

A man apart

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to the Lord to the passage we read in Numbers chapter 14. Numbers chapter 14 and verse 24.

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his feet shall possess it.

This was a very critical moment in the history of the people of Israel. It was one of the most important moments in the whole of their history.

And it is one of the most sad episodes in the whole of their history. Because here they are having been brought by the Lord to the borders of the promised land.

Having sent these twelve spies into the land, these men that went into the land, and they spent forty days searching out the land and bringing back a report to the whole company of the people.

[1 : 1 4] They brought back with them a sample of the kind of produce that the land yielded. The great clusters of grapes that were so far superior to the grapes that were found in Egypt, which apparently were very small compared to the likes of the fruit of the land of Canaan.

And yet the report that these men brought back, or ten of these men at least, it was a matter of not going any further into the land. Yet the produce was good, but the children of Anak are there.

There are giants in the land. There are people in that land that we just cannot deal with. They're too strong for us. And Caleb and Joshua, these two men out of the twelve, spoke up against that particular insistence on the other ten.

They spoke up against it and said we should go in and we should possess the land even now, because these people of the land are not as strong as us.

We have the Lord on our side. And the reaction of the people was that they should stone these two men to death. And the Lord, speaking through Moses, again said to the people in the part of the chapter that we didn't read down to the end of the chapter, that for fourteen years they were now going to wander through the wilderness.

[2 : 4 3] One year for each day that they had taken to buy out the land. Not only that, but that every single one of those that left Egypt, except for Caleb and Joshua, that they would die in the wilderness.

And they would never see the promised land. Their children would see it, their descendants would see it, that every single one of them, except for these two, they were going to die in their forty years wandering in the desert.

And in the epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament, we find a very strong emphasis in chapters three and four of why that came about.

With whom, says the writer, was he grieved? Was God grieved for forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

And he applied it to ourselves. Let us therefore fear. Let the promise being left us of entering into his rest. Any of you should seem to come short of it.

[3 : 54] For unto us was the gospel preached of worth unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.

Let any man fall after the same example of unbelief. The critical moment in the history of these people showed up that unbelief.

And what the Lord is bringing before us is the example of this one man, although of course Joshua also was alongside him in his faithfulness. But he's talking to us here especially of this Caleb, my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him.

And has followed me fully. Him will I bring into the land wherein he went. Now, there are two things there in our text that we can look at briefly today.

Firstly, what we can call God's opinion of Caleb. This is my servant Caleb, who had another spirit with him and has followed me fully.

[5 : 07] And then God's provision for Caleb, just looking at it and closing our study, him will I bring into the land wherein he went. God's opinion of Caleb, first of all.

Now we're beginning a new year, we're not very much into it yet. This is the first Sabbath day of this new year and we come to it for the opinions about many subjects, about other people, about one another, and so on.

But there is one opinion that we largely neglect all too often. There is one opinion that not just at the beginning of each year, but right through this year, you and I must continue to bear in mind and to bear at the forefront of our minds.

And it is God's opinion, it is God's looking in upon us, it is God's verdict concerning us. What is it as we begin a new year that God is saying about us?

If we're placing ourselves in a serious situation as Caleb, is God saying about you as he's saying about Caleb? Is he saying about me as he's saying about Caleb?

[6 : 16] Is he saying about us as we begin this new year that we have a different spirit within us to the spirit of unbelief, to the spirit of complaining, to the spirit that is against God?

Is the Lord saying about us as he said of Caleb as we begin this new year that we are following him fully? Is the promise of God to be real for ourselves in consequence of that that he is bringing us into this inheritance that he has promised to all who trust in him and who follow him fully?

That's what you and I must put to ourselves. That is what we must bring with us to our text. That is what must lie upon our hearts. That is the whole process of looking at that this morning for a little time together.

First of all, this man Caleb is described as having another spirit with him. And it is a spirit that is, of course, opposite to the spirit that prevails amongst the people and amongst the majority of those men who are with him looking out the land of Caleb.

He has another spirit with him, said God. A spirit that was directly countered. The spirit that was in the people that was so man-centered.

[7 : 45] The spirit that was so unbelieving. The spirit that was so reluctant to act upon the promises of God. The spirit that was so reluctant to look back upon all that God has done for them in the past up to that point.

Isn't this what God himself is saying to them? How long will this go on? How long will they go on to refuse the mighty act that I have done?

