



eLesson 030

Text: Numbers 13 & 14 and Deuteronomy 1

Subject: Faithfulness

Caleb ... Part 2

Becoming a Strong Finisher

There is much more to learn from Caleb's example. There were many distinguishing characteristics in Caleb's life ... characteristics that kept him going on in faith. Did you make a list of those characteristics as suggested at the end of Lesson 029? Why was Caleb faithful when others were not? Why could God say that he *"had a different spirit and has followed Me fully"*? How can you and I follow Caleb's example? If you have not read Lesson 029, you should read it before continuing in this eLesson. It is accessible here: <http://elesons.org/lessons/lessons.html>. You should definitely read or re-read Numbers 13, 14 and Deuteronomy 1 before continuing.

Caleb was a strong finisher. Basketball teams that finish strong win games. However, strong finishes do not happen simply because of game-day performances. Strong finishes happen because of strong beginnings and season-long persistence ... because of long, hard practices ... because of conditioning. I played on a championship basketball team. We had many strong second halves ... strong finishes. We won almost all of our games and were league champions. However, it did not seem much like basketball when we began the season. For the first few weeks we ran wind sprints, did calisthenics, and finished most practices with a two mile run ... all outside in the cold late fall of northern New York State. I remember blisters breaking inside of broken blisters ... bleeding through my high-top sneakers (trainers). We barely saw the inside of the gymnasium or touched a basketball, for the first few weeks. Later when we were inside, we started most practices by running eighty laps around the court. Frequently we ran backwards wind sprints. Sometimes, instead of a regulation basketball, we used a heavy medicine ball or a basketball that would not bounce. We often practiced with a smaller rim inserted inside the regular rim to promote more focused shooting ... and to provide more practice rebounding. One day late in the season, I complained to the coach about all the running and hard work. In response to my whining, he put heavy weights on my ankles and made me run more wind sprints. I was a quick learner ... I stopped complaining. We paid a high price in every practice. Moreover, we did not ease up halfway through the season to coast home. We kept up that pace of practicing and conditioning until the very end of the basketball season. We were not the team of greatest talent ... but we were the most practiced team and the one in greatest condition. Sometimes the score at the end of the first half of our games was close. However, in the second half we would most often dominate our opponents, as we would literally run away with the game. If I was willing to pay such a high price to win basketball games, should I not be willing to pay an even higher price to win my spiritual battles? Caleb was a man who paid the high price of persistent faith and continuing obedience. He was a man in great spiritual condition. Therefore, he became a strong finisher. Are you paying the price of persistent faith and continuing obedience? Are you getting into great spiritual condition? Are you preparing to be a strong finisher?

Caleb was a proven leader. Caleb was a leader before he appeared on the stage of recorded Biblical history. At Kadesh-Barnea, the Israelites asked to send spies into the Promised Land. Their request pleased Moses ... and God allowed it. God instructed Moses to select one man to be a spy from each of the twelve tribes of Israel ... *"every one a leader among them."* Caleb was the choice from the Tribe of Judah. Recently the twelve tribes had been numbered ... a census counting the men of military age. Caleb's tribe, Judah, had 74,600 such men. His was the biggest of all the tribes ... and also the tribe of King David and Jesus. Caleb stood out as a proven leader from among the 74,600 men of his tribe. Wow! That is impressive! But think for a moment. In what life situation had Caleb proven to be such a man? It happened in Egypt where he and all the Israelites were slaves. To the Egyptians and even to many of the Jews, Caleb was probably a faceless slave in a sea of more than a million slaves. Others might have seen him as just a slave ... but God saw Caleb as a leader in the making. When the time was right and when Caleb was ready, his leadership was recognizable ... and then God called him to step out of the shadows of obscurity onto the pages of Biblical history. What others think of you does not really matter. The important question is ... *What does God think of you?* Our spiritual success is not built in a sequence of popular public ministry performances. It is built in the obscure trenches of everyday life. Our public victories sprout from the fertile soil of our private faithfulness. To the persistent plodder goes the wreath of ultimate victory. Unseen and un-applauded victories in a myriad of private battles make possible our moments of public victory. Too often, we Christians judge each other, and ourselves, by our moments of public ministry. However, God sees us from a different perspective. *"For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart,"* 1 Samuel 16:7. A very important lesson for us from Caleb's example is that private spiritual victories precede and make possible our moments of public victory.

Into enemy territory. Moses sent Caleb and the other spies into enemy territory. They went in to scout out the land ... to see what it was like (but Moses already knew) ... to see if the people were strong or weak (compared to God?) ... and to see if there were difficult-to-conquer fortified cities or easy-to-conquer open cities (difficult or easy for them or for God?). Moses also told them to bring back fruit, which they did. The people had grown tired of manna, Numbers 11:6. They had been given more than enough quail, Numbers 11:31-33. Did Moses think that fruit, some of the satisfying physical benefits of the Promised Land, would be necessary to motivate the people to obedience? I do not know ... but shouldn't God's commandment have been enough motivation for them? Did they really need a big cluster of grapes to prod them to obedience? Have you seen a picture of a carrot hanging, just out of reach, in front of a donkey's face to motivate it to move? To me, that always seemed pathetic. However, isn't it more pathetic if we, as Christians, are primarily motivated by what we hope to get from God? Does He have to hang earthly carrots or clusters of grapes in front of our faces to motivate us? Isn't it enough when the all-present *I AM* commands us? Are the carrots of earthly rewards necessary for us? Let me ask you a few probing questions. Do you tithe because it is your reasonable service of worship? Or do you tithe because you are counting on God's consequential financial blessing to fill your pockets or bank account? Do you serve to be served ... or do you serve as Jesus did, Matthew 20:28, expecting nothing in return? As an example, I have never understood applauding a music performance in church. It would seem as appropriate to applaud the preacher when he gave a good sermon ... maybe with a standing ovation if he were especially good. Obviously, that would be inappropriate ... although, it might be interesting. Moreover, what would we do if he preached a bad sermon ... make some disapproving noise of booing, hissing, or whistling? There is a danger in applauding any performance in church. Someone might be tempted to perform for the carrot of the crowd's applause rather than for God. If they do not want the applause, do not give it to them. If they do want the applause, do not ask them to perform. The key question is this ... *What motivates you and me to serve the Lord?* Is our motivation God-centered or self-centered? Are we following the carrot of health and wealth rewards ... or are we following the King of Kings? Do we serve Him because of what He can do for us ... or because of who He is?

