

Strong in God - Achsah

With Sam We have been looking at Examples of men who were Strong in God... and today I am going to continue that theme... But I thought we ought to balance things up a bit So I am going to talk about a **Woman** who was strong in God.... And I can almost Guarantee you have never heard of her! But more about her in a few minutes... let's set the scene...

We are familiar with the story Caleb... One of the 12 Spies who went into Canaan.... The land promised to Israel by God....

Of the 12 spies sent out only Joshua & Caleb brought a good report... these two believed they could conquer as God had promised.

Can you imagine it... God says *'Caleb you can conquer this land...'* so Caleb says *'Ok God... great! Lets go & have a look.... My... he's tall... Mind you look at that huge bunches of grapes.. bet the wine's good !'*

Caleb didn't have a problem with the giants... because God had promised them the Land... And he believed God's Promise

The Giants were already defeated... all Israel had to do was walk in and take it!

Then Caleb looks round and sees Joshua... and says *'Where are the other ten.. ? 'Hey guys come out from behind that tree... '*

So they come out... and say *'look at them Giants...'* and Caleb says *'Yeah! Tall ain't they... but the bigger they are the harder they fall!'*

But the other ten spies didn't hear that... they were already running away!

Israel spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness... unable to conquer Canaan because they were afraid of the Giants that lived there... Only Two men in the Whole nation believed they could conquer... the rest chickened out. They wandered in that wilderness... like chickens wander round the yard... going nowhere until all except Joshua & Caleb died out.

Eventually even Moses had died... and Joshua became the leader... The New generation obeyed God... followed Joshua... and crossed the river Jordan and began to take the land city by city...

You know... if you have giants in your land that threaten what God has promised you and called you to do... when you make the decision to cross over Jordan you're not stepping into Their territory... you're stepping into **YOURS !**

The Israelites had been told by God to wipe out the cities that resisted them... and they did... *'As the Lord Commanded'*...

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Israel did kill any soldiers who attacked them – they had to...

- Sometimes they killed a whole population in a town set against them. This was because they knew the children would grow up to hate them and seek revenge-- in many cultures it is normal to take revenge for family deaths even in war.
- They killed off those who made the child sacrifices to Molech by making their children walk alive into huge ceremonial fires. And we still see it today with groups that encourage their children to be suicide bombers so they will go to heaven...
- They wiped out cult temple prostitutes of Baal & the fertility cult of Astarte

These were the reasons that God told the Israelites to wipe out those evil cities. God didn't want all this murder, hatred & sexual perversion among his people.

The Israelites worshipped 'Yahweh', God of creation... A Loving God who didn't demand sacrificed children, or sex with priests for crops or rain... instead Yahweh created all things and blessed everyone with them equally... and the Canaanites gradually understood this.

But the language the Bible uses sometimes seems to say the opposite...it often sounds as though the Israelites killed everyone,... or devoted them to total destruction - but they don't always literally mean it – it's like footballers saying: "we slaughtered them"

Archeologists have found that these captured Cities had become entirely Jewish.... Where the people Surrendered they weren't killed... local people were allowed to continue living there.... But those that resisted were... & they became Jewish Cities... archaeologists know which ones fought & which ones surrendered because they found pig bones in the 'locals' towns...but not in the captured 'Jewish' towns.

One of these towns that had been captured but not wiped out was 'Debir' it was a town where the 'Giants' 'The Anakim' had lived. It was still a big Trouble spot.

Debir had originally been called 'Kiriath Sepher' ... Kiriath simply means "town" and Sepher is "book" it was 'The Town of the Book'

After being Captured Joshua renamed it.... 'Debir'... which means '**Word**' as if to say '*we sorted that place out!*'

After the main conquest of Canaan, Caleb went to Joshua and said: *Josh.14.10-12: ... "I am eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now... give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."*

But Caleb had a bigger problem than 'Debir'....

Caleb had a **Daughter!** She was Very beautiful and also of the right age to be married...

You know how it is with dads & Daughters... have you heard about this dad who had a beautiful daughter... the boys were round her like bees round a honey pot! He answered the door one day to find a young man on the doorstep all booted & suited... bunch of flowers...who said '*I have come to take your daughter out*'

O have you!.... I have a beautiful daughter don't I.... The young man nods enthusiastically.... Then looking intently at the young man the father said... well young man...I not only have a Beautiful daughter....I also have: a shotgun... A shovel.... And an Alibi !!'

Caleb's daughter was named '**Achsah**' which means an 'Anklet' or 'Ankle-chain' or 'Bursting the Veil'

I told you you had probably never heard of her!

How was Caleb going to find a young man suitable for his beautiful... precious daughter.. ?

Don't forget, he was an older guy.... But he still knew how to handle a shotgun and shovel... And he didn't look like he would be retiring anytime soon. Caleb was concerned that he got a really Top-Grade son-in-law and not just the first guy to come along... for his daughter... This new son-in-law must be courageous, smart, uncompromising in faith, and as strong as himself. He wanted a man who could conquer the land... who would help his daughter raise his family... children & descendants to wholeheartedly worship God.

