

Conquering Faith **Hebrews 11:30-31**

Introduction

We have spent considerable time in the Hall of Faith and with the Heroes of the faith. The chapter begins with an explanation of faith and then continues with examples of faith. It is like a mini walk through the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews is not simply interested in a history lesson—but rather is calling the Hebrew Christians to perseverance, faithfulness and discipline. Jesus is our Lord—He is supreme. And because Jesus is supreme we have a supreme calling to live a life of faith. Abraham’s faith was sacrificial (vv.17-19); Isaac’s faith was repentant (v.20); Jacob’s faith was a worshipping faith (v.21); Joseph’s faith and undying faith (v. 22); Moses’ parents possessed a loving and fearless faith (v.23); and Moses possessed a self-denying faith (vv.24-28). The writer points out that “By faith they (the children of Israel) passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned” (v. 29). This was a miracle under God’s control. Moses urged the children of Israel to obey God against insurmountable opposition and experience the deliverance of God. It would be a lie to say the people weren’t frightened—as their enemies approached them—intent on destroying them. But the children passed through the waters; pursued by their enemies; the children of Israel were saved; the enemies of Israel were drowned. The Lord God performed the miracle of salvation and deliverance when the children of Israel acted by faith. God provides a way of deliverance for those who believe.

We add two more gems; two more facets to this jewell we call faith. Joshua and the children of Israel would experience conquering faith. Jericho was a strong city with a high wall and strong people. The writer also mentions Rahab the Harlot; the great grandmother of David and ancestor of Jesus. It is a picture of a person who turned from a life of sin to serve the living God. And because she listened and obeyed the testimony of God she became one of the great women of history in the eyes of God and believers around the world.

Remember Abraham believed God could raise the dead. Isaac and Jacob predicted the future. Joseph anticipated the Exodus long before it ever happened. The parents of Moses defied the Pharaoh and Moses forsook the pleasures the pleasures of sin in order to identify with the people of God (v.25). Moses left the land of Egypt; the people of Israel kept the Passover (v.28); and crossed the Red Sea (v.29) and now they will shout down a city (v.30). Rahab will protect some Hebrew spies. But what does all this have to do with me and you?

Conquering Faith (v.30)

Hebrews 11:30 NKJV; By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

The story begins in Joshua chapters 1-6. God promised to deliver Jericho into the hands of Joshua and that faith in that promise led to victory. Israel marched around Jericho for seven days and all of that must have looked very foolish to the inhabitants of the city (see Wiersbe’s

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Outliens p.708). This walled city was the first military objective to secure the land. This city served as the gateway to the Land.

Let's read some portions of Joshua 6:1-5; 6-25.

What do we discover? We discover some broad principles and great illustrations of practical spiritual truths. Their faith overcomes obstacles. Jericho is the gateway to the promised land. But the children of Israel must first rely on Spiritual Warfare before they can engage in actual warfare. In our walk Jesus is our Captain and our Victor. We trust Jesus to wage our war. We all face strongholds, walled cities unwilling to submit to God and God's plans.

This is important. Human reason says; an impregnable fortress requires superior military strength. Faith says—trust God. Look to the Lord. What is God's strategy? Faith often appears foolish to men. Trusting and believing God—seems like wishful thinking!

When spies first went into the land of Kadesh they brought back an unfavorable report (Numbers 13:28). The people were too big—the enemy too tough. But is that true? What wall is too strong for the Lord? By faith we win the victory and claim our inheritance (in Christ).

Jericho is old. Some believe it is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. Archaeologists have conducted several digs there over the years and uncovered multiple layers. The city covers roughly 8 or 9 acres; with inner and outer walls. The inner wall was 12 feet thick and the outer wall was 6 feet thick. Houses were discovered on the walls (see Joshua 2:15). According to the archeologists; the walls were some 30 feet high and were violently destroyed.

We have no idea who lived on or defended those walls—except one character—Rahab—the Harlot.

