

The Levites and Caleb

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[0 : 0 0] Joshua chapter 14 if you could turn back there with me please sometimes there's points when we're on a journey and essentially what we've been doing in Joshua the book is we've been following along with the children of Israel as they've been on a journey from the wilderness through the wilderness and into the promised land sometimes when we're on a journey whether we're on a long road trip or we're out on a hill climb somewhere we can be making progress and we can be pressing on at a pace and we can track that progress on a map but there's certain points in the journey where you pause you pull over into a lay-by or you sit on the side of a hill and you get the flask sight and you enjoy a coffee with those who are journeying with you you just pause and you take in where you've got to and you enjoy the company of those who are journeying along with you and then having had that pause having had that kind of intermission you're encouraged you're encouraged your energy levels are back up somewhat and you're able to press on and Joshua 14 it is one of these passages where there's a kind of momentary pause in the text where our eye is taking off the names and the numbers and the places and the details if you flick back just even over the last few pages as we've gone through some of these chapters prior they're dense with details and places and names and numbers and statistics but as we come to Joshua 14 there's a change there's a change in the in the kind of style almost and there's a change in the substance of the of the text and so tonight we are following that text and in some way what we're doing is we're we're hitting pause from looking at all these statistics and these names and we're doing a couple of character studies because that's the essence of Joshua chapter 14 we find our eyes drawn to look at a group of people namely the Levites and then an individual namely Caleb so tonight for the the time that we have

I want to look at the Levites very briefly and then Caleb in a little bit more detail but not in great detail and as we look at them I believe there are lessons for us on on how we're to travel we're all on a journey through time and we're heading towards eternity there is a heaven to gain there is a hell to shun and so as we look at these characters in this journey there's lessons for us on how we are to to wisely travel on the journey that we are on through time into eternity and there's encouragements also as we look at these characters and as we look at these people to see beyond them and to have our eye drawn to see Jesus so first of all I'd like us to look in the first five verses there at the Levites Joshua chapter 14 is where we're at and we're looking at the Levites first and I don't want to say much about them but I really want to to just zero in on one verse and it's verse 4 it says there and you can see the context of this in this section in the previous chapters the different clans the different tribes are being allocated areas of land are being allocated the inheritance which was which was prescribed for them and one by one we see the coordinates the areas that were going to these people groups but then we see the Levites and it says in verse 4 the Levites received no share of the land but only times to live in with pasture lands for their flocks and herds so all these other tribes we kind of have a vision in our mind's eye perhaps of them being amongst the solicitors in our language the legal papers the documents the title deeds they're all out and they're all being examined and each group is getting what's been allocated to them but the Levites get nothing there's no land there's no loot there's no riches there's nothing no inheritance and so if we come in simply at

Joshua 14 we ask the question why why are they getting nothing and the answer to that is found in the previous chapter you go to chapter 13 and verse 33 the answer to that question is given there but to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance the Lord the God of Israel is their inheritance as he promised them see the Levites were set aside as a particular people and they would serve the Lord and they would serve the Lord's people and their job their remit their privilege would be that they would glorify God that's what their life's task was they were to glorify the Lord and they would in that special way in a special service enjoy the Lord both in the present tense now and then forever that was their remit no inheritance no stuff but the Lord was their inheritance and serving him was their goal and you know that's actually our remit in this world the short of catechism question one says what is the chief end of man and the answer is man's chief end is to glorify

God and to enjoy him forever you know the Levites had no treasure on earth no legal inheritance but they had the Lord they had the privilege of serving the Lord and the encouragement and the instruction for us even as we look at the Levites is to be like them be like the Levites have the perspective of the Levites yes as we read in verse 4 of this chapter yes live in the towns that God has put us in and work the land do the jobs enjoy the relationships give thanks for the stuff that God has allowed us to have and to be involved with but let's be careful not to let our possessions our stuff possess us let's hold our stuff lightly to work the land enjoy what

God has given us but always remember we're not we're not permanent citizens here we have no continuing city here we're passing through from time which is just that into eternity which is beyond our measurements Max Lucado wrote that book with the title Traveling Light as Christians were to travel light Jesus travel light didn't he in his journey through time he's the one who traveled from heaven to earth he's the one who traveled from glory to Golgotha he is the one whom we sang of in psalm 24 who made everything the earth belongs legal title unto the lord and all that it contains and yet he the lord Jesus became poor so that we might become rich he as we sang emptied himself of all but love to bleed for

