

Life Begins at 80

by Charles Anderson

God may have exciting plans for you at any age, and it's never too late to serve Him with faith and consistency.

Scripture: Numbers 14:1-4, Joshua 14:6-12, Psalm 27:14, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:1

Topics: "Christian Experience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Caleb from the Bible. He highlights Caleb's unwavering faith and determination despite facing 40 years of wilderness wandering. The preacher emphasizes that Caleb had a clear vision and never lost sight of his inheritance, which was a specific piece of land. Despite the challenges and monotony of life, Caleb remained faithful and desired to fulfill his purpose. The preacher encourages the audience to adopt Caleb's mindset and seek their own unique purpose in life, trusting in God's guidance and remaining steadfast in their faith.

Transcript

I suppose I have been led, as I said the other evening, as I look out on this audience, I see so much snow on the roof and shingles missing, that I realize that this is not altogether a young audience. Most of you are at least thirty years old, and you've passed that mark, and you probably have begun to feel, as some of us do sometimes, that we have been a bit bypassed, or our day is finished. Whatever opportunity we've had to serve God and do something significant is now past and gone, and what is there left for us to do except coast until we come to the end? That seems to be the attitude and the philosophy abroad today.

Now, I am firmly convinced that God may have something for each one of us, no matter what our age, that can be the most exciting chapters in your whole life and experience yet ahead of you, and I take courage from one of the biblical characters that's always been a favorite of mine. I refer, of course, to old Caleb, and you remember that Caleb had a birthday after most of the enemies of Israel had been subdued, not all, but most of them, and they'd come to the land that had been promised to them, and Joshua, his companion, was parceling out the inheritance of those who'd been faithful over the years, and I suppose that Joshua, because of his long friendship for and admiration of Caleb, had selected a very lush portion of the land for Joshua to enjoy in what might well have been called his sunset years, his retirement years. But, really, Joshua should have known Caleb a little better than is intimated here in the word of God, because whatever Joshua had selected for Caleb's portion, Caleb denied it, refused it, because he had a very special objective in view, and we need only refer to the record itself as to how Caleb felt on this occasion.

And I invite you, therefore, to turn in your Bibles to the 14th chapter of the book of Joshua, and on this occasion, this man, this remarkable and unusual biblical character whom I don't think has received his just desserts from biblical biographers, he's speaking, and this is what it says, commencing at the sixth verse of Joshua 14, "The children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Tenezite, said to him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Padesh Barnea.' Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Padesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought in word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet had trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God.

Now, behold, Jehovah hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. And now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old." By any math, old or new, that's 85. He's 85 years old.

And listen to him speak, this old warrior. "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me.' You know there's nothing in the record intimated or stated that any of those young Israelis, those young bucks, dared to challenge that word. You see, there's nothing more embarrassing for a younger man than to be betted physically by an older man.

And I don't see any of those young fellows coming forward and saying, Ah, he's a braggadocio, he's just bragging. Let him enjoy it, but he's not what he says he is. No, they took one look at this wiry old warrior, and I'm sure they must have said, Better not take him on, better not challenge him, because he says, "As my strength was then, even so is my strength now.' For two things.

Either one is okay with me. For war, I'm ready to go to war. I'm ready to fight if that's what's needed, or to go out and to come in.

That's this ordinary thing. Doesn't make any difference to me. Whatever is needed, I'm ready for it.

To fight or to follow. Now, therefore, give me this mountain whereup Jehovah spake in that day. For you heard in that day how the Amityns were there, and that the cities were great and fenced.

So be the Lord be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out. As the Lord said, Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Taleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron, therefore, became the inheritance of Taleb, the son of Jephunneh, that can reside unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

And the name of Hebron before was Cherjaph Arba, which Arba was a great man among the Amityns, and the land had rest from war. Now, regardless for the moment of whatever significance may be placed upon Taleb's age, I think one of the chief lessons to be learned here is that the Christian life need not become stagnant and stale because we get older. This is a day of emphasis upon youth.

We all know that. It's the young who are carrying the ball in advertisement of all kinds. The young people are emphasized, but that doesn't mean that the day of old people is over by any means.

