

Wholehearted Faith

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[0 : 00] passage is taken from the book of Joshua, beginning at Joshua 14, which is page 229 in the Pew Bibles. We're going to jump around, so I'll keep you clear about where we're going.

Now, these are the areas the Israelites received as an inheritance in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel allotted to them. Their inheritances were assigned by lot to the nine and a half tribes, as the Lord had commanded through Moses. Moses had granted the two and a half tribes their inheritance east of the Jordan, but had not granted the Levites an inheritance among the rest, for Joseph's descendants had become two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. The Levites received no share of the land, but only towns to live in, with pasture lands for their flocks and herds.

So the Israelites divided the land, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 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 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 fellow Israelites who went up with 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 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 wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out. I am 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.

[2 : 24] Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites. Then the land had rest from war. Now we move to Joshua 18, verses one to ten, which is on page 233.

The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The country was brought under their control, but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance. So Joshua said to the Israelites, how long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you? Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me. You are to divide the land into seven parts. Judah is to remain in its territory on the south, and the tribes of Joseph in their territory on the north. After you have written descriptions of the seven parts of the land, bring them here to me, and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the Lord our God. The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the Lord is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave it to them. As the men started on the way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the Lord. So the men left and went through the land. They wrote its description on a scroll town by town in seven parts and returned Joshua in the camp at Shiloh. Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the Lord, and there he distributed the land to the Israelites

according to their tribal divisions.

Finally, we're going to move to Joshua 21, verses 43 to 45, on page 237. So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors.

Not one of their enemies withstood them. The Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed. Everyone was fulfilled. Amen.

[4 : 38] Well, good evening. My name is Simon. I'm a training minister here at St. Silas. Let me add my welcome to Warrens, who I am in fact dressed as, and let me pray as we start on this passage.

Father God, thank you that you are a mighty king, that you lead your people. So this evening we are here, that you would lead us by your word and by your spirit. Help us to listen, to know, and to understand. Amen. How patient are you? Now you might think if we're covering 11 chapters, you're going to need to be patient. Don't worry, we're going to cover it relatively quickly. But are you a person who can wait in serenity for any amount of time, calmly content? If that is you, it'd be great if you could tell the rest of us how to do it, because we'd all love to learn. But maybe you're just a person who finds patience really hard. If living on Great Western Road is anything to go by, people in the west end of Glasgow are, in general, not very patient, especially in cars. Having to wait for something often exposes us. It shows us that we are the I don't care how I want it now people.

Whether we are those who tend to despair or to anger or to action, it says something about who we are. And who we are while we wait matters, because life is often full of waiting. Sometimes for moments, sometimes for months, sometimes for years. There are many people, some in our own congregation, who have been displaced from their homes in other countries and may have to wait for a very, very long time to go back if the opportunity arises at all. Sometimes the pain of waiting is a really stressful thing. The Bible teaches that God's people are here and now a waiting people.

We are a people waiting for the Lord Jesus to come again, to take us to our heavenly home. And so the question as we go into tonight's passage then is, who are we going to be as we wait?

What does it mean to wait well for the Lord? So tonight we are going to look at a very big section, as I've already said. But it is the second half of the book of Joshua.

[7 : 06] The land has been taken, the war has been fought and won. And we can see this right at the end of chapter 11. Chapter 11, verse 23, it says this. War is over.

Israel are free to have the land that God has given them. And now even that land itself can rest from the war. These chapters, especially from chapter 13 through to 21, are really all devoted to the splitting up and parceling out of the land of Canaan to the Israelites.

This is what Israel have been waiting for for their whole history so far. And so we're going to dive right in with our first point. This land is a promise fulfilled. Now, chapter 13 starts with one of my favorite verses of the entire Bible.

When Joshua had grown old, the Lord said to him, you are now very old. Good for him. But then follows on. And there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

And in verse 2 to 6, God then lists the rest of the lands that Israel are to go and finally take. And then verse 6 says this. The remaining land will be taken with the Lord's help.

