

Text: Hebrews 11:29-31

Title: Faith During the Exodus and Early Conquest

Truth: Real faith operates even in dangerous circumstances.

Date/Location: Sunday October 2, 2011 at FBC

Introduction

The Bible has given us many examples of faith in Hebrews 11 so far, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah (4x), Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses (4x). Faith is certainty and conviction about what God has promised and what is unseen but revealed by God. It is also an integral part of the message of Hebrews, that we must have persevering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

In the text before us, we see three more examples of faith lived out in real-life circumstances.

I. By Faith Moses Led Israel Through the Red Sea, v. 29

Old Testament passage to read: Exodus 14.

- A. Here is a seemingly impossible situation where a huge army is on one side of Israel and a huge body of water on the other side. Where do you go? The Israelites were, understandably, very afraid (Exodus 14:10), but this fear became complaining as it too often did in the early history of the nation.
- B. Moses was certain that God would do what He said He would do and could encourage the fearful hearts of the multitudes of people in the face of grave danger. They did go forward as God told them to.
- C. This is an example of how critical faith is.
 - 1. The Israelites believed God enough to enter between the walls of water and escape to the other side. They could only have hope (faith is in the unseen) that they would make it to the other side because God promised them that they would enter into the promised land. The water was a formidable barrier to this hope which normally does not just move out of your way when you need it to.
 - 2. The Egyptians, on the other hand, died because they did not have any faith in God. Rather, they were directly opposed to God and God directly and supernaturally opposed them.
- D. Moses was the catalyst of Israel's faith. Other leaders there were Joshua, Aaron, Hur, and probably Caleb who probably had similar faith. This points out the need for leaders of faith to inspire faith in those who follow.
 - 1. Read Exodus 14:13 and surrounding to see the people's initial response.

2. They moved forward finally, at the prodding of Moses and this level of willingness was an act of faith.
 3. There is a question about whether this faith was saving faith or not. Generally, that generation of Israel did not have saving faith, as Heb. 3:7-11 and 3:16-19 records. It was unbelief that caused their carcasses to fall in the wilderness.
 4. So what kind of faith was it? It was true faith in the leaders and remnant of true believers in Israel. It was at least a small amount of faith in many of the rest of the nation because they obeyed God. God was pleased to work through their small level of belief to save them physically from the Egyptians. Their faith was not a lasting genuine faith, the kind that saves from sin. It was "saving" in a manner of speaking, but not spiritually so.
- E. Commentator Homer Kent helpfully points out that faith is a response to God's revelation; it is not mere bravado in the face of danger.
- F. Finally, the question might be asked as to whether it was God, an east wind (14:21), or faith that moved the water and the people.
1. God was the ultimate cause. He used wind as the direct cause to move the water.
 2. Faith was the thing which moved the people.
 3. Similarly was it God, lack of wind, mud, or lack of faith that killed the Egyptians? All were involved, but ultimately the lack of faith is implied in Hebrews text.

II. By Faith Joshua Led Israel To Victory Over Jericho, v. 30

Old Testament passage to read: Joshua 6:1-21, 26-27.

- A. The Bible records for us another unseen and seemingly unreasonable thing in terms of the battle plan for Israel to defeat the walled city of Jericho. What grown army soldier would follow this kind of strategy?
- B. The demise of the city was supernatural, for the shouts of a million people would not be enough to knock the walls down flat.
- C. Again leader Joshua was the catalyst for the people's faith. He led them in obedience to what God commanded. It was not the walls that had faith; it was the people!
- D. Faith defeated a strongly walled city; Jesus said faith could move mountains (Mark 11:23-24). Faith in the proclamation of God's word can do similar marvelous work in those who seem to reside in an impenetrable fortress of unbelief.

III. By Faith Rahab Was Spared Death, v. 31

Old Testament passage to read: Joshua 2 and 6:22-25.

A. Rahab had faith in the true and living God. Her faith was living in that it "worked" (James 2:25). She trusted in God enough to defy the king of Jericho who demanded her to tell where the spies were located (Joshua 2:3-4).

