

SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY

THE FIRST MEETING

Message given by Malcolm H. Watts (Principal) in the worship service:

Malcolm Watts spoke on the words of Numbers 14:24: "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 seed shall possess it."

Malcolm Watts noted that, at this time, the Israelites were near to the border of Canaan, the land of promise. 12 spies, or scouts, representatives of each tribe, were chosen and sent to take account of the land, its people and its cities or fortresses. When they returned, they all agreed that it was a very fruitful land, albeit a land populated by fierce peoples and very strongly defended. The majority, full of unbelieving pessimism, doubted the divine promise given, and felt there was no way they could take possession of this land. Only Joshua and Caleb felt that, with God's help, it could be done and they urged the people to evidence faith, not fear. On account of their persistent unbelief, the judgment of death and disinheritance fell on this generation, but the two believing spies were commended by God and assured of a place in Canaan. Caleb was especially mentioned, a man who had "another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully."

This man is identified as "the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite" (Number 32:12) and, since Kenez was an Edomite name (Genesis 36:11,15), it suggests that he was perhaps a foreigner by birth and, that professing faith in Israel's God, he was received as one of God's people and so incorporated in the tribe of Judah (Joshua 14:14; 15:13). Certainly, here in the text, Caleb (whose name means "a dog") is described by God as His "servant": one called by God, devoted to his Master, and dedicated to His service.

Yet he was a servant with a difference; and, in the worst of times, God has men who retain their integrity and who resolutely cleave to Him (Isaiah 1:9). As Thomas Boston once wrote, "their candle must shine brightest when that of others is dying out." (Genesis 5:22; 6:9; 17:1; Psalm 73:27,28).

It was pointed out in the sermon that this man was distinguished by his inner life ("another spirit with him") and by his outer life ("[he] hath followed me fully"):

1. THE INNER LIFE

"another spirit with him"

This other spirit (disposition, or motivating force) was a spirit imparted, strengthened and activated by the Holy Spirit, something which was quite special and made him different from nearly all his contemporaries (Ezra 1:5). Scripture makes mention of others like him who stood out in their several generations (e.g. 2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chronicles 17:6; 31:31; John 5:35; Acts 18:25).

Very important truths can be learned from this:

- God wants our hearts to be for Him (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 23:26); and when our hearts are warm, fervent and full of zeal, they please and even delight Him (Deuteronomy 5:29; Acts 26:7);
- it is a real mark of grace when our spirits are right (2 Chronicles 15:15; Psalm 119:38), and it becomes us to keep such evidences clear and bright (Acts 11:22,23; Philippians 2:12);
- what we are, we are within, and nothing more (Proverbs 16:2; 23:7): and therefore we must take the greatest care of our souls to ensure they are in a good state before God (Proverbs 4:23);
- such are the times in which we live, that a godly, sincere, and earnest spirit is necessary and even indispensable (Psalm 51:10; Romans 12:11);
- our spirit should be one which seeks God's honour above everything else (Philippians 1:20; 1 Peter 4:11) and takes every opportunity to doing good (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 5:16);

- to our great sorrow, we are not always what we should be (Galatians 4:15; Revelation 2:4), and therefore we need to reflect on our spiritual state and, if need be, repent before God (Revelation 3:3,19); and
- we need to keep a right spirit at all times, and particularly as we draw near to the end of our lives (Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 4:7; Revelation 2:10): to that end we must implore the blessed Holy Spirit to quicken and maintain us within (Song of Solomon 4:16).

2. THE OUTER LIFE

“[he] hath followed me fully”

Under the direction and influence of God’s Word and Spirit, we must worship Him, cleave to His truths and ordinances, and keep carefully to His revealed will and His righteous laws (Deuteronomy 10:20; 11:22; 13:4).

If the heart is right, the life will also be right. Consider:

- as believers, our lives should be summed up in this: following the Lord our God (Matthew 4:19; Luke 9:23; Revelation 14:14), which means receiving Him as our Guide (Psalm 23:1; Hebrews 12:2), obeying His Word (John 14:15, 21-23), and imitating His example (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6);
- it is fitting that we should be very careful about following the Lord, strictly observing all His commands (Ephesians 5:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:1);
- sadly, our behaviour is sometimes is not what it should be: we fail to refer to God’s Word (Exodus 5:32; Psalm 78:56,57), influenced rather by what others are doing (Exodus 23:2; Galatians 2:13);
- we should follow Him “fully”: this will mean following Him with “singleness of mind” (Acts 2:46; Ephesians 6:5), in all His commandments (Psalm 119:6; Luke 1:6), and constantly, to the very end (John 8:31; Revelation 2:10);
- to this end, we should make sure our consciences are informed and regulated by Scripture (2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:3) and avoid anyone and everything that may hinder or divert us (Galatians 5:7; Hebrews 12:1);
- the secret is to keep close to the Lord throughout each day, maintaining communion with Him and thus preserving a sense of His presence (Psalm 16:8; 119:168; 139:17,18); and
- let us always remember the benefits of following Him fully: experience here of His love (John 14:21) and help (Proverbs 10:29), and hereafter a reward in glory (Luke 22:28,29; Revelation 2:10).

In closing, Malcolm Watts applied these truths to those present. The Trustees should dedicate themselves to “following the Lord fully” as they seek to lead this Seminary in a godly, reformed and spiritual way. The Lecturers too should excel in this, ensuring that they prepare as well as possible and seeking always to inform the mind, warm the heart, and direct the will. And finally, there are the Students: let them mind this in all their studies, aiming to reach the highest standard in order to please the Most High God.

We would all do well to take Caleb for our example and inspiration. “He had another spirit with him” and “[he] hath followed me fully” – Let us follow after Caleb, even as he followed after the Lord our God!