

Caleb: An Unsung Hero

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 February 2009

Preacher: Rev Gordon Martin

[0 : 00] Please turn again with me to Joshua chapter 14. We could take as our text verse 7, Joshua 14 at verse 7.

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.

Well, we know that Caleb was one of the 12 spies that went up into the promised land not long after the people had left the boundaries of Egypt.

And we know that along with Joshua, he gave a good report of that land. The other spies, of course, went up and gave a good report also of the land.

But they were not able to say that the children of Israel should go up and take that land. And yet Caleb is something of an unsung hero in the scriptures.

[1 : 17] You do not hear much mention of him after these particular chapters. You don't hear him mentioned, for instance, in the list of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

And this evening, in a way, I want to look at this character, Caleb, and ask, why is he so special? Why is he indeed?

And why should he be regarded as a hero of the faith? And the first thing I want to say is that Caleb was the kind of man who lived by his convictions.

We read that he went up in verse 7, that he went up to spy out the land. And he brought him word again. He brought Moses' word again as it was in his heart.

And heart, of course, is the center of things. It's the center of the mental activity and the will and the affections in the Old Testament.

[2 : 18] He followed his heart. He was acting in a true way, acting with integrity. One other translation accurately uses a different word.

It says that Caleb brought back a report according to his convictions. He reported according to my convictions, in fact.

And that word is quite helpful as well, this word of convictions, because it makes us think, it makes us ask, what are convictions and where do convictions come from? And convictions, it appears, are a combination of knowledge, but also knowledge mixed with faith or mixed with belief.

And we need both if we are to have convictions. The other spies went up. They saw the beauty of the land, the glory of the land. They saw the produce of the land.

They had the same knowledge as Joshua and Caleb. They had heard the same promises as Caleb had heard. But they didn't believe these promises. Caleb, he went up.

[3 : 24] He saw the land. And he was convinced. He had conviction. He was convinced that God would fulfill his promises. Caleb was convinced that with God's help, the children of Israel could go up to the promised land and take it.

Caleb knew the promises of God. And he believed these promises. And that therefore gave him conviction to present his report to Moses in a positive, upbeat manner.

Convictions bring vision. Convictions bring vision. He saw all that the other spies saw, but he saw more, didn't he?

They all saw the same, but he saw more. He saw what could be achieved with God's help.

Someone once said that without convictions, we can do nothing for God.

We can do nothing for him if we're not convinced of his promises. If we're not convinced of his faithfulness and of his word.

[4 : 35] It has to be stressed. Caleb had no more to go on than the rest. He only had the promises of God. The word of God.

He did not act like Gideon who put out fleeces just to check what the will of God was. He just had the word of God. You know, some time ago when the church of Jesus Christ in the UK was strong in the Victorian era.

It was a boom time, as you know. It was a growth time in the church. And people have studied that era and asked, why has that been? Why was that such a growth period?

And David Bevington, an academic historian, he said this. The churches did not grow because there were no obstacles. Rather, he said, it was because the church's energy triumphed over the problems that confronted them.

They had problems on the right and problems on the left. Yet they were energized and their energy triumphed over the problems. And what gave them their energy was their vision arising from their faith in a great, powerful, almighty God.

[5 : 50] And it's true that we need to remember the old adage, it's not great faith that is required. It's not great faith that is required so much as faith in a great God.

We need to remember that our God is great. It's not by our strength. It's by his strength and by his power that we function as believing people.

You remember the verse that the people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. Caleb was the kind of man who was ready, as we have read, to do exploits.

But notice that for some, Caleb was a maverick. Caleb was an enthusiast. Caleb was a visionary. In fact, Caleb was regarded by some as a dangerous man.

You think back to the first time that he went up to spy out the land. Think back to what happened. There were ten other spies.

[6 : 52] Ten other leaders of the people. No doubt these people carried authority. They carried weight. They were regarded by the congregation. They were regarded by the populace as being worthy of being heard and their opinions taken on board.

