

Finishing Well

Lesson #41

Hough Your Horses

October 18, 2023

God Gives A Strange Command For Victory

What is the significance of the horse in Scripture?

They symbolize worldly power. A trusting in human flesh and armies rather than in God.

Job 39:19 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

Psalms 33:17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;

despite all its great strength it cannot save.

Israel's kings were prohibited from trying to build up large stables of chariot horses.

Rather than keeping, selling, or killing enemy horses, Scripture twice mentions that Israel's leaders cripple the enemies' horses instead.

This involved severing the Achilles tendon of the hind legs of captured horses, making them ineffective or powerless to the Israelites or their enemies as war horses [I Chron.18:4].

"Houghing" a horse is done by cutting the sinews of their hind legs so that they are rendered incapable of speed.

Hamstringing horses was a practice used by victorious armies to ensure that their enemy's horses could not be used in battle again.

It involved severing the leg tendon on the horse so that it could not gallop.

Though it was a cruel act, many of the horses could still be used for farming.

Joshua 11:1-5 When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of Joshua's report, he immediately formed an alliance of the northern kingdoms. These armies were as numerous as the sands of the sea. They had many horses and chariots. All these kingdoms gathered at Meron, a high place, to fight against Israel.

- High place: places of worship on elevated pieces of ground.
originally dedicated to idol worship.

Joshua 11:6, 9 But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them [a confederate under the King of Hazor, united to attack the young army of God.] According to Jewish historians, some 300,000-foot soldiers, 20,000 horse chariots, and 10,000 soldiers on horses came out to fight Joshua and his army.
for tomorrow about this time, *I will deliver all of them* slain before Israel.

- You shall hamstring [hough] their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

⁹So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

Deut. 17:16 But he [a king] shall not multiply [breed; acquire] horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

Why did God give this strange command?

Couldn't horses make them stronger and more effective fighters?

God knew for the nation to be saved, they had to learn to trust wholly in Him for their protection. God wanted to be the wall of fire around Israel, so He commanded Israel not to trust in physical objects for their safety, salvation, and freedom. Knowing if they did, they would start to think too highly of themselves, or of their possessions, and turn from the source of all strength, the great I Am.

God was teaching the Israelites:

1. To trust in Him, not in military resources. Obey Him and do not question His instructions.

Ps. 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;

But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

God wanted them to rely on HIM ALONE for their victory, NOT on their own abilities.

2. There is no need for horses in the Promised Land.

➤ God wanted them to possess Canaan and enjoy the bounty of its soil.

Truth: There is NO NEED for "my horse," anything of my flesh in living the abundant life.

I am to make anything of the flesh ineffective.

3. God wanted them to settle down in their Promised Land; horses would encourage travel.

They were to be an agricultural, not a trading, people.

4. Horses would have encouraged trade and opened the Jews to the influences of the world; influences God was having them destroy.

5. Horses could fall into enemy hands. Use them against us.

Truth: God wants us to be "helpless" so we will fully follow Him and rely on Him for victory.

Know & experience His STRENGTH of following Him. So "Hough your horses & follow Him."

This strength and vitality is exemplified in the life of Caleb. While the rest of the Israelite men were dying in the wilderness, Caleb remained strong and vibrant.

Caleb, a man of Extraordinary Faith, represented man in the FULLNESS of God's Strength, man, unhindered by the world, by Satan, because Caleb WHOLLY FOLLOWED GOD!

Num. 14:24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another [different] spirit with him,

and has followed Me fully, I will bring him into the land which he entered; and his seed shall possess it.

I. Caleb possessed a Carrying Faith

Joshua 14:6-11 ⁶ 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. 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 back word to him as it was in my heart. ⁸ Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. ⁹ 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.'

¹⁰ And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. ¹¹ As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.

Caleb, age 85, interrupted the apportionment of the land among the people of Israel when he stepped out of the ranks to claim the portion which God had promised him 45 years before. This promise from God assured Joshua & Caleb they would survive the years of wandering and they would receive their inheritance in the land.

- This gave Joshua & Caleb joy and courage as they endured years of wandering & waiting.
- Be encouraged in your pilgrim journey! You have already received your inheritance in Christ and can claim "every spiritual blessing" [Eph. 1:3].
- Since you have a glorious inheritance before you [I Peter 1:3-6], keep looking up!

Characteristics of Caleb:

1. The Faith of his youth was not dimmed in his old age.
2. The vision of the Lord was clearer as he grew older.
3. He was not content merely to survey his past but he was ready and eager for fresh battles with the enemy.
4. Caleb possessed an unwavering faith.

