

## **Caleb, Othniel and Achsah**

by Rev. Malcolm Gillies 1885 – 1945

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*And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs. (Joshua 15:16-19)*

You find Caleb's beginning, as far as the Bible is concerned, in the 14th chapter; in Kadesh-barnea he was elected to be one of the spies that would go across to Canaan and spy out the land. Caleb and Joshua came back from that expedition, and they alone, of the twelve spies, gave such a report as encouraged Moses and the people. The ten spies from the other ten tribes brought back an unfavourable report the cities were too well fortified, the nations in the land of Canaan were too strong and it was useless for the Israelites to invade Canaan. But Caleb and Joshua were of a different mind and different spirit, and they said, "that is all true". There are fortified cities in the land, and the nations that make up the Inhabitants of the land are all warlike tribes, many giants among them; but, notwithstanding, our God is able to fulfil His promise, and, if the Lord loves us, He will bring us into the land. Therefore, because Caleb and Joshua were men of faith and acted and spoke according to the faith that was once delivered unto the saints." God blessed Caleb and Joshua, and said that they, of all that came out of the land of Egypt, would enter the Promised Land. They were about forty years when they came out of Egypt and when they were sent to spy out the land.

Now, you find that after the land was somewhat settled, Caleb came to Joshua and asked for Hebron and the mountains that were connected with Hebron. In asking this as his inheritance, he tells us wonderful things of himself. He says that he was that day, eighty-five years old, but that he was just as strong and youthful that day as the day Moses sent him to spy out the land of Canaan, and he says, "Give me Hebron, the sons of the giants dwell there, and if the Lord will be with

me I will drive out the giants, old as I am". He was as willing to go to the battles of the Lord at eighty-five as at forty. He was a courageous man, and that is something we should learn from Caleb. When difficulties come in our way, when the sons of the Amalekites stand before us, when there are fortified cities and many difficulties, and we are getting weak and feeling despondent, well, we will be better off having a little of the spirit of Caleb, who is ready to go to fight the giants when eighty-five; and he did go, and he overthrew the enemy, because the Lord was with him. Even so, will it be to the end of time.

The Lord never promised any person that he would not meet with that they will not meet with many difficulties. Yea, the history of the Church in every age and in every generation is a history of unsurmountable difficulties. It is a history of contention against overwhelming odds, and in spite of that, the Church will conquer through faith and trust in God. Caleb got his wish. He got Hebron, and he went up to Kirjath-arba, the capital city of that part of the land of Canaan, and he made short work of the giants. Then there was another city in the same district called Kirjath-sepher, and Caleb was just as ready and just as able to go against Kirjath-sepher as against Kirjath-arba; but Caleb had a favourite nephew, who was Othniel, and because he had Othniel in view, and because he would put honour on Othniel, Caleb issued a proclamation, "He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife". Othniel was very willing to risk his life in order to do the will of Caleb, and to win such a treasure as the treasure that was set before him, and so Othniel, the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, went up against Kirjath-sepher and took it, and he got the reward that was promised.

Now, dear friends, you must not think that I am going to dwell on these things tonight. I am just speaking on the historical side a little, to show how the Lord's people, in other days, met with the trials that were set before them - how they went forward in the strength of God and overcame all these difficulties. I am bringing out the literal side in order to show that nothing is impossible where there is simple trust in God, zeal for God's glory, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world.

There is, however, a spiritual side to these deeds of history, for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God", and the story of Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah is given

by the Spirit of God, not only for the lessons that may be drawn from it, practically and literally, but because of the lesson that may be drawn from it spiritually, the lessons of the gospel. We can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ as clearly from the story of Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah as we can from any part in the New Testament. We can use this by way of illustration, and we can say, just as Caleb did, even so did the Lord; just as Othniel did, even so did Jesus Christ; just as Achsah was, even so is the Church of God and the people of God united to the Redeemer. As Achsah sought the blessings of the springs and the fountains of waters, and got the upper springs and the nether springs, even so do God's people seek the blessing of the redemption that is to be found only in Jesus Christ.

