

THE LOYALTY DARE

Joshua 14:6-15; 15:14-17

Loyalty is a virtue that is valued by those whom we might classify as good or evil. You've heard the expression that there is no loyalty among thieves. However, those who are thieves expect loyalty from those with whom they are associated. Loyalty is the basic thing that allows modern day gangs to exist and operate. Loyalty is an expectation for citizen of a country and serious disloyalty is labeled "treason" and is (or used to be) dealt with harshly. Businesses expect loyalty from their employees and families value loyalty from their family members. Even within a business, a smaller group might emphasize the importance of loyalty to the leader of the group. You might even encounter such appeals for loyalty from a pastor in a church setting.

We need to be careful when we encounter loyalty appeals from individuals since we may lose sight of the bigger picture of where our loyalties should be focused. You may have had a supervisor who emphasized the need for those reporting to him to be loyal and that was because he was a liar and thief and was cheating on his wife and failing in his position of leadership in the job he was supposed to be doing and he needed loyalty from those who might discover how much of a fraud he was to be able to survive. Loyalty in such a situation would be misplaced and we would need to make sure that we are loyal to the next level in the organization hierarchy. If this level does not prove to be worthy of loyalty, then we must continue to transfer our loyalty until we find something or someone deserving of loyalty. In some cases we find that such a search finds success only in God Himself. He is the One to Whom we are to be ultimately loyal. In keeping within that framework of loyalty, then we would render loyalty, respect, and honor unto others to whom such is due.

In the account of Israel moving into the Promised Land we find someone who had been loyal to God for many years and promises of an inheritance were made to him for his loyalty. The account in Joshua shows the fulfillment of the promised reward to Caleb and his family.

Testimony of Loyalty – 14:6-12

⁶ Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. ⁷ "I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as *it was* in my heart. ⁸ "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. ⁹ "So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' ¹⁰ "Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. ¹¹ "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. ¹² "Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim *were* there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken." Joshua 14:6-12 (NASB95)

The responsibility of dividing the land among the tribes fell upon Joshua and the high priest Eleazar along with a representative from each the various tribes which would have their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan River. This "committee" had been appointed by Moses after Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had gotten permission to occupy land on the east side of the Jordan River. The actual apportioning of the land apparently took place seven years later following the appointment.

Caleb represented the tribe of Judah in this group. When the time came to define what area would be given to Judah, Caleb reminded Joshua of the promise that was made to him some

45 years earlier by Moses. This situation was likely somewhat awkward for Caleb since he was part of the appointed group responsible for defining the distribution of land among the tribes.

This situation regarding being rewarded for loyalty on the part of Caleb raises a general question as to what are our responsibilities for claiming or appropriating the blessings (or rewards) that are ours because of loyalty or faithfulness. The promise was made to Caleb that the land that he had explored 45 years earlier would be given to him. What would have happened if he had not reminded Joshua of the promise given to him by Moses? It is likely that the area would have gone into the general pool that was going to be allotted to the tribe of Judah. This suggests to me that we may have benefits that belong to us that we may not be enjoying.

What are some of the benefits of our salvation that we may be missing out on because we are either not aware of our inheritance, we have forgotten what God promised, or being passive and just don't claim what is ours? It is possible to neglect God's promises and not walk in them and, therefore, not received any benefit (reward) that He has made available for those who belong to Him? In Psalm 103:2 David reminded us that we are to "Bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits." He then went on to enumerate some of these benefits such as forgiveness of sins, healing of diseases, escaping destruction, ability to have love and compassion for others, satisfying your desires with good things and maintaining a youthful outlook on life as you get older.

What would you think if you gave someone you cared for a very nice gift and they never used it and the reason given was that they just forgot it was there, or they didn't think they deserved it, or they did not see any benefit of using the gift (it was not worth anything to them)? Obviously, Caleb did not have these ideas to inhibit him from claiming God's promise to him through Moses. First of all, he did not forget what was promised. He anticipated receiving it and that is exactly what hope is all about. His hope was founded upon the loyalty of God to him and to the promise God had made. In the second place, Caleb knew he had followed and trusted in God and been loyal in connection with the first expedition into the Promised Land. The only basis for his being "deserving" was the fact that he believed and trusted God and that God (by His grace) made a promise to him. Caleb also did not discount the value of the reward to himself and to his family. The final thing that would confirm that the hill country around Hebron should be given to him was the fact that he was probably the most capable person to wrest control of that area from the giants that still occupied it. His own testimony was that he was as strong at age 85 as he was at age 40. He depended on the fact that the Lord would be with him as he would drive the Anakim out of the land.