Caleb had a cunning plan. 'Debir' was a tough nut to crack... whoever captured it would certainly be worthy & able to take care of his daughter.... So...

Joshua 15:12 CEV Caleb told his troops, "The man who captures Kiriath-Sepher can marry my daughter Achsah."

Can you imagine it? 40 thousand young fighting men all knew how Beautiful Caleb's daughter was.... There was a lot of competition.

Now, Caleb's brother... Kenaz had a son... named Othneil.... As kids Achsah & Othneil had probably grown up together in the difficult years of fighting for Canaan... perhaps over time Othniel had fallen for Achsah... and she for him. We don't know....but why else would he be so determined to win her as wife?

Othniel proved his love for God, his uncle Caleb, and Achsah by capturing Kiriath-sepher. He won his bride and they were ready to settle down and enjoy their blessings... the other 40 thousand didn't even get a look in.

Caleb gave Othneil some land... in the Negev. The Negev is Semi-Desert & arid.

Achsah is someone who refused to give up. ... one of the ways of pronouncing Achsah's name is 'Ak-saw' You know..... And that's what she was like...

So...Achsah hops on her donkey & goes to see her dad!

Caleb asks Achsah what she wants...: And she was ready... she knew what she wanted ... and why she wanted it!

Judges 1:15 Nlrv She replied, 'Give me a blessing.' You have given me some land in the Negev Desert. Give me springs of water also." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

She was bold & determined... and got her way, Like father, like daughter..! and the Bible seems to celebrate that fact – it even tells her whole story twice ! (Josh 15:15-19)

Judges 1.12-15 NiRV And Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Aksah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher."

Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so Caleb gave his daughter Aksah to him in marriage.

One day when she came to Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What can I do for you?"

She replied, "Do me a special favor. Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

We can see now where Achsah got her pluck and pushy determination from...her father ! ... who refused to give in to anything, even to old age!

Yet Caleb finally met his match when his own daughter stood up to him... she demanded some good springs as well as the desert scrub he'd given her... actually she got twice as much as she demanded – Upper and Lower springs !

So perhaps Tough old Caleb...her father... was really a 'softy' in the end, at least with regard to his daughter.

There are quite a number of Spiritual lessons we can learn from this fairly obscure Old Testament story...

Caleb is the Father... a picture of God...

Achsah his child is a picture of the believer... who comes boldly to the father and ASKS.

One of the meanings of Achsah's name is 'Breaking the Veil' When Jesus died on the Cross at the very moment He died the Temple veil tore in two.. opening up the most holy place.... The very presence of God.... To mankind.

*Heb 4:16 NiRV 'So let **us** boldly approach the throne of grace. Then we will receive mercy. We will find grace to help us when we need it.'*

Achsah's name in today's setting is interesting because so many American/Caribbean/West Indian people seem to use it ! They don't ASK... they Acks for things..

Achsah doesn't Just ask.... She asks **specifically...** and **BOLDLY** 'Give me also Springs of Water'

When you come to God why do you come? To Get ...Get...Get?
Or do you come so that you can overflow....

Like the old song....

*Lord, give me also springs of water,
Lord, give me also springs of water,
Lord, give me also springs of water,
That I may overflow,
That I may overflow.*

It may seem to us sometimes that we have been given a desert place... but we can come to the Father & ask for a Blessing... We can ask Him to give us Springs of water...

A Scottish geologist, James Geikie, said that "in a secluded valley near Debir there is quite a phenomenal supply of water... fourteen springs in all, some in the upper part of the valley, some in the lower, which never fail even in the driest summer; the land it waters became Achsah's property"

In fact when we come to Jesus we get even more... *John 7:38 hybrid* 'He that believes in me, as the scripture have said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'

1 Chron 4:10 NiV Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

Achsah appears as a strong almost 'pushy' woman... and the Church has needed women like this.

- Women like Achsah who stood up to the Canaanites, fighting when necessary
- Women like Achsah were at the forefront of many missionary movements
- Women like Achsah served Jesus abroad when they weren't allowed to serve at home.
- Women like Achsah now serve in all areas of the church

But we also need men who Like Caleb will bring a Good report... & say 'Give me this mountain'

Men who will raise bold & Godly daughters.

And we also need young men like Othneil who have seen the example of courage, faithfulness and determination to follow God and take the land prepared to take on any Giant.

Who will inspire and encourage young men to fight battles, win victories, and be strong leaders.

Eventually Othneil became the Judge of all Israel... and no doubt that Achsah had a thing or two to say as well!

At the conference we were hearing that we need to stop wearing nappies and be Big Boys' Now! To take a stand & be Men & women of God.

To Boldly Ask

To Fearlessly Go

To Courageously Conquer

To Powerfully Possess The Promise

Amen