When Caleb tried to argue his position, you remember what they wanted to do to Caleb. As he brought back this faithful report, they wanted to stone him.

They regarded him as a danger. They regarded him as someone who would lead them into trouble and cause all manner of problems for the people.

Surely this evening we need to ask ourselves, are we like Caleb? Are we ready to do exploits? This is a thanksgiving service.

Someone has said that thanksgiving is thanksgiving. We don't just give thanks by coming to the service and recording our thanks.

[7 : 54] And worshiping God is great to do that every day of our lives. But if we're going to give thanks, the kind of thanks that God wants from us is the kind of thanks that goes into every day.

Thanksgiving is thanksgiving. And so we should be asking ourselves, how convinced are we actually of the truths that we've heard this weekend?

How convinced are we of the forgiveness that there is in Jesus Christ? How convinced are we of his love? How convinced are we of the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ?

How convinced are we of the power that lies behind us, that empowers us, that energizes us, that helps us to live for him and to seek to live a holy life?

Are we willing indeed to present our lives as living sacrifices to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we willing to spend our lives and be spent for Christ?

[8 : 55] Convinced, convinced that he will one day bring his reward with him? Convinced that what he has in store for us is more than we can possibly imagine?

Convinced that we will not be so convinced that we will not be deflected in our daily experience so that we don't just serve ourselves and serve our own families and look after number one.

But rather we will devote ourselves to the service of Jesus Christ, knowing that he will bring his reward and that one day we will be like him. One day we will be with him.

And there's another question that raises itself here from this report of Caleb and his conviction and it's this.

They wanted to stone him because he wanted to do exploits for God. Are we the kind of Christians who encourage great deeds for God?

[9 : 57] I heard, I read something one time that really pulled me up short. The sentence went like this, something like this.

You are not ready to do anything for God until you are able to serve someone else's vision. A very curious kind of statement. Pulled me up short because I didn't fully understand it.

And I don't want to study it too much. But I think what the author was trying to say is that there are some people who have a very negative attitude.

There are some people who hear of someone else's vision. Hear of someone else's ideas. Perhaps someone has a desire to evangelize in a certain way.

To do something for the Lord. And some people have a very negative reaction to new ideas. Some people think, well, we're living in hard times spiritually.

[10:59] Although they don't seem to be as hard in the Western Isles as they are in other parts of the mainland. We're living in hard times spiritually. And nothing can be done. And such people, and I have the danger of falling into this myself.

And that's why it's so pertinent to me. Some people have the capacity to gnaw away at the vitals of any particular task. Until this endeavor or this project is doomed.

I remember once being on a committee that was considering the possibility of running an open air service. Nothing radical. Just a service that people might come to.

Taking the church outside the way it's been done in the old days. An open air service. There was one person in that committee. A minister. And all he did was ask questions. He asked the kind of questions that eventually destroyed the enthusiasm.

And destroyed the energy. He asked, what could go wrong? Now, there's not a problem with that. But not once did he ask, what could go right if the Lord blessed?

[12:07] What could go right if God was with us? And of course, what happened was this. The enthusiasm for this open air service and anything associated with it just died.

You know, it's so possible to be a Christian. To be born again. To be seeking to serve the Lord. And yet, without realizing it, to be a great discourager of God's people.

To have a negative attitude. Now, notice verse 8. Caleb has said that he went up despite the land. He came back in verse 7.

He brought word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers. He calls them brothers. But my brothers who went up with me.

What did they do? They made the heart of the people melt. The courage disappeared like snow off the dike. When these leading brothers brought back a report that there were strong men in the land.

[13:12] There were walled cities. Giants there. That we appeared like grasshoppers to them. And grasshoppers even in our own sight. What was wrong?

Well. Their natural common sense wasn't challenged by faith.