[9 : 36] Adam's helpless race that's us Jesus Jesus Jesus was the king of kings and yet he came to this earth to be the servant king he came as he said himself in Matthew chapter 20 and verse 28 not to be served but to serve and to lay his life down as a ransom for many and Jesus did lay his life down and yet he said himself in Luke 9:58 he had no place to lay his head the earth belongs unto the lord everything and yet his experience in this world was that he had no place to lay his head so we look here and we see the Levites in Joshua 14 but in many ways they point us to Jesus and they realign our perspectives to be people who will travel lightly and travel wisely in the journey through time into eternity so that's the Levites be like the Levites the second point here is we we look at this character we can narrow our focus slightly from a group of people to one individual person Caleb and Caleb is a role model essentially and we need role models so yf yf are meeting after this service this evening when I think back to yfs over the years I remember being in one yf that was incredibly blessed and I think one of the reasons it was so blessed was that going through the different ages and stages they were good role models they were very young children who looked to the slightly older children the slightly older children looked to the teenagers the teenagers looked to the twenties the twenties looked up to the thirties and the forties and the thirties and the forties the middle ages were looking to these mature people and going right through there were role models in the life of that church and we need them we need to see people who will show us in the way that they live what it looks like to follow Christ a friend of mine put something up on Facebook in the last week he works in all nests

I think it is as a kind of drug and alcohol worker and he shared something on facebook about some ross county players who were being recognised as young highland role models they had a particular interest in helping some young people who were trapped into alcohol and drug addiction and wanting to pull them from that and so they were they were guys who were who were held up there as as in some measure role models people who would inspire them and Caleb is somebody that whatever age or stage we're at in this in this world he gives us inspiration to keep on going as Christians he's someone to look to because as one of the commentators says he's a model of faith so what kind of faith did

Caleb have there's various things I want to just draw out the text here what kind of faith did Caleb have the first kind of faith he had was ambitious faith he had ambitious faith the question is ambition for what and the answer to that question is he had ambition for God's glory Caleb's desire Caleb's wish was to see not himself lifted up that God's name lifted up and God's glory advanced and as we take this in the context that we find it the Lord had promised his people the land that they were now advancing into at some pace and before this as they made their approach to the land the surrounding nations especially the nations that were going to clash with

God's people they knew that God had promised his people that this was the land that they would inherit and so if the Lord's name was to be honoured the Lord's promise would have to be delivered and so the Lord's people would need to advance into that land now we wind the clock back somewhat about 40 years or so and if we went to numbers chapters 13 and 14 we're not going to go there but you can look at that later on this evening if you want to we find in that passage that report of the spies remember the 12 spies went out to survey the land that God had promised them they were in the wilderness at that point and they were on the threshold of the promised land and they went in spies went in 12 of them to have a look at this land and the land looked good but the people there looked scary they were powerful people they were big stocky giant kind of people the anachites so when the spies went in yes they liked what they saw but as they thought about the prospect of a class for these people they weren't happy with it so 10 of the spies having gone into the land returned back to the people and they gave a bad report they tell the people no where are we going there they told stories about the giants and the dangers and the terrors of that land such stories that would make verse 8 the people's hearts melt with fear and that was very calculated what they did now why did they tell these stories well you could say well in part because they were true and there's truth in that but if you distill it down further the 10 bad accounts came in the form that they came in because these 10 fearful spies had no ambition to see

God's name glorified their ambition their drive was simply to save their own skin and to avoid conflict but then we have Caleb with Joshua and Caleb has an ambition to see God's name glorified so yes he goes in and yes he sees the giants and yes he sees the dangers and yes he sees the terrors and yes he can imagine the prospect of the classes with these people but none of these things fazed him because God had promised and God would go before them and God would go with them so he wasn't fearful about entering the land not when he was 40 in Numbers 13 and not when he's 85 in Joshua 14 85 by the way did you hear 85 he sees the giants he sees the mountains he sees the terrain he sees the terror but above all that he sees

[18 : 22] God and he hears God's word God is stronger said Caleb than any giant God will glorify his own name and give us success in our journey if we will trust him says Caleb he has an ambitious faith doesn't he he's a great example and I do believe we have we have Caleb's we're blessed with Caleb's in this community and this church and I want to just encourage all of us whoever we are to be inspired by this man when he's 40 inspired by this man when he's 85 will you go tomorrow morning into the office or the hospital ward or the school playground the classroom the canteen the fishing boat the home well you go out into these different places into a world and a community of giants fearlessly desiring spiritually speaking to take the territory and take the heat that comes from sharing the gospel because your absolute ultimate desire and ambition is to see souls saved and God's name glorified

Caleb had an ambitious faith second point in terms of Caleb's faith is he had an anchored faith you know it's one thing to have ambition but one has to assess are these ambitions realistic I might have ambitions to become the prime minister in the next six months are these ambitions realistic of course not they're ridiculous Harris FC may have ambitions to ascend to the giddy heights of the champions league are these ambitions realistic I'm sorry read out it what about Caleb's ambitions you know are they realistic I mean he's 85 and there are giants there are big powerful men there are many many barriers and yet he believes he's going to take this land he's going to enter this land that has been promised to him are his ambitions actually realistic well the answer to that question is yes they are and then when we ask again well why are they realistic it's because they're anchored to God's word that's what makes them realistic his faith is ambitious but his faith is anchored it's not ridiculous unreasonable faith it's an anchored faith in

