

# Caleb: A Man With A God-Sized Vision, Part 3

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, December 17th 2023

## I. Introduction — Review

So far in this chapter we have looked at the incredible vision of Caleb - a God-sized vision that would take *God Himself* to accomplish. And we saw how important it is to have *God's* idea for our lives, and not something we invent for ourselves. God calls us to operate in the sphere of the supernatural. That's not just for leaders. That's for every believer. Every one of you is called to conquer inward and outward issues that require a God-sized vision.

But we spent most of the last two Sundays showing how his incredible *outward* accomplishments as a leader flowed from eighteen *inner* characteristics. So let me review what we have covered thus far.

The first inward characteristic was that Caleb thrived *under* authority and therefore was able to exercise godly authority *over* others. Leadership without humble submission is an incredibly dangerous place to be, whereas God lifts up the humble leader and exalts him. He trusts that person with more stewardship.

Second, because Caleb had learned to lean on God's supernatural grace, he was driven to achieve things *way beyond his own ability*. And similarly, our passion should be to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

Third, his God-given vision helped him to focus on what *God* thought of him more than on what *others* thought of him. He was not dependent on the approval of others. It's very important that people get past the idolatry of needing the approval of others *before* they become leaders. Otherwise they will have a huge hole in their armor.

Fourth, he showed initiative rather than always being reactive.

Fifth, he had no doubts about God's promises; none whatsoever.

Sixth, his vision was big because it was grounded in God's Word. He was a man of the book.

Seventh, he did not allow dry spells, discouragements, or the passage of time to rob him of his God-given vision. It took a long time before he saw all of that vision fulfilled.

Eighth, like William Carey, he expected great things *from* God and attempted great things *for* God.

Ninth, his heart was totally in line with his words and his actions. He was not a Pharisee who pretended loyalty outwardly, but was inwardly something else. No, his heart lined up with his words and actions. And we are fakes if that is not true of us.

Tenth, he shared his vision with others. Leaders can't help but share their vision.

Eleventh, he did not allow the fear that was being generated by others to kill his faith. Fear can be contagious, but Caleb had learned to not be influenced negatively by the fears of others. That's huge. In my early years this was my constant failing.

Twelfth, the Hebrew of "I wholly followed the Lord my God" (a phrase used five times of Caleb) means to close the gap between himself and the Lord or to press into the Lord. As one commentary worded it, "Every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber of Caleb belonged to God."<sup>1</sup> Do we daily press into the Lord?

Thirteenth, he was a promise keeper and he could thus expect others to be promise keepers. And there is a lot packed into what it means to be a promise keeper.

Fourteenth, he had a multi-generational vision. He didn't just seek something for himself. He sought it for his children and his grandchildren. His investments had a long-term orientation. And the success of that long term vision can be seen by the number of phenomenal leaders that were found among his descendants, with many of them having places named after them. He disciplined them into his God-sized vision. They *caught* the vision. And that can only happen with our sons and daughters *if* we disciple our followers like Caleb did and like Jesus did - by being with them. If leadership could be learned from books alone, there would be a lot more leaders in the world than there are. Leadership training requires hands-on involvement in your sons' and daughters' lives.

Fifteenth, he was humble. He did not take the credit for his conquests, his faith, or even his physical fitness. He credited all of those things to the Lord. Yes, he was involved, but it was God who prospered his efforts.

Sixteenth, he had a godly work-ethic, which we saw involved patience, endurance, and some degree of tenacity.

Seventeenth, he did not allow the unbelief of his generation to make him cynical or disillusioned. In fact, he saw it as a testing ground for character.

And eighteenth, he confidently and courageously claimed His possessions because his faith and hope in God never wavered.

And we saw that all of us need to grow more and more into those eighteen inward characteristics.

## II. The benefits of having a God-sized vision (v. 13-15)

Well, today we are going to look at the *benefits* of having a God-sized vision and the *benefits* of having those eighteen inward characteristics. And there are many other benefits not mentioned here. I mean, even the *sacrifices* we make end up being for our good. But this

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Carr, "Give Me My Mountain (Joshua 14:6-15)," in *The Sermon Notebook: Old Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 733.

passage just mentions five benefits that flowed into his life. So we are just going to focus on three verses.