That's what was wrong with these brothers. And that's what's wrong so often sometimes when we get into a negative mold. When we can only see the difficulties.

We are relying on the power of the flesh. We're relying on our own reason and our own sense. I can apply that on an individual level.

There are some people here perhaps. Who have never yet made a profession of faith. And one of the reasons they've never made a profession of faith.

[14:10] Is because they're looking out and they're looking ahead. And they're seeing only the difficulties. They're seeing only the possibilities that they'll fail. They're seeing just how hard it is to live the Christian life.

And that if they were to make a commitment. A public commitment. They are more than likely to fail. There are some people who will say the same.

When it comes to witnessing for God. I cannot do it. I don't have the gifts. I don't have the skills and talents. They might even come and say I don't have the opportunities. Some people will never volunteer for a task.

In the church of Jesus Christ. They'll never say. That's a gift that I think I have. And perhaps I could use it. In the service of Christ. In this congregation. Some people never see a way for the church to get out.

Of its malaise in the United Kingdom. Very often because. We are living. By the power of the flesh.

[15:11] And living. Relying upon our own. Natural. Common sense. And what we need of course. Is sanctified common sense.

We need our common sense. Saturated. In the Holy Spirit. We need him. To. To. Change us.

We need him to. We need our minds to be renewed. Through his word. And we need to be. To be testing his word. And approving his word. And finding his word. Being confirmed in our experience. Day by day. And year by year. And growing. In grace. We need our common sense. Replaced. By. Sanctified common sense. By the power. Of. The Lord. So there's Caleb. He lives by his convictions. We ask ourselves. Where are my convictions?

[16:05] And do. Am I convinced sufficiently. So that I will live. For God. In this generation. But secondly. I want to say that. Caleb. Caleb was.

Rooted. In. The promises. You know. Caleb must have lived. A very strange existence. His. His colleague.

His comrade. His fellow spy. Joshua. He goes on. And he becomes. The great leader. But Caleb. Falls into the background. For 40 years. He wanders around. The wilderness. With the Israelites. Not knowing. From day to day.

Where they were going. God of course knew. But. But he didn't know. And. For 40 years. I wondered. Did he ever ask himself. Or say to himself.

[17:06] Do you know. We could have been settled now. We could have been settled now. If only the. If only these people. Had listened to myself. And Joshua. If they'd only done the right thing.

And I wonder. Did he ever suffer from frustration. Did he ever suffer that temptation. To become bitter. Towards his fellows. There were times.

Perhaps. When he felt. Very very lonely. When the going. Got very very tough. You remember that. All the time. Around him. Throughout that 40 years. There was times.

When there were. The people were. Were full of rebellion. When they were. Complaining. They were conspiring. Against Moses. When they were. When they were. When they were. Causing the leadership. An awful lot. Of. Grief.

I'm sure. Caleb must have felt. Very often. Like a man apart. A man. Seeking to serve God. And so. I believe. Many. Many of those. That fell. Actually were. Converted.

[18:02] I'm not saying. That these people. Some of these people. Were not converted. Yet. I'm sure. That Caleb. Must have. Must have. Felt. Very much. Alone.

Much of the time. As he. Watched. His own. Contemporaries. Die. As I said. On. On. On. Saturday. Six hundred. Thousand.

People. Six hundred. Thousand. Men. Passing. Away. Over a period. Of forty years. That's a lot. Of people. Every month. There must have been. Great days.

Of grief. And sorrow. Days. Of temptation. Perhaps. When he. Wondered. When he. Wondered. Will I. Pass away. To. Will the word.

Of God. Actually. Be fulfilled. To me. So. How did he. Respond. In these days. To question. I. I ask. And I believe. That the answer. Is in this passage.

[18:56] I believe. That he fed. On the promises. And by that. I mean. That he kept. On going. Back to them. And maybe. Even repeating. Them to himself. Time and time.