You see, God may yet have some very rich experience for you in the days ahead in your life. It may not be a long, drawn-out kind of a thing. You know, Gabriel was God's Western Union boy.

He ran errands for the Lord, and when he identified himself on one of those errands, he said, I am Gabriel that stands and attends. In other words, I just stand there, wait for the Lord, need somebody to run an errand, and I run it. And he ran a couple in the days of Daniel, and then he stood still for about 600 years and didn't run another errand for God until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And I think if I get a chance, and I get to heaven, I get the many things I want to do, and I get the glory, I think I'll be pretty busy running all over the place. I do hope, and I love music and all that, but I do hope that heaven is not one eternal concert. Oh, dear Lord, deliver us.

Imagine sitting on a cloud for billions of years, listening to the people play harp. That's beyond me. I'm just going to ask if I could take a little trip off to some far place in the universe for a couple of billion years and come back when the concertists are still playing around.

No, I think we're going to be doing far more than just listening to music in heaven. We'll be singing all the time, I suppose, but we'll be pretty busy, and there are a lot of people I want to ask some questions. I'm going to walk up to Gabriel and say, Pardon me, sir.

You don't mind if I call you Dave? Dave, let me ask you something. Was it worth it? You didn't seem to do too much. You said you were God's errand boy, but in the record, I don't read that you ran too many errands, and I can just imagine Gabriel saying, Look, if I only had the chance to run one errand for God, it was worth my existence for thousands upon thousands of years.

And you know something, my friend? If God has just one single job he needs and wants to do for you, it's worth a whole lifetime to be there and ready to do it when he wants you. Maybe it's only one task, one word, one errand, one something that'll make all your existence worthwhile. And I say this man, Caleb, encourages me, because here he is, 85 years old, and he's asking for a mountain.

He doesn't want a meadow. He doesn't want a lush pasture land rich for his herd, flat land where there are no rocks. That would have been a very special thing in Palestine, because Palestine's full of rocks.

The Arabs have a proverb. They say that when God created the world, he put all the rocks of the entire world in three bags, and he gave them to three angels, and he told them to fly all around the world and distribute them. But two of them tripped and dropped their bags on Palestine.

So, you almost feel that way when you see all those rocks, and it's a tough task for a farmer to farm a field that isn't full of rocks. Hard soil, and I imagine that this was a nice luck. No, Caleb, that's not it.

I want you to know something, Joshua. Ever since the day God called us, and Moses commissioned you and me to become part of that commando crowd that went up into Palestine to spy out the land, I had my eye on one place. And all the years that have followed, I've never lost the vision of wanting that one place, that one thing.

That's my inheritance, and that's what I'm asking for. Now, in all the years of the wilderness wandering, Caleb seems to be a man who is a one-track-minded man. He's a faithful man.

What's the secret of this man's life? What are the secrets if there's more than one? Well, it might well be summarized by a single phrase or sentence. He wholly follows the Lord his God. That's what he said.

I wholly follow the Lord my God. If you were asking for an epitaph for his tombstone, he was asking for that. Put that on it.

Caleb, the man who wholly followed the Lord his God. I knew a man, one of the most unique men I guess I have ever met in my whole life. His life is like a storybook.

He was a missionary in the Middle East. He was a medical doctor, as well as a missionary. He was, for a while, he was a medical doctor, missionary.

Which was it? Missionary and medical doctor? Whatever. He was a doctor who became the personal physician to Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. Many of you may know him.

His name is Dr. Tom Lamby. Dr. Lamby, as I said, was the personal physician to Haile Selassie, and when the Italians bombed Ethiopia into submission, and the emperor had to flee for his life and set up government in England, Dr. Lamby lost his American citizenship because he had surrendered it to become an Ethiopian citizen, and now there was no longer an Ethiopia, and so he was a man without a country. He had no citizenship anywhere in the world.

As far as I know, he's the only man whom the United States Congress, in special session, voted to give or to grant him American citizenship. I said he was a very unique man. In every way was he unique.