Now, in order to speak a little by way of applying this gospel truth, we shall notice, in the first place, three persons sets before us – WE HAVE CALEB, and Othniel and Achsah; and in the second place, we have a covenant and its fulfilment - the covenant that was set forth by Caleb and fulfilled by Othniel; and in the last place, we have a petition and its fulfilment - the petition that Achsah set before Caleb, and how Caleb fulfilled the petition; even so the Lord fulfils the desires of those that fear Him.

I. Well, we have seen in this piece of sacred history three persons brought before us. We have Caleb and then Othniel and Achsah, and Caleb here is the prime mover. Everything is in his hand, and he would give an opportunity to Othniel to place honour on him. We have Achsah brought before us as the reward that was given to Othniel when he would fulfil certain conditions. Now, dear friends, when we consider the gospel of the grace of God - the scheme of redemption by which God saves man we shall notice that there are three persons, especially, brought before us in the gospel. We have, in the first place, God the Father as Head of all things, as the absolute Head, set before us as the defender of divine attributes, as the contriver of the purpose of redemption, as the giver of a Saviour and the giver of a church to Christ. We have in the gospel the doctrine set forth concerning God, in the person of the Father, that He is the fountain from whom salvation flows.

In the second place, we have Christ set before us in the gospel, and Othniel is a sweet type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say that the spirit of the Lord

was upon Othniel, and that is not said of any of the early Judges, but it is said about Othniel, and what a sweet type Othniel is of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer and Saviour - Othniel the Lion of God; and, friends, Christ is both the Lamb of God and the Lion of God. He is the Lamb of God towards His people and towards the Father as He that makes atonement. He is the Lion of God against the enemies of God, against the enemies of His Church. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and those that do not know Christ as the Lamb of God they will know Him as the Lion. They will know Him as He that will utterly destroy all His enemies.

Othniel is a type of Christ. Christ is the very centre of the gospel. It has pleased the Father, even that all fulness should dwell in the Son and hut He should be the fountain of salvation; that He should be the Saviour in all things to His people, and that His people should be able to approach Him, and that they should be in Him as members of His mystical body. Christ is the very centre, the very foundation of the gospel.

Then we have in the gospel the Church of God set before us, the church which Christ loved; as it says, "Christ loved the church, and He gave Himself for it". Achsah, an ornament, is a type of the Church. Ah! dear friends, that is not how the Church is in herself - that the sinner is he is in himself. She is by no means an ornament, an Achsah, but as Apostle puts it, "we were all children of wrath, even as others". We were Achsah to Othniel, "we are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our own righteousness were as filthy rags". But what is the Lord's purpose in redemption? His purpose is to take sinners of Adam's race, who have been ruined and spoilt and undone through sin, to present them without spot before His throne above. The promise says, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. The sinner, ruined as he is by nature, in thought, word and deed, that sinner, saved by grace, will be an Achsah to God through all eternity - an ornament, a diadem in the hand of God.

Just as we have set before us here Caleb and Othniel and Achsah, we have in the gospel, God the Father, revealed as the head of the scheme of redemption, God the Son in our nature as a Saviour, and likewise the Church that is to be the portion of Christ for ever and ever; that is, to be the spouse of Christ, to be with Him through all eternity.

2. Now, I come, in the second place, to consider the covenant and its fulfilment. Now this covenant was in connection with the capture of Kirjath-sepher. Caleb said, "He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher and taketh it, then to him will I give Achsah" as his portion. Kirjath-sepher is the City of Books, and Othniel, if he was to have Achsah, would have to go up to the city of Kirjath-sepher and take it.

Now, dear friends, that brings before us the Covenant of Grace, for this is the very nature of that covenant which was before God from eternity. The theme of the Covenant of Grace was that the Son of God, in our nature, would perform a work, and by performing that work He would save His Church; He would save His people from their sins. He would bring them to heaven. He would be a glorious Redeemer. This was the nature of the Covenant of Grace.

