

IT Matters! IT includes those qualities and characteristics that make a difference in life. **IT** involves those attitudes and actions that shape our character and determine our steps. **IT!**

A few weeks ago we set out on a journey to discover what really matters. In studying the lives of a few OT characters, we've discovered from Joseph that **IT Matters** we have spiritual fortitude never allowing our circumstances to determine our trust in God. **IT Matters** we don't allow negative experiences to hold us back from experiencing God's will. **IT Matters** we realize God uses trials/tribulation to prepare us for greater things for His glory.

Last week we looked at the unfortunate life of Achan – who taught us that, our understanding and pursuit of God's holiness matters. **He taught us that all sin matters.** He also taught us that it matters we have accountability w/ other believers and are engaged in a local church – **IT Matters.**

This AM we're going to spend a few minutes looking at the amazing life of a man named **Caleb**. We're going to look at two passages of Scripture to learn about how faith matters.

Before we jump headlong into the life and faith of Caleb, it is important to gain an understanding of his background.

I find it interesting Caleb's life didn't start out w/ a silver spoon in his mouth. He was born a slave in Egypt during the Israel's captivity to a non-Israelite father, Jephunneh, who married a daughter of Hur, of the clan of Kaleb, of the tribe of Judah – where he eventually became the clan's chief.

Until he was near 40, all he knew in life was the misery of slavery, the bite of a taskmaster's whip, the constant sense of defeat and humiliation, and the ever-present threat of death. Yet in spite of this difficulty, he was also a man of deep faith in Jehovah who trusted in the provision/guidance of God. And as we ultimately discover, he, along w/ Joshua, are the only 2 survivors out of 2 ½ mil. Israelites to have left Egypt who actually got to enter the Promise Land. **He got to see it all.** Slavery, Egypt, the plagues, the Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, the golden calf, manna, water from the rock, the death of Moses, Jericho, and the conquest of Canaan.

Just what made Him so special? Let's look at Num. 13-14.

The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites...¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak,

few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole b/w them, along w/ some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshkol b/c of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.”

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” But the men who had gone up w/ him said,

“We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” (14:1) That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased w/ 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. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, b/c we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is w/ us. Do not be afraid of them.”

I A Man of **FEARLESS** Faith

After the Exodus, Caleb, along w/ 11 other tribe leaders, was summoned by Moses and asked to cross the Jordan River to spy out the land of promise. When he came to Kadesh-barnea, and was able to see/taste the fruits of the land – he was hooked and couldn't wait to enter into God's promise.

But then came the report. While (2) of the spies (Joshua and Caleb) gave the Promise Land a *two-thumbs up* – the other (10) spies gave it *two-thumbs down*. But it was more than just perspective – IT WAS FAITH IN GOD!

Lest you forget – the Israelites had just witnessed the salvation/provision of God in the 10 plagues and in the miracle of the Red Sea; and now they're afraid of giants?

INSERT: What do you see? **GOD IS NOWHERE**
Who sees – God is no where
Who sees – God is now here

Here's the deal – when others saw *giants* – Caleb saw *God!* When the others said – “*We can't*” – Caleb said, “*We can!*” When the others wanted to *turn back* – Caleb wanted to *move forward*. When the others thought the *best was behind* them – Caleb knew the *best was ahead*. When others saw *problems* – Caleb saw *promises* – and **IT Matters.**

IT Matters we see w/ eyes of faith and not w/ eyes of fear.
IT Matters we believe God can and that He will.

Too many churchgoers suffer from a **grasshopper complex**. We've come to think that our God is impotent and that our faith is insignificant – so we pack up our faith and go home.

Here's a simple **rule of thumb** – if you ever hear yourself responding to a promise of God w/ a “**but**” – then you're probably being controlled by fear and not by faith.

I'd follow God more... but – I'd forgive others... but
I'd come to church more... but – I'd serve God more... but

Why does this matter? Instead of moving forward into promise, the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron asking to go back to Egypt. Imagine that! **They'd rather go back to bondage than to take God at His Word.** They'd rather have the instant gratification of slavery over the blessings and cultivation of their character. **And this still happens today.** Even though sin and disobedience isn't a place to be, for some it's comfortable so they'd rather stay in bondage than move into the unknown w/ God.

And the result is devastating. Just as w/ Israel, when we choose to follow fear instead of God, it sends us wandering in our own faith wilderness – **it always invokes a detour.**

Did you know that as a result of listening to the 10 spies who were motivated by fear, the Israelites, who were camped on the border of Canaan, had to spend 40 yrs. in the wilderness? As punishment for not following God, they spent (1) yr. for every day the spies were gone. An entire generation of fearful grippers and faithless complainers would go on to die in the desert – all of them except Caleb and Joshua.