1. We know that she was serious about her belief in the God of Israel because she hid the spies.
2. She gathered her family into her home as the spies commanded.
3. She may have left her sinful lifestyle even before the spies arrived, or sometime after. But she was at some point in her past an immoral woman. The title might have stuck even if she left her wicked ways.

B. She was an ancestor of Jesus by marriage to Salmon. They had a son Boaz, who married Ruth. They had Obed, who had Jesse, who had David the king (Ruth 4:18-22, Matthew 1:5-6). She was not only a prostitute; she was a Gentile woman, yet she receives favorable mention in the OT and NT for her faith in the true God and her hospitality to the spies.

C. Think about the nature of Rahab's deliverance.

1. In the Red Sea crossing and the defeat of Jericho, there is clearly something supernatural going on. Crossing a sea on dry ground and causing a city walls to fall over with a shout are obviously outside of the range of normal!
2. The example of Rahab, however, may seem to be somewhat normal. But remember that in Joshua 6 God had demanded total destruction of Jericho. Joshua had reminded the people to be careful not to transgress that command. Rahab was, by that order, as good as dead. It was her faith that delivered her and her family from partaking in the total destruction. In a sense, a supernatural divine "exception" was made for her and her family.

Conclusion

Rahab did not see deliverance in advance. Neither did Israel have empirical evidence to suggest they would survive crossing a sea of water held by nothing but wind. Nor was it rationally sensible (apart from faith) that marching around a city would eventually lead to marching into the city.

Then again, neither have you seen many things of which we speak in the Christian church: heaven, hell, Jesus, or even God for that matter. You can see some contemporary consequences of sin, but not the eternal consequences—unless you believe the Bible.

By faith you receive the Bible not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). You simply cannot "see" everything. Human senses cannot discern that which God has to reveal to be known.

The Israelites and Rahab had to *do* what we read about. All we have to do is *believe* it. They had to actually *do* it. Would you have done as well as they did?

The Iranian pastor in the news is a modern-day example of faith in the face of danger, imprisonment and even death. His name is Youcef Nadarkhani (see <http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/30/world/meast/iran-christian-pastor/>). Iranian authorities have done a quick switcheroo on the charges to make themselves seem more reasonable, but there is little credibility to what they are saying:

“In a translated Iranian Supreme Court brief from 2010, however, the charge of apostasy is the only charge leveled against Nadarkhani.

“Mr. Youcef Nadarkhani, son of Byrom, 32-years old, married, born in Rasht in the state of Gilan is convicted of turning his back on Islam”...It goes on to say that during the court proceeding, Nadarkhani denied the prophecy of Mohammad and the authority of Islam. “He (Nadarkhani) has stated that he is a Christian and no longer Muslim,” states the brief. “During many sessions in court with the presence of his attorney and a judge, he has been sentenced to execution by hanging according to article 8 of Tahrir...

“Nadarkhani, the leader of a network of house churches in Iran, was first convicted of apostasy in November 2010, a charge he subsequently appealed all the way to the Iranian Supreme Court. After four days of an appeals trial that started Sunday at a lower court in Gilan Province, Nadarkhani refused to recant his beliefs.”

Many people have trouble just believing the historicity of the events we have described—at least the parts about the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Jericho. If we (collectively) find it difficult to even believe what is written, is it any surprise that Christianity is so weak in America? It’s ridiculous, really. We argue about whether God really created the world in six days like it says, or about whether salvation is by faith alone when it clearly says so (Eph. 2:8-10). These are so obvious. Many of our people could not handle any kind of persecution at all. What I’m saying is that we have to believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ! Get past that point and move on to further obedience!

In both the Exodus and Rahab examples, people who did not believe died physically. The Bible also tells us that we will die in our sins eternally if we do not believe in Jesus—John 8:24 “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” In Rahab’s case, she was destined for destruction (the physical counterpart of eternal destruction in Romans 9:22) yet God spared her because of her faith.

Faith is not just a desirable characteristic or behavior. It is an essential and necessary one if you want to really live forever.

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