

Othniel: Up To The Challenge

Judges 1:12-15; 3:7-11

Introduction:

- Joshua has died... 110 years old.
 - The elders that served with Joshua have all died.
 - The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served false gods.
 - God raised up judges to lead and save the people.
- ⇒ The first of these judges is a man named Othniel.
 - Interestingly... there is very little information about Othniel.

Othniel... I suspect that was probably not in your top three names to name one of your children.

Othniel = "Lion of God"

Wait a minute... that changes things... "Lion of God" ... that name is inspirational

- ❖ So this now becomes the question that we ask today... ["What was it that made this man such a lion of God?"](#)
- ❖ What are some things that we find in Othniel's life that we can connect with... that can make a big difference in our lives and churches today?

I. Build Your Life On A Great Heritage (Judges 1:12-13)

⇒ Othniel built his life on a great heritage.

¹²And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter for a wife." ¹³And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it. And he gave him Achsah his daughter for a wife.

Now contrast that passage with this passage from **Judges 3** about the Israelite nation as a whole...

⁷And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

➡ We're talking about the same group of people.

➡ Othniel was an Israelite.

- So... we have one man and a nation as a whole who have the same heritage.
- They had the same legacy to reflect on.
- They saw God working in their midst.

- They experienced the same miraculous power of God.
 - So... how is it that one takes his heritage and builds upon it and becomes a great leader for God... but the nation as a whole rejects what they had seen and experienced.
 - They left God and it cost them their freedom.

IMPOTANT: When you have a great heritage to build on... continue to develop it and build on the faith of those who preceded you.

Application: So what does all that mean for us today?

- You may be saying, "I don't have much of a legacy."
- "My family was tough to get along with."
- "I don't have much to build on."
- Remember Gideon

REMEMBER... I'm not speaking about your physical legacy... I'm referring of your spiritual legacy. We all have the access to a great spiritual legacy.

- We are walking in the footsteps of some spiritual giants of history.
- Since the church began over 2000 years ago, people have made incredible sacrifices for the sake of gospel so that the God will not be forgotten.
- That's our heritage.
- God calls on us to build on that heritage... to expand that heritage... to enlarge that heritage.
- There is a chain of witnesses down through the ages that you are linked too... Our option is to strengthen that chain or break that chain.
- One person CAN make a difference.

II. Live Your Life With Great Ambition (Judges 1:12-13a)

¹² And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter for a wife." ¹³ And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it.

Did you notice the challenge that Caleb issued?

Ambition comes in all shapes and sizes. But God is not just looking for ambition that promotes ourselves... or even our churches... He wants ambition that promotes faith and service in Him.

- But remember... spiritual ambition is more than just faith... it's more than just believing in something... it's also about action.
- James reminds us *"Faith without works is dead."* (James 2:26)
- Jesus said, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."*

Jesus has called us to be ambitious for the sake of what honors Him. It goes against our very nature and definitely against our culture...

- ➔ Turn the other cheek.
- ➔ Go the second mile.
- ➔ Love your enemies.
- ➔ Do good to those who mistreat you.
- ➔ Help those in need who would not normally give you the time of day.
- ➔ The first shall be last and the last shall be first.
- ➔ The person who humbles himself will be lifted up... but the person who tries to promote himself will be humbled.

Not one of those statements makes any human sense... but they demand a spiritual ambition that sets us apart from the rest of the crowd.

One final lesson...

III. Finish Your Life With Great Faithfulness (Judges 3:9-11)

⁹ But when the people of Israel ^(D)cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

- ➔ Faithfulness is not a word.
 - ➔ It is not a title.
 - ➔ It is not a name.

➔ **Faithfulness is an ACTION and a BEHAVIOR.**

God did not call us to a title. He called us to action.

- ➔ Othniel was a man of faithfulness.
 - He finished well.
 - He kept his faith to the end.
 - He did not quit.
 - He served for 40 years and "saved" Israel.

The New Testament parallel would be the Apostle Paul... "I have fought that good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith..."

Conclusion:

I'm impressed with Othniel. To the very day he died, he was committed to God.