

"HE WHOLLY FOLLOWED THE LORD."

– JOSHUA 14:5-15. – *OCTOBER 26.* –

WHAT A GRAND, what a wonderful testimony this is respecting any man; – he wholly followed the Lord. And the words have special force and weight in Caleb's case, because by nature he was not of the children of Israel, but only by adoption into the tribe of Judah. He was of the seed of Abraham, but through the rejected son Esau. The lesson of his faithfulness and reward is, therefore, of special force and weight to us who by nature are children of wrath, members of the worldly class of humanity, whose natural disposition was typified in Esau whose little faith in the promises of God, and greater appreciation of the good things of this world, led him to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. Many of us who now rejoice that we are counted in as Israelites indeed, justified by faith, sanctified by the truth, – of the people of God, sharers in the great inheritance, – realize that many of us once loved the things of this present life more than the things of the life to come, and were disposed to grasp the tangible things of the present rather than to sacrifice these in the interest of the future glories and blessings of the divine promise.

After the fall of Jericho Israel passed through various experiences in taking possession of the land of promise. First, there was the sin of Achan, his covetousness which led him to disobedience of the divine command respecting the possessions of the people of Jericho. His love for the condemned things not only cost him his life, but brought considerable injury to the cause, just as with us one whose consecration is defective and who loves the present evil world, and contrary to the divine command secretly encourages evil in his own life, may bring considerable disaster to the Lord's cause before the secret sin is made manifest, and eventually brings upon the wrong doer the weighty penalty implied in the Apostle's words, "If we live after the flesh, we shall die." Achan's course also represented the rule of the

Millennial age, when all who even secretly love evil will be made manifest and will be destroyed from amongst the people. – Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:9.

Later on the Lord brought the people to the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. In the wonderful natural amphitheater between the two mountains the people were gathered while from the one mountain was read the blessings of the Law and its keeping, and from the other the curses which would come upon those who would fail to keep the Law; thus did the Lord reimpress upon the people their continued obligation to him and the fact that their prosperity would depend upon their faithfulness to his law. So it is **[R3091 : page 310]** also with the royal priesthood who by faith have reckonedly entered the land of promise; from the time of their consecration the Lord speaks to them through his Word and through his providence, instructing them that although free from the Law covenant which was upon Israel they have come under the still higher statement of the divine law, briefly comprehended in the word, Love; and that on the one hand spiritual blessing, refreshment and growth will come to them in the line of obedience to this law of love, and on the other hand weakness, inability to overcome the world, the flesh and the adversary, and general spiritual disaster will be their portion if they neglect this divine law of the New Covenant, Love. So in the Millennial age after the antitypical Joshua shall have brought the world under the new conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, the law of God will be distinctly set before all as the standard of conduct, it will be the law of love, the highest expression of the divine law with its many illustrations and explanations and assistance as may be necessary to bring the matter to the comprehension of every creature. "The law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:2) Those who will obey the leadings of the glorious Joshua, the Deliverer, the Christ, will by his help and encouragement and guidance be brought off victors in the end; and those who will not obey that Law-giver and the law expressed through him, shall be chastened, judged, and if these corrections in righteousness do not serve to bring

their hearts into accord with the Lord, there will be but one end possible; the wages of sin (no longer Adam's sin) will call for their death – Second Death – from which there will be no redemption, no recovery, no release.

Later on came the great battle between the Israelites under Joshua and the confederated kings of that region, resulting in the defeat and destruction of the latter and their armies on what is generally known as Joshua's long day. Then followed sundry other defeats of Israel's enemies until a sufficient portion of the land had been conquered to permit of its distribution between the tribes.

It was at this time when the enemies had been reduced in a general way and a considerable portion of the land of Canaan was in possession of the Israelites, that a division of the land was made between the tribes, each tribe still having considerable to do in the way of conquering its own province and destroying the inhabitants remaining therein to dispute their possession. Joshua occupied the place of judge, formerly held by Moses, and the various tribes were assigned their portion by him; Judah evidently was one of the last to make application for an allotment, and Caleb was one of the representative men in the tribe of which he was an adopted member. The representative elders of Judah came also with him as implying their indorsement of his request for Hebron, promised him by Moses, and because they also considered that to be one of the most desirable localities of Palestine.