Dr. John Davis writes: “A single march around the nine acre mound probably took twenty-five to thirty-five minutes. It should not be concluded that every Israelite took part in this march. Such a feat would not only be impractical, but would be impossible. It is more probable to assume that the march was carried out by tribal representation” (Conquest and Crisis p. 45).

We cannot live the life of faith without God's resources.

We will not have public victory unless we are willing to experience private worship. Joshua when he encounters the angel of the Lord—fell on his face in worship—takes off his shoes in humility—and turns his plans over to His Commander and says; “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

When we look at the capture of the city we see several things; they obeyed their leaders (vv.6-9); they had patience and faith (vv.10-14); they trusted God for the impossible (vv.15-16); they

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obeyed the Lord in every detail (vv.17-25). You will note the treasures of the city were to be devoted to the Lord (accursed, consecrated). The animals and citizens were to be slain; Rahab and her family were to be saved alive. Sometimes we obey God before the battle but fail to obey the Lord when we experience the victory. The Lord gave the children of Israel total victory over Jericho because they trusted His Word.

Our weapons are also not carnal or worldly but spiritual. We are promised divine power.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5; “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Preserving Faith (v.31a)

Hebrews 11: 31 NKJV; By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe. . .”

Who perished? The people of Jericho. Why did they perish? “who did not believe” (apeitheo)—means more than simply “not believe”—it means—disobey—or disobedience—one Bible scholar (Marvin Vincent) calls this “disbelief as it manifests itself in disobedience” (WS; Vol. 4:532). The correct translation should include the element of disobedience (like it does in RSV; NASB and NIV). This is the kind of disbelief that leads to disobedience.

For some people this causes great consternation. Why does the Lord insist that everyone die in Jericho? We are often not satisfied with the statement that God doesn’t owe anyone an explanation for what he does.

The Bible makes it clear that when a culture or a city (like Sodom) reaches a kind of fullness of perversion—a point where decency is abandoned—this action invites judgment. The holiness and justice of God insists that something be done. The entire Canaanite society had long past the point of no return. According to 1 Kings 14:24—the whole land was populated by perverts—every imaginable perversion—no moral boundaries. The Lord wanted to keep Israel as pure as possible for as long as possible—in order to insure the coming of Jesus. It might seem odd to you—that God was going to set aside a virgin to give birth to Jesus. Had Mary been immoral and impure—God’s plan would have been effectively thwarted.

Rahab’s confession of faith is found in Joshua 2:11.

Let’s read Joshua 2:1-11.

Her faith led to works when she risked her life to save the spies (see James 2:25-26). “Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent

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them out another way?” (v.26) “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

By faith Rahab kept the Israelite spies safe!

By faith she did not perish with those who did not believe (the city fell).

She becomes a type and picture of the believer in Jesus. In what way?

In Wiersbe’s Old Testament Outlines he brings up these points (adapted and expanded pp. 209-211);

Rahab was a sinner (harlot is not just an honorary title). Her sin? Moral impurity! Sexual immorality! Did she manage a brothel? The Bible teaches “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23).

Rahab was under condemnation. God pronounced judgment on Jericho. Just like God has pronounced judgment on the world in which we live. It was just a matter of time before judgment and death would come upon the city. Everything and every one in the city was destined to die (Joshua 6:21).

Rahab was extended a period of grace. The city was under judgment and had been for years (see Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 23-24; 12:2-3). In Genesis 15:13-16 we discover that the inhabitants of the land were afforded 400 years!! to repent—to forsake sin—before judgment would finally fall on the land. The people of Jericho were aware the children of Israel were coming (Joshua 2:10). They had heard about their slavery, their exodus and the miracles. All these events take place over a period of 40 years; add to this Joshua 4:19; and Joshua 5:10 and the additional week that the Israel marched around the city (6:14). God is kind. God is patient.

Rahab heard the Word of the Lord. How are we to think about this? Rehab heard a message of miracles and judgment concerning the true God and the people of God. Rehab calls God “Lord”.

