

The Courage of Faith

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[0 : 00] Let's listen to these verses, verse 30-40 in chapter 11.

! Very familiar. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down For seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight, women received back their dead by resurrection, some were tortured, refusing to accept reliefs so that they might rise again to a better life.

Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword.

[1 : 51] They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy. Wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth, all of these, though commanded through their faith, did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us, they should not be made perfect.

The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews is the great section referred to as the heroes of faith. There we read of men and women who were people of great faith.

Lest we think they were bigger than life, we should be reminded that they literally experienced the same things that you and I experience.

They were born into a family. They grew up experiencing hunger and thirst. They existed in often poor housing.

Many of them married and wanted a better life for their children than they had. They had many of the same desires, hopes, and fears that we have today in the 21st century.

[3 : 20] One thing they all had in common was a measure of faith. Some may have had more than others, but they were all men and women of faith.

And this begs a question, of course, is what is faith? Probably defining verse of Scripture on faith as found in Hebrews chapter 11.

We already looked at it. Verse 1. Consider this definition. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Maybe tonight can be a night of confession. We'll start with me. I've always been a bit confused about that passage.

I think I know what the Holy Spirit is saying, but I've never really been totally sure. So please indulge me with another definition of faith that is probably a bit more simplified in my mind.

[4 : 24] Faith means trust. The very word faith in the original New Testament Greek means to trust. It is interchangeable in our Bibles with the word believe, although in the Greek it takes on a richer, more expansive meaning.

This begs another question, in whom or in what do we trust? Now, of course, the answer to that is God. We put our trust, our faith, and our belief in God.

But let me point out something. No one in this room has ever seen God. No one in this room has yet to lay eyes on God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I dare say that none of us have heard God's voice. So while on the one hand we can say with assurance that we trust in God or in Christ, I think we need to get a bit more specific.

What we really trust in is the word of God. That is where we learn about Him, His promises and His commandments to us.

[5 : 45] Faith then is trusting completely in God's Word. It is a trust that places no conditions upon God or what He has chosen to reveal to us.

We believe what He says based solely and completely on the fact that He has said it. And based on that, we believe it. We come to God by faith because He has told us He is able to receive us.

And where He has told us that, He's spoken about it in His Word. True faith does not question God. True faith takes God at His Word, acts upon it based upon the revelation.

There's an old saying that God said it, I believe it, and that settles it. Dr. McBride, when he was here, took issue with that. And I remember one Sunday morning, he said a more accurate rendering is that God said it, that settles it whether I believe it or not.

[7 : 03] Let God be true and all men liars. By the way, for new members, Dr. McBride was our pastor here for 17 years. Now in Florida.

We've been very sheltered here in America. Persecution toward Christians has been almost non-existent. Although we must admit that we're starting to see signs of it on the horizon. But when you think in terms of history and even other cultures today, you see a supreme mark of faith and that is courage.

It's easy to believe when things are going well. But what about times when things are not going so well? We experience those a lot at Voice of the Martyrs from different places around the world. What about becoming a Christian knowing this may cost me all my friends? This may cost me family members.

[8 : 13] My job. Maybe in the extreme, my life. You may think that doesn't happen anymore. But it has happened today somewhere in the world.

Happens every day. Remember, faith is the only real weapon that we have in life to handle the struggles we face.

If we're going to be conquerors, it will be through faith. So let us look this evening at some courageous faith. The first one we're going to look at is Joshua.

That's a derivative of Yahshua, by the way. And the Israelites at Jericho. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they'd been encircled for seven days.

When we speak of the walls of Jericho, you've got to picture something that's massive. In keeping with the walls of that time, archaeologists have discovered that most walls constructed back then could accommodate at least two chariots traveling or racing side by side on top of the wall.

[9 : 48] That was sort of the benchmark for when they would construct them. Jericho was a strategic city. It was placed where it was at in the northern part there of Israel to protect from marauding tribes.

