

GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER SIX

ACHSAH

(Joshua 15)

“NOW JOSHUA WAS OLD and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (13:1).

Even after his long, eventful and useful life, God pointed out to Joshua that his plans for Israel were not yet accomplished. There was much unpossessed land. Every Christian surely feels that in the field of the Word of God very much of it is uncultivated and unexplored by him.

Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was of the tribe of Judah whose allotment fell in a country abounding in vineyards and pastures. At this time he was eighty-five years old but did not show any sign of weakness. He went to Joshua and reminded him of the promise made to him forty-five years previously by God’s servant Moses. Caleb and Joshua were the two spies who brought a good report of the Promised Land and their ability to take it. Moses said to him: **“Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord”** (14:9).

In vigorous tones Caleb asserted that the Lord had kept him alive, while the rest wandered in the wilderness. **“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in”** (14:11).

It isn’t every man who would enlist for aggressive warfare as well as for home defense at his ripe old age, and qualify too. He asked for the most difficult field—**“Give me this mountain** [where there giants and cities great and fenced] . . . **if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said”** (14:12).

This was not mere bravado. He was conscious of his dependence on the Lord, yet confident that He would fulfill His Word. Such faith, assurance, and real ability heartened old Joshua and he could not help but bless such a spirit and doubtless wished he had more such men of God who did not hurry to the superannuation list. He blessed him and praised the Lord for his courage, fearlessness, and example. Someone has said, “Caleb wholly followed the Lord,” and spiritual decrepitude does not attack such persons though the outer perish.

Caleb knew Debir and its giants would offer stubborn resistance, and that he would need men in his army of unique courage for the attack on the city. To stimulate the valor of the assailants he offered as a reward the hand of his only daughter in marriage. He said, **“He that smiteth and taketh Debir will I give Achsah, my daughter, to wife.”**

We may think this strange, as a brave soldier might not be the easiest man with whom to live. But not infrequently in those days, as in the days “when knighthood was in flower,” a woman was won by the chivalry of the lover. Saul offered Merab to the one who would subdue Goliath. The hero of the battle was not only to smite but to take or possess. There are many things in life that need smiting and controlling. There are moral citadels that need to be conquered and governed. There are those who can take cities but cannot control their own temper, appetites, or vices.

Solomon says: **“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city”** (Proverbs 16:32). The Lord, too, in Mark 9 tells us that our hands, our feet, our eyes may cause us to offend; that is, what we do, where we go, what we covet may cause offense to one of his immature disciples, and the Lord recommends us to apply spiritual surgery to ourselves. Cutting off a hand or foot that offends, or plucking out an eye is preferable to stumbling others or sinning against ourselves. **“Have salt in yourselves.”** Often we have plenty of salt to offer others but fail to apply the same to ourselves.

Christians, too, become complacent and boast of past victories because they have at one time or other overcome a temptation. But we never can become lax or lay aside any part of the whole armor of God. A sin subdued once is no guarantee that it will not rear again its ugly head; we need constantly to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

As her wedding dowry, Caleb gave his daughter a south land. She appreciated the gift, but she was determined not only to possess the land but to work it and make it produce.

Every Christian has a gift, yet some are content with possession but do not put it to use. Our gifts and abilities vary. They were never given to be rolled up in a napkin. The Lord expects profit by the use of the gift with which He has endowed us.

Achsah and her new husband were driving home one day to see her father. They discussed what they would sow in their field. They knew of an adjacent property with springs. Could that be obtained their property would be far more valuable and productive. They would like to call their place Green Acres. Achsah kept reminding Othniel that he was in such favor with her father that he would give him anything for which he would ask. “You ask for the field with springs.”

“No,” he said, “you ask him yourself.”

“No, you ask him.”

Just then they arrived at the house, and Caleb came to meet them. They looked at each other as if to say, “You tell him.”

Caleb almost read their thoughts and asked, “What were you talking about? What is it you want?”

Othniel left it to her to make the petition. Wisely she first expressed gratitude for what had been given, then asked for springs of water to improve the property. The father at once saw the wisdom of the request and there was no hesitation about his reply. He was proud of Achsah’s sagacity, prudence and industry. He gave handsomely, not only the nether, but the upper springs.

Each Christian has a field to develop and cultivate for the Lord. God has let out His vineyard to the husbandman that He might receive from the husbandman the fruit of the vineyard. But our field needs to draw constantly from the perennial springs of the Holy Spirit, as the psalmist says, “**All my springs are in thee**” (87:7).

Yesterday’s drawings of water will not do for today. In inviting the thirsty to the living waters, the Lord explained what these living waters were. “**This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive**” (John 7:39). We must preserve unchoked channels through which the living water can flow if we would be fruitful and not barren land.

We need springs in the mountaintop experiences of life, and we need springs in the valley of humiliation; in our glad days and sad days we find refreshment in Christ, the fountain of living water.

O Christ, He is the fountain—
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I’ve tasted,
More deep I’ll drink above!

We are not only to absorb these waters for ourselves, but dispense to others what we enjoy, and thus obtain the promise of Isaiah 58:10, 11: “**If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.**”

Christ can satisfy our souls from the upper springs and in like manner from the nether springs, as J. T. Mawson remarks, “He proposes to make us contributors to the deep need of thirsty souls around us.”

All the days were not bright days for Mr. and Mrs. Othniel, for there were spiritual decline and worldliness among many of those with whom they had been brought up. It took real moral courage to withstand the trend of the times among the people of Israel. Their neighbors were mixing with and marrying the ungodly, and living as the ungodly. They “**forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves**” (Judges 3:7). The worship they commit themselves to was revoltingly impure and grossly immoral.

When a Christian neglects or forgets God, he leaves himself open to all uncleanness. But thank God they soon felt the iron of the yoke to which they had become subject and they “**cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel . . . And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel and went out to war: and the Lord delivered . . . king of Mesopotamia into his hand . . . And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel . . . died**” (Judges 3:9-11).

Who is the one who is used to delivering the backslider and worldly Christian? It is the man or woman who allows the Spirit of the Lord to control his or her life. Christians are not happy to see their brethren going astray or being overcome by evil; but at the first cry after God they are quick to run to meet and rescue them.

- Are we ready for the Master's use?
- Are we delivering souls from the thralldom of sin?
- Do we go after straying sheep until we find them, bruised indeed by the enemy of souls?
- Do we pour in oil and wine and take care of them?

Oh, for more Othniels and Achsahs!

Like her father, they wholly followed the Lord and were controlled by the Spirit and had a care for others. As long as Othniel lived, a godly influence pervaded Israel. “**And the land had rest forty years.**”

Is there rest where you are? What is your influence—for good or evil?

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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