Now, there are many ways in which we can speak about Christ in connection with the gospel of redemption, and the way He fulfilled the Covenant, but, for the present, I illustrate it by Kirjath-sepher, the City of Books. The Covenant of Grace was of that nature. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, would fulfil the contents of two books before He could save His people. He had to go to a spiritual Kirjath-sepher and take it if He is to be the Saviour of poor sinners of Adam's race, and the first book that He had to fulfil was the book of the law. We have in the Bible the book of the law summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, and expounded from Genesis to Revelation. The law of God is the whole Bible. Now Christ has to fulfil the law, the law which man had broken. It was given to man in the Garden of Eden, but man broke that law. He did not love the law, his God and his neighbour. He did not obtain life from the law, but death. But now the Covenant of Grace was of this nature. From all eternity the second Adam, who was also the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, was set up, and it was propounded to Him, speaking after the manner of men, that He should come down to this world and do the work that the first Adam failed to do, and which the whole race of mankind have failed to do, namely, that he would begin at the first commandment in the law, and obey the whole law right through completely without deviation of any kind. This was set before the Son of God in our nature. He had to obey the law. This was set before the Son of God in our nature. He had to obey the law. He had to go up to Kirjath-sepher, the City of Books; He had to approach the law of which He was the giver, and He had to fulfil that law and He had to obey the law that we trampled underfoot. The Son of God came from

heaven to obey it, and not only the law as to direct obedience, but the law as to penalty.

There was a penalty attached to the law that man had now incurred, and the Covenant of Grace set before the Othniel of the everlasting covenant. "Not only must thou obey every command in the law, but thou must die the death that is due for sin. Thou must die, the just for the unjust". Christ, speaking reverently, could not be a Saviour of sinners, He could never espouse the Church to Himself (you could never be united to Christ) if Christ had not come and fulfilled the law by dying on Calvary's Cross, in your room and stead, and if you are married to Christ, you are married to One that died for you in obeying the law. The law you did never obey, and Oh! how you should love Him, how you should follow Him, and how you should obey a husband who died for you.

Well, now, Christ had to go up to this Kirjath-sepher, the Kirjath-sepher of the law of God, and He had to take it. He had to overcome it in this sense in fulfilling it to the very letter, and in dying the death that was written in the law that the Son must die, or else he could never have His Achsah, He could never have His Church, nor a single one of His people.

But there was another book that the Othniel of the new covenant had to fulfil, and that was the Book of the Prophets. He had to go up to this Kirjath-sepher also - Kirjath-sepher of the Book of the Prophets, of the Book of the Old Testament Scriptures, and He had to place Himself in every condition, in every position, and under every trial that is mentioned from the first promise in the Garden of Eden down to the curse that is Written in the Book of Malachi. Ah, dear friends, how does the Old Testament end? Well, the last word in the Old Testament is curse. "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse". There was no way of salvation, but that Christ had to fulfil all the promises of the Old Testament scriptures from the Garden of Eden to the curse in Malachi; He had to be the seed and the stone, and he had to be the Shepherd. He had to be all that was said about the Messiah; the man of sorrows, pierced in His hands and feet, and He would have to ask for a drink on the cross; He would have to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

The Old Testament is full of Christ and what He must be when He Would come in order to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Moses began to speak of Him, and he said: "The seed is coming, and He is to hate the devil and his works"; and

then the Scriptures run on from that, right through, telling what the Christ would be, how He would come, and where He would be. How He would be humbled, and spat upon, and crucified, and laid in a grave, and how He would work miracles. He would do good, and be put to death for doing good.

The Old Testament Scriptures speak of His birth, manhood, and ministry, and how He was treated, betrayed and condemned, and nailed to the cross, and laid in a sepulchre. The Old Testament speaks of all these things, and how in the everlasting covenant it was ordained that the Son of God, in our nature, as the Saviour of lost people, would come and fulfil every clause written in the Old Testament Scriptures. There are many Old Testament Scriptures that are not fulfilled yet concerning the second coming of Christ. They will be fulfilled as sure as the Scriptures in connection with His first coming were fulfilled. He had to go up to this Kirjah-sepher, the City of Books of the Prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures, and He had to take the city and fulfil every one of these promises. As He says Himself: "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined". This is what He was doing the thirty-three years of His life in this world. He was taking the city of Kirjath-sepher, and He was walking according to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Now, what did the covenant say? The covenant said when He would do this, He would not be without His Achsah. Just as sure as it was true about Othniel (when he went up with his weapons of war and took the city of Kirjath-sepher, then he could come to Caleb and claim his bride; Caleb did not deny him), even so it is with the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ. He did fulfil the terms of the Covenant of Grace; He cried out on the Cross, "it is finished", and He went up to the right hand of the Majesty on High. He claimed His Achsah, His Church, "Thou has received gifts for men even for the rebellious". He fulfilled every condition, and now He sits as King upon His throne. He sits on the right hand of power, and the Father says: "Ask of me and for heritage the heathen I'll make thine". Thou has fulfilled the terms of the Covenant; Thou has wrought out redemption, a perfect and a glorious salvation; now ask for Thine Achsah, Thy Church.

