



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2019*

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**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:30-31

**Subject:** Part 37 - The Courage of Faith

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.*

Chapter 11 so far, has been walking us through the old testament; but it's not just a history lesson, it is to help us understand what faith is. It is also to encourage the reader to persevere, push through, don't give up regardless of what the circumstances look like because Jesus is Supreme and so, we have a supreme calling on our lives, a supreme purpose which is a life of faith. Faith is courageous. Having great courage doesn't mean having faith, but having faith means having great courage. True faith doesn't crumble under pressure. Before we examine these two verses this morning, I think it will benefit us to put them into context, prior to the fall of Jericho.

In Numbers 13 and 14 we find the account of the Israelites first encounter with the land of Canaan. Moses was still leader at that time and sent 12 spies into the land for intelligence. All came back with the same report, the land was flowing with milk and honey, the fruit was full and plentiful, but nevertheless, they reported that the people who dwelt in the land were strong, the cities were fortified and very large and there were descendants of the Anak there.

The Anakim or Anakites were a warlike race of **giants** that occupied the lands near Hebron. 10 of the spies gave the Israelites a bad report saying that people devoured its inhabitants, they saw men of great stature, they saw **giants** making them feel like grasshoppers and they would not be strong enough to go against them. But 2 spies, Caleb and Joshua, tore their clothes, and told the children of Israel not to rebel against the Lord, that they shouldn't fear the people of the land as the Lord was with them. The real obstacle was not Canaan but unbelief. This report, their fear and disbelief, caused the Israelites to rebel against the Lord. They didn't have faith in God; and because of their rebellion, they spent the next 40 years in the wilderness until the generation who rebelled died, except for Caleb and Joshua.

Before Moses died, Joshua was called to be leader over the children of Israel. In the first 5 chapters of the book of Joshua, we see that God promises Joshua victory, but from the first chapter, the Lord speaks to Joshua directly about being courageous and strong. The attitude of the people had changed by then, saying to Joshua that they would heed what he had to say, and encouraged him to be strong and courageous. The two spies went to Jericho and came back with the witness that God had given them the land (we'll come back to this later).

In Joshua chapter 4 we see that the children of Israel crossed the Jordan where God demonstrated another miracle, just like the crossing of the Red Sea, and about 40 thousand men had prepared for war when they reached the plains of Jericho. They believed that Jericho had been given to them by God and they set up camp in Gilgal.

When all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites by the sea heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the crossing of the Israelites, Joshua chapter 5 tells us, their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer. At that time Joshua circumcised the uncircumcised, and afterwards they kept the Passover. It came to pass, that when Joshua was by Jericho he saw a man with a sword drawn in His hands. And Joshua, said 'are you for us or our adversaries?' And the man said, neither... I'm the commander of the army of the Lord. And Joshua fell on his face, worshiped the Lord and said to Him 'What does my Lord say to His servant?'

What we see in all of this is, first there is the call, then once there is obedience, there comes a revelation of the Lord himself, then comes the victory. God does this in our lives. Some say seeing

is believing, but they have it backwards, because the bible teaches us that believing is seeing. Now let's turn to our text.

***By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days (11:30)***

Jericho was the first city that the Israelites had to encounter. It was a fortified city and was known as a gateway city into the land of Canaan. It was the capital of the Amorites, one of the 7 nations in the land of Canaan. So from a military view point, it was a very important city of defence. There were mighty warriors, men of valour in that city, which were not to be underestimated. It had an inner and outer wall to fortify the city. Jericho wasn't that big, but archaeologists say it was one of the oldest inhabited cities. It sat on a deep spring which is still there today. Remember Elisha thought that it was bitter but it was sweetened by salt and prayer. Jericho actually means, The Moon city. The inhabitants at that time were known to be debauched, idolatrous, and wicked people. They were noted for their grossly immoral and perverted sexual practices as well as for their general cruelty. Their moral boundaries were thin as a waiver. Among other things, they frequently put live babies in jars and built them into their city walls as foundation sacrifices. Just imagine a society who thought that it was o.k. to kill their unborn, oh wait... or give birth and offer them as a sacrifice on the altar of a deity who needed their blood lust to be satisfied.

