfillment of God's promise, plan, and purpose for our lives.

God's promise. And then, just like my mother's leftovers, it may take a little longer, but in the end, it'll be just what it's supposed to be.

[30 : 26] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for being a faithful God, a God that always keeps his promise. God, teach us how to wait on you.

Teach us how to work while we wait. We embrace your strength as you sustain us for what is yet to come. Strengthen us individually, strengthen us collectively as a church, that we might realize all that you have in store for us.

Thank you for the promises. We stand on them and we hold tight. It's in your son's name we pray. Amen.

Let's stand in.