### A. Joshua's blessing (v. 13a)

The first benefit was the *blessing* that Joshua gave to him. Verse 13 says, "And Joshua blessed him..."

We throw around the word "blessing" rather loosely. Sometimes it becomes almost like a greeting. But in the Bible, a blessing is *far* more than a greeting. When a true blessing comes from the lips of a person walking with God, something is actually conveyed to that other person. This is the testimony of hundreds of Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. I want to just give a very very brief sampling of the *kinds* of things that can happen when we are blessed or when we truly bless others.

Leviticus 9:23-24 says, "And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. *Then* the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces." The blessing that Moses and Aaron gave to the people immediately unleashed God's favor, which was displayed in a very visible and remarkable way. But even when it cannot be visibly seen (which is usually the case because God calls us to live by faith - even when it cannot be visibly seen), blessings bring something *to* people.

For example, Ephesians 4:29 says that ordinary believers can *impart grace* (that's an exact quote, can *impart grace*) to the hearers *through their words*. That's very interesting - an ordinary believer's *words* can actually impart grace into the lives of others.

Or you can think of Matthew 10:43, where Jesus told the apostles that when they bless a household that is worthy, their peace will rest on it. And then it goes on to say, "But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you." So their blessing made peace travel to the house, and if no one in the house was worthy of that peace, the peace would travel back to them; it wouldn't rest on the house. I happen to believe that it is angels who carry these blessings, but that may or may not be true. But the reason I think it *is* true is that the blessing goes to the house and when it is discovered (God doesn't need to discover anything, but when it is discovered) somehow that there is no one worthy of peace, the peace comes back to the one who pronounced the blessing. And yes, all of us have angels that accompany us. Jesus said that even the little ones have their angels. Anyway, moving on:

You can think of Luke 10:5-7, where Jesus tells the seventy disciples, "whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' [That's a kind of blessing, right? say 'Peace to this house.'] And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you."

Or Proverbs 18:21, which says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue [He is saying that the tongue has power - "Death and life are in the power of the tongue"], and those who love it will eat its fruit."

We need to get used to thinking of the fact that our blessings can confer God's grace into people's lives and our curses can tear down demonic strongholds.

I remember the remarkable changes that one woman testified to when she stopped pleading with God concerning her rebellious daughter and her uninvolved husband and all of her woes. God convicted her that she was not praying in faith. She writes that all of a sudden, she had this urge from the Lord to bless her family in faith. And I'll just go ahead and read what she wrote. She started praying,

"I bless Hal with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in every decision he will face today," I heard myself quoting from Colossians 1:9. "I bless him with a faithful heart as my husband and with the ability to be a loving, caring, involved father to Nicole. I bless him with favor and influence to sit among the elders of the gates of our city," flowed the words from Proverbs 31.

With renewed excitement, my attention turned to my daughter. "In Jesus' name I bless Nicole with peace and joy that springs up like a bubbling fountain. I bless her with faith, hope, and love—with good health (physically, mentally, and emotionally). I bless Nicole with protection—may Your guardian angels defend and watch over her. I bless her with healthy friendships and in the future with Your perfect choice of a mate. I bless her with a sensitive spirit, a tender conscience, and a heart that runs hard after You all the days of her life."

Suddenly it was as if heaven itself had come down into my living room. I sensed the Lord directing my prayers in a fresh way. It seemed His face was shining upon me—that He, rather than I, was orchestrating the prayer time.<sup>2</sup>

Her realization that her prayers of blessing actually open up the windows of heaven when we pray them in faith was a turning point in her family. She began discovering her family conforming to the blessings. God was doing something remarkable as a result of her blessings.

When you read the lives of the patriarchs and the other saints in the Old Testament, you will find that they believed in the reality and power of blessing others. When we start and conclude our worship service with a blessing, receive it in faith that God *will* bless you. Don't take it as just a sweet greeting. And you dads need to get used to blessing your households every day.