He looked as though he had lived his whole lifetime out in the open. He was bronze, and he was wrinkled. His whole face was all wrinkled up, but he was a man with a keen mind, and he had special entrée to the Arab people.

On one occasion, he was introduced to an Ethiopian tribe in the south of Ethiopia, and he thought, how am I going to make an impression upon the chief of this tribe? And so, Dr. Lamby had some very facile bridge work in his mouth, teeth, false teeth, and so he stood before the chieftain, and when he was being introduced, and he just slowly raised his hand like this, the chief watched him, and then suddenly he slapped himself in the back of the neck, and spit his upper teeth right out in his hand with force, and without a smile, he put them back in his mouth. Well, the eyes of that chieftain moaned, and all about began to murmur, and so he thought he'd try it again, and he did. Very slowly, he raised his hands, deliberately, slowly, and they were mesmerized by it, of course.

Then he went, and out came his teeth again into his hand, and he pushed them back in his mouth. Well, that was a challenge for that chief. He had to do something similar, and so this poor chieftain, he before his people, not to be outdone by this white man, he raised his hand like this, and he walloped himself in the back of the head, and nothing happened.

No teeth came out. So, he hit himself again, three or four or five times, till he was hurting himself, and then finally he surrendered to a bigger man, Dr. Landy. From that point onward, Dr. Landy had open access to that tribe.

They respected him. Now, I don't suggest that as a method of entree for missionaries by any means, but this is the kind of man he was, you know. He established this tubercular sanitarium on the road between Bethlehem and Hebron in the Valley of Baraka, and he stayed there a number of times with this great man of God.

When the Lord took him home, he did it in a unique fashion as well. It was Good Friday afternoon, and he was preparing a message to speak at the Garden Tomb on Easter Sunday morning, and he had just finished 6.6 appearances of the Savior after his resurrection, and he turned to his wife and he said, Will you hand me my writing pad? I think I want to put that seventh one down, and she turned away from him, and when she turned back, he'd gone on to heaven. He died within the shadow of the place where it is thought Jesus himself rose again from the dead.

Now, I tell you all that because you must know I admired this man tremendously. So, he said to me one day, Let's go down to Hebron, and we walked the road down to Hebron, that dusty road. There, in the city of Hebron, I saw what you can see anywhere in Palestine, all these mangy little curs, these little dogs running around, and the Arabs were pretty tough on their animals.

They'd eat the living life out of their donkeys, and they'd kick their dogs. I've seen them kick a dog five feet in the air, and yet the old dog comes right back and follows his master, and they're the mangiest looking things you ever did see, and I felt that every one of them had a hungry look in his eye, as though he was saying, Hmm, I'd like a piece of that fresh meat. I was very cautious, and Dr. Landy said to me, How sharp is your ear? Tune it.

Tell me what you hear these Arabs calling their dogs. So, I tried, but my ear is dull, and I couldn't pick it up, so I surrendered. I said, I can't get it, Doctor.

What are they calling them? He said, If you listen again, I'll help you. Listen. They'll call their dog, Kelp.

Kelp. The Arab word for dog. Kelp.

He said, You know what that is? That's the shortened form for Caleb. You see, Caleb, Dr. Landy said, was God's faithful old hound dog. He just followed the Lord's heels, right on the heels of the Lord.

Wherever the Lord went, you can say of Caleb, he only followed the Lord his God. Maybe that was the chief and main characteristic of this grand hero of the Old Testament. Well, I still think, however, that there were some other secrets of this man's life.

Let me see if I can enumerate them. I think there were at least three outstanding secrets that made Caleb the man he was. Caleb, the conqueror.

See, not the man who was just coping, but the man who was conquering. Even at the old age of 85, still going on, still battling on, still winning, still conquering. How do you explain a man like that? Well, you have to look at his life and discover, first of all, that he was consistent in his youth.

We don't know much about his youth, but he was a man that must have been marked and was marked by a faith that never wavered. When there was much that would cause faith to waver, his never did. He was the man who rose to the crisis.