[8 : 42] But notice God wants them to have what he has promised them. He wants them to receive this gracious gift that he has prepared for them. A holy land for his people to dwell with him in.

And so he tells them to take the remaining parts of the land. And mostly, over the chapters that we're covering, they do take the land. But these aren't promises that just arrived five minutes ago. These are promises that started all the way back in Genesis chapter 15. So keep a hand in Joshua and turn back to Genesis chapter 15, where God made one of the first covenant promises to Abraham.

So Genesis chapter 15, starting at verse 18. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham and said to him, To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Cadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Vephiites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gershites, and Jebusites.

So right from that early period is Abraham, the forefather of all Israel, saying, receiving from God a promise that all of the land is going to be theirs, the land of all of these tribes.

[9 : 59] And it isn't until 450 years later that they eventually come to see it. That promise of the land gets reaffirmed through every generation of Abraham's offspring.

When we get the liberation of Israel from Egypt in the Exodus, it is to liberate people not just out of slavery, but to a promised land.

The goal for God's people has always been this land of promise. And now here they are. The pagan tribes are defeated, the land is taken, and these promises have been kept over hundreds of years. And here are Israel at last, receiving what God has promised them. And so that's why there are so many chapters devoted to just describing this land.

Because the first readers, this is the land that they're living in. It's the land that they know. When someone says the allotment runs down this gorge and past this lake and up this hill, they go, yeah, I know that place.

[10:59] It's beautiful. And it's reminding them that this is God's gift to them. A land that they did not take by their own strength. Fields that produce food that they did not initially farm.

It's all theirs as a gift from God. In chapter 14, Joshua the leader and Eleazar the priest assign the inheritances to the people by lot.

That is, from our point of view, by kind of random chance, as if they're rolling a dice. But from their point of view, it is something that God is in control of. It is therefore completely fair.

People are given what the Lord assigns to them. And then later, in chapter 18, when the survey of the land is done and the lots are cast, it is all done in the presence of the Lord.

We're told that this is something that he sees, that he is in control of. And there's little details running through all these chapters that are just really beautiful. In chapter 17, a man named Zelophehad in the tribe of Manasseh only had daughters.

[12:01] And when they come and say, are we going to get an inheritance too? They're told, absolutely you are. It doesn't matter, you're part of the tribe, the inheritance is yours. Each tribe gets enough space.

In fact, the only people who don't get any land, you might pick this up in the reading, are the Levites. We're told in chapter 18, verse 7, the Levites do not get a portion among you because the priestly service of the Lord is their inheritance.

If anything, they get something even greater. They get to minister to all of Israel, to be the people who are at the tabernacle and close to the Lord. They may not get land, but instead they get that great privilege.

And were you to go and read chapter 21, you'd see much more about the places they are given to live. Israel even assigned the cities of refuge, that are the places where people go for safety if they've committed manslaughter.

Now we might think that just sounds very specific. Well, it is. And it came up in the law in Leviticus. And even that promise is kept. Israel, do not fail to assign every bit of the land as the Lord had told them.

[13:08] And the point in the midst of all this detail really is that the promises of God for all of Israel's history so far have been fulfilled because their God has been completely faithful.

But if you read through these chapters, that might leave you scratching your head and asking the question, well, if he's been so faithful, why has this taken so long?

Why is Joshua so old? This should have happened quicker. Well, that brings us on to our second point, a problem continued. 40 years prior to the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the land, Israel had almost received the land.

But they'd stalled. They'd gotten to the edge of the land and then they had a problem. And in chapter 14, we see Caleb, who's going to be the focus of a lot of what we look at this evening. Chapter 14, Caleb goes along with the men of Judah, the men of his tribe, to ask Joshua for the land of promise that he has been promised. But if we follow along with chapter 14, verse 6, he says this, You know what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, at Kadesh Barnea, about you and me?

