

How long can you wait for something? A day? A week? A month? A year? How long can **you** wait?

I remember when I was a teenager and my friends at school were into music and were buying records. But I didn't buy **my** first record until I was 17. It was called 'The Dean and I' and was by a band called 10cc and cost 49p! And that was great. The only thing was, I didn't buy my own record **player** until I was **18!** In those days we **waited** for what we wanted. If you didn't have the money, you had to wait.

Nowadays we live in a want now, **get** now society. People don't **have** to wait – it's a get now, pay later society. Every day I see children with phones and music players worth hundreds of pounds in school. They don't have to wait. We don't know **how** to wait. How long can **you** wait for something?

Let's extend that thought a little: How long can you wait for something that's been **promised** to you? Not only do you **want** it, you've also been told you're going to **get** it. How long can you wait?

The obvious example in the Bible of someone who couldn't wait is of course the prodigal son, who couldn't wait until his father died before he had his inheritance, he wanted it and he wanted it **now**, he didn't want to wait. I guess there's something of that in **all** of us, isn't there? – if we're told we're going to get something, we can't **wait** to get it, can we?

We're going to look at a man this evening who was promised something, but there was a time lapse of 47 years before he got it. He'd become an old man before he received it. We're looking at Caleb. We'll be referring back to the first part of his story which is in Numbers 13 – 14, but we'll be concentrating on the **second** part of his story in Joshua, chapter 14. Let's read this now. Joshua chapter 14.

Quick potted history of the story so far: God's people were in slavery in Egypt, God brought them out with Moses as their leader, God parted the Red Sea and **they** walked across while their enemy perished when the Sea returned; they came to the edge of the land God had promised to them through their ancestor, Abraham; Moses sent in **spies** to check the land over – **2** of them, Joshua and Caleb came back saying it was **great**, flowing with milk and honey, ready to be given to them by God; but 10 returned saying they **couldn't** take the land because the cities were well-**fortified** and the inhabitants were **massive**.

In Numbers 14:6-9 we read, *‘Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh ... tore their clothes and said, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly **good**. If the Lord is **pleased** with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord.’* But the Israelites **did** rebel and for the next **forty** years they wandered about the desert.

You’ll have seen those horse-jumping events, the rider urges his horse on, they come to the water jump, the horse’s thinking I’m going to jump, I’m going to jump. Then he sees the water and slams on the brakes – he’s not going in **there!** The rider takes the horse back in a large circle trying to calm the horse and give him confidence to make that jump, and feel everything will be OK, there’s no danger.

The Israelites were like that. God had to take them back into the desert, until they **trusted** that he would give them the land despite any danger. It took 40 years.

We saw when I last preached how God gave his people victory in Jericho under Joshua, and since then another 5 years have passed by with victory in **other** places, before we get to chapter 14.

Here we find Joshua and the heads of the clans allocating areas of the west of the Promised Land to the tribes. It’s clear that they’re **obeying** God in this because verses 2 and 5 say, *‘as the Lord had **commanded**.’* It’s interesting to note that this partition of land begins with one of Moses’ two spies, Caleb in chapter 14, and ends with the allocation for the **2nd** of Moses’ spies, **Joshua** in chapter 19, rounding the section off nicely.

Anyway, it’s at **this** stage that Caleb approaches Joshua to make his request, *‘Now give me this hill country ...’* verse 12.

As we look at Caleb, I want us to see that he is an example of faith, **whole-hearted** faith, **Word-fuelled** faith, **power-enabled** faith and **rewarded** faith.

Firstly then, he’s an example of **whole-hearted faith**.

Verse 7: *‘I was 40 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**.’* Caleb remembers the time when he came back **convinced** that the Lord would give them the land that he had promised. His faith in God was wholehearted. 2

He along with Joshua had no doubts about the God they trusted to keep his promises. But the majority opinion – what 10 of the 12 spies said – was that there was **no** chance of victory because the towns were well-fortified and the people who lived there were **giants**. [Our Caleb lives with giants and **he's** not afraid!] Caleb stood his ground, against the majority, he went against the flow. Ever tried running up an escalator that's going down? I have! It can be done, if you stick **at** it. Caleb went against the flow, because he followed the Lord **wholeheartedly**.

And in verse 9, we read the phrase repeated, Moses says *'you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'* Verse 14 repeats the phrase again, *'because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.'* We know this is a major point of this passage because it's repeated.

Caleb completely followed the Lord. He was willing and courageous enough to stand alone with Joshua stating the minority view that they shouldn't be afraid, he said *'do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us.'* Numbers 14:9. Courageous, because this stance put his life in danger – the whole assembly talked about **stoning** them.

Caleb's wholehearted faith was courageous, complete, **firm** in the face of danger, even **death**. His wholehearted faith led to him being unpopular and even isolated.