Now, the other evening I had you look with us a little bit, and we shall not review that territory anew, but I had you think with me about the 14th chapter of the book of Numbers, a very significant chapter in the experience of the children of Israel. It was at a place called Kadesh Barnea that they came into a crisis moment. And what happened there changed the whole course of Israeli history for years to come.

It was a moment of challenge. It was a moment when they should have and could have responded by faith, but instead of that they turned back in unbelief. Read again the little book of Jude in the light of Numbers 14.

It will shed a fresh new light on that little gem tucked right there before the last book of the Bible. Well, there were two things that marked Caleb in those days. He was a man of moral and physical courage.

There's no doubt about that. He was a man. Friends, I want to tell you, whatever you can say about this fellow Caleb, you have to say he was a man.

Just because a man is sold out to God doesn't make him a fat or a sissy. In fact, it took and still does take a great deal of physical courage for a man to stand up for God. It often takes greater courage than sheer physical bravery for a man to stand by his moral and spiritual convictions.

Some of you have experienced that in business in years gone by. Perhaps because of your stand, your uncompromising stand on certain issues in business, you've suffered some losses. You took some dire consequences, and it wasn't an easy thing for you to do.

So, just because a man's a Christian, we must not dilute him as far as moral and spiritual courage is concerned. It often takes a lot of courage, too, to stand against popular opinion, and that was true of Caleb. When the rest of the spies brought their overwhelming, gloomy report concerning the difficulty that they were going to face as they tried to conquer the land, he and Joshua stood against the whole crowd.

That often takes a lot of courage, you know. If you have convictions, stand for them. You may discover that it will cost you something.

Not only was he marked by undaunted courage in those young days, as part of the young man, but he was marked by an unwavering faith. When all the rest said, we can't do it nevertheless, but they were saying, if we go up we'll not win, he said, if the Lord be with us, we can win. And, it was the if not of doubt, but the if of conviction and faith.

So, in his early life, in his young life, he was consistent in all that he did. You know, it's important to note that. All too often, young Christians just peter out.

They don't laugh. They don't run all the way down the course. They make a great deal of promise at certain portions of their lives, but they don't hold to it all the way through.

It's wonderful to see those who, from youth onward, have pressed on to the very end. Well, the second secret, I think, of Caleb's life was not only that he was consistent in his youth, but he was constant in his middle age. He had a strength that never weakened.

There are a lot of people who are like rockets in their youth, in the early stages of their Christian experience. They soar high, and they look like they're going to be great leaders. And then, as life drones on, and you know something? Life has a way of droning on.

See, most of us are not defeated by the big crises of life. What defeats us often is the monotony of life. There's no change.

It's the same thing over and over again. Can you endure? Can you live joyously and triumphantly in the midst of all of that? Caleb had to live 40 years in the wilderness. You know how long 40 years is? I'll tell

you.

It's 480 months, or it's 2,080 weeks, or it's 14,600 days, tramping around in the wilderness. Where are you going? We don't know. How long will you be gone? We don't know.

When will you stop? We don't know. Forty years. 2,080 blue Mondays.

Imagine that. Coming up to Monday. 2,080 times.

But he had a promise from God, and he rested on that promise. You know, you'll never find Caleb involved in any rebellion against Moses. No, no.

No record of that. He's never found among the skeptical and the grumbling. He's never numbered among the crowds that hankered for the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt.

You don't find his name listed in that grumbling crowd. He's not found among the disobedient nor the idolatrous. Why was that? Because he had caught a glimpse of the possession that he was claiming by faith, and it was worth it to fix his eye of faith on that.

And all the rest of it was inconsequential. How can a man live like this? Well, because he had a faith that never wavered, and it laid hold of a strength that never weakened. I don't imagine Caleb ever heard Isaiah's promise that he knew something about it.

Nonetheless, that they that wait on the Lord renew their strength. They mount up with wings. They run, and they're not weary, and they walk, and they're not faint.

That's true. As I moved around this world a little bit, I have met some of the grandest, grandest old saints they put me to shame. Men and women who have reached far beyond the retirement age of life who are still going on making their lives count for God.

There was a mission in China called the South China Boat Mission. They changed their name. I don't know what, if it's still in existence, whether they have another name now or not, but the boat people of China are very special people.