Caleb rehearsed to Joshua the story of the spying out of Canaan and reminded him that Moses promised that the particular part of Canaan he trod upon in spying should be his portion. He showed how this promise had fully entered into his heart; that not only had he the faith which enabled him to make the good report as to the possibility of Israel, under the Lord's favor, taking possession of the land of promise at once, but the same faith was with him afterward; he believed the Word of the Lord through Moses respecting his ultimate

inheritance in it. The same promise and faith had been with him and actuated him during the wars of Israel in taking possession of the land, and now he still had full confidence that God would accomplish all the promises of Moses through the new leader Joshua. He was not unmindful of the fact that Hebron, which was the portion promised him by Moses, was not yet conquered; that it was in possession of the Anakim, giants, and that there would be serious battles to be fought before he could take full possession. His confidence was, however, that the same God who had made him the promise in the beginning, who had kept him thus far and who had fulfilled the promise up to this time, would be with him still and give him victory over the entrenched and fortified enemies in Hebron. How well this illustrates the progress of the spiritual Israelites who in the present time, by faith, are living the new life in the land of promise, battling with the enemies and overcoming them in the name and by the power of the Lord! They look back to the beginning of their experiences and rejoice that the Lord has kept them and blessed them in all spiritual things up to the present, and in proportion as they realize this they have faith to look forward into the future and to see the final outcome, – see themselves victors in their contests even with the strongest and most entrenched enemies of the flesh, – its giant passions, customs, etc. Amongst these enemies of spiritual Israelites, living high up in the mountain fastnesses, giant in form and thoroughly fortified, are religious customs, traditions of men, nominalism, sectarian pride and ambition and love of show. But the same grace of God which was sufficient to enable us to gain the victory over the common sins, in the valley, is able still to give us the victory over all these enemies of the new mind, the new creature, and to bring us off conquerors and "more than conquerors through him that loved us" and bought us with his precious blood. But as faith was necessary at every step of the journey – to spy out the land, to enter in, to fight the battles, so the same faith increasing as it has progressed, is necessary now for our final victory and our entrance into the full promised inheritance. Doubtless, the same condition in some respect will be true during the Millennial age to the world also: at first the requirement of the Kingdom will be obedience

in outward form; but ultimately the requirement will be the full submission of the heart to the will of God ere the restitution class will reach full perfection and enter upon the inheritance of everlasting life at the close of the Millennial age.

It is pleasant in passing to note the generous language of Caleb in respect to the ten other spies who were with Joshua and himself, and who brought back the evil report. Here would have been a fine opportunity for an ignoble man to have spoken evil of those associates and to have endeavored to glorify his own [R3091 : page 311] faithfulness and that of Joshua in contrast with the unfaithfulness of the ten. But no; generously he passes over their wrong conduct in as mild language as possible, and so far from denouncing them or reviling them, he speaks of them as "my brethren." The spiritual Israelite must have this same disposition, only with us it should be still more pronounced than with Caleb, because we, having been anointed with the holy spirit and through this anointing having been taught many of the "deep things of God," may well judge ourselves by a standard much higher than any with which Caleb was acquainted; surely spiritual Israelites have much advantage every way over natural Israelites. Whenever, therefore, we hear those professing the new life and large attainments of grace speaking evil of their brethren, we are to remember [R3092 : page 311] the word of the Lord, that revilers shall have no part in the Kingdom of God; we are to remember that it is written of our Lord that "when he was reviled he reviled not again"; we are to remember that evil speaking is classed by the Apostle as amongst the works of the flesh and of the devil, and the conduct of Michael, the archangel, is held up before us as a shining example of propriety, in that he did not bring a railing accusation against Satan, but merely said, "The Lord rebuke thee"; we are to remember too the Apostle's specific declaration, that evil speaking against others is a part of the filth of the flesh from which we, as the Lord's people, must be cleansed if we would be acceptable to him through Jesus Christ our Lord; and that revilers "shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." – I Cor. 6:10.

Let us not be misunderstood; the Scriptures nowhere teach that all men are brethren in the spiritual sense; on the contrary, they teach that the unjustified are not God's children, but "children of wrath," and some of them are so thoroughly evil that from God's standpoint they are of "their father the devil"; we are to recognize as brethren in Christ only the household of faith, and to draw a sharp line of demarcation in our minds and in our salutations as between these and the children of this world. This does not imply either that the children of this world are to be treated unkindly by us or insulted or offended; rather they are to have our sympathy, our love, to whatever extent possible, our assistance as the Apostle suggests. We are to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity," especially unto the household of faith, – the brethren. Brethren are still to be recognized even though they fall into difficulty, dangerous snares of the adversary; and if it be necessary that our fellowship be withdrawn for a time, it is merely with the view to assist them back to their proper relationship to the Lord and back to our love and sympathy in fullest measure; as the Apostle says even such are to be treated, not as enemies, but, as misguided brethren for whose recovery we are to be willing to lay down even our lives – an hour here, another hour there, an effort for this one and an effort for another one because they are the Lord's. It is only after such brethren have turned back from the Lord's service like a "sow to her wallowing in the mire" or after they have discarded the redemptive work of Christ like the man in the parable who took off the wedding garment – only then are we to esteem them as enemies, adversaries, and even then we are not to bring against them a railing accusation, but to leave the matter for the Lord's judgment. – 2 Thess. 3:15.

The essence of this lesson to the spiritual Israelite is that in order to inherit the good promises of God, we, like Caleb, must have faith in God and a corresponding obedience, that of us, as of him, the Lord will write, "He wholly followed the Lord."

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