He's **commended** for his devotion to God, **nothing** was going to stop him from following the Lord wholeheartedly, because he knew that's what God wanted of his people. Notice the timing of the three references to his wholehearted faith - in the **past**– when they were on the edge of the Promised land the first time; **present** having just entered; and in the **future**, lived there ever since. Caleb was marked by his wholehearted faith **throughout** his life. All his time energy and resources spent following God wholeheartedly.

God wants **us** to be **serious** in following him. He wants us to be **wholehearted** in our faith. If this is a truth worth following, surely it's worth following **fully, completely**. For Paul there was no question. He said, *'For to me to live is Christ.'* Philippians 1:21. He recognised that Jesus had given his life to pay for his sins, so to him it was the only **option**, to follow and serve him completely.

When Peter and John were jailed for speaking about Jesus, they were told not to speak about him again. But they said, *'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'* Acts 4:19, 20.

\They risked prison, but said they would never stop speaking about the Lord Jesus, **could** never stop speaking about the Lord Jesus. They followed him **wholeheartedly**. Why? For this reason: *'Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved..'* Acts 4:11. There is no other God. There is no other way of salvation. There is no **point** in being half-hearted in our faith, because that would just show that we don't put all our trust in **God**, we also put our trust in other things.

There is no other way of salvation. And this isn't a **popular** message today. Like Caleb when he stood firm by his convictions about going into the Promised Land risked his **life**, the man or woman who does not compromise their faith, the ones who remain totally committed to following God are going to face opposition, unpopularity, isolation, and in **some** parts of this modern world today, persecution and death. Do you flinch from that? I have to admit that at times, even often, I do. And I need to seek God's **forgiveness** for that.

God rebukes the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3, because they're neither hot nor cold, and he says to them, *'because you are lukewarm ... I am about to spit you out of my mouth.'* Lukewarm followers are **not** what God wants. **Wholehearted** faith is what's required by God.

How much of your time, energy and resources are spent in following the God who **loved** you and **died** for you? 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my **all**.'

Whole-hearted faith.

Let's move on. We come secondly to Caleb, an example of **Word-fuelled faith**.

You know when someone gets an idea in their head and they pursue it doggedly and will never give up trying to achieve it. Where do they get the idea from? Their own feelings? Their own **desires**? How much **Christian** work is because we want to do it because **we** think it's a good idea? Should we be **surprised** when it doesn't work in the way we want?

See here that Caleb's faith is fuelled by the word of **God**. He makes his request in verse 12 for his inheritance. But it's not because he wants it; it's not because he thinks it would be a jolly good idea to have that piece of land; he makes this request because God's **word** has told him that this will be his inheritance. He's asking for nothing more than what God has **promised** to give him. This is the **foundation** for his faith.

In Numbers 14:24 we read, *'because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly [again, see?] I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will **inherit** it.'* And look at the references in Joshua chapter 14: verse 6 – *'what the Lord **said** to Moses,'* verse 10 – *'just as the Lord **promised,'*** and verse 12 *'he **said** this to Moses,'* – *'that the Lord **promised,'*** and *'you [Joshua] yourself **heard,'***. **God** promised this to Caleb, and verse 9 tells us that Moses swore to him that this land would be his inheritance.

There is no other foundation for faith other than the word of God and the **promises** of God. That's what Caleb stands on here in these verses. Our faith, not just words but **actions**, are to be based upon God's promises in his **word**. We don't practise faith which depends on how spiritual I **feel**, but on God's **word**, on his promises. Someone once said, 'We don't need great faith in God, we need to have faith in a great **God**.'

Jesus said, didn't he, that if you have faith as little as a mustard seed, you could tell mountains to move and they **would**. It's not necessarily great **faith** we need, but faith in the promises of the great God in the Bible. So we need to know Scripture to find the promises of God, so that we can plead them before God. If we don't know what God has **promised**, how can we know what we should expect in following him?

God promised an inheritance to Caleb 45 years ago. And since then God has kept him alive. Because his promise hasn't yet been **fulfilled**. How long does he have to wait? Not much longer now. But Caleb continues to follow God wholeheartedly, because he knows God **said** he would receive his inheritance, and so he's certain that he **will**. In the meantime, Caleb has been part of the wandering through the desert until all the fighting men who refused to go into the Promised Land the **first** time round had died – apart from **two**, of course, him and Joshua. After **that** they'd had years of battles moving **into** the land. Still God **kept** him until his promise was fulfilled.

Do **we** know God's promises to **us**? Do we ask God to keep these promises? Do **we** look forward in anticipation for God fulfilling his promises to **us**? Or are we still wandering about in the desert because we don't know where to place our faith?

'God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son,' and he promised, *'that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* The greatest promise in the Bible. Do you know the truth of it in your life? It's in God's word. It's God's **promise**. Are you following God wholeheartedly as a result of it?

The God who promised Caleb an inheritance, promises eternal life to **all** who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Do you recognise that promise? Have you **claimed** that promise?

Our faith is fuelled by the promises of God in the word that he has spoken.