Yet regardless of all this defence, we see in Joshua 6, Jericho was shut down by the time the Israelites arrived. No-one went in or out of the city. They knew the stories of the Israelites and their God (Joshua 2). The Lord said to Joshua – in verse 2 of Joshua 6 –

And the Lord said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valour. <sup>3</sup>You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. <sup>4</sup>And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. <sup>5</sup>It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

It's amazing the tenses that the Lord uses. Grammatically we would say – 'See, *I will give you Jericho*' but not the Lord. He said '*I have given you*'. The Lord is outside time and he knows what is going to happen, he knows already what is accomplished. This is why the finished work of the cross was not just for the future, but it could stretch back in time, in fact, it was

before the foundations of the world, the lamb was slain (Revelation 13:8). God promised them victory, their faith, as they looked at the Jericho walls was challenged, but what we see here is that we must rely on spiritual warfare before getting over actual warfare. We have to trust God, trust Jesus to wage the war. While the children of Israel had a part to play, it was just a part. They did not have total control over how the victory was going to be achieved. Yes, there were 40 thousand ready for war, but what would have been the outcome if they went ahead in their own strength. *Great loss even though they may have overall achieved victory?* We don't know, but what we do know is, there are things in our lives that we have to face, but sometimes with our approach, in our own strength, we come away from situations with unnecessary wounds. If only we would bring it before God first and wait on Him, allow Him to wage the war, and give us victory, in His way. Maybe there are things in our lives that we feel like we don't want to change but we need victory over them, only Jesus can do it for us.

I'm sure before the Lord gave Joshua the plan, many of the Israelites must have looked at the walls and the inhabitants; and thought to themselves how this was all going to work out. Is there any wall too big for God, any city too fortified, any city too strong, any situation too difficult for God? No! We can be at the gateway and see that there is something very big in our lives preventing us from victory, preventing us from occupying the promises God has given us. How are we going to deal with it? You know the things that you may struggle with, things that may seem to re-emerge, or things that seems to thwart our plans; The bible tell us that we have the victory over sin and fear, but we need to firstly allow Jesus to occupy us, to reign and rule in our hearts, minds and lives. We need to give him everything and allow Him to win the battle in whichever way He wants to work it out, for His glory. There is nothing too difficult for Him? No!!! We serve a mighty and all sufficient God.

But our ways are not God's ways. We see in verse 3 of Joshua 6 God gave them, what some may have thought a strange strategy, to march once around the walls for 6 days straight, without saying a word, 7 priests holding seven trumpet of rams horns before the ark. Then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, they had to march around 7 times around the city, then a long blast of the rams horn, then all the people were to shout. There are a few things we need to observe here. The first thing is that had to march around for 7 days... but didn't the Law say that they had to rest on the Sabbath? Here the Lord gave them a command, and they had to obey. Being obedient to God is part of faith. We have seen this time and again, in all the previous examples of it in

chapter 11, that obedience plays a major important role in our faith. We see the Lord's heart in relation to this matter in 1 Samuel 15 verse 22 and 23 which tells us –

*So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."*

It was not for the Israelites to reason why God wanted them to march 7 days, but they needed to obey. So far in this story we keep seeing Joshua and the peoples obedience.

The next thing that needs to be pointed out here, is that the ark and the priests were involved. This is usual again, because they were never previously involved in battle, why? God was showing the people this was a spiritual battle, it was God's battle. Just as those who held the ark as the Jordan River was parted, God stepped into the situation, and was going to open up Jericho, and open up the promised land. The third thing that needs also to be observed here is that they were told to use, Ram's horns. Not the usual silver horn that sounded the attention in battle. The Ram's horns were used in Jubilee celebrations. *What took place in the year of Jubilee?* Slaves were freed, all debts were forgiven and the deeds of the land had to go back to their original owners. It was all happening here for the children of Israel, God was fulfilling His promises to them. It was more than just victory over a city, but the promises that were given to Abraham were finally starting to unfold.

Joshua and the people believed God and they obeyed God. They embraced the word of God. Remember that verse, Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. Joshua was the first leader were God said in verse 8 of chapter 1 in Joshua –

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

If you want victory you must be obedient to the word of God, that often requires courage. Battle often requires intelligence, strength, numbers, artillery, technology of some type, but here for the Israelites, it required faith, faith which included obedience and courage.

What do you think the Israelites thought when they first heard of God's battle plan? Imagine, the staff meeting that Joshua had... what were they reactions? Well we know, that they were willing to believe God regardless of what it looked like and they didn't complain, they had confidence in God. It's one of the few places in scripture where we can learn from these people in a positive way.