[14:27] 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 fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear.

Now that's interesting, isn't it? Not the enemies of the people made the people melt in fear, but my Israelites who went with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear.

This is remembering a time in the book of Numbers when Israel was sending spies into the land so they could give a report about the land to the Israelites. And Caleb and Joshua come back and say,

The land is amazing.

It is everything that God has promised to us. We have to take it. But the rest of the spies see the size of the people in the land, how many of them there are, and come back in fear, claiming that the Lord has just brought them to this land to kill them off finally.

A generation ago, Israel didn't believe God could actually give them this land. They didn't trust him to protect them. And the consequence of that was 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

[15:41] If you've ever been on a camping holiday, it's fun for a week. It's not fun for 40 years. That generation looked from the earthly challenge in front of them, and instead of looking to God, looked to their own weakness and faltered, failing to receive what was promised and dying in the wilderness.

But now, here they are 40 years later, and Israel have entered the land, and they've seen the walls of Jericho fall, and they've seen dozens of pagan kings fall before the Lord. Have they learned? Well, as the land is divided up, we get ominous little moments running through this story. Just follow along with me, if you will. Chapter 13, verse 13.

But the Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Macca, so they continued to live among the Israelites to that day. 15.63, Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem, so to this day, the Jebusites live with the people of Judah.

16.10, they did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer. To this day, the Canaanites living among the people of Ephraim are required to do forced labor. 17.12, the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region.

[16:58] There are signs in the background of this story that Israel are still struggling to trust the promises of God, even though they've seen the great success that he has brought.

They've seen the conquest, but they keep having these moments saying, well, we couldn't possibly do the next bit. They fear the power of the Canaanites more than the power of their God.

And this is written to people who are surrounded by armies that look incredibly dangerous and may eventually come to Israel. We even see this a little bit in the sluggishness of the taking of the land at the start of chapter 18 that Natalie read.

The camp has now moved from Gilgal, the war camp of Israel, to Shiloh, the place where the tabernacle is. This is Israel not at wartime, but at peacetime, given the divisions of the land.

But 18.3, Joshua said to the Israelites, how long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, your God, has given to your ancestors?

[18:02] Sorry, has given to you. Now, we aren't told what's holding up Israel at this point, but there seems to be some remaining fear that they might not be able to take the land, or maybe they're not strong enough.

And it seems that the mistrust of God is traveling with them. Though these people have seen God's wonders in the wilderness and in the land, they are still reluctant to turn wholeheartedly to their God.

In an otherwise actually pretty joyful and triumphant section, these little moments are the seeds of problems that will eventually become the downfall of Israel in the book of Judges.

As readers, we're being reminded that those problems didn't come out of nowhere, but out of the Israelites' lack of faith in the Lord. And it's a warning for us as readers still, even with the promises of God in full view, we can get distracted by the things of the world that make us fear.

We as New Testament believers can see that God has done this. But much more than that, we can see what God has done through the Lord Jesus, through his death and his resurrection, that he's been triumphant over sin and death and given us salvation.

[19:22] And yet, how often are our hearts and minds drawn away to our own weakness, to the things that make us fear and ultimately away from God? Maybe we're people who look at Western culture and think, how on earth can the church make a difference in this?

Can we really do anything? Or maybe we're just people who think, do you know what, I'm just so unimpressive. I have so little to offer God.

What use am I to him? But notice what we're doing. I'm saying, I'm no use because I don't think I'm very powerful.

To which, doesn't this passage respond as if your weakness is a challenge to the Lord? He can use whoever he wants. He used Israel, not because they were impressive, not because they were wonderful, but because he chose to.

Because God can use who he wants to do his work. God is absolutely able to fulfill his promises and plans using whatever means he chooses. So who cares about being impressive?

[20 : 26] God is almighty. Are our eyes looking in his direction or are we beginning to look down to the things of this world and fearing? This passage is a reminder to keep our eyes up and focused on him.