Forty days of spying. Caleb and the other spies were in the land for 40 days. Each of the spies must have seen similar hills and valleys, similar cities and villages, similar milk and honey, and some of the same large people. However, they saw it all from different hearts ... and brought back

conflicting reports. Joshua and Caleb brought back a faithful, fearless report of encouragement. The other spies brought back a fearful, faithless report of discouragement. Joshua and Caleb, with faithful hearts, saw the land and the enemy through the eyes of God. As Caleb said some 45 years later, *"I brought word back to him as it was in my heart."* Joshua 14:7. The faithless spies reported, *"We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us"*. The ten spies were right about one thing. The enemy was too big for them ... too big without God. Lacking faith, they developed grasshopper vision, *"and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight,"* Numbers 13:33. However, with God all things are possible ... and all enemies are conquerable. The army of the living God may be, and most often is, *humanly* outnumbered ... but *with God*, we are always the stronger army. Should a small six-year-old boy be afraid of a big eight-year-old bully? Yes, if that small boy stands alone. However, he is not afraid when his 6' 5", 200-pound (1.95 M, 91 Kg) father is standing with him. We should be fearful if we stand alone ... but we should be fearless when God is with us. The ten spies show us that fear displaces faith ... and that fear is contagious multiplying into mass disobedience. We learn from Caleb that faith in God displaces fear.

Overwhelming odds. *"Don't let the faithless spies around you squeeze you into their worldly fearful mold,"* my paraphrase of Romans 12:2 for Caleb. He did not let them squeeze him into their mold. He was unmoved by their fear. He took an unpopular, minority position ... but he was right. Very importantly, fear of the faithless majority did not silence him. He spoke the truth in love ... but he spoke the truth. *"Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, 'We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it,'"* Numbers 13:30. It was ten against two ... the other spies against Joshua and Caleb. Actually, the odds were much worse than ten to two. All the other numbered men turned against Joshua and Caleb. Therefore, the real human odds were 603,548 against two, Numbers 1:46 & 14:2. Would you be willing to speak out against those odds? Caleb was willing to stand in the minority ... one of the things that made him so different. That is one of the reasons he could become a strong finisher. Think about this ... the dissenters were the people of God. Wouldn't it be a more comforting story if the fearful, faithless majority were from outside the flock of God? There are great lessons for us in this part of Caleb's story. We must not let the faithless behavior of other Christians squeeze us into their worldly mold. We must stand for truth ... even if we stand against great odds ... even if we stand against a vast majority. We must speak the truth in love ... but we must be sure to speak. Would you rather stand alone with God or stand together with 603,548 fearful, faithless Christians? *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed. Thus you will prove in practice that the will of God is good, acceptable to him and perfect,"* Romans 12:2 from the Philips paraphrase.

(This eLesson is the second of a three-part eLesson)



Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. Before appearing in the Old Testament record, what was Caleb besides a slave?
2. How big was his tribe ... and who else descended from that tribe?

3. How does man see a man ... and how does God see a man?

4. What does Matthew 20:28 teach us about what our motivation should be?

5. What was the conclusion and report of the 10 spies?

6. What is grasshopper vision?

7. What was Caleb's report to the people?

8. What were the human odds against Caleb and Joshua?

9. What can the world do to us?

10. What key verse goes along with your answer to question nine?



Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. What impresses you most about Caleb?
2. How would you describe your present spiritual conditioning?
3. Which of the characteristics of Caleb do you need to build into your life?
4. What price will you pay to be a person who has a different spirit, one whose heart is fully His?
5. What do other people think of you? Why?
6. What does God think of you? Why?
7. In what ways have you been motivated by carrots that you thought were from God?
8. In what ways have you had, or presently have, grasshopper vision?
9. What unpopular, minority, but right situations are you in?
10. In those situations, what are the human odds against you?
11. Since God stands with the righteous, what are the real odds?
12. How do you need to implement Romans 12:2 in your life?



Answers to Study Questions

1. Before appearing in the Old Testament record, what was Caleb besides a slave? **Caleb was a proven leader in the Tribe of Judah.**
2. How big was his tribe ... and who else descended from that tribe? **74,600 men of military age ... David and Jesus.**
3. How does man see a man ... and how does God see a man? **Man looks at the outward appearance while God sees his heart.**
4. What does Matthew 20:28 teach us about what our motivation should be? **To be like Jesus ... we must be seeking to serve rather than to be served.**
5. What was the conclusion and report of the 10 spies? **The people of the land were too strong ... victory was impossible.**
6. What is grasshopper vision? **Thinking that we are smaller than our enemies are ... and thinking that our enemies see us as small.**
7. What was Caleb's report to the people? ***"We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."***
8. What were the human odds against Caleb and Joshua? **Among the spies, 10 to 2 ... among the people, 603,548 to 2.**
9. What can the world do to us? **Squeeze us into its fearful, faithless mold.**
10. What key verse goes along with your answer to question nine? **Romans 12:2.**

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