I wonder what the Israelites looked like to the inhabitant of Jericho? The inhabitants had known of these people, we've already seen how the king's heart was melted when he saw the Israelites in the distance, the city of Jericho was shut down. *Where they getting ready for battle inside the walls?* Day one, they watched the Israelites walk around their walls, the armed force in front, then 7 men holding 7 Ram's horns, then 7 priests holding some kind of box, and then the rest of the people following behind. Did it begin to look ridiculous to them, by say, day 3? Do you think that they thought the Israelites looked foolish?

Often our Christian walk seems like that to those who look on. You have a problem and your friends who are not Christians may give you all kinds of advice: relax, go home watch the television, it's time to take care of yourself.. then you say no to that advice, you say, I'm going to pray about it or go to the prayer meeting and speak with others who can pray for me. They look at you, why would you want to do that? All that praying and reading the bible, and going to fellowship with other Christians, how could that make any difference to your problems? Believing God can seem foolish to those who don't know God but they don't understand that the true and living God, creator of all things, upholder of all things, is in control of all things. Trusting and believing God, having faith in God, can seem the craziest thing to people who don't know Him, but for us who do know Him, where else could we go? To whom do we go to? Jesus said to Look to him, follow him, obey him, leave the things that are causes us harm and embrace the things that He has for us. God gave Israel total victory because they trusted God completely. The battle that you are facing, remember, is not just against flesh and blood, but it is spiritual. 2 Corinthians 10 verses 4 to 6 tells us this:

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, <sup>6</sup> and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Militarily, the seven days of marching demanded nothing physically outstanding, but it demanded Faith which gave them courage. It is often easier to fight than to have faith. If we fight, we will at least have a certain respect from the world, even if we lose. But faith always looks foolish in the eyes of the world. One of the most amazing things about Joshua 6 is that not a single word of doubt or complaint is recorded. The Israelites believed Joshua's report from the Lord. They had first-hand account of God's mighty hand to do the impossible, and they immediately began to prepare for the marching (v. 8). For a full week they carefully and faithfully marched. It was a milestone of faith in the life of Israel. And what happened, just as God said? On the seventh day, after the seventh march around the city, the Israelites shouted and the walls came tumbling down, except for one part of the wall. God delights in slaying men's pride. He slew the pride of the city of Jericho by making its city walls collapse in the most foolish possible way, just as some years later He would send a little boy to kill the **giant Goliath** and send the Philistines running. In the defeat of Jericho, He also demolished any pride the Israelites might have had. It was obvious that their part was purely symbolic. They could take absolutely no credit for themselves. All God wanted from them was faith, and this they gave, for by faith the walls of Jericho fell down. God wants the same from you. Maybe your life prior to becoming a Christian was full of self-sufficiency and pride, but God wants you now to love the Lord, love His people, cultivate your gifts and talents and step into your calling. That is the big difference.

Once the walls came down, victory was assured. They had to slay all the animals and citizens, because of the abominations that they were submerged in. All the treasure, the first fruits of the campaign, were given to God. Only one person didn't abide by that, which is another study, but I'm just bringing it up now as a word of warning to the wise, often we obey God prior to the battle but not so much once we begin to taste the victory. This isn't good enough, we need to be obedient always. Only one part of the wall did not fall... can anyone remember, why?

Well this leads us into the second verse we are looking at this morning –

***<sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. 11:31***

Rahab is called a harlot not just here but also in the Book of Joshua and even in The Book of James. Yet, here she is in the hall of faith and she is an unlikely candidate. She was a harlot (or prostitute), a gentile, an Amorite which was a race that God had long before marked for destruction (Genesis 15:16), not a Jew however she ended up in the Messianic Line (Matthew 1). Yet that is how God's grace works. His mercy is open to all who will receive it, and His grace has always been wider than Israel, even in Old Testament times.

Rahab did not perish because she believed. Why did the others perish? because they were disobedient, they didn't believe. The People of Jericho disbelieved even though they heard all the stories of what God had done for the people of Israel and the promises. What would have happened if they did believe? We know examples of when a Nation repented for example Nineveh, God is very gracious. Rahab had no more light than any other inhabitant of Jericho; yet she believed, while the others disbelieved. Rehab was not the only person in that land that had heard the story of the Israelites, but it seems like she was the only one that believed. This is just like people who hear the Gospel but they don't really want to believe, they don't want to change.

The society and culture was terrible, it had so much perversion, no moral boundaries. They needed to be wiped out. The Lord wanted to keep the Children of Israel as pure as possible, for as long as possible, why? Because of the seed.