Return to the scene 45 years earlier recorded in Num. 13 & 14. The children of Israel reached a place called Kadesh-barnea on the very border of the Promised Land.

Problem: The UNBELIEF which had plagued them during their early wilderness journey demanded > We must send in spies to survey the land. So, 12 men [1 from each tribe] were sent in.

Unbelief Is Not:

- Unbelief is not the absence of faith.
- It is not a negative state of mind.
- It is not an intellectual attitude, or state, caused by a want of sufficient evidence.
- It is not a state of blank ignorance of God and of His truth.
- It is not the state of ignorance of the existence and attributes of God.
- It is not disbelief/belief in the opposite of what the Bible says is true.
- It is not an intellectual state at all.

Unbelief is at the heart of our lack of commitment to God!

After a 40-day tour of inspection they brought back 2 reports.

Consider: Our search for truth usually starts with questions such as: What do the experts say? What do my friends say? The question people most avoid: What does God say?

a. Majority Report > The land does flow with milk and honey.

Num. 13:28, 33 NEVERTHELESS, the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak (GIANTS) there and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

Conclusion: We ARE NOT ABLE to go up against them.

Truth: The majority opinion is not an accurate measurement of right and wrong.

b. Minority Report > Caleb & Joshua > It is true there are giants, but we BELIEVE GOD.

Num. 13:30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said,

Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Num. 14:8 If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.

➤ The giants in the land have no protection. The LORD is with us.

Conclusion: We are well able to overcome it.

Imagine Caleb's reaction to the bounties of the Promised Land - the grapes that exploded with sweetness in his mouth after 2 years of manna.

He & Joshua took samples of the fruit back to the people so they could experience it.

Surely the people will be excited about this wonderful Promised Land! He could hardly believe his ears as the people listened intently to the descriptions of the giants and walled cities.

People - can't you see these grapes! Taste! Can't you see that God is with us?

Remember the past: He recalled:

a. 2 years in wilderness journey; daily manna

b. The day he had been brought out of Egypt by the power of the blood of the Lamb.

c. The sure leading of the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day.

d. He KNEW the Lord delighted in His people. THEREFORE, we are able to overcome.

Cry of the People: "Let us go back to Egypt." They FORGOT the bondage.

In their desire to avoid further peril and trouble, they dishonored God.

Difference: The majority measured the giants against their own strength.

Caleb & Joshua measured the giants against God's strength.

The majority trembled and saw great giants and a little God.

Caleb & Joshua had a great God and little giants. "One with God is a majority."

What Difference Does A Right Spirit Make In a Person's Life?

The 10 Spies	Joshua & Caleb
Spirit of Unbelief	Spirit of Faith
Spirit of Fear	Spirit of Boldness
Spirit of Weakness	Spirit of Strength
Spirit of Defeat	Spirit of Victory
Negative Spirit	Positive Spirit

God's Decision: The land of blessing can ONLY be inherited by faith and obedience. Therefore, the Promised Land will be refused to a whole generation of His people except Caleb & Joshua.

Note: God shut down any return to Egypt.

He slammed the door on Canaan and their inheritance.

God's Word records 6x: Caleb followed God fully. He was filled with pursuing God.

His heart was set to follow God. There was no room for any competing choice.

Num. 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

"wholly" or "fully" - 2 Hebrew words: ahar > the hind part, behind

mala > to be filled up

Caleb was filled up with the hind part of God. He kept so close.

To be filled with the Spirit of God > you are so dependent upon Him, He can't shake you!

Caleb surely treasured that promise from God during 45 years of weary wandering, toil and ceaseless conflict and unfulfilled hopes. As the people continued to murmur, Caleb retained the fixed purpose to wholly follow the LORD; his faith carried him.

Like Abraham in Rom. 4:20-21 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Consider: Caleb was NEVER found among the grumblers, the skeptics and unbelievers.

He was NEVER found among the people who yearned for the leeks and garlic of Egypt.

He was NEVER found among those who disobeyed God or turned to idolatry.

Why? Caleb had caught a glimpse of the reward of obedience.

That hope was sufficient to keep him true for the rest of his life and until that brought him to the place God had promised him.

Consider: If I am lacking in a "carrying" faith, I need to abide in Him, His Word and His Promises. The basis for abiding in Him is obedience to His commands. If I am not abiding in Him, I will not have the faith to carry me through the storms of life. Instead of feasting on the "monster fruit" of God, I am starving on Gerber's processed baby food.