IT Matters we are motivated by faith and not by fear.

II A Man of **COURAGEOUS** Commitment

I want to point out one other thing in particular that matters. Look back at **Numbers 14:6-10**.

*Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased w/ 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. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, b/c we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is w/ us. Do not be afraid of them.” **But the whole assembly talked of stoning them.***

Caleb and Joshua teach us that **IT Matters** that we have the courage to stand for what is right, good, and of God – even when everyone else is against us. **It Matters**, even in the body of Christ, that we trust in God when it is not popular or even politically correct.

Folks, can I just tell you that it is only a matter of time, maybe even weeks, until the church is going to come under major attack – personal, political, and even physical attack – for what we say we believe. And I promise you, that many will fall away from the faith and join the crowd of consensus – b/c they'll move w/ the mob instead of stand for the truth and leading of God. **IT Matters!**

Now if we stopped right now we'd have plenty to learn from the life of Caleb – but there is more. And if we stopped right here it'd be almost criminal – b/c in Caleb we discover that God's best comes to those whose faith last. See **Joshua 14**.

III A Man of RELENTLESS Resolve

Now the people 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 40 yrs. 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 fellow Israelites who went up w/ me

made the hearts of the people melt in 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 of your children forever, b/c you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'

"Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for 45 yrs. since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, 85 yrs. 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, b/c he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. 6-14

So let's fast forward 45 yrs. The Israelites have survived their wilderness wandering and a new generation has crossed over and have begun their conquest of the promise land. And now – **as a senior citizen** – Caleb comes to Joshua and says, *"Give me that mountain and give me those giants. I was there when God made the promise and I want to be there we He gets the victory – they're mine!*

Before I go any further can I just say that **IT Matters? IT Matters** we never retire from Jesus. **IT Matters** as long as we have breath in our lungs that *we fight the good fight, we finish the race, and we keep the faith.*

It breaks my heart when I see anyone, but especially older adults, quit serving the Lord b/c they think they're washed up – or even worse – they think they've done their time and now it's time for others to serve them. **But oh how it blesses me to see them continue to pour it on for Jesus.**

Can I just tell you how blessed I am by many of you. I was so blessed this past *Upward* season to watch **Jack Miller** coach little boys so he could love them to Jesus. And have you ever been on a mission trip w/ **Herman Spinney** – he works the young whipper-snappers under the table in Jesus name. And let me tell you – I thought I was swinging across hell on an icicle squirting a water pistol into Satan's face when I was blessed to pray w/ **Roy and Betty Kilgore.**

My point – *you're only as done as you want to be done.*

The church hasn't put you on a shelf and God most certainly hasn't called you to ambiguity – **it's up to you.** Yes! The ministry has changed. And yes, church life has changed. And so has the spiritual war we're fighting. But God hasn't changed. His calling on your life is still to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. His call is still to take the mountain for His glory and good.

IT Matters not just that you started well – **IT Matters** equally that you finish well too.

As I close I want to share w/ you about a remarkable man of faith who I have recently become better acquainted. In all likelihood you've heard of George Muller – but as I have begun to read more about him – the more I am blessed and encouraged by his life and ministry.

George Muller lived from 1805–1898. He was an evangelist who after several rejections of becoming a missionary – founded and directed the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England where during his tenure he cared for over 10,000 boys and girls.

Truth is by the time he'd reached 70, he'd accomplished more than 100 men would in a lifetime combined. It is said his work w/ orphans began w/ a small amount of change, 3 dishes, 28 plates, 3 basins, 1 jug, 3 salt stands, 1 grater, 4 knives, and 5 forks – and no building. Before it was over, there were 5 buildings and over 10k orphans who had been fed, housed, educated, and settled into employment. And he never asked a soul for a single penny. **God provided it all.** So much that he gave away nearly 2 mil. Bibles and untold amounts of money. His life is a testimony of God's greatness and provision.

Now here is where it gets good. At age 70, when others would be considering retirement, he was looking for his next mountain to conquer in Jesus' name. As a result, he followed the call of God into all the world. And on his own, from age 70 to 91, he would travel over 200k miles (before planes), visit 42 countries, and proclaim the Gospel over 6,000 times.

At 91 yrs. young, he said, *“I am very near the end of my earthly pilgrimage. Still, I am able to work every day – and all day too. I preach 5 or 6 times a week and besides – I am unspeakably happy.”*

IT Matters – IT matters that we START well – that we STAND tall, and that we FINISH well. IT Matters!