



eLesson 031

Text: Numbers 13 & 14 and Deuteronomy 1

Subject: Faithfulness

Caleb ... Part 3

A Faithful Finisher

Is there fear in the camp? Are you in a confused, fearful group of God's people ... your family, friends, church, or Bible study group? That was the scene when Caleb appeared in Old Testament history. Or ... maybe you feel that way personally. Caleb, knowing God's will, was not confused when others, relying on their own wisdom, were confused. He was courageous when others were fearful. He was faithful when others were faithless. He was persistently faithful throughout his life even though he spent most of his years waiting. He was faithful until the end. Caleb is a great role model for us.

Fully trust the One who is fully trustworthy. The ten faithless spies had given their bad report to Moses and to the people. They told of seeing men of such great size that they (the 10 spies) became like grasshoppers in their own sight and in their enemy's sight. The 10 spies had developed *grasshopper vision*. They gave exaggerated reports of cities fortified to Heaven and of a land that devoured its inhabitants, Numbers 13:32 & Deuteronomy 1:28. Their fear and faithlessness were contagious. After hearing the reports, the Israelites wept all night. They would not trust God to give them victory. Why would they doubt the Deliverer who had freed them from slavery in Egypt? Why would they doubt the power of the One who had parted the Red Sea? We would never act like that ... would we? We know that God was faithful throughout Old and New Testament history. Moreover, we know from our own lives that He has proven to be trustworthy. Therefore, how could we ever doubt Him in the trials of today? And ultimately, He proved His love for us on the cross. How could we now question His love in our difficult circumstances? We need to be more like Caleb and less like those other fearful, faithless Israelites. We need to see our enemies and our obstacles through the eyes of God rather than with *grasshopper vision*. We need to be fearless and faithful. Against all human odds and in all adverse circumstances, we must trust Him fully ... trust Him because He is fully trustworthy.

They wept all night. After their night of faithless weeping, the Israelites said to one another, "*Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.*" They were unwilling to trust God. Such faithlessness is appalling. How do you react when you think of their faithlessness? What emotional response does it provoke in you? Did you shake your head in disapproval as you read the description of it? Or did you casually pass over it, with your emotions only mildly affected ... if at all? Several years ago on a cold, snowy, overcast winter's day, I walked the grounds of the Auschwitz death camp south of Krakow, Poland. I stood in the gas chamber ... peered into the one-meter-square overnight cell for four ... walked to the execution wall ... and stood in front of the furnaces. The

experience nauseated me physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If you have been there, you reacted in the same manner. But does lack of faith provoke that response in me? Does it in you? Does lack of faith nauseate us? Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in reaction to the blasphemy of the people's faithlessness. They tried to reassure the people that it was a good land ... one that God would give to them. Nevertheless, the Israelites rejected that encouragement and wanted to stone them. Does that nauseate you? Caleb was different ... therefore, he tore his clothes. As a young boy, I learned the acronym F-A-I-T-H ... Forsaking All I Trust Him. That is a good definition of faith. Caleb would not approve of, *Forsaking some I trust Him*. Nor would he approve of, *Forsaking most I trust Him*. For Caleb it was, *Forsaking ALL I trust Him*. What is it for you? Is it *some*, *most*, or *all* that you forsake to trust Him? Do you see lack of faith as blasphemy? Look at your Christian friends. Look in the mirror. Do you see faith ... or do you see faithlessness? Should you tear your clothes?

Forty more years of obscurity. After his 40 days of spying, Caleb dropped out of sight again for 40 years in Old Testament history. However, we do know what was life was like. The grumbling Israelites were condemned by God to wander and die in the wilderness. Joshua, Caleb, and those under 20 years old (at the time of disobedience) did not die in the wilderness ... but they did wander with the disobedient all those years. Caleb had been faithful and obedient. However, he would suffer for 40 years because of the grumblers. Because of them, he was denied immediate access to God's blessings in the Promised Land. His milk and honey would be delayed for four decades. Instead of milk and honey, he ate manna at every meal ... for over 40,000 meals ... manna, manna, manna, and more manna. Caleb saw all his peers (except Joshua) die in those years of wandering. His parents, siblings, and older children may have been among those who died. There were about 600,000 men condemned to die. Adding the same number of women to that number brings the total to 1,200,000. With no burials on the Sabbath, there must have been almost 100 funerals each day ... six days per week for 40 years. Their life was a wandering funeral procession. Life must have been humanly monotonous and morbid. Every day it was ... take down the tent ... walk ... put up the tent ... eat manna ... dig more holes ... bury the dead. Day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, it was the same. Caleb had been faithful. He had been a faithful spy who had given a good report. He should have been enjoying life in his new home up in the hill country of Hebron. Instead, he suffered and waited for 40 years ... one year for every day that the spies had been in the land.