God's word and Caleb's recurring emphasis in this passage is on what the Lord said look at verse 6 he talks about what the Lord said and then when we go to verse 10 and verse 12 he's absolutely fixated on what the Lord promised one of the commentators Dale Ralph David says the sheer difficulty of the task stimulated Caleb's request but we must remember he says if we believe numbers 13 this is not because Caleb was an optimist whereas the Israelites had been realists but because Caleb was a believer whereas the Israelites had refused to be his faith is realistic his faith is anchored in God's word and for us as we apply this in an age where God's word is so much under attack we're called to be Calebs in an age where everybody else says that's ridiculous we're not going there that's unreasonable that's going to get us shot that's going to get us criticised that's going to land us in all kinds of hot water our calling is to be

Calebs we sometimes sin we have an anchor that keeps the soul and that anchor is not some government initiative it's not some cultural trend it's not our strength it's not our determination and our willpower our anchor is the Lord and his word so Caleb's faith is ambitious yes but it's anchored in God's word his faith thirdly here is an act of faith it's not just that Caleb knew God's will it's not just that Caleb had a good memory and he could remember God's promises but he was determined he was going to act on and over the years many years he remained consistently determined that he was going to act upon it

F.B. Mayer says amid the marching and the counter marching the innumerable deaths the marmorings and rebellions of the people Caleb retained a steadfast purpose to do only God's will to please him to know no other leader and to heed no other voice Caleb's desire was to please God without faith it is impossible to please God it says in Hebrews 11 6 Caleb's determination was to please God his life was not the perfect life he was a sinner just like we are but his life was a life of faith anchored to the word and promises of God active in the pursuit of God's will and God's glory his life was a life that pleased the

[25 : 15] Lord and it's a life that points us forward to Jesus the one in whom the father said remember he was well pleased Jesus the one who never sinned the one who never lost track of his father's will and purpose the one who revealed the glory of God in every word he spoke and every action and every reaction and every healing and every miracle and supremely as Jesus went to the cross we see that determination to do the will of the father we see that loving determination to complete the work of salvation that would bring sinners like us forgiveness and eternal life as we trust in him

Caleb's faith was an ambitious faith it was an anchored faith it was an active faith it was an abiding faith voice says what was the secret of Caleb's success it's not difficult to answer that question he says Caleb has total faith in God and he utterly gave himself to God great men says boys they're never really complicated Caleb had an abiding faith it wasn't a fleeting faith he wasn't up one day and down the next he wasn't sort of steady in his 20s and fading in his 30s and super zealous in his 40s tired and wayward in his 50s he was just abiding in the Lord constantly steadily steadfastly and so we only have snapshots of his life here we see him at 40 the threshold of the promised land everybody else melting with fear

Caleb saying what's the problem don't you see God don't you hear his word didn't he say we can take the land why are we hanging about let's take the land then at 85 when everybody else is thinking about drawing their pension Caleb's ready to draw the sword God has promised he says let's go and that kind of vitality that kind of consistency comes from a life that is abiding in Christ to bring it into the New Testament Jesus said abide in me and die in you in John 15 as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me Caleb is a before Christ example of what Jesus was teaching in John 15 he's fruitful he's lively because he's abiding in Christ

I love the Weersby quote I read in preparation Weersby says Caleb was 85 years old but he didn't look for an easy task suited to an old man he asked Joshua for mountains to climb and giants to conquer his strength was in the Lord and he knew that God would never fail him he's a man who wholly followed the Lord you know that's the phrase that actually keeps popping up here verse 8 verse 9 verse 14 Caleb he followed the Lord wholeheartedly it's a great testimony to leave isn't it you know what's what will our testimony be as people reflect on our lives you know in the office when we're not there or maybe in future years if somebody says tell me a little about that man about that woman tell us something about

Caleb they said he followed the Lord wholeheartedly that's an encouragement for us challenge for us how much of our hearts are we given to following the Lord Caleb's faith was ambitious for God's glory anchored in God's word it was a faith that was active it was a faith that came from abiding in the Lord and it was a faith that was advancing on the basis of God's promises the time is gone and so let's end with prayer Lord as we come to you in prayer as we come to the end of this short study we think even about this quote that's in the last point the majority measured the giants against their own strength

[31 : 13] Caleb and Joshua measured the giants against God the majority trembled the two triumphed the majority had great giants and a little God Caleb had a great God and little giants and we confess Lord that often our view of you is blurred by our own fearfulness often Lord we have this overwhelming sense of fear when we see the pressures and the attacks that there can be on your people as we are called to share the gospel in this world we see the giants loom large in our workplaces in our families amongst our circle of friends and we can be fearful as so many were in the account that's accorded for us in Joshua we pray Lord that you would help us to learn to be like

Caleb and Joshua that we would not be overwhelmed by the the hugeness of the giants that we see but Lord that you would enlarge our vision of you and that we would see the reality that there is no one and there is nothing that can stand against you and prevail so we pray Lord that you would help us to see you clearly and we ask that you would forgive us Father for the times that we have lost track of you and we have strayed thank you that you are a God full of grace you're a God who receives us back the moment that we turn in repentance to you and we ask now Lord that as we go from here into a week in different places that you would give us that courage and that zeal of Caleb help us we pray and we ask this in Jesus name Amenress on the amen let's go home in money to to