Rahab believed the Word of the Lord. Faith is the evidence of things unseen. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of the Lord (Rom.10:17). It is faith that saves the sinner; even the most ungodly sinner (Rom.4:5); and here the writer of Hebrews confirms Rahab believes by faith, acts by faith and is saved by faith. In Joshua 2:9 we read “I know that the Lord has given you the land”! How could she possibly know that? It was given to her by faith!

Rahab proves her faith by works! The fact that she was willing to risk her life—to receive the spies, house the spies, hide the spies, protect the spies is proof that she trusted the Lord. She chose to identify herself with the people of God—with the Lord’s host. By making that choice she also chose to no longer identify herself with the people of Jericho (again James 2:25).

Rahab sought to win others to rescue and salvation. Think of the stakes—what does Rahab risk—when she declares her belief that God had marked Jericho for destruction! Rahab shares the

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Word with her family. When people trust the Lord Jesus they want to share His love and salvation with those who are close. It is a risk!

Rahab was delivered from judgment. There were in fact two judgments. First the shaking of the city; then a fire that destroyed all its contents. Rahab's house was on the wall (see Joshua 2:15!!!). What happened? It would appear that section of the wall did not fall. After Rahab and her loved ones were taken from her house—Joshua commanded the rest of the city to be destroyed with fire! What did Rahab and her family think when the earth started to shake—and the walls started collapsing? Were they terrified? Perhaps. But God purposed to keep her and her family safe—from the judgment (see Joshua 6:22-25).

Wiersbe writes; “Christians today see the world shaking all about them, but they can be sure God will rescue them before He sends His fiery judgment on the world” (Old Testament Outlines; p. 211). He then quotes 1 Thess. 1:10 and 5:9;

“and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

And

1 Thess. 5:9; “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.10) who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”!!

Rahab went to a wedding! In Matthew 1:5—we see Rahab listed by marriage to the Jewish nation—and named an ancestor of the Messiah! She wasn't simply saved. She was saved for a reason and a purpose—to further God's plans and fulfill God's will. She believed God gave the Jews the land! Did she also come to believe that God would also provide a Seed? While the people of Jericho perished—suffering death—Rahab and her family would live—to see a wedding—her wedding—a wedding feast. She will marry a man named Salmon—(was he one of the spies?). The former pagan becomes the great-great-grandmother of David the King!

The book of Revelation describes a future marriage—and wedding feast in our future! The wedding plans are detailed in Revelation 19:7-9; 17-19.

Again Wiersbe: “Rahab was saved by faith, not by character or by religious works. This is the only way God saves people (Eph. 2:8-9). Have you trusted Jesus as Rahab trusted Joshua?” (see Wiersbe's Outlines Joshua—p. 211).

Saving Faith (v.31b)

Hebrews 11:31; “. . .when she had received the spies with peace.”

Rahab is saved by faith and even brought into the human ancestry of our Lord Jesus (Matt.1:5).

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But we discover something else; Rahab's faith was a contagious faith as she persuades her family to join her in the family of God.

Joshua 6:23; "And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and let them outside the camp of Israel."

Rahab becomes a follower of Jehovah. She abandons the false gods of a city destined to die. Her faith is tested. In order to preserve the spies—she must abandon her loyalties to the city. She will stand with the Lord. Courage is grace under pressure (Hemingway).

Conclusion

The children of Israel did nothing from a military standpoint to overcome Jericho. They simply believed and obeyed God's instructions. Rahab could not save herself from the judgment. It would require faith—and cooperation with the people of God.

Rahab's story is a story littered with grace. She is saved by grace. She becomes a vital link to the promised seed. A firm faith in the promises of God is the best theology.

Is that your story as well? Sinner. Condemned. Extended grace. Hear the Word of God. Believe the Word of God. Tell your family. Delivered from judgment. Invited to a wedding!

In the end conquering faith is courageous faith. Someone said, "Courage consists, not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing and conquering it." Martin Luther King admonished a generation—"We must constantly build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear."

You depend upon the Lord. Can He depend on you?