

58-11-06.wpd --Faith for the Future

future, danger, risk, faith, promise, victory, suffering, church

Heb 11:30-40

God wants us to adopt His ultimate in the face of the temporary.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

--[Those who plan fireworks start out at a steady pace, but at the end, they set off wave after wave in a spectacular display as a finale.] This is much like what the writer of Hebrews does in the last portion of the faith chapter. In rapid succession, OT people and situations are referred to briefly in a grand finale. He, or she [some think Priscilla wrote *Hebrews*] has a special purpose in doing this. The very last verses in the chapter speak about suffering. Some of the readers of this letter were already experiencing that, and others soon would be. In the midst of a hostile present, the Christian has a relentless faith for the future, because of God's firm promises. **HOM.idea.** That's the kind of faith exemplified in this passage.

I. Offensive Faith for Conquest, v.30

- A. Jericho, with its mighty walls, appeared impregnable to the Israelites. In human terms, it would have been silly try to besiege it. So, God gave them a silly thing to do to make the walls come down: "*march around them for seven days.*"
- B. The church has only one area of conquest, not to take over control of a promised land, but to liberate human souls
 1. [Many people act as though they have walled themselves off from Gospel faith, and there is no way to get through.] (Our job is not to convince them; only the Holy Spirit can do that. We just have to be around them, and around them and around them [My experience of friendship evangelism in Amsterdam....].)
 2. How many times do we go around them? Jesus gave us an indication-- Mat 18:21-22 (NKJV), Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

TRANS: The most essential element of getting a job done is first to show up. There is strength in unity, especially in prayerful unity. [Many Christian groups are doing something called *prayerwalking*, where they walk around

locations in a city where they know God's power is needed, and pray while doing so. The answers to prayer are sometimes amazing, but usually, it takes more than one or two marches around the walls they hope to come down.] Many of you take walks, and that's a healthy thing for this temporary life. But **God wants us to adopt His ultimate in the face of the temporary.** Make your walk a *conquest* by using it as a prayer time for the walls in people's lives around you that need to come down for God to enter.

II. Defensive Faith for Deliverance, v.31

- A. Surprisingly, Jericho's prostitute Rahab had the same faith as the Israelites in God's ultimate plan for the land of Canaan's future. That future meant her destruction, but her faith brought her out the way of destruction and into the way of salvation (read **v.31**).
- B. The early church fathers saw Rahab as symbolizing the Church, pointing to the sign used to identify her household for safety-- Josh 2:17-19. The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him. (sounds identical to the Passover blood on the door, that brought safety to all within the house... and it points to the safety from judgment provided to the household of faith, the Church, by the blood of the Christ).
- C. Rahab's faith brought her more than the deliverance of her and her household from destruction: she was set free from a destructive life of prostitution, and accepted into a life with the people of God.
 1. There were some initial worries-- Josh 6:23b, They brought out her entire family and put them in a place **outside the camp of Israel**. (That response is not how we should treat those who come into the church with a sordid past history. God forgives; so should we.)
 2. There was eventually an acceptance that brought her not only into the *honor of marriage*, but to fame of being an ancestor of King David, and of Christ-- Mat 1:1,2a,5,6a, A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob... (etc., etc.) ...Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

TRANS: Others in Jericho feared the conquest of Israel, but trusted in their walls to defend them. Rahab's faith, "*because she welcomed the spies,*" became her defense against destruction. She believed God would do what He said. She **adopted God's ultimate plan in the face of her temporary life** in Jericho. In so doing, the faith of a prostitute became an example for us to follow.

III. Tenacious Faith for the Promised Future

- A. I like the phrase in **v.32**, "*And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about...*" (and in the next 7 verses, the author mentions, but does not go into detail about, 25 or so situations in OT times, using them all to make a general point.) That gives me liberty to do the same, and **the point is this: God's ultimate promises for the future must be held tenaciously by faith no matter whether we temporarily succeed or temporarily suffer.**
- B. Faith is about trusting God, not circumstances, whether they are good ones or bad ones. After this long list of the faithful, who won victories or suffered defeats, **v.39** says, "*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.*" (God's is not looking on the world's evaluation of things, but on our loyalty to His promises, the invisible realities that He has yet to bring into earthly history.

CONCLUSION:

--What was God waiting for? He was waiting Jesus to build the Church, where Jew and Gentile would join in one Body-- **v.40**, "*God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*"

--We may ask the same thing, especially if we identify best with those at the lower end of the list, where the faithful suffered so terribly.

"What is God waiting for? Christ has come. The Church is founded.

Why doesn't He end my suffering and take me home to glory?" But He is still building His Church, still reaching the lost, and He "*has planned something better...*" for those who have not yet put their faith in Christ, "*so that only together with [them] would [we] be made perfect.*" **God wants us to**

adopt His ultimate in the face of the temporary. Let's pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" But let's keep on walking around those who have walled Christ out, praying down those walls down, for Him to enter.

Heb 11:30-40 (NIV) By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people 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. {32} And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, {33} who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, {34} quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. {35} Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. {36} Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. {37} They were stoned ; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- {38} the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. {39} These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. {40} God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.