

## By Faith – The Israelites and Rahab

### Hebrews 11

#### Introduction

1. The Hebrew writer gave time to the faith of Moses who would lead God's people to the promised land.
  2. However, while the faith of Moses was great, the faith of the people was required to escape the oppressive Egyptians and conquer Canaan.
  3. No doubt, the Israelites are a prime example in many ways of faith failure. However, the writer notes their faith in the exodus, as well as their first victory on the other side of the Jordan.
  4. There, the Israelites also encountered a Gentile woman whose actions were rewarded by God with deliverance from destruction, and eternal glory in the annals of God's scheme of redemption.
  5. We can learn great truths regarding faith from the actions of Israel, and Rahab – **Hebrews 11:29-31**
- I. By Faith the Israelites
    - A. Faith Moves Forward at God's Word
      - a. Leading to the crossing:
        - i. The way God led them – **Exodus 14:1-4** – a way that Pharaoh would see as foolish, setting up an opportunity for him to pursue Israel.
        - ii. The effect of Egypt closing in on Israel had – **Exodus 14:10-12** – **“wilderness has closed them in” (v. 3)** and now the Egyptians.
        - iii. Moses' expression of faith to the people – **Exodus 14:13-14** – Stand still (be calm) and see God's deliverance.
        - iv. The Lord's instructions – **Exodus 14:15-18**
        - v. Moses' and Israel's faithful obedience – **Exodus 14:21-22**
      - b. Stand still – **Exodus 14:13-14**
        - i. In times of stress and anxiety faith “stands still” in confidence of God's care.
        - ii. They had just witnessed the power and deliverance of God in Egypt with all the plagues, and needed to quiet down and consider that God was still with them.
        - iii. **Job 37:14** – consider His wondrous works.
        - iv. **Psalms 46:1-3, 10-11** – Be still and know He is God, and He is victorious, and He is with us.
        - v. **Matthew 6:30-34** – Don't worry, but trust in God.
        - vi. Yet, while faith is not overwhelmed with anxiety, but is still and quiet, trusting in God, IT IS BY NO MEANS PASSIVE, AND INACTIVE.
          1. This calm is a resolve to hear God's instructions.
      - c. Move forward – **Exodus 14:15**
        - i. God would deliver them but gave the command to move forward.

- ii. Faith is not simply professing trust in God without action.
  - iii. If we trust in God, we will move forward with doing His will – **Luke 5:4-5**
  - iv. Faith in Jesus as Lord is not shown by lip service, but by action – **Luke 6:46-49** – and it is only that faith that God rewards with protection.
- B. Faith is Not Presumptuous
- a. The Hebrew writer does not neglect to mention the severity of God amidst His goodness – **Romans 11:22; Hebrews 11:29** – The Egyptians presumptuously decided to follow Israel when the promise to pass on dry ground was only for them.
    - i. The difference in the crossing by the Israelites and the attempt of the Egyptians was FAITH.
  - b. Spiritual endeavors are only successful if they are responses of faith to God’s word – **Matthew 7:21-23** – actions taken without Divine direction are vain.
- C. Faith Counts God’s Foolishness as Wisdom
- a. The victory at Jericho was unique:
    - i. **Joshua 6:1-5** – instructions from the Lord.
    - ii. These instructions were by no means sound military strategies.
    - iii. Without any context of the speaker, or situation, these instructions as an advance on an enemy city WOULD SEEM FOOLISH AT BEST, AND INSANE.
      - 1. Consider the view of the inhabitants of Jericho.
      - 2. No doubt, the Israelites received much ridicule as they marched around the city.
  - b. However, the Israelites followed God’s instructions and subdued Jericho – **Hebrews 11:30**
  - c. Like God’s directions that closed Israel in with the wilderness, and His instructions to subdue Jericho, there are times God’s requirements may appear as foolish to the world. HOWEVER, FAITH KNOWS THAT IS NOT THE CASE.
  - d. God’s ways are greater – **Isaiah 55:8-11** – His word always accomplishes what it sets out to do, even if we don’t fully grasp the reasoning behind it.
  - e. We must trust that what may appear to be foolish to the world is actually the powerful wisdom of God to salvation – **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**
    - i. If we have the view that any of God’s commands are foolish, we need to humble ourselves and submit to His wisdom while acknowledging our foolishness – **1 Corinthians 3:18-20**
- II. By Faith Rahab
- A. Faith Yields to Indisputable Evidence
- a. In Jericho there was one who did not perish after the Israelites encircled the city – **Hebrews 11:31**

