

## Heb 11:30 The Faith of Israel at Jericho

(Taken from A.W. Pink, though development of applications are my own.)

Today we come to the very end of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. The old generation perished. And now it is time to fulfill God's promise to their children. Moses passed away before entering the land. The leader is now Joshua, one of the two spies (with Caleb) sent into Canaan 38 years before. And now God appoints Joshua as Israel's leader with clear instructions from the Law of Moses. And then we come to the famous words from God to Joshua found in 1:9: **"Have I not commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."** And then God leads them across the Jordan river and establishes Joshua with a great miracle as the water of the river is held back until all the people cross. And crossing the river brings the people right in front of Jericho. This may have been the same city that terrified 10 of the spies a generation earlier. And now we find a different situation. The discipline and judgment of God in the desert was finished and now we see faith instead of unbelief. We find this story in Joshua 6. I will retell it as we consider 5 characteristics of faith, with applications at the end.

1. The Courage of Faith. God tells Joshua and the people: **"Be strong and courageous,"** and they are! When they crossed the Jordan, they burned all bridges and left all boats behind them. They were cut off from being able to run away. The river was on their back. There was no fortress to which they could run. They were now in the land of their enemies. Their only two options were victory or death. And God tells the people to march around the city for six days. And on the seventh day, to march around the city seven times. They were not to make a sound until God said. If that were me, I would have been fearful, maybe thinking that the inhabitants of Jericho would come out. Or, they would throw stones from the wall and kill many people over the seven days. But, by faith, the people did not hesitate. Nor do we have any indication that they complained. They were bold and courageous, trusting God!

In his commentary on this verse Pink reminds us of what he calls, *"three degrees of faith."* In other words, we see faith worked out in three ways. The first is a faith that receives. This is what we see mostly in the NT as those who followed Christ are said to have "received" him. John says, **"To those who received him he gave the right to become children of God"** (John 1:12). A second "degree" of faith is a faith that "reckons." And this is not like my grandpa, who used to say, *"Son, I reckon I can do that."* Here, "reckon" means that we trust that God will do what He has promised. In 2 Tim. 1:12, Paul says, **"But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."** We see both of these "degrees" of faith with Israel when they come to Jericho. But, we also see a third way. This is a faith that takes risks, a faith which dares to do something for the Lord. For example, Moses, when he confronted Pharaoh. Or David when he fought Goliath. Or Elijah when he took on the false prophets on Mt. Carmel.

I think of William Carey, considered the "Father of the modern missionary movement." Many urged him not to go to India. At a meeting when Carey presented his case to go, one pastor said to him: *"Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me."* And Carey replies with some famous words that are

often recalled: “*Expect great things*” (from God). “*Attempt great things*” (for God). This was the kind of faith we find with Israel at Jericho.

When I think of these “degrees” of faith and I look at many churches (including Grace) I believe we get the first two. We’ve received the Lord Jesus. We know that God will fulfill his promises. But, in regards to the third, I can only say for myself (and many of you), that we are not daring and courageous. I/We must be more bold in and courageous and come more often and more bold to the throne of grace, asking for more faith and more petitions, believing God will give. I/we must be more bold in our evangelism, as we tell our co-workers, as we speak with our neighbors, as engage the world (many ways here). And, please pray for your elders in this regard.

(Also, I believe calling Gil is a move of bold faith. We do not know exactly what we will see, but by faith we believe this is good and this will be helpful to our church going forward!)

2. The Obedience of Faith. In Josh. 6:3-4 we read: “**You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.**” To walk around the walls in such a manner carrying the ark, not speaking, but instead blowing trumpets, seems like a childish or ridiculous method for taking a fortified city filled with many men of war. But, the people believed the Word of God, that they would be victorious. So, they followed His instructions exactly as prescribed. It is true that divine power brought down the walls. But, the people acted in obedience; no matter how strange the means.

Consider their condition when they came to Jericho. For centuries, they had been a nation of slaves. For forty years they wandered the dessert, where a whole generation died. Their great leader, Moses, was dead. They were without military experience, lacking artillery, with no trained army. Yet, they had the marching orders of the living God! In the same way, God has not left us without marching orders. For Israel at Jericho, God gave plain and minute instructions. They had to march in a certain order, each with an assigned place. They were to march at a specific time, going around the city exactly as God told them. There was no room for human scheming, no place for planning, no need for human reasoning. All that was needed was obedience. This was faith!

We have so many examples. Do you remember Naaman? (2 Kings 5) He was the commander of the armies of Syria, which often fought with the Norther Kingdom of Israel. And he fell ill with leprosy. So he heard about the prophet Elisha and his miracles. So, he travelled to Elisha, who told him to go and wash himself 7 times in the Jordan river and he would be healed. At first he thought, “*What a nasty river? All the rivers of Damascus are much better than this one?*” And he left. But his servants said to him (my translation): “*Are you crazy? Do what he says!*” So, he washed himself 7 times in the Jordan and was healed from his leprosy! Brothers and sisters, our marching orders are not so strange. They are clear and defined in every way from the Word of God. We are told how to live. We are told how to order our families. We are told how to conduct ourselves in the church. We are commanded to “**go and make disciples.**” Yet, when I look around, I see so many churches (and may even be blind due to lack of obedience in our case) forsaking the simple means of grace, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, the simple ordering of the

church, etc. If this is happening with us, may God give us mercy and grace to change our ways and bring them into line of God's word! Faith is obedient to God's commands!

