

## Wholeheartedness

### Caleb

The Israelites failed to go into the promised land of Canaan because of their lack of faith in the power of God, despite it being demonstrated every day to them. As a result they wandered the desert for another 38 years whilst the unbelieving generation died out.

Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob **Numbers 32<sup>11</sup>**

Only Joshua and Caleb trusted God enough to overcome the difficulties that they would have. Caleb especially had spoken out and tried to persuade the people that they could take the land because God was with them, so God allowed them to go into the Canaan.

But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. **Numbers 14<sup>24</sup>**

Eventually, with Joshua as their leader, they invaded Canaan and after five years of fighting, they conquered the land that God had promised them. When the fighting was over, Caleb came to speak with Joshua.

Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'

"Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."

Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. **Joshua 14<sup>6-14</sup>**

### The nature of wholeheartedness

Some definitions:

- Completely sincere and committed. (Compact Oxford English Dictionary)
- Having no reservations; having unconditional and enthusiastic support (Wiktionary)
- Wherever you go, go with all your heart. (Confucius)

What is our heart? It is our very essence the core of our feelings and being. It is essentially our self, who we are.

God is a wholehearted God.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! **1John 3<sup>1</sup>**

I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty," declares the Lord. **Jeremiah 31<sup>14</sup>**

King David was a man after God's own heart. The apostle Paul spoke to the people at Pisidian Antioch about him.

After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' **Acts 13<sup>22</sup>**

When he was making plans for a temple in Jerusalem after his death, David spoke to his son Solomon.

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. **1Chronicles 28<sup>9</sup>**

David gave Solomon three vital directives that we would be wise to take heed of:

### 1. Acknowledge God

A pre-requisite is to be born-again, to acknowledge the authority of God in our lives as Saviour *and* Lord.

On the face of it, it costs nothing to be born again, but it costs us everything to stay born-again. Easy to put a hand up at a meeting and make a commitment, but our commitment to Jesus has to be total and we have to surrender all to him to continue.

Every day reaffirm that He is the Lord of your life.

If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. **Joshua 24<sup>15</sup>**

We will see the promises of God fulfilled in our lives..

You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

### 2. Wholehearted devotion

The Hebrew word for "wholehearted" is *shalem* and means "unhewn, untouched stones." In the Old Testament *shalem* often referred to rocks that were uncut. The uncut stones represented uncut hearts. - the kind of wholehearted devotion God wants from His people.

Jesus said:

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. **Mark 12<sup>33</sup>**

A divided heart puts us in no-man's-land - a place of danger. The Israelites had divided hearts when they went left Egypt and they failed to enter the Promised Land. They changed their minds and made a half-hearted attempt to take the land but it was too little too late.

Rather than tiring us out, being wholehearted gives us strength (eg Caleb).

I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. **Joshua 14<sup>11</sup>**

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. **Hebrews 10**<sup>39</sup>

Conversely being cynical and half-hearted takes away our hope and energy and affects our physical and mental health.

Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise. They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the Lord...

Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. **Psalm 106**<sup>24-25 & 46</sup>

### 3. A willing spirit

He wants us to serve Him and honour Him because we want to. Because it pleases us. Because we choose to. The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.

God wants us to serve Him with a willing spirit, one that would choose no other way. Right now you may be frustrated because serving and knowing God is not your greatest pleasure. Your question may be, "How can I change the way I feel?" You can't. But God can. Give Him your heart - your whole heart. Give Him permission to change it.

Living the life of a born-again Christian is not a matter of how we feel (feelings are important) but it is primarily a decision of the will, a deliberate decision. It is love and love is a decision, not a feeling. If they don't line up at the beginning, our feelings will line up with our decisions eventually.

Being wholehearted:

- Sets us free

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. **Romans 6**<sup>17 & 18</sup>

- Gives us wisdom

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; **Proverbs 3**<sup>5</sup>

- Helps us to find him

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **Jeremiah 29**<sup>13</sup>

- Is the best way to serve

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, **Colossians 3**<sup>23</sup>

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men **Ephesians 6**<sup>7</sup>

To summarise:

- God is wholehearted
- He wants us to be wholehearted too:
  - In our complete acknowledgement of him
  - In our total devotion to him
  - By our determined willingness to serve him
- When we are wholehearted towards God we:

- Inherit His promises (including our salvation)
- Are strengthened
- Live in freedom
- Receive wisdom
- Can find God
- Serve better