They live on boats, little sandpans, little junks, and there's something peculiar about the boat people. They say that large numbers, maybe all of them, they're born on a boat, they're raised on a boat, they learn whatever they learn by way of education on a boat, they get married on a boat, they have their children on a boat, and they die on a boat. Never touch dry land.

Never put their foot on dry land. They're very special people. At one time, they numbered over a million, and they were in the southern part of China, and there was a mission established that sought to reach these people.

And then the communists came in, and they drove lots of people, including the boat people, most of them down farther, farther south, until they congregated around the Hong Kong area, and especially Aberdeen Harbor, a little north and west of Hong Kong. And there the South China Boat Mission set up a little, a boat chapel, I guess you'd call it. When I first saw it, I thought it must be the nearest thing to what Noah's Ark must have looked like, the long, drab kind of a thing on a barge, as it were.

And so I got on a sampan, these little sampans, they all scream for your business, and they row you out, and I finally got up to the side of the boat, and a big cow dog came to the edge, and he was a mean-looking thing. And I wasn't about to get out of that junk until somebody took care of that cow, and pretty soon a lady came to the edge, and she took charge of the dog, and she said, come on aboard. So I went aboard, and I spent an hour or more with a little old lady up there, and she told me some very wonderful stories about what God was doing among her people, her boat people.

And I left her admiring this woman. I could only guess how old she was. That's a dangerous thing to guess how old any lady is, but I would say she must have been in her mid-to-high 80s, and she was still carrying on alone.

A little later, oh, maybe nine months or so later, I met Dr. Bob Pierce of World Vision, and Bob Pierce told me that he had also gone out to Aberdeen Harbor and to this little boat chapel, and he met this little lady. And he said, I said to her, calling her by name, and I'm sorry her name slips to me now, he said, sister, where's your home in the states? She said in California. He said, how long has it been since you've had a furlough? She said, furlough, how do you spell that? Furlough.

And then she went on to say that she had been there for more than 25 years without ever leaving that little boat chapel, and she hadn't come back to the states. And Bob Pierce said, look, you must go home. You must.

I insist on it. We, World Vision, will pay your airfare if you'll go back home. You owe it to your family and to those who love you and support you.

She said, it's a bargain, it's. I'll give you an if. I will go if you can find somebody to take my place.

Surely as you travel all across America, there'll be somebody who'll be willing to come out and take my place. There must be. And Bob said, I told her, sure, I'll do it.

I'll try. So I came back, and I must confess that numbers of times I forgot about that little lady. One or two times I did mention her and asked if there's anybody interested in going out to fill in for her.

And finally, he said, about a year later, I went back again. My little champagne pulled up alongside of this boat, and I called. And this time she didn't come to the edge of the boat and invite me in.

So I climbed aboard, and I called for her, and I heard her voice deep inside this long chapel barge. And she said, come on in. He said, after my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I saw her there.

She sat in a chair. She was strapped to a metal chair, and the chair was bolted to the deck of that rocking, swaying boat. And he said, when I came up to her, I said, what in the world has happened to you, sister? She said, oh, a few months ago, I slipped on a wet deck, and I broke my hip.

And she said, I hadn't been able to walk around for a month. They put me in a cast, and then my wonderful Chinese friends, they fixed up this chair for me, and here I sit, and I can't slip now. They got it all fastened to the deck, and here's where I sit.

And Dr. Bob, listen, in the last year, my Chinese friends have brought their friends on board, and I've had the joy of leading more than 200 of them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah. Bob said, I thought I told you to go home.

And she looked at him and said, I thought I told you to send somebody to take my place. He said, I had to hang my head in shame. I couldn't find a woman or a man in all of America who would say, I'll go, I'll go.

Isn't that tragic? Not too long ago, I was in a missionary conference. We'd come from some mission field, and in this, on this field, they were asking if we could find somebody who would be mother and father to the missionary kids. That's all.

Just be mom and dad for a year, for two years. And so, I thought, surely there are older people, retired men and women here in America who'd be willing to give a couple of years of their retirement life to mothering and fathering missionary kids while their parents go out into the bush and do whatever they have to do. Surely there's somebody.