Ah! dear friends, won't you pray to Christ tonight that He would ask the Father even to give you to Him, for the Father says to the Son on the right hand, "Ask of Me, my Son, thou art the Othniel of the New Testament; Thou didst fulfil all conditions. Thou didst shed Thy precious blood, which came up as a sweet-

smelling odour before the throne. Now ask of Me, and I will give you one here and one there until the Church, completed and made perfect, will be Thine to all eternity". Ask of Him now, dear friend!

Christ had a right to the Church by gift, and now, when He fulfilled the terms of the Covenant of Grace, He had a right to the Church by purchase. He had bought His people, the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood. But now, in the day of mercy, He comes to have them by another right, the right of their consent. The right which Christ exercises over them in the day when that saying is fulfilled. "A willing people in thy day of power shall come to thee, in holy beauties from morn's womb thy youth like dew shall be", and, dear friend, when the sinner of Adam's race sees the beauty of Christ, His glory, His preciousness as a Redeemer and Saviour, when he is brought to see the love with which He loved sinners, when the sinner is brought to see his need of Christ, when he is brought to be willing to embrace Christ as his own personal Saviour, then Christ, the Othniel of the New Testament, gets His Achsah. Christ gets that which belongs to Himself. As Dr. Kennedy used to say of that verse in the 45th Psalm, "O daughter, hearken and regard, and do thine ear incline; likewise forget thy father's house, and people that are thine", that this was the marriage sermon the Spirit of God preached when He united a soul to Christ, and would it not be good for you and for me tonight if we would listen to Christ?

What does Othniel say of his Achsah? Oh, He is saying this: "You are a lost, hell-deserving sinner, and there is nothing that you in yourself can do that will save you; but now I came to this world, and I obeyed and I suffered and I died, in the room and stead of sinners, in order that they might be saved. Will you not give yourself to me?" Christ says this now, and this is what wins the hearts of His people in this world, when the Spirit of God opens their eyes to see themselves and to see what Christ has done for them. The question is this: Wilt thou go with Christ - to depend upon Him alone as a Redeemer and Saviour? Are you willing that he should be your prophet to teach you, your priest to cleanse you, your king to rule over you? Will you go through a wilderness journey with Christ? Rebecca, many a day when she was in the desert, did not know where she was going, and when she would reach, but she followed the man. Christ says to the soul, "Soul, will you follow me through this world? I will lead you to the celestial mountains. I am leading to that place where your sun will no more go down. I am leading to



that land of pure delight where you will see my face and stand evermore in my presence." Wilt thou go with?

Now Christ is getting His Achsah, His people. There are thousands upon thousands that belong to the Church of Christ now round about His throne as spirits, and He is continually gathering them. They shall come from the north, south, east and west, and they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. Will you be there? You will be there if you will close in with the Lord Jesus. You will never be there if you shut your heart to Him, and now Christ has come to us just as Othniel came to Caleb after he captured the city of Kirjath-sepher. Othniel would come and say to Caleb, "I have done what you demanded. I have fulfilled the conditions given me". Christ comes to us in the everlasting gospel, and He says, "I am He that has fulfilled all conditions; I have made an end to sin, finished transgressions. I have brought in everlasting righteousness; give yourself to Me, believe on Me". "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest", and the Father will give everyone of His people to Him. Christ will not be without His church, but, until she is gathered to Him, the Lord sends His word to men, as rational creatures. We must come to find Him, and when we do, we will say, "Oh, it is all of grace". It is not our seeking that caused us to find Christ; no, it is by grace alone. In this manner the covenant will have its fulfilment.

