



[www.jhbc.org](http://www.jhbc.org)

**Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church**  
Sanford, North Carolina

Dr. Mark E. Gaskins  
Senior Pastor

The Lord's Day  
May 2, 2010

© 2010

---

**“Give Me This Mountain!”**  
**Joshua 14:6-14**

***Caleb's story***

He was an old man now, with nothing but a promise. And that promise had been made 45 years earlier. It may even have been that no one else remembered it except him, and the one who made it—the LORD.

A lot of water had gone under the bridge since it was made: 40 years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai, the death of everyone who was 20 years old or older when the promise was made (except, of course, this old man, Caleb, and Joshua), and even the death of Moses, the man of God who led Israel out of Egypt and in the wilderness. But when Moses died, the LORD had another leader ready—this Joshua, the only other survivor from the adults who had come out of Egypt.

Now, Joshua and Eleazer the priest and the tribal leaders of Israel had gathered at Gilgal, and called the tribes together to divide the land as an inheritance for the people. By the LORD's hand they had gone in and taken control of Canaan, the land God had promised so long ago to their father Abraham and his descendants. Even though pockets of resistance remained, the Israelites were in sufficient control to take possession of their inheritances.

When the tribe of Judah came forward to be assigned its part of the land, this old man, Caleb, came to the front of the crowd. He began to address Joshua, reminding him of the LORD's promise to him through Moses 45 years earlier.

You remember the story, don't you? God had delivered his people from bondage in Egypt by the hand of Moses with great signs and wonders. He had promised to carry them to the Promised Land, Canaan.

But they were a complaining lot, almost constantly grumbling about something! Nevertheless, the LORD bore with them patiently, gave them his covenant at Mount Sinai, and brought them to the edge of Canaan at Kadesh Barnea, instructing Moses to make preparations to go in and conquer the land.

To prepare for the battle intelligently, Moses sent twelve spies (one from each tribe) to spy out the land carefully. When they returned 40 days later, they all agreed on the magnificence of the land, but ten of them said it would be impossible to take it. Only two of them—Caleb and Joshua—urged the people to go up and conquer by the LORD's hand and power, claiming what had been promised to them.

Because of his faithfulness, God not only allowed Caleb to live; he also promised him an inheritance whenever the people entered the land.

And now Caleb stood before Joshua, the other faithful spy who was now the leader of the

LORD's people, with nothing but a promise! What was more, he wasn't even an Israelite by his physical ancestry! He was a Kennizite, a descendant of Esau, not Jacob! His ancestors, maybe even his tribe as a whole, had joined Israel and been incorporated into the tribe of Judah.<sup>1</sup> And while the others had been faithless, Caleb had been faithful to God and had wholeheartedly followed him!

Now the promise was all he had. But for Caleb, that was enough! He reminded Joshua of it and how it came about. And then, *confident of God's faithfulness, Caleb laid claim to the inheritance God had promised him.* He looked at Joshua and said boldly, "Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day" (14:12).<sup>2</sup> Or as the old King James Version puts it, "Now therefore give me this mountain . . ."

Caleb was encouraged in his faith because God had kept him safe to this point. That made him confident that God would be with him to claim his promised portion of the Promised Land.

And God was! Joshua gave Caleb the hill country of Hebron, along with his blessing, and Caleb went out and took full possession of it. What had been a promise had now become a reality! God had been faithful to this one who had followed him wholeheartedly when the others wouldn't!

God had promised Caleb an inheritance, and Caleb boldly claimed it. His words should be an inspiration and a challenge to all of us! "Give me this mountain!" is like a battle cry, like the cavalry bugler in the old western movies sounding the advance!

On this Senior Saints Sunday, Caleb's story has a lot to say to us—whether we're senior adults, middle-aged, young adults, or teens. It shows us that *God is faithful to honor his promises when those who follow him wholeheartedly claim them.* Think about this truth with me.

### ***God is faithful***

*God is a God of promise, and we can always trust him to keep his promises.*

So much of God's relationship to humanity throughout history has taken the form of promise and fulfillment. Now often his promises are far off or at a distance, as the writer of Hebrews puts it. In other words, they're about something grander in the future. But they're his promises nonetheless, and he can be trusted to keep them!

For Caleb, it had been 45 years, *45 years!* But now God was honoring his promise! Caleb could easily have given up, but he was persuaded that God could be trusted to keep faith!

God's promise to Abraham hundreds of years earlier was just now being fulfilled; *but he was fulfilling it!* And it was to a people waiting for God's promised Messiah that Jesus came as the Christ! And it will be to a people waiting for his promised return that Christ will appear in glory! Whatever his promise, we can trust God to keep it in his time and his way and on his terms!

Now when God delays his promise, he often offers us encouragement along the way.

For Abraham, it was the birth of Isaac, the son of promise, in his old age.

For Caleb, it was God's preserving him through the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan.

For us as Christians today, it's the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and in us

---

<sup>1</sup> R. F. Johnson, "Caleb." *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 482-483.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures are from the *New International Version*.

individually as believers. Paul says that the Spirit's presence and indwelling is God's down payment on the glory to come, "a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14). Through his Spirit, God guides us and works in our lives in many different ways. When we can see God at work, it confirms our faith and helps us believe God for the promises.