Did Caleb's faith waver in his years of waiting? No! Did he forget God's promises? No! Did he reach a point of despair because of his advancing age? No! Did he change ... become complacent? No! When Caleb reappeared in Biblical history, he was the same faithful man he had always been. His faith had not wavered or weakened. After the wandering, the time came for Joshua to divide the Promised Land. Each of the 12 tribes would be given their portion ... not to simply possess it, but to conquer and settle the land. The notorious hill country was the area that had caused fear and faithlessness. Humanly, that hill country was dangerous, difficult, and challenging to conquer. The giant people were there in fortified cities. Moreover, Caleb was no longer a 40-year-old man in the prime of his life. What could this man, now 85 years old, do? What did he want to do? Was he interested only in sitting back in a rocking chair on the porch of his tent to watch and offer advice? No! Caleb went to Joshua and requested his land. His request to Joshua is a spectacular example of unwavering faith. Caleb said, *"You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the Lord my God fully. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God fully.' Now behold, the Lord has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke on that day,"* Joshua 14:6-12. Re-read the words

of his request ... read them aloud with the emphasis and tone that he might have used. Caleb's faith had not weakened. God was his strength. In His strength, Caleb could say, "Give me this hill country." He requested the land of the giants and fortified cities. Joshua gave him that land ... and Caleb conquered it and settled there. It was renamed Hebron. It had been called *Kiriath-arba* (city of Arba) because Arba was the greatest man among the giants. However, Caleb's God was greater than Arba ... and greater than all the giants. Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb because he followed the Lord God fully. What will you and I be like at 85? Will we still be following God fully? Will we say, "Give me this hill country"?

Caleb persevered while waiting. Most of his life was consumed in waiting. Caleb had waited 40 years to be freed from slavery in Egypt. Then he waited through all the years in the wilderness. His life until 85, except for 40 days of action spying out the land, had been consumed in waiting. However, he remained faithful ... faithful until the end. Are you waiting for some answer from God? Does your life seem to be on *pause* while you wait for His answer? Are you waiting for some answer about a relationship ... for news of employment ... for healing ... or for someone to come to faith in Christ? Is it difficult to stay faithful as the hours turn into days ... and as the days turn into weeks? Have weeks of waiting turned into months? Have the months turned into years? Stay faithful! God will keep His promises. His answer will come. Do not fear! Be faithful! Are some of your Christian friends judging you because you are waiting? Do not let them squeeze you into their faithless mold. In Heaven, you will never regret your present circumstances on earth. However, you might regret your reactions to those circumstances. If God says wait ... then wait. Be faithful. Maybe someday in Heaven, you will have the opportunity to share the story of your long and faithful wait. Maybe you will tell it to a large gathering of the Saints. If that happens, I would suggest that you keep one thing in mind ... Caleb might be in the audience.

He followed Me fully. God described Caleb as a man who "had a different spirit and has followed Me fully." Caleb was a persistent plodder. Early in his life, in the adverse circumstances of slavery, he became a proven man of God. As a forty year-old man, he saw Israel's enemies and obstacles through the eyes of God ... all as conquerable. He never developed *grasshopper vision*. He did not let the fear and faithlessness of others squeeze him into their disobedient mold. He stood firm in the minority ... and spoke out against the vast majority. He saw faithlessness as blasphemy. He never forgot what had been promised to him. Waiting and suffering did not make his faith shrink. He was a strong finisher. "The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary," Isaiah 40:29-31. Caleb is a great example of those verses. He waited faithfully. He walked and did not faint. He ran and did not become fatigued. Then near the end of his life, he mounted up with wings like eagles and soared on the strength of the Lord. Let us all, each and every one of us, follow the example of Caleb. Be someone with a different spirit who follows God fully even when outnumbered by faithless peers or ferocious enemies. Be a strong finisher. Be faithful until the end. God will bless you. He will give you your hill country. Persevere now ... so that at the end of your life you will be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," 2 Timothy 4:7.

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



Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. Did the ten spies see a different land and people than the two spies saw?
2. How did the ten spies exaggerate their report?
3. After hearing the report from the ten spies, what did the people do all night?
4. What had the people seen God do for them?
5. What did the people want on the next morning?
6. How did Caleb and Joshua view the people's faithlessness and what did the two men do in response?
7. How many years, meals, and burials were there during the time of wandering in the wilderness?
8. How old was Caleb when it was finally time to enter the land?
9. What land did he request ... and who lived there?
10. Before the day of entering the land, how much of Caleb's life had been spent waiting?



Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. How are your peers tempting you to be fearful and faithless?
2. How has their influence been contagious in others?
3. Why did the Israelites weep all night?
4. In what way might you seek a leader to take you back to your Egypt?
5. How will you look at faithlessness in the future?
6. Seriously and prayerfully fill in the blank in: Forsaking _____ I trust Him.
7. In what ways has your life seemed like the Israelite's time of wandering in the wilderness?
8. How have you responded to waiting?
9. What hill country has God given to you?
10. What cities and giants are in your hill country?
11. What has the Spirit convicted you about in this three-part study of Caleb?
12. How will you change your life so that your final words in life could be, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"*?



Answers to Study Questions

1. Did the ten spies see a different land and people than the two spies saw? **With their eyes, no ... with their hearts and faith, yes.**
2. How did the ten spies exaggerate their report? **They described the land as devouring its inhabitants and the cities as fortified up to Heaven.**
3. After hearing the report from the ten spies, what did the people do all night? **They wept.**
4. What had the people seen God do for them? **Deliver them from slavery ... and part the Red Sea.**
5. What did the people want on the next morning? **They wanted a new leader who would take them back to Egypt.**
6. How did Caleb and Joshua view the people's faithlessness and what did the two men do in response? **They saw it as blasphemy ... and tore their clothes.**
7. How many years, meals, and burials were there during the time of wandering in the wilderness? **40 years ... 40,000 meals ... and 1,200,000 funerals.**
8. How old was Caleb when it was finally time to enter the land? **85.**
9. What land did he request ... and who lived there? **The hill country ... the giants.**
10. Before the day of entering the land, how much of Caleb's life had been spent waiting? **85 years minus 40 days.**

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