Othniel fulfilled the covenant; he had his Achsah. Christ has fulfilled all the requirements of the Covenant of Grace; He will have His people. Do you belong to Him? Did you ever see how precious He is and embrace Him as He is freely offered in the gospel? Like the old Puritan divine who was teaching a Sabbath school class one day. He had a lot of little boys and girls in his class, and he asked the question. "What is effectual calling?" They answered, "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, hereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel".

Now, said the divine, is there any little boy or girl in my class today that can apply these words to himself or herself? One boy got up, and he said, weeping:

"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby He convinces me of my sin and misery; enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ, renewing my will, He doth persuade and enable me to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to me in the gospel", and what blessedness that little boy had who could speak

like that right from his heart. This is the experience of God's people and truly such as are united to the Lord Jesus - are joined to Him in a union that will never be broken.

3, But now, in the last place, the petition and its fulfilment. Achsah came to Caleb and said: "Give me a blessing. Give me also springs of water, and he gave her the upper and the nether springs". Here was Achsah coming to Caleb, and she does not now come to Caleb immediately; she says to Othniel, "Now Othniel, you go to my father Caleb and ask for a field, and ask for springs of water". Othniel was now her husband, and she would never go in her own name. If Christ and you have made a match of it, if you are united to the Lord Jesus for eternity, you will never come before God in your own name, but, through Him as your Mediator, your Husband and your Head. She came to Caleb through Othniel, and if Christ is precious to us, and if we know Him as a Redeemer, we do not go to God the Father in our own name, but through our Head, through Christ the Mediator and Saviour. "No one cometh to the Father but by Me".

But now she began to ask, and said, "Give me a field", and when she got that, she said, "give me springs of water", when he gave her a south land. What is the south land that the heavenly Father gives to the soul that loves Jesus and that takes to Christ as his Redeemer and Saviour? He gives him the south land of grace with all spiritual blessings necessary for this life. He gives him a south land, a warm land, not a land of cold and ice. Oh! the spiritual colds and frosts and ice that lie on us, but if we got "life from the dead" we would want the south land. We would desire that the love of Christ would be warm in our heart, and that there would be a union between our soul and the Redeemer.

But then he gave her also a field. What is the field that God gives unto those to whom Christ is made precious? The field of the means of grace. The scriptures of truth are the field where they receive their nourishment and their sustenance - the pure word of God. But she wanted springs of water, and he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs, and though we would have a field, unless the field is watered there will be no fruit; and though we would have the Word of God, or the means of grace in this world, unless the "dew from on high" will come down we shall have no benefit. We need the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, or else we will get nothing for our souls in the Scriptures.

But he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. I just mention one or two points in connection with these. God gives to His people in this world the upper springs of spiritual blessings - that which they need for their soul, that which they need to sustain spiritual life, and which enables them to go in the way of obedience. He gave them the nether springs of temporal blessing. The upper and the nether - "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you". He will give to those that wait upon Him spiritual refreshment and encouragement and joy in a way that they themselves shall experience and know. They have times when they will drink out of His fulness in a way in which their cup will be running over, and when they will not have that, He will give them the nether springs. He will sustain them by His own grace in a mysterious hidden manner, in spite of their inability to lay hold on the truth that they are being upheld by Him.

The Christian is never altogether without a supply of grace. Sometimes he is in a way conscious of it. The Lord supports His own in a mysterious way at other times. Bunyan, in the "Pilgrim's Progress", compares the believer's condition to a fire on which a man is pouring water, but which he cannot put out. The reason of this is that there is One behind the fire pouring oil on it and keeping it alive, in spite of all the man will do. That is the way the Christian in this world oftentimes is. It seems as if this man is endeavouring to destroy grace - drown everything that belongs to Christ, but Christ is behind them vigorously supporting them. He will give them nether springs in time, and the upper springs in eternity. He gives to His people upper springs and the nether springs of all their needs. He will give the same to you if you will seek the Lord Jesus and find Him. Everything you need here, and everything you can hold up there. In heaven the Christian's vessel is running over. You will get down here as much as you need, and up there as much as you can hold, and surely that ought to be enough.

Now, dear friend, when you go home tonight, you should say to the Lord, "Wilt thou take me as thine Achsah? Wilt thou not unite me to thyself in an everlasting covenant?"