

Giants of Faith: Joshua and Caleb

Sabbath Afternoon, November 15

The Lord commanded Moses to send men to search the land of Canaan, which He would give unto the children of Israel. . . . After they had spoken of the fertility of the land, all but two spoke very discouragingly of their ability to possess it. . . . As the people listened to this report, they gave vent to their disappointment in bitter reproaches and wailing. They did not wait to reflect and reason that God, who had brought them out thus far, would certainly give them the land. . . .

Caleb urged his way to the front, and his clear, ringing voice was heard above all the clamor of the multitude. He opposed the cowardly views of his fellow spies, which had weakened the faith and courage of all Israel. He commanded the attention of the people, and they hushed their complaints for a moment to listen to him. . . . But as he spoke, the unfaithful spies interrupted him, crying: "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

These men, starting upon a wrong course, set their hearts against God, against Moses and Aaron, and against Caleb and Joshua. Every step they advanced in this wrong direction made them firmer in their design to discourage every attempt to possess the land of Canaan. They distorted the truth in order to carry their baneful purpose. They represented the climate as being unhealthy and all the people of giant stature. . . .

This was not only an evil report, but a lying one also. It was contradictory; for if the land was unhealthy, and had eaten up the inhabitants, how was it that they had attained to such massive proportions? When men in responsible positions yield their hearts to unbelief, there are no bounds to the advance they will make in evil. . . . If only the two men had brought the evil report, and all the ten had encouraged them to possess the land in the name of the Lord, they would still have taken the advice of the two in preference to the ten, because of their wicked unbelief. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 106.

God's people today have far greater light than had ancient Israel. They have not only the increased light that has been shining upon them, but the instruction given by God to Moses, to be given to the people. God specified the difference between the sacred and the common, and declared that this difference must be strictly observed. . . .

The Lord has given His people great light and precious instruction. What sorrow, what shame, what agony of soul, has been felt by God's faithful servants who have stood, as did Joshua and Caleb, to hear Israel cast off their leader . . . and choose one of their rebellious number to lead them back to Egypt. In their complaints the Israelites blasphemed God. God had signified that the defense of the land of Canaan had departed, and that now was the opportune time for them to enter it.

Caleb declared the truth for that and every time: "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 122.

Sunday, November 16

Faithfulness

These men, having entered upon a wrong course, stubbornly set themselves against Caleb and Joshua, against Moses, and against God. Every advance step rendered them the more determined. They were resolved to discourage all effort to gain possession of Canaan. They distorted the truth in order to sustain their baleful influence. It "is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof," they said. This was not only an evil report, but it was also a lying one. It was inconsistent with itself. The spies had declared the country to be fruitful and prosperous, and the people of giant stature, all of which would be impossible if the climate were so unhealthful that the land could be said to "eat up the inhabitants." But when men yield their hearts to unbelief they place themselves under the control of Satan, and none can tell to what lengths he will lead them. . . .

In humiliation and distress "Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel," not knowing what to do to turn them from their rash and passionate purpose. Caleb and Joshua attempted to quiet the tumult. With their garments rent in token of grief and indignation, they rushed in among the people, and their ringing voices were heard above the tempest of lamentation and rebellious grief: "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." . . .

The unfaithful spies were loud in denunciation of Caleb and Joshua, and the cry was raised to stone them. The insane mob seized missiles with which to slay those faithful men. They rushed forward with yells of madness, when suddenly the stones dropped from their hands, a hush fell upon them, and they shook with fear. God had interposed to check their murderous design. The glory of His presence, like a flaming light, illuminated the tabernacle. All the people beheld the signal of the Lord. A mightier one than they had revealed Himself, and none dared continue their resistance. The spies who brought the evil report crouched terror-stricken, and with bated breath sought their tents. . . .

And of Caleb He said, "My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 389, 390, 391.