How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be ere they believe me? For all the signs which I have showed among them that Caleb had another spirit with him.

And he showed that spirit if we go back for a few minutes to the previous chapter to verse 30. verse 30 of chapter 13 we find 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.

Notice the emphasis Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said the people were obviously greatly agitated by the report of these men that stressed for them the gigantic proportions of the sons of Anak and the Amalekites and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites and the strength of these people.

[9 : 12] But here is Caleb amongst all the bustle of the people as they're complaining as they're complaining against Moses and against God as their hearts are set on going back to Egypt Caleb says hold on a minute what are we talking about?

We are well able to overcome because Caleb is confident in his God. Caleb is showing the difference with that very point of confidence in his God whatever this year is going to hold for you and for me God only knows that.

But if we're going to be faithful to God and to his gospel and to his demands of us then we're going to meet with the sons of Anak we're going to meet with giants in the world we're going to meet with difficulties we're going to meet with trials we're going to meet with the devil and all his guises we're going to meet with all the frustrations and the disappointments we're going to meet we trust also with exhilarating experiences with great things with the hand of the Lord upon us and if we look out over all that may lie ahead of us faithfulness to God will bring the reproach of Christ but we have to have the spirit of Caleb we have to have the different approach of Caleb to the people that surround him that are so filled with unbelief this different spirit that has confidence in God that says I can do as we saw last Sabbath evening all things through and in Christ who fills me with strength not the spirit of Caleb the spirit that God says is another spirit that is with him but he shows it also in this same chapter that we read where we find

Caleb here speaking along with Joshua himself to the people of the land and to the people here in verse 8 if the Lord delight in us then he will bring us into this land and give it a land which flows with milk and honey now notice his emphasis there at the beginning of verse 8 if the Lord delight in us then he will bring us into this land not only did Caleb have confidence in God but Caleb had carefulness before God because what Caleb was concerned for in all his living was that God would be delighted in him was that God's delight would be upon him how do we have the delight of God upon us how does God delight in us what above everything else brings God to delight in any of us well you know very well that you have nothing as I have nothing in ourselves that attracts

God to us that makes God delight in us how can it be when we are depraved and lost and wretched and miserable sinners in his presence how can it be that God will delight in such people as we are how can we look over 1993 as it opens up before us and have confidence that God will be delighted in us well it's primarily in the way of obedience to God his own you remember how when Saul came back to Samuel after he was supposed to have completely destroyed the Amalekites he had spared the best of their flocks and their goods and so on in the pretense that he was going to bring that back to offer it to God and sacrifice when Saul met him and asked him have you done what God commanded and he said yes then what is the meaning of this bleating of sheep and the lowering of oxen that I hear in my ears and Saul said the people wanted to keep the best of the flocks to offer and sacrifice to God what did Samuel say to him but the Lord delight as much in burnt offerings and in sacrifices as in obedience to his command for to obey is better than sacrifice the Lord was not delighted in Saul because

[14 : 09] Saul had not lived according to God's command however difficult it was and the Lord will not be delighted in you or in me unless we are seeking at all times to live in obedience to himself as obedient servants to Christ are you and I facing this new year as it unfolds with this concern primarily in our minds with this overriding all other things in our hearts if God is delighted in us how can we face at this critical juncture of our lives as we find one year coming to an end another year beginning as we find the brevity of life the uncertainty of life as we find the promises of God the truth of the gospel as we find our own weaknesses and sinfulness and dependence on God so evident how can we possibly go on a step further unless this is our hope that God will take delight in us and if we're not delighting in him and delighting in his ways in his commands in his gospel and all that he is then he is not delighting in us and we cannot proceed with the confidence of Caleb we cannot proceed upon the promises of God but as

God delights in us my servant Caleb because he had another spirit with him so there was confidence in God there was carefulness before God but we have to try and apply that more fully to the situation in which you and I live as well today because we're surrounded by so much that is man-centered even amongst many who profess the name of Christ even amongst the visible church of God on earth there is so much of an emphasis on the man-centeredness on the sentimentality of the religion of our day there is so much of an emphasis even on unbelief and of a disparaging of the old things of the gospel there are some things that you and I must always do first of all as 1993 unfolds you and