Joshua valued Caleb as a worthy recipient of the Lord's blessing, and Caleb was indeed blessed. Let me read to you a bit from a commentary on this. This is David Howard's commentary. Every phrase has a bunch of verse references to back it up, but I won't read the references - only the text. He says,

The concept of a blessing is a rich one in biblical thought. God's blessing upon his people bestowed abundant and effective life upon them (e.g., Gen 27:27-29; 49:1-28). It involved bestowing material abundance upon them, such as children (e.g., Gen 1:28; 28:3), land (Gen 26:3; 28:4), or wealth (Gen 28:12-14), as well as upon

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<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Sacks and Arlyn Lawrence, *Prayer Saturated Kids: Equipping and Empowering Children in Prayer* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2007), 48.

others (Gen 12:3; 22:18). When people blessed God, they were worshiping him, ascribing worth to him and his great name (e.g., Ps 103:1–2; 104:1). When people blessed each other, it conveyed a desire for God’s best to befall them (e.g., Gen 47:10; Judg 5:24; Neh 11:2; Prov 30:11). Blessing someone was more than wishful thinking, however, since blessing in the name of the Lord tapped into the power and resources of God himself.<sup>3</sup>

I don’t like the way he phrases that as tapping into God’s power and resources, but there *is* a communication of God’s resources when you by faith bless those who should be blessed. As Ephesians 4:29 words it, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” May we learn to impart grace to each other through blessings. I know I’ve spent a long time on this, but I really think that we need to up our game on this particular issue.

### **B. Gets his inheritance first (v. 13b-14)**

The second benefit Caleb got as a result of his huge vision was that he got his inheritance. That was a pretty obvious and visible benefit of his vision. And interestingly, he got *his* inheritance before anyone else got theirs. Chapter 15 will show that Judah received its inheritance by lot before the other tribes did because God wanted to honor that tribe as the royal tribe. But here God gives Caleb his portion within Judah before anyone else in Judah got their apportionment.

Don’t disparage the idea that you can inherit tangible assets from the Lord. If you have been faithful to serve God’s interests rather than your own, God loves to bless you with more resources. If your soul has been prospering, God loves to prosper you with wealth and health as well. 3 John 2 says, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” One of the benefits of having your soul prosper, is outward prosperity. Or to use this chapter, the reason God could trust Caleb with so much outward inheritance was because he had fully embraced the inward eighteen characteristics that would make his soul prosper. So don’t downplay physical blessings. God loves to give them.

### **C. Honor — Hebron is a place of honor**

The third thing he got was honor. And I’ll spell this out in more detail in a bit, but God trusted him with honor because Caleb wasn’t about himself. He had spent a lifetime humbly seeking *God’s* honor and had humbly served *God* for so many years. Matthew 23:12 says, “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” It’s just a part of God’s economy that He loves to honor those who love to honor Him. And by the way, this is imitating God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - three

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 330.

Persons in one God. If you read Bruce Ware's book on the Trinity<sup>4</sup> you will see that the Father is driven to honor Son and Spirit, and the Spirit is driven to honor Son and Father, and the Son is driven to honor the Spirit and Father. They are the most unselfish Persons in the universe, and that is why they love humility in us. Humility is so dear to God's heart that God can only honor those whom He can *trust* with that honor - in other words, the humble. It's one of the reasons I have been so convicted recently to crucify any vestiges of pride, arrogance, and anxiety that I might find within me. And so Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The timing is in his hands - and He sometimes waits to see how we will respond. The greatness of Caleb's vision was not a self-serving one, but a vision that longed to see *God* exalted in the earth. It's the kind of vision God delights in blessing. Can you see that?

Anyway, verse 13 goes on to say, "and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance." Before I develop why this was such an incredible honor, let me address what liberals like to say is an error. Liberal archaeologists from a few decades ago liked to dogmatically claim that no one lived in Hebron during the time of Joshua, so the book of Joshua must be in error. And it never ceases to amaze me that liberals repeatedly embarrass themselves by trying to find mistakes in the Bible; they are always proved wrong eventually.

First of all, stones don't speak. The liberals dug around in the stones for a few weeks and couldn't find anything, and thus their dogmatic claim that there was nothing there to find. But here's the problem. Stones don't really speak. You interpret archaeological remains based on presuppositions, and liberal presuppositions are hostile to God and the Bible, and thus tend to make them blind to the evidence. I was just reading in our devotions recently about the Pharisees trying to kill Lazarus because so many people were believing in Jesus as a result of the amazing resurrection of Lazarus. They wanted to hide the evidence. But God loves to humble prideful liberals over and over again. And liberals for sure have egg on their face on this issue. In the last few years conservative scholars have uncovered a massive amount of evidence that Hebron was indeed occupied during and after this time. (And I should have put some of the pictures into the outline. But let me give some of the evidences.)