Give Me This Hill Country

Before the distribution of the land had been entered upon, Caleb, accompanied by the heads of his tribe, came forward with a special claim. Except Joshua, Caleb was now the oldest man in Israel. Caleb and Joshua were the only ones among the spies who had brought a good report of the Land of Promise, encouraging the people to go up and possess it in the name of the Lord. Caleb now reminded Joshua of the promise then made, as the reward of his faithfulness: "The land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord." He therefore presented a request that Hebron be given him for a possession. . . . His claim was immediately granted. To none could the conquest of this giant stronghold be more safely entrusted. . . .

Caleb's faith now was just what it was when his testimony had contradicted the evil report of the spies. He had believed God's promise that He would put His people in possession of Canaan, and in this he had followed the Lord fully. He had endured with his people the long wandering in the wilderness, thus sharing the disappointments and burdens of the guilty; yet he made no complaint of this, but exalted the mercy of God that had preserved him in the wilderness when his brethren were cut off. . . . The brave old warrior was desirous of giving to the people an example that would honor God, and encourage the tribes fully to subdue the land which their fathers had deemed unconquerable. Caleb obtained the inheritance upon which his heart had been set for forty years, and, trusting in God to be with him, he "drove thence the three sons of Anak." . . .

The cowards and rebels had perished in the wilderness, but the righteous spies ate of the grapes of Eshcol. To each was given according to his faith. The unbelieving had seen their fears fulfilled. Notwithstanding God's promise, they had declared that it was impossible to inherit Canaan, and they did not possess it. But those who trusted in God, looking not so much to the difficulties to be encountered as to the strength of their Almighty Helper, entered the goodly land. —*Conflict and Courage*, April 27, p. 123.

Today we need men of thorough fidelity, men who follow the Lord fully, men who are not disposed to be silent when they ought to speak, who are as true as steel to principle, who do not seek to make a pretentious show, but who walk humbly with God, patient, kind, obliging, courteous men, who understand that the science of prayer is to exercise faith and show works that will tell to the glory of God and the good of His people. . . . To follow Jesus requires wholehearted conversion at the start, and a repetition of this conversion every day.

It was Caleb's faith in God that gave him courage, that kept him from the fear of man, and enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly in the defense of the right. Through reliance on the same power, the mighty General of the armies of heaven, every true soldier of the cross may receive strength and courage to overcome the obstacles that seem insurmountable. —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 207.

The Power of Example

It was Caleb's faith in God that gave him courage; that kept him from the fear of man, even the mighty giants, the sons of Anak, and enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly in defense of the right. From the same exalted source, the mighty General of the armies of heaven, every true soldier of the cross of Christ must receive strength and courage to overcome obstacles that often seem insurmountable. The law of God is made void; and those who would do their duty must be ever ready to speak the words that God gives them, and not the words of doubt, discouragement, and despair. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 378.

Two, however, of the twelve who had viewed the land, reasoned otherwise. "We are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30), they urged, counting God's promise superior to giants, walled cities, or chariots of iron. For them their word was true. Though they shared with their brethren the forty years' wandering, Caleb and Joshua entered the Land of Promise. As courageous of heart as when with the hosts of the Lord he set out from Egypt, Caleb asked for and received as his portion the stronghold of the giants. In God's strength he drove out the Canaanites. The vineyards and olive groves where his feet had trodden became his possession. Though the cowards and rebels perished in the wilderness, the men of faith ate of the grapes of Eshcol.

No truth does the Bible set forth in clearer light than the peril of even one departure from the right—peril both to the wrongdoer and to all whom his influence shall reach. Example has wonderful power; and when cast on the side of the evil tendencies of our nature, it becomes well-nigh irresistible. —*Education*, pp. 149, 150.

Thousands would accept the truth if they could do so without denying self, but this class would never build up the cause of God. These would never march out valiantly against the enemy,—the world, the love of self, and the lusts of the flesh,—trusting their divine Leader to give them the victory. The church needs faithful Calebs and Joshuas, who are ready to accept eternal life on God's simple condition of obedience. Our churches are suffering for laborers. The world is our field. Missionaries are wanted in cities and villages that are more certainly bound by idolatry than are the pagans of the East, who have never seen the light of truth. The true missionary spirit has deserted the churches that make so exalted a profession; their hearts are no longer aglow with love for souls and a desire to lead them into the fold of Christ. We want earnest workers. Are there none to respond to the cry that goes up from every quarter: "Come over . . . and help us"? —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 155.