I have got to insist upon the negatives of the gospel as we can put it and many people will tell you you don't need to bother about negatives the Christian church should always be positive what's the point of stressing negatives what we've got to do is set out what we positively stand for what we positively believe for the gospel is not about negatives you don't get anywhere by simply stressing what this person or that person is not that the gospel is not Roman Catholicism that the gospel is not liberalism that the gospel is not what the cults believe and so on well of course we have to be aware of the need for the positive element at all time certainly the gospel is not properly proclaimed or proclaimed in a balanced way if all that we are doing always is a harangue of Roman Catholicism or of some other viewpoint we have to bring these things out certainly but the gospel is not merely a series of negatives that we have to grant but we should never neglect the negatives the denouncing of the opposing views the bringing out of the negatives in such a way as say that is not the gospel that is not what we must believe that is not the support of the gospel that is not of the pain because if we leave aside the negatives altogether what we're going to find is that error is going to make its way in rapidly subtly but certainly into our thinking and into our way of life so in the year ahead you and

I have got to insist upon the negatives upon the things that we know are perhaps commended as the gospel but that are not according to God's word and then as you've got to insist upon the negatives so you've got to resist the subtractions and the additions to the gospel the year ahead brings many challenges to the believing faithful people of God one of the challenges is the challenge to discern when the gospel is subtracted from or added to we're not very good at knowing subtractions from the gospel we're a bit better at looking at additions to the gospel that's easier to see it's easier to detect but it's not as easy to detect the subtractions from the gospel we can hear somebody speaking to us or preaching to us and we might agree with everything he says or she says and we can leave with a conviction in our minds that because we have agreed with everything that person has said they are on exactly the same emphasis as ourselves there's no difference whatsoever between them and ourselves but you and I have got to learn more and more to listen for is not just what people say but what people don't say the things that people leave and reach the essentials that should always be stressed because the reformed evangelical emphasis that we love must always stress certain things and must always have certain things so central to the message of the gospel that in some form or another and to some degree or other they always appear in the gospel in its presentation in its preaching in its being lived out in the life of

God's people and however much we can listen to people and say I agreed with everything they said maybe what they didn't say was the really important thing because a person can say a lot of things things that are more on the peripherals on the outside of the truth things that are around about the central issues of the truth but if a person spends an hour in speaking of the need that we have as people to know God in our lives and doesn't present the centrality of Christ the sufficiency of Christ the atonement of Christ the depravity of man the inability of man all of these things if they're not in some way presented then you've got to say about that person whatever he has said is not said enough and we have to beware about the subtraction because the devil is an expert at subtracting from the gospel by simply putting across things that you cannot quarrel with and yet you have the feeling that that person believes something else though he has never said it we must insist upon the negatives of the gospel we must resist the subtraction from the gospel and we must also resist addition to the gospel you remember that's what happened in the

[22 : 05] Galatian churches when Paul wrote to them that was his complaint to them that was why he was so indignant he said you began well this is what you were taught this is what you embraced when I preached to you that oppression is justified by faith in Christ but you've gone further than that you've added to that you've added circumcision you've insisted on circumcision along with that and because of that you've added to the gospel you've added to the foundation and you'll come across many people in our day who'll say oh but I'm still an evangelical I'm still I still believe in the reformed emphasis of the truth that's where I began twenty years ago I'm still there all I've done is I've added certain things to that I've embraced other things which I believe are necessary in ways you've got to beware of the additives and especially when they're additives to the very foundation of the gospel to

Christ himself because anything that's added to him must be met with Paul's own vehemence to the Galatians that is something which 1995 23 must always set before the spirit of Caleb he had another spirit with it was a spirit that had confidence in God you and I must have that confidence in God it is a spirit that is careful before God you and I must seek to be careful before God it is a spirit that must prize the truth of God you and I must have the spirit of Caleb in prizing the truth of God insisting on the negatives and resisting all subtraction and all additives to it but what then about the second aspect of Caleb's witness because he he has followed he has followed me fully my servant

Caleb because he had another spirit and because he followed me fully therefore him will I bring him into the land what is it to follow the Lord fully well to follow the Lord fully in this unfolding year for you you must follow the Lord continuously there are many people who sadly begin to follow the Lord to show much encouraging signs of setting their heart upon following Christ who begin in certain conditions to follow the Lord who have a conviction of sin who begin a sense of danger in their hearts through the preaching of the gospel through the reading of the Bible or something who have that sense of danger and yet who don't continue to follow the Lord who come short of following the Lord fully you remember Lot's wife Luke chapter 17 the