If they had even read Josephus, they should have suspected this. Josephus, who lived in the first century AD claims that Hebron was 2,300 years old in his day. Well, that means that it was occupied in the time of Caleb. Of course, he was far removed from that time, so let's look at evidence from *Caleb's* day.

The discovery of the Egyptian Amarna letters, which are accepted by everyone as being legitimate, mention Hebron as being occupied. These letters are the diplomatic writings between the 14th century BC Pharaohs and their vassal kings. Well, one of those vassal

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

kings was a king over Hebron. That means Hebron existed in the 14th century BC and was occupied just when the Bible says it was.

Third, the Egyptian temple of Medinet Habu, lists the cities of Canaan during 1250-1000 BC. One of those cities mentioned was - you guess it - Hebron. So according to this new discovery, Hebron was occupied during the time of Caleb's conquest.

Fourth, in September of 2005, new *archaeological* research at the site of Hebron by Jeffrey Chadwick, has completely disproved the older liberal claims concerning that *same* area. The liberals just didn't dig long enough. The new digs show much evidence of occupation at Tel Hebron during this period.

And since then, new overwhelming evidence has been uncovered of Hebron's city gates being burned during this period and a 60 foot tower being torn down, and other evidences of occupation during the period of Joshua and Caleb. So ignore the older archaeology books on Hebron. As Leibel Reznick words it,

Before the finding of concrete evidence, Hebron was flaunted as contrary to the Biblical narrative of an Israelite conquest of Canaan. With the discovery of artifacts in recent years, Hebron now boasts of incontrovertible evidence of the Israelite conquest.<sup>5</sup>

But let's look at some reasons why getting Hebron was such an honor to Caleb.

**1. Caleb possesses the place of Abraham and Sarah's burial place (Gen. 23:2-20; 25:9-1) as well as the burial place for Jacob and Leah (Gen. 49:29-31; 50:13)**

First, Caleb possessed the very place where Abraham and Sarah were buried, and where Jacob and Leah were later buried. And I've given you the Scripture references for those burials in your outlines. These patriarchs were men and women of faith who believed that their descendants would inherit the land, and they wanted to be buried *there* as a testimony of faith that God's promises would one day be fulfilled. While the rest of Joshua and Caleb's generation died in unbelief, it is so appropriate that *Caleb* would inherit Hebron since he had the same faith as those patriarchs did.

**2. This was the place where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived for years (Gen. 35:27-29; 37:1,13-14)**

Second, this was the place where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *lived* for years. Caleb wanted to identify with the home-base of these patriarchs.

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<sup>5</sup> Leibel Reznick, "Did Hebron Disappear?", <https://aish.com/48964966/>

### 3. This was the place where produce was gathered from to prove the land's fertility (Numb. 13:22-23)

Third, this was the place where produce was gathered by the twelve spies about 40 years earlier to prove that the land was indeed a very productive and fertile place. Numbers 13:22-23 says,

22 And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23 Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

Joshua and Caleb considered that fruit to be a testimony to God's goodness and sought to use that to convince their generation that God was indeed blessing them. How appropriate to honor Caleb with the very place where that fruit came from.

### 4. This was the place from which David would rule for seven years (2 Sam. 2:4,11; 1 Kings 2:11) and where he would father six sons (2 Sam. 3:2-5)

Fourth, this was the place that David would later rule from for the first seven years of his reign. It was also the place where he would father six sons. Caleb obviously wouldn't know that, but God in His providence would place a long line of faithful men from Abraham to David in Hebron. So I believe this paragraph was included to place Caleb into that hall of fame. It was an honor to receive Hebron. It was an honor that spoke to his deep humility and trust in God.