II. Caleb had a Climbing Faith

Joshua 14:12 Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said.

What a moment when Caleb [at 85] in all the maturity of godly character and in all the authority of one who believed God, stepped out of the ranks alone. He had gone through many difficulties and succeeded in the struggle to overcome those who would have done most anything to dissuade him from his conviction.

Can you imagine hearing him:

"Now, after 45 years of waiting, after many an agony of soul, after having been tempted by the crowd to pull back - NOW, give me this mountain whereof the Lord spoke in that day!"

Adoniram Judson - missionary who spent 12 years in Burma without a convert. The board that sent him out didn't sense the situation nor what a tremendous missionary they had in Judson. They wrote him a letter suggesting he come home. What are the prospects in Burma for the future? He replied, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."
His confidence in God was the reason he could stay in the wilderness of Burma. Although he suffered a great deal, revival eventually came.

Truth: I can complain all day, but that will only hamstring my walk.

Focus on God, His Hope, His Future for me.

Scripture tells us that it is through faith and patience that we will inherit the promises.

- Heb. 6:12

Note: Caleb's strength never weakened.

Joshua 14:11 As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.

Truth: A faith that NEVER wavered enabled him to lay hold on a strength that never weakened - the very power of God Himself.

Caleb fully followed the Lord while everyone around him was dropping dead, complaining, getting bitten by snakes, swallowed by the earth. Caleb was thinking about going mountain climbing; pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Caleb kept on drinking from the Rock, thinking about the grapes, his inheritance and climbing the mountain.

Truth: You are either running a winning race or falling down in the wilderness.

No human energy could suffice for all the trials of the way. Caleb could toil, fight and exhaust himself and still be full of the strength of God.

II Cor. 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

III. Caleb had a Conquering Faith

Desire: II Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. Caleb's reward was complete victory.

Joshua 14:13-15 ¹³ And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. ¹⁴ Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

¹⁵ And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the land had rest from war.

Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there:

- Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.

We discover of all the people who received an inheritance in the land, Caleb was the only one who succeeded in expelling the enemy. The others made poor headway. The last part of Joshua makes sad reading. Over and over: "They were not able to drive them out."

The chariots of iron were too strong. Caleb was able to drive out ALL the enemy even though there were 3 giants in the portion allotted to him.

Consider: The man who wholly followed the LORD was the only one who was wholly victorious in the battle.

Truth: The enemy knows the weak points in my armor.

Failure to drive out the enemy in my life is due to my failure to wholly follow the Lord.

Absolute triumph is achieved only in response to utter obedience.

When Caleb was 40, he toured and inspected the land. One place captured his heart, not because of its fruit, its milk and honey. He desired Hebron which was situated on a rugged mountain. It was the most powerful stronghold of the enemy and was guarded by the strongest of giants. Gen. 10 tells us that Abraham pitched his tent here.

God spoke to Abraham here and gave to Abraham the promise of the land.

Hebron's meaning: fellowship, love and communion. This was the place that Caleb cherished.

This is the place we all must seek and find. Caleb wanted to PROVE the POWER of GOD.

Fear looks at the problems > Faith claims the opportunities.

Truth: Faith filters every giant through the Power of God.

Redpath: "There is a place guarded by powerful forces, a rugged stronghold which Satan attempts to keep from God's people at all costs. He is prepared to barter portions of the land to the children of God. He will give them the plains and the valleys. He will give them the milk and honey. But when Satan sees a soul pressing toward the mountain of Hebron - the soul that is going to be satisfied with nothing in his life other than love, fellowship and communion with God - Satan is stirred to a last-ditch battle."

"Here was the secret of Caleb's patience, of his faith and of his complete victory: in Hebron he had caught a glimpse of the reward of discipleship - the greatest reward of all.

Caleb saw the place of communion, of fellowship, of God's infinite blessing, and regardless of the cost and the hardship, he pressed on until Hebron was his."

Caleb is a picture of what Christ promises to all those who wholly follow Him > an Abundant Life. We are to walk victoriously and hamstring our enemies. However, we are often "hamstrung" by Satan who works to accuse us, cause defeat and discouragement in our lives. He NEVER wants us to know and revel in the power of God to bring victory.

I John 3:8 For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,
that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Jesus has rendered Satan POWERLESS; He has hamstrung Satan! There is NO REASON we should allow Satan to defeat us. Focus on the POWER OF GOD in every situation.