Lord's own words bring forth Lot's wife as an example she had tremendous privileges she was visited by angels from God she was warned of the destruction of Sodom the angels took her by the hand they led her out of Sodom she was determined at that point to leave Sodom she saw the danger she knew what was going to happen she accepted God's word she took the message to herself she began to follow the Lord and then she looked back and she became a monument to following the Lord incompletely she became a monument to a sense of danger and a conviction of sin and of the wrath of God that did not lead to following the Lord fully and if your heart is set as I'm sure it is today on following the Lord you must get beyond mere conviction of sin that's good you must get beyond whatever mere resolve you have to follow the

Lord that's good you must get beyond the sense of danger that's good that sense of danger is valuable you must get beyond that you must follow the Lord fully you must press on to know Christ for yourself until your sins are forgiven until the Lord discloses to you in the peace of your heart that he has dealt with your sins that you must then continue to follow him continue to seek him continue to love him to obey him this is Caleb's testimony this is God's opinion he followed me fully how sad it is to see as we very often see some people when they have a serious illness or something like that begin to think seriously about religion about following the Lord eternity comes close death's reality is brought near we appreciate as never before the brevity the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death and the certainty of meeting

[27 : 35] God and the certainty of eternal issues and we begin to have a serious thought about things but how often when the illness wanes the thawed wanes how often when people get better the following of the Lord declines proportionally to the bodily increase of health and the world then comes back to tempt us and we embrace the world again and we follow the ways of the world and the ways of sin again and the following of the Lord becomes a very faint blur on the horizon of our past and it was one of dr Lloyd jones his great emphases on why he became a preacher of the gospel having been a superb skilled physician a man who could have done so much in the field of medicine but this was his testimony this is what he said i saw he said that however much i could do for people physically or to that effect anyway many of these people that were being improved physically i was sending back to their sins i was sending them back to their sins physical health is important but there is something far more important than that it is following the lord it is health of soul it is spiritual vitality and in this year as you look back over the past year whatever it has been for you however much you have or have not followed the lord let this year unfold be a year where you follow the lord fully where you follow the lord as you did not follow him in the past where you follow the lord where you set your mind upon him where you set your mind upon following him fully where it is where you press on to know the lord where in every way that you can as the bible commended to you you will follow the lord fully in that it is then caleb testimony the lord's opinion of caleb he has followed me fully you follow the lord fully when you follow continuously you follow the lord fully also when you follow him with your whole heart that's important your whole heart because so often we give the lord only out divided with attention somebody else is there some other person some other thing some other object has our trust has our fellowship has our love we divide the lord out we portion him out the lord demands of us out whole heart give me all your heart set me first in your heart let me have the throne of your heart let me rule in your life let me be the lord of your life let me be the governor of your life let me be the one that dictates your whole heart let me have all your heart upon his saying to you and of course we know to our cost how we divide the lord out with other objects of our affection yet we thank god that the bible has the evidence of failure and decline in the life of god's people not for an excuse for us not to follow the lord fully but so that will encourage us that others before us who fell into sin still came to follow the lord fully even after that you remember david his sin in the killing of bathsheba in the ordering at least of the killing of bathsheba's husband uriah the sin of taking bathsheba to himself you remember the emphasis in the life of peter how he fell into sin and denying his lord three times there are many other examples in the bible we could bring out of with time that was decline that was decay that was backsliding in the people of god men of god men who followed the lord and yet for that particular moment at least were not following the lord fully went back in the following of but they came back to the lord with sin with their confession they came back to the lord to strive after more following of him to the full you look back over as

I look back over the year that has passed you can see where you did not follow the lord fully you can see where you went wrong where you sinned against him you can see where you came short you can see where you fell into sin you can see what you did to provoke the lord you can see all of these things and as you see them you must look at the spirit of Caleb and you must say that as this year ahead unfolds you're not going to go back to these things by God's grace you're going to learn from these things you're going to go ahead in this year to follow the lord fully you're not going out with any other that has your affection you're not going to be satisfied with beginning and end drawing back you're not going to be satisfied with a partial following following of him this surely is your heart dear friend also today and you're going to follow the lord fully in this year hand the following of the lord for you following him fully as it must it must bring him that you know himself in an increasing way because there is nothing that will make you follow him more than appreciating his own magnificence his own beauty you have to study him more you have to be where he is studied you have to set your heart upon being with him more the fellowship of him the word that he brings to you you have to study his beauty you have to see himself as that object of great beauty that is your desire is there anyone as beautiful as