Indeed, God is the God of promise who is faithful. We can always trust him to keep his word to us—even though it may not be according to *our* timetable. That's the most important part of this truth, but it's only part of it.

### ***Wholeheartedly following God***

You see, *we must wholeheartedly follow God*, just as Caleb did.

In the biblical sense, to have faith is to be faithful! It means that because God is faithful, we become faithful to him.

Caleb had wholeheartedly followed the LORD, trusting his promise about the land. In turn, God had promised Caleb an inheritance, and trusting in the LORD's promise, he was now claiming it. He fully realized that to receive it, he would have to go up and fight, and that for him to take it, the LORD would have to be with him. Caleb put his faith in the LORD that he would be with him. He thought sort of like the old English Puritan revolutionary Oliver Cromwell who used to say, "Put your trust God, my boys, and keep your powder dry!"<sup>3</sup>

We must wholeheartedly follow the LORD who is faithful to us. Our faithfulness to him involves several things.

It involves *faithful and faith-filled discipleship*, which takes the LORD at his word and lives in obedience to it.

It involves *the responsibility to lay claim to the promises God has given us*. Just as Israel would never have received the Promised Land if they hadn't gone in and claimed it, we must claim God's promises, obey him, and do what he calls us to do. His promises are never claimed without trust and obedience on our part.

It also involves *the necessity of relying on his presence*. Like Caleb, we can be sure that if the LORD is with us, we can claim his promise confidently. And he is! The Spirit is in the church, and dwells in every believer! Jesus said he would be with us till the end of the age (Matthew 28:20)! What more can we ask for? As Paul put it, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

### ***Laying claim to God's promises***

God is faithful, and we must wholeheartedly follow him. To those who do, he gladly keeps his promises. But just to believe and affirm these things isn't enough. We have to *act* on them! *We have to lay claim to God's promises in faith!*

Did you ever get one of the sweepstakes entries they used to send out every year? There were several different kinds, but the big one used to run commercials on TV stressing how "You must enter to win." They even sometimes emphasized that some people won because the person with the grand prize numbers never entered, so they had to choose somebody else.

It's sort of like that with God's promise—you have to lay claim to it to receive it. And Caleb did! He claimed God's promise, then acted on it and received his inheritance.

We have to do the same when it comes to our *salvation*. God has provided the way in Jesus Christ through his perfect life, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. His Spirit draws us to him. But the time comes when we each have to put our trust in him and commit our lives to him.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bartleby.com/100/402.html>.

We must claim his grace, and if we don't we're still lost.

When it comes to *his church*, and particularly this part of his church known as the Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church, we must claim Jesus' promise: "on this rock I will build my church . . ." (Matthew 16:18). But we must remember *how* he builds it—Paul said, ". . . like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it" (1 Corinthians 3:10, NRSV). Christ builds it through the faith and work of his people who make it up! And his promise of victory that "the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18, NRSV) is the picture of the church advancing against the powers of death, not *vice-versa*! We gain the victory through our faithfulness to and dependence on God's promise and presence. To claim his promise for the church, we *must* be and make disciples for the one who has been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

### ***A challenge***

Now this truth of God's faithfulness to the faithful *challenges us*, doesn't it? No matter what our age or season of life, it challenges us to a deeper commitment than ever. But I believe this text speaks a particular challenge to our senior saints.

As people grow older, they tend to react in one of two ways as far as their work in the church. They usually either "retire" and don't take on *any* responsibility, thinking that their faithfulness through the years has "paid their dues." Or they hold on to positions and power almost desperately, fearing that things will be done differently than they've always done them, or that somehow they will lose their standing among their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I think that Caleb's story speaks a word to both these attitudes. First, it shows us that *the Lord isn't finished using people just because they get old*. Caleb was 85 and ready to claim his inheritance! And senior saints have a wealth of experience, wisdom, and often time to offer in the Lord's work. We never retire from being a Christian, and to be a Christian is to be a servant! Even if you're limited in what you can do, there are still things you can do. If you can't get out to visit, you can visit by phone or send notes or cards. And most importantly, you can *pray*! We desperately need more prayer warriors, especially as we follow Christ into some new areas of mission and ministry where we've never been before. You can fill that need!

Second, Caleb's story shows us that while the Lord doesn't put anybody out to pasture, *leadership has to be passed on and respected*. This is a very practical thing. If we don't prepare younger leaders, then when older leaders die, there's a leadership gap. Caleb was apparently older than Joshua, but he had always respected Joshua and his role as the leader of God's people. Now younger leaders may make mistakes—after all, you probably made some too. And they may lead the church in a new direction or in new ways, because times and needs change, and we must be ministering to the needs of our time in ways that reach the people of our time. Younger leaders need the respect, support, encouragement, counsel, and affirmation of senior saints. That's a vital role you can play in developing leaders for the coming years, an influence that you'll bear long after you've gone to be with the Lord.

You, our senior saints, have made tremendous contributions to the life of our church through the years. And we deeply appreciate you. There's still so much more you can do! Your role now may be a little different, or maybe a lot different, than it used to be, because you were once the children, then the youth, then the young adults, then the middle-aged adults. And now, you are the Calebs among us.

You know from both Scripture and experience that *God is faithful to honor his promises when those who follow him wholeheartedly claim them*.

You're our Calebs! Will you boldly claim God's promises for our church, and show us all the way?

†*MEG*