It was at the critical head of the Jordan River. And many would have considered those walls to be impregnable. Can't ever breach these walls.

Now the Hebrews had left Egypt some 40 years earlier they'd wandered in the wilderness just as God had told them. They had crossed the sea by faith.

And that was the last collective act of faith they had displayed in all the intervening years. It is estimated that a straight line journey from Egypt to the promised land should only take about 11 days.

because of God's discipline that journey took 40 years. But as the Hebrews approached Jericho and they didn't do a straight line they were wandering but as they approached Jericho they again put on display the faith that should have been their mark before a lost world.

[11 : 17] Jericho was really the first significant obstacle they came to in Canaan. From the human perspective when they looked at it it seemed an impossible barrier.

A well trained and a well equipped army protected the people within the walls of Jericho. God would use an army of highly motivated Israeli men to rout many an enemy over the next decades.

But in this case the Lord put on a demonstration of His own power. This was done for the benefit of both the Hebrews and the Canaanites who were inside those walls.

So we see the Israelites marching around the city once a day for six days. On day seven they marched around the wall seven times while the priests blew their trumpets.

The people obeyed in all of this although for some it may have been or seemed at least somewhat foolish. And with the final blast from the horns the walls came crashing down.

[12:42] I think we used to sing about that in Sunday school. God is in the business of slaying pride. He certainly humbled the pride of the residents of Jericho who no doubt thought themselves impregnable.

When the Lord is leading an army or an individual obstacles will fall and the walls of Jericho fell and archaeologists have found them. And they report it.

It's very interesting because they fell out. They went outward. Well we see another person of faith Rahab.

Hebrews 11.31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

Here we see one of the most unlikely candidates for the Hall of Heroes. One of only two women mentioned in the Hall of Faith.

[13:55] Rahab Rahab was a prostitute a Gentile and a Canaanite three strikes. She was of the specific tribe of the Amorites a race that God had marked for destruction long before.

In spite of everything stacked against her we see the grace of God enter where no man would think possible. That in reality what salvation is all about.

Rahab had no more light than anyone else in Jericho but she believed. There's that word faith again. And God bestowed upon her grace and faith as gifts.

that is how men and women are saved. It's a grace gift of God. God gives grace and He gives faith. Because of her faith God spared Rahab's entire family. That's quite a faith isn't it? Hope I have that much faith.

[15:16] Because of her faith God spared her family all the others in the city were destroyed. We hear often that God is a God of love and could never destroy a people or a civilization.

God is a God of love and He especially loves justice and righteousness and obedience. the Canaanites were a debauched and pagan culture and they wanted to destroy the people of God. They were noted especially for their immoral perverted sexual practices. These practices including gross homosexual immoral perverted sexual activity both in public and it included the killing of innocent babies.

Pray you're never in a country that practices open homosexuality and the killing of babies. We don't want that do we? In the midst of all this we have the most unlikely woman make a profound decision to follow the Lord.

In Joshua 2 11 we read this the Lord your God he is the God in heaven above and on earth beneath. She staked her life and that of her family on the fact that God said he would protect his people.

[17:03] And Rahab didn't know a whole lot about God but she knew one thing she wanted to be on God's side. That'll preach. She wanted to be on God's side.

And as amazing as it was for this woman living in a pagan culture to be saved there is something even more amazing. This Gentile Canaanite prostitute was the great great great great great grandmother of King David.

Now why is that significant? Because that puts her in the direct line of the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ. Rahab's in his line.

You can read about her in Matthew and in Luke in those genealogies. And the Bible goes on to describe many others starting in verse 32.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight.

[18:47] Now these six men that I just listed here are not listed in chronological order. But they all were rulers and leaders of Israel at one time.

Some were less known than others. Samuel was both a judge and a prophet. David, of course, was a king. Gideon was a judge and a military leader.

In fact, Gideon assembled 32,000 men to fight the Midianites and the Malachites. and God said, I don't want the Hebrews to think that their might is found in numbers.