Christ you and I must have the desire of the spouse and the son of Solomon draw me and we will run after thee what is she captivated by she's captivated by the beauty of this king that she is espoused to she's captivated by him in such a way as we see in that song that when she is at a distance from him she cannot bear to be parted from him she loves him to an extent that when he is absent he is sick with mourning is that how you and I are going to follow the Lord are we going to be satisfied with anything less than increasing an increasing awareness of the beauty of Christ and of the desire in our heart to follow him to the full are we going to be satisfied in this year with anything less than to say about him he is the cheapest among ten thousands thou art altogether lovely and

I cannot do without and I cannot do without thy face upon me thy kisses every day to me follow the Lord fully let your heart upon a full following of the Lord and you will need to know yourself as well as to know him whatever the past year has held for you in a sense of knowing yourself in the way of knowing your sins in the way of knowing your heart it has not been enough it has not been enough for me it has not been enough for you you can never know yourself as much as you should neither can I you never know the depth of your heart to the extent that you should you never know your own impotency without Christ to the extent that you should labor to know yourself more to enter into your heart more to know your own sinfulness more your own tendencies more all of these things because the more you know yourself more the more your heart will go out to this glorious beautiful saviour as the one who alone is your sufficient you will follow him fully only as you know yourself and as you know himself more and more and there's one other must you must know himself increasingly you must know yourself increasingly and you must also be with others who follow him fully you must have the fellowship of

[37 : 41] God's people you must not like be like an isolated tree standing out in a field on its own that's blasted by the wind that becomes gnarled and twisted and shaped in one direction that takes on the appearance of the elements a cluster of trees is not like that they grow according to their natural shape because they have the benefit of one another's support the Christian needs Christian fellowship you're going to dwindle you're going to be dwarfish without that and in this year that unfolds let it be a year of Christian fellowships let our homes be homes of Christian fellowship let our homes be open to the gatherings that discuss the things of God the things of Christ where the Saviour is set out where the things of salvation are set out let there be an abundance of fellowship in this year ahead let there be the benefits of

Christian togetherness in the gospel that's what Caleb is doing in following the Lord fully that's what following the Lord fully must entail so there are always emphases he has another spirit with him he has followed me fully and then just in a word God provision for Caleb him will I bring into the land where into he went in Joshua chapters 14 and 15 we find the time when Caleb went into the land of Canaan 40 years after this by which time Caleb was 85 years old and what did he do when he was 85 years old well if you read these chapters when you get home you'll find out but this is in summary what it was he drove out three of the sons of Anak personally at the head of his people so that he could inhabit this land that

God had promised him he was then as filled with strength at 85 he he he he had he demonstrated in his old age that he had confidence in God that he had carefulness before God in a way that supplied him with strength they didn't carry Caleb on a couch into the land of Canaan as a bed with an old man Caleb went into the land of Canaan as a conqueror why because God proved himself faithful and true in Caleb's taking of the land the part of the land that he inherited I will bring him into the land where into he went I will make sure that he inherits this land and he will not be dragged into it as a feeble old man he will inherit this land in strength and you notice the note of consequence because of this because he had this different spirit because he has followed me fully therefore

I will bring it's the emphasis of consequence not of direct cause cause there's always God's grace but there's always the consequence in other words the consequence of godliness is always glory always glory the consequence of godliness is always entering in powerfully into the inheritance the kingdom if you read second peter chapter one you'll find that same emphasis there he doesn't just speak of an entrance into the kingdom of god an entrance into the inheritance and glory what does he speak of he speaks of an abundant entrance who does he speak of as having an abundant entrance those who are diligent in one thing in working out in adding to the faith in pursuing to follow the

Lord fully in the spirit of Caleb because this is God's promise to us as people in this year ahead you honor me and I will honor you the those that despise me I will lightly esteem honor the Lord following the Lord fully that is the promise that God has attached to this I will take you onward and I will take you onward in power in my power to inherit my promises I will be with you and you will conquer you will conquer in obedience to himself enable us oh Lord we pray to have that different spirit in us that is contrary to the spirit of unbelief and of complaint the spirit that would set about thy truth in a way that would love it and prize it enable us we pray to follow thee to the full to the utmost of what we are able to do to practice we pray gracious lord for the grace and would enable us in all things to honor thee and help us we pray that in the honoring of thee we might be consistent in all that we seek to do to witness for bless us now and bless thy word to us to that end for thine own glory sake amen roi