Again. Because these promises. Were particular. To him. Look at. Verse 6. You know. What the Lord. Said to Moses. The man of God.

Concerning you. And me. This is him. Speaking to Joshua. Again. In verse 9. He speaks about. What Moses. Swore on that day. What Moses. Swore to him. And in verse 10.

He repeats. This again. 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. Again. In verse 12. There's this. This emphasis. On the promise. And the Lord. Speaking. What the Lord. Had said to him. You see. He is the kind.

[19:52] Of person. Who relies. On God's word. He doesn't look. For experiences. He doesn't look. For excitement. To keep him going. He relies.

On God. To fulfill. His word. And we need. To be the same. Don't we? We need. To be the kind. Of people. Who can keep. On marching. Through.

The wilderness. There are days. When we might. Feel. That we're surrounded. On every side. By. By those. Who know. No faith. Those who have. No interest.

In our faith. No interest. In our God. There are days. When we will be. Coming up against. People. Who will want. To attack us. For our faith. There will be days. When the evil one. Strikes.

When we will have. What. What. Paul calls. Evil days. There will be days. That will be so hard. Because. We are. We are under the cosh. Of Satan.

[20 : 46] When he is attacking. And attacking. And attacking. It may be a. Particular temptation. Or it may be. A particular. Spirit. That comes from. A particular mood. That comes on to you. How are we going to cope?

Some days. As Christians get older. Some Christians. Even as they. You know. Go into the senior citizen bracket. And that they're approaching. They're approaching the end. And they know it. Sometimes. Their assurance is shaken.

Sometimes they're very. Very worried. That they're not Christians. At all. They're absolutely. Petrified. Because they've lost. The sense of. Of feeling. That they had. They've lost. The sense of excitement.

Of being a Christian. They've lost. The sense. Sometimes. Of the Lord's closeness. To them. And they would do anything. To get these things back. Because. We thrive on these things. And we live. On our emotions.

So much. And we ought not to. Well. What do you do? And what do I do? In such days. We have to go back. To the promises. We've got to go back. To God's word. And we've got to. We've got to rely. On God's word.

[21 : 43] We've got to say. Well. God has said. God has said. Whoever. Believes. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. Shall. Not perish.

But shall. Inherit. Eternal life. God has said. Whoever. Comes to me. I will in no wise. Class. And sometimes. People have to go back. To him. As if it was the first time.

And throw themselves. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. Pleading for his mercy. Pleading. For his grace. We've got to rely. On his promises. We've got to rely.

On what he has said. Faith. Is taking God. At his word. Psalm 130.

I think it is. That says. I wait. For the Lord. My soul. Waits. In his word. I put my hope. John Calvin said. That we should. Turn the promises.

[22 : 38] Into prayers. And plead. These promises. Back to God. But I will be honest. With you. And you might be able. To sympathize with me.

I don't think. We're all together. Very good. At noting. The promises. In scripture. I would. I would. Encourage you. To. To read. Someone like Spurgeon.

For instance. Who. Who has a book. Called the Czech. Book of faith. I think it's called. And there. And I. When a daily. Devotional reading. He. He is. Picking out. Little glints.

Little promises. For us. A marvelous. Art. He had. Marvelous gift. To pick out. The promises. Of scripture. And apply them. To us. And I'm.

It's hard. Sometimes. Just to see. All the promises. That there are. In scripture. But. That's what we need. To learn. That's what we need. To go to. That's what we need. To rely on. Take these promises.

[23 : 32] Turn them. Into prayers. See God answering. The prayers. Of his people. Dale Ralph Davis. In his commentary. He says. That this is the perspective. Of faith. Faith. He says.

Is always looking. Into the past. Seeing God's goodness. There. Dragging it. Into the present. Praising God. For it. And so. Gone on.

From strength. To strength. That's what Caleb did. He looked. Into the past. He saw. God's goodness. He.