Humble Hero

The wars of conquest ended, Joshua had withdrawn to the peaceful retirement of his home at Timnath-serah. . . . The Lord had impressed His faithful servant to do as Moses had done before him—to recapitulate the history of the people, and call to mind the terms that the Lord had made with them when He gave them His vineyard.

Several years had passed since the people had settled in their possessions, and already could be seen cropping out the same evils that had heretofore brought judgments upon Israel. As Joshua felt the infirmities of age stealing upon him, he was filled with anxiety for the future of his people. It was with more than a father's interest that he addressed them, as they gathered once more about him. . . . Although the Canaanites had been subdued, they still possessed a considerable portion of the land promised to Israel, and Joshua exhorted the people not to settle down at ease and forget the Lord's commands to utterly dispossess these idolatrous nations. . . .

Joshua appealed to the people themselves as witnesses that, so far as they had complied with the conditions, God had faithfully fulfilled His promises to them. . . . Satan deceives many with the plausible theory that since God's love for His people is so great, He will excuse sin in them; that while the threatenings of God's Word are to serve a certain purpose in His moral government, they are never to be literally fulfilled. But in His dealings with His creatures, God has maintained the principles of righteousness by revealing sin in its true character—by demonstrating that its sure result is misery and death. The unconditional pardon of sin never has been and never will be. Such pardon would show the abandonment of the principles of righteousness that are the very foundation of the government of God. . . .

God has faithfully pointed out the results of sin, and if these warnings are not true, how can we be sure that His promises will be fulfilled? That so-called benevolence, which would set aside justice, is not benevolence, but weakness.

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After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, Joshua called upon the people, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. . . . Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal -worship. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 139.

Changed by Contemplation

What a mystery of mysteries! It is difficult for the reason to grasp the majesty of Christ, the mystery of redemption. The shameful cross has been upraised, the nails have been driven through His hands and feet, and the cruel spear has pierced to His heart, and the redemption price has been paid for the human race. . . .

Redemption is an inexhaustible theme, worthy of our closest contemplation. It passes the comprehension of the deepest thought, the stretch of the most vivid imagination. . . .

Were Jesus with us today, He would say to us as He did to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Jesus longed to open before the minds of His disciples deep and living truths, but their earthliness, their clouded, deficient comprehension made it impossible. . . . The want of spiritual growth closes the door to the rich rays of light that shine from Christ. . . .

Those who have been diligently working in the mines of God's Word, and have discovered the precious ore in the rich veins of truth, in the divine mysteries that have been hidden for ages, will exalt the Lord Jesus, the Source of all truth, by revealing in their characters the sanctifying power of what they believe. Jesus and His grace must be enshrined in the inner sanctuary of the soul. Then He will be revealed in words, in prayer, in exhortation, in the presentation of sacred truth.

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary, the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in His gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 186.

If we would but think of God as often as we have evidence of His care for us we should keep Him ever in our thoughts and should delight to talk of Him and to praise Him. We talk of temporal things because we have an interest in them. We talk of our friends because we love them; our joys and our sorrows are bound up with them. Yet we have infinitely greater reason to love God than to love our earthly friends; it should be the most natural thing in the world to make Him first in all our thoughts, to talk of His goodness and tell of His power. The rich gifts He has bestowed upon us were not intended to absorb our thoughts and love so much that we should have nothing to give to God; they are constantly to remind us of Him and to bind us in bonds of love and gratitude to our heavenly Benefactor. We dwell too near the lowlands of earth. Let us raise our eyes to the open door of the sanctuary above, where the light of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Hebrews 7:25. . . .

We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us. —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 102, 103.

Friday, November 21

For Further Reading

Christ Triumphant, "We Are on the Borders of the Promised Land," December 29, p. 370.

The Faith I Live By, "Third Person of the Godhead," February 15, p. 52.