- i. Rahab was spared due to the faith she displayed.
    - ii. Her family was spared with her.
  - b. Jericho was a fortified city – **Numbers 13:19** (like a camp or a stronghold? – Stronghold!); **Joshua 2:15** (Rahab’s house was on the wall – sizeable wall!)
  - c. It did not matter how big the wall of Jericho was, and it did not matter how many failures to penetrate that wall Rahab witnessed.
  - d. What Rahab heard about Israel’s God changed everything – **Joshua 2:8-13**
    - i. Especially – **vv. 9, 11** – The Lord has delivered us into your hand, and He is the true God.
    - ii. But note the contrast – **Hebrews 11:31** – **“those who did not believe”** – THE NEWS WAS NOT ISOLATED, BUT WIDESPREAD. HOWEVER, ONLY RAHAB BELIEVED, AND ACTED ACCORDINGLY.
    - iii. What Rahab heard was enough to convince her to do whatever she needed to be on the Lord’s side.
  - e. **Hebrews 11:1** – faith is the evidence of things not seen.
    - i. Not evidence itself.
    - ii. However, it follows the logic of evidence, and yields to the inescapable conclusion.
  - f. When a message is presented, and it checks out to be God’s word, faith accepts it and follows it – **Acts 17:11-12**
- B. Faith Can Overcome Any Past
  - a. The Hebrew writer did not neglect to mention the person Rahab was – **Hebrews 11:31** – a harlot.
    - i. Some try to minimize it:
      - 1. “Codex Sinaiticus with one or two other ancient textual witnesses inserts epilegomene, “the so-called,” in an effort to whitewash the term harlot.” (By Daniel H. King, Sr., Edited by Mike Willis. Truth Commentary - Hebrews (Kindle Locations 9115-9117))
      - 2. Some say it merely has reference to her being an idolater.
    - ii. However, there is no way around it. Rahab was involved in the vile profession of selling herself for unlawful sexual gratification.
      - 1. The commands of wisdom in an effort to warn about the harlot – **Proverbs 6:24-29; 7:10-20**
      - 2. This was the life that Rahab lived.
  - b. It would have been less effective to leave Rahab’s occupation unidentified.
  - c. She not only was a Gentile, but a harlot – YET SHE ACTED ON FAITH, AND WAS DELIVERED.
  - d. **James 2:25** – James says she was justified by her working faith.
    - i. **“Likewise”** – i.e. like Abraham!
    - ii. The past can be left behind in faith by God’s grace!

- e. Faith trusts in God's power to take away the worst of sins – **1 Timothy 1:13-16** – Paul, chief of sinners, persecuted Christ.
- f. Faith trusts in God by repenting of wrong, and following Him – **1 Corinthians 5:1, 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7; 7:10-11**
  - i. This man, like Rahab, was guilty of a terrible offense.
  - ii. However, he changed his life by faithful penitence.
  - iii. Faith does not overcome the past by persisting in the past, but by leaving it behind and following God!

### **Conclusion**

1. The faith of the Israelites teaches us to not be overwhelmed by what surrounds us, but to move forward in obedient faith to God's word.
  - a. It teaches us to never doubt God's wisdom and ways but trust them.
2. Rahab's faith shows us that no matter what we've been involved in of a sinful nature in our lives, it is not too much for God to forgive, and purge from our lives. We just have to trust in Him and follow His ways.