He knew they would take credit for any victory. So he cut the attacking force from 32,000 to 300.

He cut it, he whittled it down to 300. they attacked an enemy described as more numerous than locusts.

[20 : 06] Gideon's army carried with them not traditional weapons, they carried torches and trumpets, and the victory belonged to the Lord.

He won the victory. Barak is mentioned briefly here and in Judges. Other than that, we know nothing of him.

Through Deborah, a judge, Barak was ordered to assemble an army of 10,000 soldiers taken only from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.

He only had a token army and they attacked the Canaanites and put them to the sword. The scriptures tell us that Barak conquered kingdoms.

Now, we all remember Samson and we remember him more for his physical strength than for his faith. What can we say about him?

[21 : 09] Well, he was gullible, he was self-centered, he was immature, yet he depended upon God for his strength and for his victory.

And his hair, we make a big deal about that, his hair was only symbolic of God's power in him.

Through his faith, he delivered the Hebrews from the Philistines.

God remembers him for his strength. Jephthah came from Samson and were responsible for doing the Ammonites.

They were bitter enemies of Israel. He did make a foolish vow to God that he was not able to keep. We read about this vow in the book of Judges, chapter 11, verse 30 and 31.

Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, If you will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I'll offer it up as a burnt offering.

[22 : 31] And then I really messed up, I forgot to look that passage up. I can't remember what he offered, probably one of his sons. Daughter? Wow.

In spite of this, God knew that his trust was in the Lord, and he blessed him. Even people of faith make mistakes, but God still honors them for their faith.

And David is obviously one of the great men of the Old Testament. He trusted the Lord, and his killing of Goliath is directly related to his future role as king.

David, like all of God's children, was not perfect, but God was able to use him in a mighty way. And God even referred to David as a man after his own heart, God's own heart.

Samuel is also listed though he was not a soldier, but he fought battles equal to any soldier on the battlefield. His enemies were idolatry and immorality.

[23 : 46] He stood in the midst of a polluted society, spoke of God's truth. His greatest opponents were not the pagans surrounding Israel.

His greatest opponents were the Hebrew people themselves. He was a man of faith and he became Israel's last human judge. Now many of God's people have suffered through the generations.

Suffering is part of God's plan. We pick it up at verse 35, women receive back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, not accepting their release so that they might obtain a better resurrection.

And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

True believers do not try to escape from affliction if it brings honor and glory to the Lord. And remember Tertullian said this, the blood of the martyrs, he's one of the church fathers, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

[25 : 34] And we live by that, that's one of the models we live by at VOM. them. Many of our brothers and sisters have undergone torture and scourging and mocking.

They have suffered mental and physical anguish. Millions have perished rather than deny their faith. And God says that the world is not worthy of them.

They can say, as we can say, with the apostle Paul, Romans 8.18, for I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Those who possess true faith are given the courage to count on the salvation of the Lord regardless of what the devil and the world throw at them.

Hebrews 11.39-40, And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us, they would not be made perfect.

[26 : 52] These true saints lived with a hope that seems to have disappeared in our day. It was a settled hope, and dependent upon the promises of God.

And the ultimate promise was the sending of the Redeemer, His Son. He came and brought to this dying world the righteousness of God.

They all knew that God had promised His children something better and something eternal. And we're still looking for the promised reward in our day.

we're looking forward to a heavenly home and an eternal existence lived out in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I thought it fitting with that being said to close by quoting the closing words of Revelation 22.20.

Come Lord Jesus. Jesus. We look for it every day and His appearing has never been closer in our lifetime than it is right now.

[28 : 08] Don't know when He's coming back but it's never been closer. Let's close with prayer. thank you Father for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you Lord that He's the great keeper of promises and that He's coming back for His church and we will be with Him forever.

Lord we have family members that are lost they need to be saved. We have loved ones friends that are lost that need to be saved.

May we play a part in reaching them. And I certainly ask this in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Amen.