On a personal level, Christians are obedient. And their lives are marked with godliness. They love God. They love his people. They love God's means of grace. Yes, we sin! But, we have a savior who has overcome sin on the cross and death with his resurrection. And yes, He is our advocate. But, at the same time we will . . . over time . . . know a tree by its fruit.

3. The Discipline of Faith. In our story Joshua told the people: **"You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout"** (6:10). This is very interesting. They must be disciplined not to speak during those seven days until Joshua told them. This silence in the beginning was as necessary as their SHOUTING at the end. Why? Think about the young generation that was about to enter the land. They were the children of the greatest grumblers. Over and over their fathers complained and murmured against God and Moses. And if they were allowed to speak, they surely could have told Joshua how to conquer Jericho, what strategy was needed. Maybe they would have thought a siege would have been better as they starved the inhabitants over time. Or, they may have suggested tall ladders to climb the walls, or battering rams to destroy the gates, or even the digging of tunnels . . . If they would have been allowed to speak, they may have overthrown the plan of Joshua, which was the plan of God.

I think of Prov. 3:5-6. What does it say? **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."** When it comes to the non-Christian . . . the world . . . they always lean on their own understanding. Prov. 18:2 says: **"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion."** This is what we see often on tv with different talk shows and different "news" segments where groups of people sit around and share their opinions on how they believe we should understand the world and how we should get things accomplished. With Israel at Jericho they were given a method, that, in their opinion, may have seemed unlikely to succeed. And I am sure many inside the walls may have thought, *"What in the world are they doing?"* not knowing they were following the command of God.

Brothers and sisters, the soldiers of Christ must be trained, faith must be disciplined, knowing there is a time to speak and there is time to be quiet (Ecc. 3:7). I think of Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane. When the soldiers came for Jesus, what did Peter do? He took up a sword and started swinging, even cutting a man's ear off. Do you remember what Jesus said to him? Matthew tells us he says (my paraphrase): *"Put your sword away. I could call legions of angels if I desired. Instead, this is God's plan. This is the way. Let the Scriptures be fulfilled."* (Matt. 26:51-54). In the same kind of way, we must know that often God's ways are not our ways. And we must learn, by faith, to trust his ways. And in the meantime, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in this world as he sovereignly brings history to its appointed end.

4. The Patience of Faith. Our verse says, **"By faith the walls of Jericho came down . . ."** "After they had been encircled for seven days." They did not fall the first day or the second or the third, or the fourth, or the fifth, or the sixth. And on the seventh day, they went around seven times. We must consider that one of the reasons was for the testing of their faith, particularly their patience.

When nothing happened after marching 12 times around, it became more evident that their enemies would not be overcome by the power of man, but by the power of God.

Examples of those who do not wait on the Lord abound. When God waited for so long to give Abraham a son with Sarah, what did he do. He grew impatient, determined to have a son with Hagar. What about Moses? As a young man, he tried to take things into his own hands and killed the Egyptian, thinking the Hebrews would follow him. But, this was not God's timing. Instead, he lived in the desert for many years until God appeared in the burning bush. Jesus, after the resurrection told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the pouring out of the Spirit.

In the same way, as Israel patiently waited on God at Jericho, we must also trust in God's timing. Ps. 37:7 says, "**Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him . . .**" Faith is patient, particularly in trusting the sovereignty of God in all his timing. We are often in a hurry! God is in no hurry! We often find it harder to wait than it is to believe . . . by faith. Gal. 6:9 says: "**And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.**"

5. The Anticipation of Faith. Josh 6:20 says: "**So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.**" Here we notice that the people . . . SHOUTED . . . before the walls came down. This was a shout of faith . . . faith expecting victory.

Listen to the words of Jesus in Mark 11:22-24: "**Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**" It is interesting that Jesus uses the picture of a mountain. Why? Because moving a mountain is not possible. But Jesus says in another place, "**With God all things are possible**" (Matt. 19:26). Look back at our definition of faith from 11:1: "**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" Faith is connected to what ONLY God can do. There was nothing Israel could do to make the walls of Jericho come down. In the same way, there is nothing a sinner can do to save himself, but to trust (faith) the work of God to not just make salvation possible, but to bring it to pass in Jesus the Son. (gospel)

And it isn't merely salvation that requires faith. The Bible says, "**the righteous will live by faith**" (Rom. 1:17). We trust God's promises . . . EVERY one of them! And our lives are FULL of shouts of faith, knowing God will bring down the walls. By faith you can be a godly husband. By faith you can be a godly wife. By faith you can be parents that raise your children in this ungodly world. By faith, children, you can obey your parents, and even do this in your heart. By faith, you can make godly decisions and do what is right in every situation. Brothers and sisters, it is because of faith that we are different than the world!

Let me end with a few applications.

Application: God's ways are different from our ways. This is obvious with Israel at Jericho.

Application: Faith is always war. Life is always war. In this regard, we always live on the edge of Jericho. Eph. 6:10-17 says: **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God . . .”**

Application: Satan, sin, and death cannot ultimately stand. They will all be defeated by God and his people. To unbelief life is full of walled cities that cannot be shaken. But with faith God has only to breathe on them and they fall down.

Application: ALL victories belong to faith. This is God’s design! God will work in your life in such a way that God will get the glory!

Application: From beginning to end, life is lived by faith. Israel began by faith. They enter the promised land by faith. Through the ups and the downs, the trials and the victories, we live by faith. Faith is the glue holds all of life together. How fitting. Jesus is described in Colossians as the One through which “all things hold together.” And by faith we are united to Him!