He realized. That he'd been taken. Through 45 years. As he says himself. He saw God's goodness. To him. He remembers. The word of God. He drags. These things. Into his presence.

Into the present. On difficult days. And he praises. God. For these things. And thereby. Goes on. From strength. To strength. To strength. He lived.

[24 : 26] By the promises. He lived. By the word of God. And we are to be like that. And thirdly. Caleb.

Was ready. For action. He was ready. For action. I've hinted at that. Already. You know. I was brought up. In the campaigner movement. And you have campaigners.

Here now. And in campaigners. We learned. For memory work. Isaiah 40. And verse 30. And 31. Even the youth.

Shall faint. And be weary. And the young men. Shall utterly fall. But they that wait. Upon the Lord. Shall renew their strength. They shall mount up. With wings as eagles. They shall run.

And not be weary. And they shall walk. And not faint. And I believe. These verses. Are fulfilled. Are fulfilled.

[25 : 21] In Caleb. Look at verse 11. I am 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. Isn't that a great testimony.

45 years. Living. Faithfully. Wholeheartedly. Before God. How we need to challenge ourselves. And my former presidency. One of the ministers in the north. Used to say something. Like this. I see a lot of tired people. In front of me. I see a lot of tired Christians.

It may have been more of a reflection. Of himself. Than of the people. But. To an extent. It was true. Physically. In the north. Congregations.

[26 : 21] Are aging. And the folks. Naturally. Are tired. But what we can't allow. And mustn't allow. Is that because our bodies are tired.

So our souls. Must be tired. That ought not to be. And so we have to ask ourselves. No matter what age we are. Are we ready for action?

Are we still ready for the fight? Are we still ready for the fight of faith? And if we say. Well you know. I am getting tired. It's not really.

Because. We are old and done. Because it's not. Physical energy. That we need. For the Lord's work. It's spiritual energy. You remember.

When the disciples relied. On the power of the flesh. On the night. The Lord was betrayed. He told them. To keep watch. Sit and watch. For an hour. And he went.

[27 : 19] He went forward. And he prayed. And they slept. And they were young men. Or think about Abraham. Who when he was relying on the power of the flesh.

Went into his concubine. To Hagar. Or went into his servant. Hagar. Slept with her. And the produce. Of that union.

Was. Was Ishmael. And you think. Of all the damage. That has been done. In the history of the world. Because of that. The father. We're told.

It's claimed. Of the. The Arabic nations. Ishmael. Because. Abraham. Didn't live. By the promise. At that point. He didn't rely.

On the word of God. He relied on himself. And on the human ability. To. To. To produce. The promises. Of scripture. And cause damage. Or think of Peter.

[28 : 16] Who relied. On the power. On his own power. Relied on the power of the flesh. And claimed that. No matter. What others would do. He would stick. By the Lord.

And who was it. That denied him. Denied the Lord. It was Peter. A young. Man. Full of. Natural energy. And strength. I found to my.

To my. Cost. That opportunities. To witness. Or to counsel. People. Have been lost. Not because. I wasn't. Well. Or strong. Physically. But because. I wasn't. Prepared. Spiritually. Because. I hadn't. Been relying. Upon God. And we all.

Have to watch. Out. For our. Spiritual energy. Seeping out. Just like. Chemicals. Out of. An old. Battery. We've. Got to be. Careful. That we don't. Lose. The energy.

[29 : 12] That God. Gives us. We lose. That energy. Do we not. Through having. The wrong. Priorities. Through losing. Our first love. Through backsliding.

Through a lack. Of private. Devotions. Through. A lack. Of faithful. Living. Caleb. I believe. Waited. Upon the Lord. As it said. In. Isaiah 40. In verse 31. They that wait. Upon the Lord. Shall renew. Their strength. And sometimes.

That waiting. Requires. Self-discipline. It requires. Us. To get. Into. A routine. And a habit. Of. Picking up. The Bible.

And studying it. Day by day. And I know that. Lives. Are. Increasingly. Busy. And. Time.