Because can I really do it? No. But can God really do it? Well, of course he can. I don't need to worry about that. And that kind of faith, if you fill your heart up with it, is what produces a man like Caleb.

And here's the focus of our third point, a perseverance rewarded. Now, I wonder how you imagine Caleb as you read this passage. He really is a remarkable character in the story.

He's kind of a beastly octogenarian. He has come to Joshua to ask for the land that he was promised back in the book of Numbers. This was the land that he was rewarded for being one of only two faithful spies sent into Canaan the first time.

But have a look down at chapter 14, halfway through verse 8. We can follow along there. So he's just said what happened with the rest of the Israelites. But he says, I, however, followed the Lord, my God, wholeheartedly.

[21 : 38] 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 45 years since the time he said to Moses while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, 85 years old and I'm still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out and I'm just as vigorous to go into battle as I was then. You want to meet him, don't you? You want to be like, I've been thinking all week, is he just humongous or is he just like a normal sized 85 year old who's just mega powerful? Hard to know, doesn't say. Whatever's coming up in your mind, here is a man ready for the land.

Here is a man who knows that his God is good and can keep his promises. And notice what's said in verse 8 and verse 9 and verse 14. Caleb has followed the Lord his God wholeheartedly.

And what a wonderful comparison to that, the half-hearted trust of Israel running in the background. This man at the age of 85 wants his bit of the promised land and is excited to take it.

[22 : 51] Caleb has persevered and trusted the Lord through the disappointments and frustrations of the wilderness years. absolutely sure he will get what God has promised because he trusts the Lord with his whole heart.

In verse 12, we hear he's going to take the cities of the Anakites and that might just feel like another name if you're reading this, but let me say that's a name that would have struck absolute fear into the hearts of many.

The Anakites were the giant, strong men of Canaan. They're like the boss level of the land. And the presence of the Anakites is what made the other spies 40 years ago decide that they couldn't take the land.

They saw these huge men and thought, we cannot do that. And so what does Caleb get? Look at verse 12. This is where Caleb's confidence is.

Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised to me that day. You yourself heard 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.

[23 : 54] He looks at the gigantic monsters of Canaan and goes, it's not a problem. Of course not. Because he has such wholehearted confidence in his God. Caleb has no fear and no concept that these beefy pagans are going to be a problem because he simply trusts that the Lord is with him.

All of Israel 40 years ago looked at these enemies and thought, we can't do that. And Caleb looks at these enemies and never questions that God can. And he gets the land.

It's as simple as that. Out of this wholehearted trust of the Lord, he gets what he was promised.

Caleb is an amazing picture of what wholehearted faith gets you. He is 85, vigorous, ready for battle and joyful, trusting in the Lord.

That is the fruit of wholehearted faith. Now we might not be expecting to be like brawlers at 85, but actually, wholehearted faith in the Lord is fruitful over time.

You may well have the joy of knowing elder saints who've persevered with the Lord for many years. We are privileged to have a good few here at St. Silas. I'm still encouraged by a couple I know in

Edinburgh named Joe and Anne who are in their 80s and are still bringing people to know the Lord Jesus in their nursing home.

[25 : 13] They've never stopped telling people around them about the Lord Jesus and people they've met in their 70s have come to know the Lord because God has kept them fruitful and it is because Joe and Anne love the Lord Jesus and it's so evident when you meet them, it just pours off them all day.

They are joyful knowing Jesus and they are eager to go to their heavenly home and that is what walking wholeheartedly with the Lord gets you. A joyful faith, vigorous at 85, ready to keep going and take hold of what the Lord has promised.

And that should excite us. We can be people who are vigorous into our later years knowing the Lord is with us. So whilst Caleb is a wonderful example of wholehearted faith, he's not everything, is he? He's the kind of Israelite we hoped for but he's just one man and the whole nation aren't all like Caleb in this story. Great though he was, even he's just pointing us to something greater.

