

**Faith at 85**  
**(A study of Caleb)**

**Intro:** A young couple looks adoringly on their new born son and they begin to think of possible names for him. The father lights up, “I have an idea. Let’s name him... “Dog”! Not!

Actually, this did happen. Among the descendants of Esau’s grandson, Kenaz, was a man named “Jephunneh”. In the book of Joshua he is called “Jephunneh the Kennizite”, an expression that reminds us that he was not of Israelite ancestry, but an Edomite who in some way was incorporated into the family of Judah. By the time of the Exodus, his son had become leader among the tribe of Judah. We know him however by the Semitic word that the word “dog” translates—“Caleb”. (I hope I haven’t spoiled that name for you by telling you its origin.)

All of us will remember that Caleb was one of the twelve spies who along with Joshua had a faithful attitude toward the conquest of Canaan. Because of his faith he, along with Joshua, was allowed to live to enter the land of Canaan rather than perish in the wilderness as did the other ten spies. But now this week in our reading he reappears in the report of the conquest of Canaan.

Over 45 years have passed since the time he had been chosen to spy out the land and his faith was stronger and more vibrant than ever. He comes to Joshua to lay claim to the promises that the Lord had made to him many years before.

Read the text (Josh. 14:6-15). As I read this I am impressed with the greatness of the faith of this aged man. Notice with me how Caleb demonstrated his great faith.

**He remembered the promises of God**

*The years had not diminished the vividness of God’s promise that day when the Lord spoke about him:*

*So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God fully.’ (Joshua 14:9)*

*What an encouragement that promise must have been to Caleb through these long years of wandering in the wilderness. I wonder if they at times got him through some of the many difficult and disappointing things along the way. Those words of God would come to mind, “the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you”.*

**He acknowledged the providence of God**

*Caleb could see that God had provided for him all through those years in order that he might receive the promise:*

*And now behold, the Lord has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness;*

*“I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. (Joshua 14:11)*

***Caleb acknowledged the providence of God. At age 85, he could affirm that his years were the result of God’s protective power and provision.***

### **He fought the battles of God**

*Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the Lord has spoken.” (Joshua 14:12)*

***It is remarkable that Caleb would ask for this particular place. There are many reasons why he might have wanted to pass on this location:***

Caleb was himself an aged man. He could have said, “I’m too old for this”. I want to turn it over to the younger men; but Caleb didn’t do that!

The hills that Caleb asked for were some of the most difficult to occupy; for the descendants of Anak were there. That is, these were the gigantic men that had been living in the land for many years and had established a stronghold in Hebron. Caleb could have easily justified avoiding confronting these seasoned warriors in preference to places less defended; yet he didn’t do that!

***In spite of all these things he wanted to be used by God to conquer and occupy this land! He wanted to be a part of the work of God’s people at age 85! It is as if he reasoned that God had been preparing him for this battle all his life! And he had hope that God would be with him and help him do his part to fulfill the command of God.***

### **He received the gift of God**

***It is interesting that the text tell us two things.***

Joshua “blessed” him. He prayed for God to be with Caleb in this endeavor.

Joshua gave Hebron to Caleb as an inheritance. He added his own authority to the undertaking as the leader of the nation.

It is as if Joshua the leader of Israel said, “If you are willing to express such faith, then I am willing to let you do the work and may God help you succeed”.

***We might expect that we would read of a series of battles and struggles against this powerful city. Maybe a contest between Caleb and a giant warrior of Hebron. Instead the writer tells us only this:***

*Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the Lord God of Israel fully. (Joshua 14:14)*

**This is enough to say that Joshua's prayers and Caleb's request were fulfilled. And notice that final expression. This expression in one sense bookends this narrative. The reason why Caleb had brought back such an encouraging report as a spy was because he said "I followed the Lord my God fully" (v. 8). Now the historian tells us that such became his possession "because he followed the Lord fully".**

***An application***

***A lesson for the older people***

I could wish that every aged saint would derive their inspiration from this great senior citizen of the kingdom of Israel. How much today we need the aged to press toward the inheritance and take on the enemies of God! We need the encouragement of aged saints who stand on the promises, who can recount God's blessings through the years, who are as ready to work for him at 85 as when they were much younger, and who lead us to the victories God has prepared for His people!

***A lesson for the younger people***

I could wish that every younger saint would derive their inspiration from this great senior citizen of the kingdom of Israel. How much today we need the young to pick out a hero of faith like Caleb and say, "That the kind man or woman I want to be". And then start following their example of faith early in life and gaining in strength throughout life so that they too would be an example to other young people to come.

**Conclusion: I doubt seriously that "Dog" will ever be the name of choice for very many parents for their sons; but the Hebrew name of "Caleb" has served us quite well. And I am sure that every godly parent could wish that their son, whether they name him Caleb or Joshua or some other name, would grow up to be like the Caleb of the OT.**

**It is just this kind of faith that leads us to become a Christian and receive our eternal inheritance:**

***We must remember the promises of God***

***We must acknowledge the providence of God***

***We must fight the battles of God; and then...***

***We will receive the inheritance of God!***