

There was a mixture of panic and excitement in the air. 2,000 British soldiers had just landed. They had already set the town of Danbury on fire. The continental soldiers had to be alerted. But this was more difficult than at first imagined, for Col. Ludington's militia lived on their own farms scattered across the New England countryside. But the alarm had to be sounded and the soldiers summoned if there were to be a chance to stop the advance of the British soldiers.

Col. Ludington's aid was commissioned with the task of riding throughout the countryside, calling the militia to gather for battle. The mission would be dangerous. British soldiers could be encountered along the way. But there was no choice. If this new country was to gain her freedom, the continental militia would have to be mustered.

Racing out on a steed named Star, the aid rode down along the river first, then on to Charles pond, pausing at each home along the way long enough to yell out, "The British are coming, Danbury's burning, gather at Ludington's". Rain began to fall, but the aid hardly felt the drops heading north now for Stormville. Farm after farm, door after door, delivering the same message. "The British are coming, Danbury's burning, gather at Ludington's".

At one point in the trip, the aid spotted some other horsemen in the distance. Sure enough, they were British soldiers. But by hiding in the bushes until they passed by, the aid was able to keep on going on this most critical mission. All throughout the night, until the return to Col. Ludington at sunrise, his aid rode tirelessly, warning the sleeping militia of the British presence.

There is a name that will be forever connected with the event that I have just described because of the poet Longfellow's pen. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would invite his children to listen and hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere. But the aid that I have been speaking of is not Paul Revere. This aid, even though recognized for bravery in a personal letter from Alexander Hamilton, is today honored by a very modest headstone in an obscure New England Cemetery. Yet this person rode twice as far that night as Paul Revere did, and rode through a much more treacherous route. Yet this aid was dedicated to the same cause with the same tenacity- Col. Ludington's daughter, a 16 year old young lady.

Very often in life, there are those who are equally dedicated, who work just as hard or harder, and who achieve the same outward fruit of their labors, but who just don't seem to ever receive the same public recognition for their labors. They are the people who seem to always work behind the scenes. And most often, whereas a relatively few names receive the accolades, the overall success is dependent upon the others who are laboring with tireless dedication behind the scenes.

In a very real sense, the man who we are going to focus on during these next few Sunday Mornings would fall into this category. His name was Caleb. Every mention of him in the Bible presents him in an extremely positive light. He accepted challenges that were seemingly impossible tasks- and he was successful in every one of them. Yet, he seemed to live his entire life in the shadows of others, first in the shadow of Moses, then in the shadow of Joshua. Yet of all the characters of the Bible, I cannot think of a better one than Caleb to illustrate a Biblical model of accepting challenges.

For the next few weeks, we are going to be looking at some characteristics of a spiritual mountain climber, one who is willing to accept challenges for God. This morning, we are going to see in Caleb the overriding characteristic that is brought out from his life. That characteristic could be summarized in the word "wholeheartedness".

The terms wholehearted or fully following or wholly following in the KJV are the terms that are most often used of

Caleb in the Bible.

*In Numbers 14:24, the Lord said of Caleb- "But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."

*Again in Numbers 32:11,12, God said, "Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men 20 years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob- not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly."

And we could go on and on, finding this term applied to Caleb. There was a difference between Caleb and the other men of Israel. Caleb had a different spirit. And that spirit could be described by the word wholehearted.

Now what was this characteristic of Caleb that made his spirit different from the others of his generation? What does it mean to be wholehearted?

Our English term wholehearted is actually a translation of 2 Hebrew words that literally mean full or fully behind or following. To be wholehearted is to be fully behind, or fully following. The idea was that Caleb was fully following the Lord.

Now the Hebrew term translated fully is a very interesting one. It has 2 major shades of meaning. And I think that both of these are very important in our understanding the concept of wholeheartedness, being committed to fully follow the Lord.

1. First, the term has a spatial significance, to be full as a glass is full of water.

*This is the very word used by the author in giving the account of the miracle of the widow's oil in 2 Kings 4. You recall the situation, don't you?

-a prophet's wife had become widowed; she had 2 boys; unable to pay her bills, the creditors were pounding at her door; she even was in danger of losing her 2 sons to slavery to pay bills; she comes to Elisha for help; Elisha asks her what she has left in the house; Just a little oil, is the reply; Elisha sends her home to collect as many jars as she can from her neighbors; she is then to pour the oil from the jar into all of the containers; miraculously, the oil does not stop flowing until all the jars are full; then she is to sell the oil to pay her bills, and live off what is left.

The Hebrew term that is used in 2 Kings 4:6- when all the jars were full is the same one used in the term wholehearted that we are studying this morning.

*But this Hebrew word is also the term that Moses uses to describe the extent to which the locusts would permeate the land of Egypt during the 8th plague.

-God gave 10 plagues to Egypt to bring Pharaoh to the place where he would let the Israelites loose from their slavery; each plague greater in severity; by the 8th plague, they were devastating; 8th plague was locusts throughout the land, everywhere; Moses predicted to Pharaoh giving the very words of the Lord that the locusts would "fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians- something neither your fathers nor your forefathers have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now."

*The word fill is our Hebrew word indicating that there wouldn't be a corner of a room where there wouldn't be these pesky locusts. Now the connection is rather obvious isn't it? A person who follows the Lord wholeheartedly allows the Lord to fill every area of his or her life.