[30 : 06] Might. Be at a premium. But still. Can I. Encourage. You. And myself. To read. That Bible. Every day. Day. And to get.

Strength. There. To spend. Some time. With the Lord. The time. That. He. He gives you time. Let's face it. He gives us time. The Lord. Wants us to do something.

He gives us time. For it. And he certainly. Wants us. To read his Bible. Day by day. That keeps us. From losing.

Our priorities. That keeps us. From straying. Keeps us. From backsliding. Caleb. You see. 85 years old now. And he's still ready. For the big battles.

He's still ready. For the hill country. He's still ready. For the. For the Anakin. These. Great. Strong. Warriors. But he's not ready.

[31 : 01] In his own strength. He's ready. Relying. On the Lord. It may be. That the Lord. Will be with me. And I shall. Drive them out. Just. As the Lord.

Has said. Are you ready? Are you still ready. For the fight? Are you still ready. To do a great work. For God. Are you still ready.

To witness for him? Are you still ready. To share your faith? Are you still ready. To battle. With sin. And with failure. In your own life. Are you. Are you ready.

Am I ready. To obey. The word. No matter. What the personal shame. No matter. What. The personal cost. Are you and I. Ready to follow. Our convictions.

Ready to look beyond. What's visible. What we can work out. With the human sight. Are we ready. To live by faith. And do we.

[31 : 55] Have faith. In a crucified. Risen. But exalted. Lord. Have you still got. This great vision.

In front of you. That Caleb had. Let me remind you. Of some of the promises. That. The Lord gives. To his church. He that hath a near. Let him hear. The spirit saith.

To the churches. To him that overcomes. Will I give to eat. Of the tree of life. Which is in the midst. Of the paradise. Of God. He that overcomes. Shall not be hurt.

Of the second death. Him that overcomes. Will I give to eat. Of the hidden man. And will give him. A white stone. And a stone. In the stone. A new name written. Which no man know. Will. Saving he that receives it.

That overcomes. And keepeth my works. And to the end. To him will I give power. Over the nations. Dawn. And on. And on. Promises. The Lord setting before us.

[32 : 52] A vision of what is to come. And saying to us. To be like Paul. To be like Caleb. Indeed. To be like the Lord himself. To fight the good fight. To serve the Lord.

Wholeheartedly. Thanksgiving. Requires. Thanks. Living. Let us pray. Lord God in heaven.

We. Thank you for. Yet another example. In your word. Of a man who sought. To serve you. Becomes in. In his own way. An image.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who served you. Perfectly. Wholeheartedly. Who said that for him. To do your will. Was meat and drink.

He rejoiced. To serve you. Lord grant us. That vision. That would. Enable us. To say. Along with Jesus. It is meat and drink.

[33 : 51] For us. To serve God. To do the will. Of our father. In heaven. Lord. We pray. That you would give. To us. Clarity of purpose. And give.

To us help. We pray. When the days. Of evil. Do come. When the evil one. Attacks. Give us strength. To rely upon. Your word. And not to rely. Upon our own.

Emotional state. Lord. We pray. That you would. Help us. To understand. Your grace. And your strength. Working. Within us.

Go before us. Now we pray. And bless us. In Jesus name. Amen. We sing.

From page. 252. Psalm. 37. Verses. 3 to 7. Set.

[34 : 46] Thou. Thy trust. Upon the Lord. And be thou. Doing good. And so. Thou. In the land. Shalt dwell. And verily. Have food. Delight. Thyself in God. He'll give thine heart's desire to thee.

Thy way to God. Commit him. Trust. It bring to pass. Shall he. Psalm 37. Verses 3 to 7. We stand to sing. go for this. food.— That God is in the name of the Lord.

And he must show the Lord of Pilot. **CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS**

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS In the Lord that patiently with all the truth of faith, **■■■■** **CHOIR SINGS**