And I called a dozen times or more in meetings. I never had anybody come up and ask me anything more about it. Never.

So there was one gentleman in the meeting one night, he looked like he'd be the dandiest father kids could ever have. Just had that look, you know. And I went up to him and I said, sir, you hear what I said tonight? He said, yep.

I said, why don't you go? Are you well? Oh, yeah, he's fine. Are you retired? Yes, sir. I said, are you poor? No, not exactly poor, not rich, but I'm getting along.

I said, why don't you go? I said, the little old lady, she wouldn't let me. I said, you mean your wife, of course. He said, that's right.

I said, why wouldn't she? He said, you know, here she comes, why don't you ask her? And sure enough, this sweet little lady came up and I looked at her and said, I've been talking to your husband about maybe you two going out to, I've forgotten where the mission station was at this time. I said, they'll provide housing for you and you won't have to charge him anything and all he wants you to do is be mother and dad. You can put a couple of years, can't you, of your life in? Maybe only two years.

Then you come on home. Ah, this is what I couldn't do. I said, why couldn't you? He said, I couldn't be separated from the grandchildren.

Oh, come on, Grandma. I said, you know what you do. You wait till they come and then you pray they won't stay too long and they'll get gone pretty soon.

They bust your vases, they mess up your home, you're glad to see them, but you're glad to see them go. So, come on now, you know that. Oh, I couldn't live without seeing my grandkids.

Yes, you could, you know. Well, she said, well, well, anyhow, I couldn't go. We couldn't go.

Why not? I just don't like bugs. Oh, I said, is that so? I don't like them either. Hate them.

But I'm going to ask you something. When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ and over here is all the angels listening and over here is the vast number of the redeemed and they call your name and you come forward and the blessed Savior says to you, Sister Ida, if that was your name, Sister Ida, I had in mind for you that you would spend, I knew you were 83 years old, but you were healthy and strong. I wanted you to spend two years of your life out on a mission field being a mama to a bunch of motherless kids who needed a mother.

Why didn't you go? And you're going to say with all those folks listening, Lord, I don't like bugs. I said, isn't that going to be a magnificent eloquent argument in the courts of heaven? She didn't like that much. I could tell by then she didn't like me much either.

So she had one thing still up her sleeve. She said, Bro, I might die out there. I for good ease.

You know, I said, what we would do with you if you died out there, we'd wrap you in a blanket, dig a hole, put you in the ground, cover it over, put a little stick up there and put your name on it and you'd wait there till resurrection morning and I'm going to tell you something, it'd be a whole lot cheaper than burying you here in the heavenly red cemetery in a nice big copper, whatever it is. I think all the money they'd spend and your resurrection won't be any more glorious coming up out of that thing than it would be down to that hole in the ground. Well, they thought they weren't called.

Neither one of them. I'm not saying that that's what you have to do, but I am saying this, that God may have for you the most exciting adventure of your life yet ahead of you. When do you think life began for Daniel? I'll tell you, when he was at least 86 years old.

That's the night he spent in the lion's motel, sleeping with a bunch of hungry lions. Ask Daniel what was the most exciting experience of his life. He probably would say, man, I never dreamed at my age that I'd have to spend the night with hungry lions.

That was an exciting experience for me. How old were you, Daniel? Well, I was at least 86 when it happened. Yes, but God may have something special for you.

You see, Caleb was consistent in his youth. He was constant in his middle age, but best of all, he was conquering in his old age. For Caleb, getting old was not petering out, it was pressing on.

It was not descending the mountain, it was attacking new peaks. For him, old age was not senility and sterility, but it was adventure and achievement. When he was young, he walked alone, almost, except for Joshua.

When he was old, he climbed alone. Nobody else climbed that mountain of Ebron to help him throw out Anak and his son. He climbed it alone.

In his old age, he knew full well all the difficulties, and yet, he had real confidence in the Lord, his God. If the Lord be with me, I shall be able. And when you read the closing chapters of the book of Joshua, you will read how many of the tribes were unable to cast out the inhabitants in their area.