#### D. It requires consistent pressing into the Lord (v. 14b)

The fourth benefit that Caleb received for having a God-sized vision was that it absolutely required that he press into the Lord. If he had a smaller vision, he could have done it on his own, but God gave him a vision that required him to depend upon God, which in turn meant that he had to experience God's supernatural power. And so the very *difficulty* was also a *benefit*. We saw in the last sermon that the phrase "he wholly followed the Lord" is more literally that he fully pressed into the Lord or kept the gap between himself and the Lord small. Obviously this was one of the inner characteristics that we already dealt with, but a God-sized vision of taking on the giants required that he *constantly* depend on the Lord and press into the Lord. Verse 14 says,

Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

Israel was the name given to Jacob (Ex. 32:13; 1 Kings 18:36; 1 Chron. 29:18; 2 Chron. 30:6). So once again, it is connecting Caleb's faith and loyalty to God with that of the patriarchs.

So the first benefit was blessing. The second benefit was tangible land. The third benefit was honor. The fourth benefit of his vision was that it forced him to depend upon God.

## E. Cultural change happened (v. 15)

The fifth benefit was seeing massive cultural change. And I love this one. Before Caleb died he was able to see a land that had previously been devoted to witchcraft, child sacrifice, sexual perversion, and other evils turned into a place of peace, righteousness, and God-glorifying cultural activities. And these changes are summarized in two sentences.

### 1. The greatest of opponents are overcome (v. 15)

Verse 15 says, “And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.)” Kirjath Arba means the city of Arba. Gordon Mitchell points out that similar name changes are put into various texts to mark a major cultural transition that was about to occur. For example, Zephath becomes Hormah (Numb. 21:3; Judges 1:17). Kirjath-sepher becomes Debir (Josh 14:15; Judges 1:11) - also one of the cities given to Caleb. Luz becomes Bethel (Judg. 1:23; Gen. 28:19). Laish becomes Dan (Judges 18:29). Etc. In other words, even the names that are used reflect a geography that *was* Satanic *now* being dedicated to God.

But that clause also shows another change. This region had been dominated by the very giants that had struck such terror into the heart of the ten spies. It had been dominated by them and their wicked culture for hundreds of years. It was a land of darkness suddenly bursting with the light of the Gospel. Caleb had deliberately picked the hardest place to conquer because he knew that God had promised it and He knew that with God’s enabling, they could take it.

In any case, both ideas hint at the massive cultural changes that can happen in a very quick period of time when God’s people have faith to take on giants, and when they do not allow discouragements to stop them praying in faith, and when they are willing to take steps of faith that prepare the fields for rain (as Alex Kendrick likes to word it). Just look at the massive cultural changes that have repeatedly happened in the last 2000 years. When you study history it encourages you that our culture is not too difficult for God to change. It’s not. Look at the huge changes that happened in the Great Awakening under John Wesley and George Whitefield’s preaching.

### 2. The land had rest from war (v. 15)

The last clause of verse 15 says, “Then the land had rest from war.” Hebrews 4 tells us that this was not the final rest since future generations would have repeated wars, but it was still a real rest in the sense that the campaign came to an end. God gave them a reprieve. It was a temporary resting point.

But the word rest is also typological of New Covenant Gospel triumphs. Hebrews 4 reminds us that the book of Joshua is a prophetic picture that foreshadows the whole of the New Testament age - from warfare to rest. There is coming a time in our future when all enemies of the Gospel will be subdued by God’s grace and the world will be a Christian world. But Hebrews says that instead of a sword of steel accomplishing this, God will accomplish the Christianization of the world *through us* with something *far* more powerful - the sword of the Word of God, the Bible.

And as a prophetic picture, this book shows us that there will be ups and downs - times when Christianity dominates and times when the pagans dominate because Christians lack of a God-sized vision and lack faith. But it also illustrates how living by faith makes all the difference in the world. David Jackman said, "The issue is whether we measure the giants by *our* strength or by *God's* promises, and the results are polar opposites."<sup>6</sup> And I say "Amen!" Let me read David Jackman's statement again: "The issue is whether we measure the giants by *our* strength or by *God's* promises, and the results are polar opposites."

We need more Joshua's and Calebs in our generation. Men and women who have a supreme trust in God's promises, His power, and His grace. With God on our side, we have every reason to raise our expectations of what can be done in our country from a small vision to God-sized vision. May it be so of each of us. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> David Jackman, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 146.