

THE INITIAL FAITH OF A NEW GENERATION (vv. 30-31)

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. ³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

1. The defeat of Jericho centered around one of the most interesting military strategies in the history of warfare.

JOSHUA 6:2-5 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³ March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴ Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵ When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

- a. Why do you think the Lord proposed such a bizarre strategy?
 - b. What do you think Israel learned about the nature of true warfare?
 - c. What do you think we need to learn or relearn about the nature of spiritual warfare?
 - d. Why do you think most of Israel's subsequent battles were fought and won using conventional tactics?
2. Rahab is one of the most interesting entries in the roll call of faith. She is one of only two women mentioned (Moses's mother, Jochebed, is implied, v. 23). She is a Gentile. And as the writer of Hebrews is quick to remind us, "she was a prostitute." Yet her faith is remarkable.

JOSHUA 2:8-11 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof ⁹ and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ¹⁰ We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

- a. What does Rahab's inclusion in our text teach us about the nature of authentic faith?
- b. How should Rahab's faith encourage us?

APRIL 11, 2021

LOOK TO JESUS

ENDURING FAITH PART THREE | HEBREWS 11:23-31

Life must have been extraordinarily difficult for the first generation of believers in Rome. The writer of the Hebrews reminds his readers of the early years when they were openly persecuted, publicly humiliated, and even thrown into prison. Remarkably, he adds, they "joyfully accepted the confiscation of their property, because they knew that they had better and lasting possessions (see Hebrews 3:32-35).

The initial joy of knowing Christ enabled them to overcome the enormous challenges of living for Christ in a hostile culture.

Over time, however, their hardships, though far less intense, began to wear them down. They were not only in danger of losing their joy, the writer of Hebrews is concerned that they might walk away from their faith altogether.

He reminds them that Christ is God's final word, and their final hope. The message he brings is greater than the message mediated by angels. He is far greater as the Son over God's house than Moses was as the builder of the house. He leads us into a better rest than Joshua provided for the people of Israel when he led them into the promised land. He offers us far greater access to God than either the tabernacle or the temple could afford, and he offers a better sacrifice than Aaron. Jesus is everything the Old Testament anticipated and so much more.

The writer of Hebrews balances his encouragement with four stern warnings. He wants his readers to realize the weight of the grace they will forfeit if they walk away from Christ.

Finally he challenges his readers by drawing on Israel's rich history of enduring faith, which brings us to chapter 11. In verse 1 he tells us, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1)." In verse 6, he reminds us, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (v. 6)."

Chapter 11 is divided into four scenes. The first scene (vv. 1-7) describes the faith of those who lived out their faith in the immediate aftermath of the fall. The second scene (vv. 8-22) highlights the faith of Abraham and the patriarchs. The third scene (vv. 23-31) highlights the faith of Moses and the Exodus generation.

THE REMARKABLE FAITH OF MOSES (v.23-28)

²³ By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

The writer of Hebrews introduces us to the faith story in four scenes. In verse 23 he highlights the courageous faith of Moses's parents. In verses 24-26 he highlights the courage of Moses in openly identifying with the people of God rather than enjoying the privileges afforded him in Egypt. Verse 27 highlights his courage in confronting Pharaoh and leading the people out of Egypt. Verse 28 highlights his faith in leading the people to participate in the Passover.

1. The centerpiece of this section is Moses' desire to openly identify with the people of God rather than enjoy the privileges his royal status afforded him.
 - a. According to verse 24-26, what are some of the things Moses forfeited in order to identify with the people of God?
 - b. What are some things Moses embraced in order to identify with the people of God?
 - c. It is interesting that the writer of Hebrews connects being "mistreated with the people of God (v. 25)" with suffering "disgrace for the sake of Christ (v. 25)." How did Moses suffer disgrace for the sake of Christ 1400 years before the time of Christ?
 - d. Why was Moses willing to be "mistreated" and suffer "disgrace?"
2. Moses actually left Egypt on two separate occasions. On the first occasion he fled to Midian in fear. The second time he left with the entire nation of Israel

in full confidence that God would deliver them. According to verse 27, what was responsible for Moses' huge shift in perspective?

3. How will seeing "him who is invisible" change our perspective on life and the difficulties we face?

THE RAGGED FAITH OF THE PEOPLE (vv. 29)

²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

It is amazing that the writer of Hebrews offers this scene as an instance of faith. The people initially responded with an incredible lack of faith.

EXODUS 14:10-12 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

EXODUS 14:13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Moses encouraged the people to trust God, and in spite of their fear they took the first step into the dry sea bed of the Red Sea.

1. What does this episode teach us about the nature of authentic faith?
2. What are some fears we may need to overcome in order to persevere in faith?