*Just as the oil filled the container right up to the top, so the wholehearted Christian allows the H.S. (who is pictured by oil in the Bible) to totally control his life.

*Just as the locusts permeated every crack and crevice of the house, so the wholehearted Christian allows God's control into every room of his life. He does not compartmentalize his life, giving God certain areas and then keeping the other areas for himself. He doesn't try to keep any secret rooms hidden from God for he knows that God sees what is going on in all rooms anyway. The wholehearted Christian allows God to enter and control every single room in his life. That is part of what it means to be wholehearted.

2. But our Hebrew word also has a temporal significance as well, and this is also important for us to see. The other major way in which this Hebrew term is used in the O.T. is with regards to time. Fully completing a period of time. Let me give to you some examples quickly.

*When a Hebrew woman was going to bear a child, this was the common word to indicate that the time of her pregnancy had been completed, filled up. Gen. 25:24 says of Rebecca, "when the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb". This Hebrew term is the one used here to indicate the fullness or completion of time.

*When a person took a vow in the O.T. to restrict his diet for a period of time, it is this term that is used when that time was completed. Daniel uses this word to describe his 3 week period of fasting in Dan. 10:3.

*When God gave a period of time to Pharaoh that the plagues were going to last or between the plagues, this was the word which was used as in Ex. 7:25.

*And we could go on and on if we had time showing how this Hebrew term is used of a completed portion of time.

The temporal significance of this term is very important to see, for God desires an enduring commitment from his people. He wants his people to follow him, not for just a day or week or year, but for the completed time which is their entire lifetime. To be wholehearted means to be continually committed to follow the Lord.

Now why is it so critical that we see these 2 aspects that are found in this Hebrew term? I believe that it is critical for these speak directly to the 2 major temptations that every Christian has to face in his or her decision to be wholehearted in his commitment to follow the Lord.

The first temptation is to give God part of our lives, but keep back a portion for ourselves as well. Allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of even most of our life, but we often want to keep at least one room padlocked as our own secret place. Every person seems to wrestle with at least one area of his or her life where he wants to remain in control. But we have to realize that we will never become a wholehearted follower of God until to give him access to every room. There can be no secret areas.

The second temptation is to catch fire for the Lord and then fizzle out. To make that decision to follow the Lord wholly, and then a week or month or year later to drift back into former patterns. We were sincere when we made the commitment to God, but we lost our dedication with time. A flash in the pan, a sparkler that shown brilliantly for a while, but now just a pile of blackened embers. A person will never truly be wholehearted in the Biblical sense of the term until that person commits to follow the Lord for the duration, for an entire lifetime, until the time is completely filled.

A mountain climber will never reach the peak of Everest unless he or she is wholehearted in his endeavor. We saw this

illustrated in our drama at the beginning of the service. As the mountain climber is scaling the rocky cliffs, he has got to be filled with the singular goal of reaching the top. This allows for other minor irritations to be put in proper focus. If the climber becomes overly concerned with too many issues, he loses his focus and he gives up on his quest. His eyes must be on the peak, and he must be obsessed with getting there. He must be filled up with his goal to reach the top.

The mountain climber must also be committed for the duration of the climb. He can't just go for a day as Bull did and then give up. If he does not remain committed every day until he reaches the top, he'll never make it. A storm will come, the winds will howl and blow, he will get cold, and he will quit. And it is interesting, that the closer he gets to the top, the more difficult the conditions are. But the mountain climber that is wholehearted will reach the top of the mountain.

Caleb was totally committed to following the Lord. That is the reason for God himself using this term "wholehearted" to describe Caleb over and over again.

*Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. Nu. 14:24

Caleb was fully committed to following the Lord. He was willing to give his all, risking even his life, to obey the Lord. Let's go into that promised land. It doesn't matter that there are giants in there. God will give it to us. And Caleb was also committed to follow the Lord for his entire lifetime. As a young man, he was faithful- so faithful that of all the men of the tribe of Judah, Caleb was chosen to be their representative. And as an 85 year old, he was still ready to accept the challenge. Give me this mountain, the tough one, the one where the giants live. Throughout his entire life, Caleb was dedicated to the Lord.

As we conclude this morning, I would like for us to see one more meaning of this term which I found to be most interesting this week. And I think it is appropriate for us to conclude with it. I, personally, was not aware of this meaning until I was studying these Hebrew terms and I came across this derivative in the Theological Wordbook of the O.T. I don't know how this specific meaning came to be- and they didn't say how it came to be either. But a derivation of this term that we have been studying is the Hebrew term for setting a gem. Perhaps as that craftsman made that perfect setting, filling up the gold or silver points with that brilliant jewel, he thought that this term would best describe what he was doing. But however it came to be, the Hebrew word for setting a gem comes from this word that we have been studying this morning- wholehearted.

The world tells us that it is foolish to be a wholehearted follower of God. "You only have one life- live it with all the gusto you can muster", the world says. Don't give your life away to another. Grab it yourself. Satisfy your own desires.

God reminds us that if we really want to save our lives, we will do so only in losing our lives in him. He reminds us that we have only one life- we had better invest it for all eternity. It is by giving ourselves voluntarily and fully in following His will in our lives that we really reach the potential that he created in us.

And an amazing phenomenon occurs as we wholeheartedly follow the Lord. God forms and makes us into a beautiful gem. A brilliant jewel that reflects his own character and glory. Caleb was such a gem in his day. And God is still looking for those who would follow him wholeheartedly today.