And so, you read such things as Joshua 15-63, children of Judah could not drive them out. Joshua 16-10, they drove not out the Canaanites and Gezer. Joshua 18-2, seven tribes had not received their inheritance.

Joshua 18-3, Joshua says to them, how long are you slack to go up to possess the land? Yet, I read in this book, and Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak and took the mountain. He climbed it, and God gave him the victory. What a way to wind up your life in such victory as that, eh? I don't know what God has for you or for me.

I just want Him to find me usable and ready when He needs me. I'm not going to take the time because I've already transgressed, and I ask your forgiveness, please. My last night, you're finished with me for

good after tonight.

But there was a biographer whom everybody knows, Emmanuel Bradford. Emmanuel Bradford was probably one of the most famous biographers of American history. As you know, he was an omnivorous reader.

When you read what this man did, this is a little bit of his day. He says, he wrote this in his diary, In the morning I write till half past ten or thereabouts. After that, I begin my morning reading with fifteen minutes of poetry, this according to a system that I followed for years by successive months, first two days of Dante or Milton, then a Greek or Latin play or Homer, then a French or Spanish play, then from the twentieth to the twenty-fifth of the month either English or Latin poetry, then French poetry in alternate months, and in the others German, Italian, or Spanish.

Are you tired already? The remainder of the morning isn't through the morning yet. The remainder of the morning I spend on the American work which prepares for my portrait. In the afternoon, after playing on the piano and doing such accounts or correspondence as may be necessary, if I'm at home, I read Latin.

If I have any time before going to work out of doors, then after working and going down for the paper, I read Greek until suppertime. In the evening, I begin first with a few pages of Shakespeare or some Elizabethan play, these all according to a system, then some pages of what I call the gossip of history, letters and diaries, all according to an elaborately prearranged system which has become part of my life. Then I read a few pages of the great critics according to a system again, then some reading in different languages for different portions of the month, and then a half hour of novel or play reading.

I call that reading. And yet, listen, with all of his reading in so many important languages, so many different spheres of literary expression, Emmanuel Bradford, when he was 56 years old, more than a score of years after he wrote what I just read to you, he was forced to confess from the darkness of his own natural mind that he knew nothing about God. In 1918 or 19, he sadly explained, Who will tell me something of God? I know nothing about Him, whatever.

It's a mere name, a mere word to me, yet it clings. Why? Mere association brought down from my childhood and thousands of others, clouds, dreams, reveries, hopes, wonderings, fears? Or is there something deep and mysterious there that really takes hold of my soul? I cannot tell, but still the word clings to me, sometimes in the form of a note, sometimes in that of an indication or a feel, but still clings, and it seems to me that it grows. And then, in 1921, one of the last entries in his diary, he said this, I have deliberately, purposely kept my Bible close, especially the New Testament.

I do not dare to read the New Testament for fear of its awakening a storm of anxiety and self-reproach and doubt and dread of having taken the wrong path. And Emmanuel Bradford, with such a brilliant, disciplined mind, died and went to hell in hopeless despair. What a difference between him and this old warrior of God, of whom it is written in the last day he was found climbing a mountain and conquering it for God.

Hey, how do you want to die? What do you want on your tombstone? Ever picked out your epitaph? I know what some of you say. Am I going to have a tombstone? We're all going to go to heaven at the same time. Yeah, I hope so too, but just in case we don't, better get one ready.

Have folks read what it says on there. He wholly followed the Lord his God. If you do, you will find that to the last day of the journey life will be an exciting adventure.

Let's pray. Lord, how we thank thee for the heroes and heroines of thy word whose lives teach us great truths. For this man, Caleb, what an inspiration he is to us.

And we thank thee for him. Maybe, as we think of our future, if thou didst keep thy son at thy side for a bit longer, then we'll have to come down to long years of life if thou didst spare us. We don't want to peter out.

We don't want to just dribble down to the end. We want to be conquering down to the very last moment. Give us that spiritual vigor and vitality and strength that says, I will wholly follow the Lord my God to the end.

We ask this for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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