

“Aggressively seeking God”

Judges 3:7-11 [New American Standard]

“7 The sons of Israel [*“God prevails”*] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals [*supreme male divinity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites*] and the Asheroth [*a Babylonian (Astarte)-Canaanite goddess (of fortune and happiness), the supposed consort of Baal, her images: her images: sacred trees or poles set up near an altar: groves for idol worship*]

8 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim [*koo-shan' rish-aw-thah'*] [*Meaning: “twice-wicked Cushan”*] king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years”

9 When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] [*Meaning: “lion of God”*] [*The First Judge Delivers Israel*] the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim [*koo-shan' rish-aw-thah'*] king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

11 Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] the son of Kenaz died.

There was a great lesson to fight not to forget God.

Today, we are going to learn what it means to be men and women of godly pursuit.

The judge in this passage is Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*]; he was not so famous, but he was considered an ideal Lord's judge.

*** When the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help God raised up Othniel as their deliverer.**

*** God empowered Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] by his Spirit.**

*** Being led by the Spirit of the Lord, he went to war against Cushan-Risha –thaim [*koo-shan' rish-aw-thah'*] king of Aram.**

*** It is not too clear who this king actually was.**

2.

Whoever he was, his name suggests a very powerful and intimidating king since the name meant “*Cushan of double evil*”

When the Lord raised Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] up as a judge and empowered him by his Spirit, it didn't matter how fierce, powerful, intimidating “*Cushan of double evil*” was.

Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] simply overpowered this evil king.
Under Othniel's leadership, there was forty years of peace.

What made Othniel an ideal judge was his attitude towards God and his promises.

* He was a man who aggressively went after God's promises trusting in God's unfailing steadfast love, faithfulness, and power.

* He was a man of godly pursuit.

To understand better how he aggressively pursued after God's promise while trusting in God, let me take us back to Judges 1.

The beginning of Judges chapter 1 chronicles the tribe of Judah's effort to possess the land that was allotted by the Lord.

This is parallel to Joshua 15, which gives a little bit more detail. Joshua 15:13 says:

“And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak [*tribe of the giant people*] which city is Hebron”

Othniel [*oth-nee-ale'*] - Caleb and his daughter Acsah all belonged to the tribe of Judah. [Make a note of this statement - write down these three names I mentioned]

The Lord allotted the southern portion of the Promised Land to Judah. And, it was the people of Judah's job to attack and capture the remainder of the land that was yet to be possessed.

3.

Attacking and capturing all the allotted land required them to exercise their faith in God who promised them the land.

- * What we see **is not only** Othniel [oth-nee-ale']
- * But his father-in-law Caleb
- * And Caleb's daughter Acsah, Othniel's wife, were all ideal people of God **because they all aggressively pursued after God's promise.**

They were fully convinced of this: what God had for them was what was best for them.

When Caleb challenged the men of Judah to attack and capture Kiriath Sepher [city of the book] and to promise his daughter to the man who completes the task, what he was really looking for was a man who would not compromise, but go after God's promise wholeheartedly and obediently.

Joshua 15: 13-17 [Message]

“ 13 Joshua gave Caleb son of Jephunneh a section among the people of Judah, **according to God's command.”**

He gave him Kiriath Arba, that is, Hebron.

Arba was the ancestor of Anak.

14-15 Caleb **drove out three Anakim from Hebron: Sheshai ["noble"], Ahiman ["my brother is a gift"], and Talmai ["furrowed"], all descendants of Anak.**

He marched up from there against the people of Debir. Debir used to be called Kiriath Sepher.

16-17 Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath Sepher and takes it, I'll give my daughter Acsah to him as his wife."

Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, took it; so Caleb gave him his daughter Acsah as his wife”

- * Othniel [oth-nee-ale'] stepped up to the challenge.
- * And, it demonstrated that Othniel was a man of faith in God's power, faithfulness, unfailing love and his promise.

For Caleb to have challenged in this way tells us that Caleb too was a man of deep faith.

4.

* *Forty - five years* before Caleb gave this challenge, he and Joshua were the only two spies who were fully confident that they could attack and capture the land of Canaan because the Lord promised them to give it as their inheritance.

Numbers 14:7-9 reveals Caleb's confidence in God at that time, "The Land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with 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, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them"

How did the people respond to Caleb and Joshua's plea to trust in the Lord?

Verse 10 says, "*But the whole assembly talked about stoning them*"

Verse 2-4 reveals their hearts:

"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 desert! 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."

Was this true that God only brought his people out thus far only to destroy them by the sword, to have their wives and children be taken as plunder?

This was not God's promise.

* God's promise was to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites as their inheritance.

* But, their utter lack of confidence in God for his promise grieved his heart deeply.

Numbers 14:11 reveals God's heart:

"The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

5.

Because they treated the Lord with contempt and disbelief when they showed no confidence in God to deliver what he promised to them, God said in:

Numbers 14:21-23: “as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fill the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it”

But, about Caleb, the LORD said this in verse 24: “But because my servant Caleb had a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.”

The Lord’s promise to Caleb was fulfilled forty - five years later when Caleb was eighty - five years old.

*** Forty - five years later, Joshua 14:6-14 recorded what Caleb said at the age of eighty five years old:**

“Now the men 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 [*Holy*] about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea [*Holy*] to explore the land.

And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up; with me made the hearts of the people melt with 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’”

Caleb continued in verse 10-14:

“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 desert.

So here I am today, eighty-five years 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.

6.

Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites [Giants] 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 belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly”

* This is the story of Caleb.

* At the age of forty years old, Caleb was more than ready to fight to possess God’s Promised Land.

* And, forty - five years later, Caleb was passionate as ever before to pursue hard after what God promised him.

Joshua 15: 13-17 [Message]

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This Caleb as the father of his daughter Acsah - would not have any other way for his daughter except to give her into marriage to a man in his mold.

* Caleb witnessed what happened when the people of God gave into the fear of people, circumstances, when they walked by their sights instead of trusting in God’s promise and walking in faith.

* **Forty - years** of wandering in the desert was the result instead of **forty years** of possessing the Promised Land with milk and honey.

7.

How does this relate to us Christians?

Othniel, Acsah, and Caleb portray for us the ideal picture of what it means to follow Jesus.

1. Aggressively pursue love relationship with Jesus

For Christians, the promise of inheritance is not the physical land as it was for the Israelites.

Instead, our inheritance is the promise of rest as Jesus talked about in [Matthew 11](#)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”

2. Aggressively pursue to become a person tested and approved in Christ

* In [Romans 16:10](#), Paul talks about a person named Appelles.

* *Appelles: Means Called*

* He speaks well of this person by saying *tested and approved in Christ*

* Men of the church, women of the church, your goal ought to become a person *tested and approved in Christ*.

Conclusion

[Judges 3: 10-11](#)

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We need to aggressively pursue the Lord

We need to plant the same faith seeds that Caleb planted