A greater Israelite with greater victory in a greater land. And so our final point then is a prize awaited. We as Christians today aren't hoping to go and storm the land of Canaan and take it back once more.

[26 : 32] But it isn't as if God hasn't kept his promises. As our section wraps up and at the end of chapter 21, we read this from verses 43 to 45.

So, The Lord gave Israel all the land that he had sworn to give to their ancestors. They took possession of it and settled there and the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he has sworn to their ancestors.

Not one of their enemies withstood them and the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of the Lord's good promises to Israel failed. Everyone was fulfilled.

The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord. He's the one who's victorious in this story. Israel, join in his victory because this God keeps his promises and doesn't fail.

And whilst we aren't seeking to go back to that land, we are looking forward to a true and better promised land. Our land of promise is the one that will come through Jesus when he comes again.

[27 : 37] One that Revelation describes as God's dwelling place among the people, being their God, wiping away every tear from their eyes with no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order will have passed away.

There is a promised land worth waiting for and it is coming. So how do we wait? What does it mean to wait patiently in this age?

Because we aren't in the wilderness in the same way that Israel were. Jesus has already come. Redemption has already been achieved through his death on the cross and he was resurrected and he reigns now.

What we're waiting for is him to come back. Well, so finally, if you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11 verse 39 which is on page 1210 of the church Bibles.

chapter 11 of Hebrews speaks about what's often called the heroes of the faith.

[28 : 47] These are people who throughout the Old Testament died believing that the promises of God were still true and was going to go way past their lifetimes. And we read in verse 39 all of these were commended for their faith yet none of them had received what had been promised.

Since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Caleb was waiting for us to turn up.

Isn't that a strange thought? Was Caleb waiting for the Messiah? Absolutely, but he was waiting for the whole kingdom. Even Caleb in receiving the land is being pointed forward to something greater and bigger because in his own history the history of Israel and God God has said that one day all the evil and sin and death and curse will be taken away and even in Canaan no matter how good it is that's still not true.

Only together with us and with those in the future who believe in Jesus until the whole kingdom is wrapped up will things be made perfect. But as we look back at these Old Testament stories the faith of these people is something that goes much further and so our faith does too.

So if you read on to verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12 therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us fixing our eyes on the Lord Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross scorning

its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[30 : 36] How do we wait well? Well we throw off everything that hinders us from running for Christ we get rid of every sin that entangles us Messageries don't turn up to the marathon wearing full skiing gear it's not helpful come dressed for the event for us that means live a life of holiness focused on the Lord Jesus because if we look to our own weakness and to the world we will start to stumble and falter but if we look at him at the finish line already having one inviting us home then we can run wholeheartedly for him for our whole lives we await the coming of Jesus to bring the kingdom in full and Jesus knowing the shame and pain that would come through his death had an unwavering and wholehearted trust in the Lord and through the cross he conquered death and was resurrected forever Caleb conquered with his eyes on the Lord we conquer with our eyes on Christ running the race and keeping our eyes on the prize of eternal life with him which means that we can have wholehearted faith we can have faith in the one who's gone before us and we have even more reasons to have that faith than Caleb did as Jesus takes us to an eternal promised land forever so friends don't let your eyes be drawn away to the things of this world that you fear or to your own weakness keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and his power and keep running wholeheartedly trust in God and the promise that he made and will absolutely fulfill and one bright day we'll be standing in the land of glory forever enjoying God in full together and it will be absolutely worth the faith that we had so may the light of that day strengthen us as we seek to live for Christ let's pray father thank you that you are a God who makes promises that you are a God who loves us enough to offer us an eternal home with you free from sin and death and pain father we long for that day to come but until it does and until Christ comes again keep us faithful and keep us thankful and keep our eyes focused on you

Lord Jesus you are welcoming us home and have sent your spirit that we may run to you so help us to do that every day in repentance and faith until the day that you come again in glory Amen