

Character



Caleb: Lessons from a Dog's Life (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

This is a little extract from a rather interesting book I read recently called Blind Courage. I don't know whether you have read it, but it is the story of a man who is blind. He was a Christian. He was so grateful to the Lord for what the Lord had done for him in saving him. He said, "Lord, I would like to do something for you. What would you like me to do?" And he told the Lord said walk the Appalachian Trail. That's 2,100 miles of very rigorous terrain from Georgia to Maine. He said, "That couldn't be right." Every time he said, "Lord, what do you want me to do for You?" the answer was, "Walk the Appalachian Trail." So with his seeing-eye dog named Orient, they set out. And that blind man walked 2,100 miles of very rough territory with no real companion except his dog. And this is what he says about the dog.

> "When it comes to priority of senses, Orient got his information from his nose first, his ears second, and his eyes last, walking by scent and not by sight."

Mino Persol, who trains dogs for search and rescue, described the difference in human and canine scent this way:

> "One of the substances released by human perspiration is butyric acid. If one gram, a small drop in the bottom of a teaspoon were to be spread throughout a ten-story building, a person could smell it at the window only at the moment of release. If the same amount were spread over the entire city of Philadelphia, a dog could smell it anywhere, even at an altitude of 300 feet."

Isn't that amazing? Philadelphia is considerably larger in area than Jerusalem. Anyplace in that whole area where one drop of human perspiration was released, a dog could smell it from anywhere. This is a research statement. It's not a wild guess. So do you have a good sense of scent? Do you know where the Lord is by something that tells you inside? You don't depend on your eyes. You know how to find Him.

I was thinking of the word "dogged." Most of you are familiar of the word dogged. And so I thought what is it that is expressed by being "dogged?" And I looked it up in two dictionaries. I wasn't satisfied by either, but I will quote them.

Collins New English Dictionary defines dogged as "absolutely determined, willful, or tenacious." Webster defines it as, "marked by stubborn determination." I don't think that does it justice. There is a higher quality to "dogged" like dogged courage, dogged faith. What is the mark of the dog? It hangs on, it follows, it never drops out. What marked Caleb from all the rest except Joshua? His dogged courage, his dogged faith. So you see, he was a pattern.

Now some people will tell us that all you need to inherit the promises is faith. That's not what the Bible says. You need something more. I know some of you know what it is. Hebrews 6:12:

> "do not become sluggish, [the margin says lazy, sluggish is a nice polite religious word. Lazy is the right word. Don't become lazy. You know there is not one blessing offered to laziness anywhere in the Bible. In fact, the Bible condemns drunkenness much less than laziness. I don't want to say that the Bible endorses drunkenness, but our scale of values in the church is so wrong. Because we wouldn't keep a drunkard or an alcoholic in the church, but we have lots of lazy people. Is that right? You might be one of them too. So this is what Hebrews 6:12 says] do not become lazy, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

It's not enough to have faith. You have to have faith and patience. You see, it takes time to develop character. We live in an age of instant everything. But there is one thing you don't get instantly and that's character. The Lord is much more interested in character than He is in gifts. You can receive a gift, a wonderful gift, a marvelous gift, but it doesn't change your character one iota. If you were unreliable and selfish before you received the gift, you will be still unreliable and selfish after you receive the gift. In fact, I think one of the most dangerous things that can happen to a Christian is to receive a rather dramatic spiritual gift. Because so many rely on the gift as a substitute for character. But listen, dear brothers and sisters, when you step out of time into eternity you leave all your gifts behind. All you will take with you will be your character. And that will determine what you will be throughout eternity. And remember it takes time to develop character. There is no instant character development. It's faith and patience.

Now, it's not so easy to train a dog to follow, but it can be done fairly easily. There is one thing that is much more difficult, which is to train a dog to wait. Have you ever gone into a large store and there's this dog sitting outside patiently sniffing at everybody as they come out? But not moving. Whenever I see such a dog I think, "That's an owner with character." You couldn't have a dog like that if you didn't have some character yourself.

Now, I think the same is true of Christians. We have to be trained to follow, but we have to have much more training to wait. I've asked people in many places, all over the world, which takes more faith—to work or to wait? And never has anybody told me it takes more faith to work. The real test of faith is waiting.

So, you're a good dog. You've learned to follow your master. But have you learned to wait? The dog doesn't know what you are going inside that store to do. You can't explain to him that you want to get some shampoo, some nail varnish, some tissues. But he waits. And when you reached a certain maturity in the Christian life, God will say, "Now wait here." And He won't tell you what He's going to do. He won't give you any explanation. He just wants to know if you are trained. Or will you get up and scamper off to some person who is not your master? Remember waiting is a test of character.

And then another picture of a dog comes to mind which is a dog that's lost it's master. It's lost contact. Have you ever seen that? I'm sure you have. And this dog with it's tail down keeps running up to every person that passes by and sniff, sniff, and then disappointment. No, not the right person. He's lost. He's lost contact. Some of you here tonight are like that. You've lost contact with Jesus. You're still a believer, you're still a dog, but you've lost contact. And you know what happens? You go up to everything and everybody and sniff it. Can I find it here? Can I find it there? Is this what I am looking for? No. You'll never find satisfaction in things. What you need is to restore your contact with Jesus. In that Scripture that was quoted it says, "Come, let us return to the Lord." That's what some of you need to do—return. You've got lost. You've lost contact. You know Jesus, you know who He is, you know how good He has been to you, but you don't have this present, ongoing, intimate contact. Is that right? It's right whether you acknowledge it or not, for some of you.

Let's just look in closing Caleb's reward. I want to warn you that I am like Paul. When he is writing an epistle in chapter 3 he says, "Finally brethren..." and then he goes on for two more chapters. So this is closing but it may be a long drawn-out process. Joshua 14:6–13—we've read this before but we will read it again.

> "Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: 'You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh

Barnea.' I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and brought back word to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.'"

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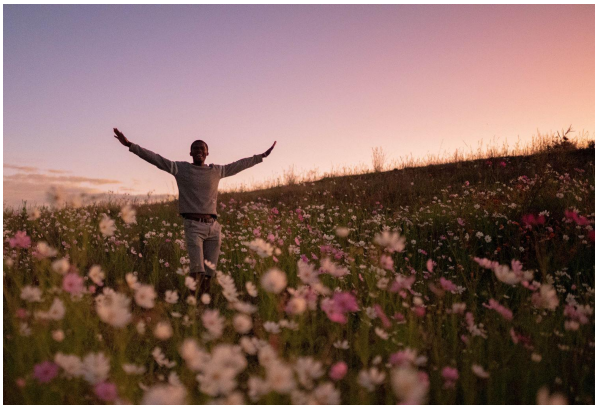

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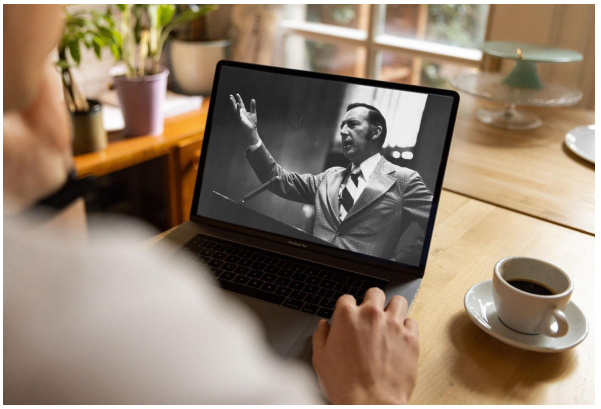

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