Reward for Loyalty – 14:13-15

¹³ So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. ¹⁴ Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully. ¹⁵ Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; *for Arba* was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war. Joshua 14:13-15 (NASB95)

Joshua honored the promise that was made to Caleb and granted the Hebron area to Caleb as his inheritance. The stated reason for this promise being fulfilled was because Caleb "fully followed" the Lord. In other words he was loyal to God. The area he was promised was where Abraham lived when he was in Canaan nearly 500 years earlier. The name of the main town in the area was Kirjath-arba which literally meant the city or town of Arba. It was named for one of the leader of the very large people who inhabited that area.

It may have been several years later that the name was changed to Hebron which was the name of one of Caleb's descendants. Obviously, the name had been changed by the time the

historian recorded the events that make up the book of Joshua. We see that following this that the land had rest from war. While this statement is true, it is also true that it was a significant amount of time after this that the rest from war came. Also, the rest from war was relative rather than absolute. The major conflicts in which there was organized resistance to the invasion of entrance to the land of Canaan had come to an end, but there were still areas that needed to be cleaned out and the areas secured so that the Israelites could live there.

One of the lessons we need to learn regarding rewards for loyalty is that the rewards are not instantaneous. We are conditioned to expect fast response and instant gratification. Life usually does not work that way. In Galatians 6:9 Paul wrote that “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” It took approximately seven years to get the point where Joshua and the leaders could even start the process of assigning territories to the various tribes which would be located on the west side of the Jordan River. Sometimes we read the accounts and we get the impression that it was a very rapid conquest and happened without a lot of effort. This impression comes about by the nature of the historical account. Parts of the account paint pictures in very broad brush strokes that proclaim that Joshua took all the land from the hill country and desert and lowland and captured all their kings and put them to death and then cut off the Anakim from the hill country and so he took all the land according to all that the Lord had spoken through Moses. (Compare Joshua 11:16-23.) The problem with such a description is that it is so broad and general that it appears to produce inconsistencies in the more detailed accounts.

The passage that says that Joshua took all the land, etc. is equivalent to saying that Bush invaded Iraq. A more accurate rendering of the passage would be to say that the forces of Israel took all the land and cut off the Anakim, etc. Since Joshua was the civil and military leader it was reported that Joshua did it. The more detailed account of the conquering of Hebron shows up in the first chapter of Judges which records events that happened after the death of Joshua.

Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) and they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (the name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.) Then Caleb said, "whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. Judges 1:10-13

The wording of the passage in Judges is almost identical to the account recorded in Chapter 15 of Joshua where we find that in order to possess his inheritance that Caleb had to overcome challenges from those who were enemies of what God was doing.

Challenge to Loyalty – 15:14-17

¹⁴ Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak. ¹⁵ Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. ¹⁶ And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife.” ¹⁷ Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife. Joshua 15:14-17 (NASB95)

As mentioned earlier this conquest is recorded in more detail in Judges chapter one. Some commentaries try to resolve the different accounts given regarding this area by suggesting that perhaps some of the pagan people fled from the cities and hid out in the mountain when the initial battles took place and they then came back and occupied the cities since the Israelites were not ready to move in and take control of what Joshua had liberated. This is a distinct possibility and we can see a spiritual lesson in this. Sometimes people will hear the gospel message and accept it readily. There might be a surge of enthusiasm following this conversion experience and then they sort of just drift away and they get back into their old habits and the old way of life.

This would be like Joshua's army cleaning out the area and then when they moved on, those who had not been killed in the invasion crept back in and entrenched themselves in the cities.

We can find a warning from Christ in Matthew 12:43-45 regarding what can happen to a person who is set free from demonic influences and does not fill his life with the Holy Spirit. He is left with a void or (in the case of Hebron) an empty city which can be re-inhabited by the same things that were driven out initially.

We see in this account of Caleb that the reward for loyalty or faithfulness was more opportunities for additional responsibility which will bring additional challenges in many cases. The promise was fulfilled when Caleb was granted the right or authority to possess the Hebron area. He continued to show his loyalty by doing what it took to bring that area under control. In this particular case he enlisted others of the tribe of Judah to assist. Sometimes the job we have to do takes more than what we can handle alone and we find that we need help.

Caleb learned that rewards for loyalty can be motivating and he put forth a challenge to those involved in helping him. We see this challenge in verse 16 where he promised to let his daughter marry the one who captured the city of Debir. This challenge was met by a nephew of his named Othniel who eventually became one of the judges in Israel. The leadership Othniel had was enhanced by rising to the occasion to capture the city and that led to even more responsibility for him.

Some of the things that we can apply to our culture today regarding loyalty (or being faithful), the use of rewards, and meeting challenges to loyalty might be this. If we give rewards (or awards) for just showing up, then there is little motivation for loyalty or faithfulness. Without proper motivation, then any challenges that a person faces will result in ignoring the opportunities that we encounter and we wind up with very little getting done to improve our culture and apathy will be rampant. Such passivity leads to deterioration in the quality of life and decay of the moral fabric of our society.