Caleb, we have to remember, is at this stage when he claims his inheritance 85 years old. I don't know about you, but when I'm 85 I'll be retired, sitting with my feet up at home in my comfy armchair or pottering about in the garden, enjoying the peace and quiet. Not Caleb.

He's thirdly an example of **power-enabled faith**.

What do we **do** while we're waiting for something that's been promised? Sit around waiting for it to happen? Twiddling our thumbs, just killing time? Not according to **Caleb**.

Caleb makes his request to Joshua in verse 12: *'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.'* Israel was afraid – they said *'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'* Deuteronomy 1:28. These things make Israel melt with **fear**.

But not Caleb. **They** said it couldn't be done, **they** said it was impossible. Not Caleb. Israel **refused** the task. **Caleb** has the faith, the energy and strength to pursue it. Israel's **extremity** is God's opportunity, and Caleb will grasp it with both hands.

A western book company is looking for opportunities in Africa and sends a representative to check out the situation. It's not long before the rep comes home saying, 'nobody reads over there, there's no books, it's **hopeless**'. Later they send another rep over. He sends back an excited message saying, 'Great possibilities! **Nobody's** got books here – send over as many as you **can!**'

Caleb pursues **wholeheartedly** what God had promised. *'the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.'* Although the task is difficult, if the Lord is with him it will happen just as God **said** it would. The possibilities are **great** when the **Lord** helps, when the **Lord** gives strength. This 85-year old can say in verse 11, *'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.'*

What an example of faith which is strengthened by the **power** of God. Caleb is strengthened and **invigorated** by almighty God, and so this enables his faith to pursue **all** that God has promised. God **delights** to bless his people and give them victory to gain glory for himself.

Paul says, *'I can do **everything** through him who gives me **strength**.'* Philippians 4:13. When we focus our faith on the all-powerful God, he will enable us to follow him completely and achieve great things for him. Power-enabled faith.

We come then to my final point – Caleb is an example of **'rewarded' faith**.

Let me say straight away that the reward we receive is not earned. There is nothing about all we have and receive from God that we deserve or **earn**. Our faith is a gift from **God**, and the **results** of that faith are a gift from God as **well**. **Nothing** about our salvation and the benefits our faith brings is deserved or earned. God says, *'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.'* Exodus 33:19.

But as a result of the faith that God gives, there **are** wonderful benefits.

As a result of Caleb following God wholeheartedly, standing on the promises God had given him, and fighting for God in the **strength** of God, Joshua gives him Hebron as his inheritance, in verse 13. This is his 'reward'. God kept his promise and rewarded his faith.

Now Hebron was a pretty important place. It was the area to the southwest of Jerusalem and it was significant because it was where the great patriarchs of the people of Israel – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – were **buried**. It was the birthplace of Israel, because it was **here** that the messengers told Abraham and Sarah that they were going to have a **child**, although they **too** were very old when that happened, as we've been thinking about recently. This was Caleb's inheritance, and it belonged to him and his family ever **since**, verse 14.

And look how he **received** the inheritance – the bit that's added in brackets: *'Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.'* The invigorated Caleb went in, the Lord his strength, and drove out the greatest warrior of the area – that is, until **Caleb** arrived! Because he followed the Lord **wholeheartedly**, he received his reward – his inheritance.

What about **us**? Our faith won't be rewarded by land, surely. (If it is, I'll have Patcham!) No.

But there **is** an inheritance promised to **all** who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We've said already, eternal **life** is promised, and we start enjoying that as soon as we put our trust in him.

Peter talks about *'an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.'* 1 Peter 1:4, 5. This is **another** of God's promises to all who believe, a promise of inheritance. An inheritance that nothing and **no-one** can take away from believers because God **himself** protects his followers. And the time that this inheritance will be received is when Jesus comes **again**, when God winds up this **present** earth and heaven and Jesus comes to take his followers to be **with** him. **This is our inheritance. This is our Promised Land.**

We started off asking 'how long can you wait for something that's been promised?' Caleb had to wait 47 years by the time he was victorious in the area of Hebron. How long do **we** have to wait, before we receive **our** inheritance? I can't **tell** you the answer to that, the **Bible** doesn't tell us. But I **can** tell you – it'll be well worth waiting for!

What do we do in the **meantime**? We follow Caleb's example. We follow God **wholeheartedly**. We discover and stand on his **promises** in God's word. We **act** on what we read, we're **empowered** by God to stand firm against our enemies and go his way. Are **you** prepared to do that? Because if you **are**, a great inheritance will be **yours**.

The one who inspired the writer of the book of Joshua was also the one who inspired Paul as he wrote to the Colossian church. Colossians 1, verse 10 onwards: *'And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: [wholehearted faith] bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, [word-fuelled faith] being **strengthened** with all power according to his glorious might [power-enabled faith] so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light [rewarded faith].'*

Right at the very end of the Bible we read, *'He who testifies to these things [that is Jesus] says, "Yes, I am coming soon."* (Revelation 22:20). Will **you** share in the inheritance that he comes to bring? I pray that we all **will**.