

Caleb

We all know that Caleb was one of the twelve spies that Moses sent into the promised land in order to determine how best to structure the invasion. We also know of him, along with Joshua, to have been the only two of the twelve that trusted God sufficiently to recommend going forward against the giant occupants of Canaan. These seemed to be both so huge and so powerful that only through God's grace could they possibly be conquered by mere man. Ten lacked that faith and therefore argued against what they saw as a hopeless deadly venture. The people agreed with them and so refused to go. As a result, God condemned the entire population to 38 years of wanderings until everyone over 19 years old of age except, Joshua and Caleb had died. Then the new generation, who were not participants in this lack of trust in God's faithfulness, was allowed to proceed out of the wilderness. Caleb was second in command after Joshua under Moses, God's appointed supreme leadership.

Caleb's name was never tarnished in the slightest way throughout his long service to Our Lord. He stood among the most righteous of God's servants. His name means, "bold, impetuous" and indeed he was, where serving God was concerned. There is an interesting fact about Caleb. Although he had a strong persevering zeal and impeccable loyalty to the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, he was not an Israelite, that is he was not a direct descendant of any of the 12 tribes. Instead, he was a Kenizzite, probably a descendant of Kenaz the grandson of Esau. This made him an Edomite, a tribe of Semite people traditionally among the most hostile to the Israelites. There are several Calebs spoken of in the Bible, and considerable caution is required if one is to avoid confusing one with another. This Caleb is known as the son of Jephunneh. The Kenizzites are mentioned as having received a portion of Canaan. Perhaps this is referring to the portion Caleb was given, as we will see later. Some sources suggest that Caleb was grafted into the Tribe of Judah through marriage to a daughter within the Tribe of Judah.

The Israelites had been two years at Mt. Sinai when this spying mission was authorized. Being chosen to represent the tribe of Judah must have been a prestigious privilege for

Caleb. Therefore, he must have already gained considerable prominence and respect as a brave, faithful leader prior to that time. The whole nation having been but two years out of Egypt, and all of that time in a very sparsely unpopulated area west of the Red Sea in Arabia. When he became a postulate is not mentioned. Some of his ancestors may have been taken into slavery by the Egyptians in one of their wars. He probably was pressed into servitude among the Israelite slaves where intermarriage may have occurred. He was only about 38 years old at the time of the Exodus.

Caleb was a man of great bravery, impeccable character and extremely zealous for the Lord. Six times it is recorded of Caleb that *“he hath fully followed the Lord.”* What an incredible testimony this was! He “fully followed the Lord.” How many people throughout the ages, and even today could deserve such an accolade? Courage and perseverance were also among his many attributes. Through these as given to him by God, he was invincible against even the giants in battle. When it came to choose his piece of land, he asked for and received an area in the mountains of Judea, the place called Hebron, where the Anakins, the giants lived. At age 85 he killed or drove them out and made that place his home. When Caleb asked Joshua for this land, he asked for what was probably the most hostile of all the places left to conquer. In making his case, he said that he, at 85 years of age, was just as strong as he had been at age 40. He proved it most impressively. He proved not only his physical strength, but also his absolute faith in God, just as he had proven that same faith 47 years earlier, when only he and Joshua, of the 12 spies, believed in God’s promise of victory over the giants. In Caleb, son of Jephunneh, I believe that God has revealed to us another one of the great and most faithful of all patriarchs, yet one whose greatness has escaped much well deserved attention.

Before we leave Caleb, let us muse a little about him and his associate Joshua, two of the most extraordinary servants of God. Joshua and Caleb came out of being slaves in a pagan culture, that through generations of such exposure had permeated the souls of essentially the entire slave population. The sons of Jacob had been systematically stripped of their own culture. Even the rite of circumcision was forbidden to them.

Surely the stories of the past about the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were handed down, but most likely by then these were viewed by most of them as mere myths. The God of their patriarchs also became a myth, or at a least He was a God who no longer involved Himself in their circumstances. If He hadn't, why were they slaves? Surely the gods of the Egyptians were far more effective and worthy of worship. This belief was well evidenced at Sinai when they made the golden calf. With this background, where did Joshua's and Caleb's great faith, obedience, knowledge and unceasing dedication to God come from? Was it all from God's work through Moses at Mt. Sinai? A million of these fellow slaves were also witnesses to this. Why did only two of them "get it"? That this was the case is attested by the fact that not one of the entire population that was of age 20 or older, except for Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter the Promised Land, due entirely to their "not getting it"!

Is the answer as simple as "many are called, but few are chosen?" In essence, I believe it is. God called them all out of Egypt, and out of slavery. Thereafter, He called them out of idol worship through a two- year course why and how to worship Him. Then He called them out of the wilderness and into the land He had promised them through His covenant with Abraham. They witnessed how God had plagued the Egyptians nine times while sparing them completely. (The snake episode was not an affliction) Then how He inflicted the last plague, but in this case, they needed only a small demonstration of faith in order to avoid sharing the suffering with the Egyptians.

All they needed to do was paint their doorways with the blood of an unblemished lamb in order to be "passed over" when God's angel came to do the job. We presume that most of them did this, and so the lives of their first-born were spared. The ritual was a little more than that, but nevertheless, it was a ritual. Pagan worship involves many rituals, so this one wasn't too strange to go along with, given Moses' one thousand batting average in hitting homers the first nine times at bat, or should I say "at rod". But did they believe that He was really their God? If they did, wouldn't it have demonstrated evidenced of their faith in a sustaining obedience? The evidence, if we were to go on and observe

them for the next 40 years, and sadly for the next 4000 years, would compel us to say no, except for the ever presence of a small remnant.

So again, it comes down to the many are called but few are chosen axiom. It is a matter of being merely professors of faith, or the possessors of salvation, that is of being pretenders, or genuine participants in the faith. Somehow God's truth penetrates some souls regardless of the most unfavorable, unlikely circumstances. It seems that here, among older Exodus people only Caleb and Joshua were of the blessed remnant. However, they were even more than that. God lifted them up to heights that none of the remnant obtain, simply because He had a very special purpose for them in His "master plan", just as He had for Moses and all of the other "greats" of Scripture. If you are His, you too have a purpose that you are obligated to look into and to get at doing. Scripture shows us that He chooses only a few to be chiefs, such as these two. We can't all be chiefs, most of must be Indians. However, He has made it clear that He loves Indians just as much as He loves the chiefs. All He wants is that you should be the very best Indian you can be. He wants worship and obedience in the spirit of humility and gratitude. The Holy Spirit who resides in you will give you your assignment and also the power to carry it out. Don't ignore the call to the specific service to which He wants for you. Serving Him in this service is the only way you will be able to lay golden crowns at Jesus' feet, and hope that when you stand before Him you will hear the most blessed words ever any ear can hear, "Well done my good and faithful servant."