To see what happened with Rahab, and how she welcomed the spies with peace, we need to go to Joshua chapter 2. Joshua sent out spies secretly to view the land, especially Jericho. When they went in, they came to the house of Rahab and lodged there. The king got wind of this and somehow Rehab seemed to be Suspect number one. Why was that? Do you think that something about her had already changed? By faith, Rehab hid the spies. She told the officials who were sent by the king, that they were once there but had left, they had just missed them and to quickly pursue them in case they could catch up with them. Rehab lied. Does this mean that lying is o.k. No.. if she told them the truth there would have been a different story, but the bible doesn't condole this, but it doesn't overlook it either.

In verses 4 to 6, of Joshua 2, she hid them by bringing them up to the roof, and hiding them under the stalks of flax. Rehab told the spies in verse 9 that she knew that the Lord had given the Israelites the land, that terror had fallen on the city and the people who lived in the land

because they heard how God dried up the Red Sea when they left Egypt and also, how they destroyed Sihon and Og. She believed that their Lord God was God of all, in heaven above and on the earth (Joshua 2:11). Remember, they knew God recently parted the waters of the Jordan. The Israelites served God who was still as mighty as when they left Egypt.

Rehab's belief in God, lead her to risk her own life to hide the spies. James 2 verse 25 tells us

*Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

Rehab used the opportunity to seek grace and asked to be spared the judgement that the city was going to go under, not just for herself but also for her family. Like the woman at the well, after her encounter with Jesus, she didn't just keep it to herself, she went out and told her family (John 4). Rehab becomes a typology for the believer in that, *was Rehab a sinner?* Yes. *Was she under Condemnation?* Absolutely, she was living in the city God had promised victory to the Israelites, but so is the world; John 3 verse 16 to 17 tells us –

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Everyone in the world is condemned. Canaan knew that the land was given by God to the Israelites. As they looked over the walls, they knew what time it was, but they didn't want to change. Think about people today, they talk about the end of the world, they listen to the news, the weather reports and talk about Armageddon, but do they want to change? Do they heed those who sound the warning, who preach the true gospel, who tell people of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ? No, they mock them. Jericho was shown Grace by God... there was 6 days prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> day when the walls fell. Unfortunately, like the people of Jericho, there will be people who will not believe and they will see the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Judgement.

Rehab experienced Grace. You were saved at the same time Rehab was – when was that? Before the Foundation of the earth. Rehab was saved by Grace through Faith. Rehab heard the word of the Lord. She heard the message – the message of deliverance, miracles, judgments concerning God and His people. She believed. Faith believes the Word of God. Rehab proved her faith by taking the risk, risking her very life. Like Moses, she identified with

the Hebrews spies. She made a choice that she no longer wanted to identify with the people that she grew up and lived amongst.

It's interesting that Joshua just sent two spies isn't it? Some Scholars say that was because he remembered what happened the first time when spies were sent to the land of Canaan, but some say, *not stretching the point*, some say that these two spies are a typology for the two witnesses that God will send prior to the World's final judgment. It's also interesting to note that when they left the city, Rehab advised them to go to the mountains to stay there for 3 days... the same time that the witnesses will be dead.

The spies agreed to Rehab's plea that she would be saved, and anyone that would be in her home. They told her to bind the scarlet cord in the window she was going to let them down with, only then could she be saved. When you stand back from this, and think about it, it's kind of like the Passover isn't it, the scarlet cord in the window, the blood of the innocent lamb on the door posts, but more interesting there is actually a whole study on the scarlet chord of redemption. The first time with see reference of a scarlet thread is in the birth of Tamar's twins, where it was used to mark the first born in Genesis 38 verse 27 to 30, this was to indicate who was to have the designated privileges of the firstborn, accept it didn't work out like that. God had different plans. Another reference it's mentioned as part of the tabernacle's curtains and the high priest's ephod (Exodus 26v1 and Exodus 28v6), the scarlet thread represented Christ's atoning work on the cross through the shedding of His blood. God's mercy and forgiveness of Rahab the harlot was signified by a rope of scarlet chord becoming the symbol of the blood of Christ.

Two things occurred in the city of Jericho after the Israelites shouted, First the walls fell. I'm sure when the city began to shake, all that were in the city were frightened, even Rehab and her family. Joshua in verse 22 of chapter 6, told the two spies to go and get Rehab and her household out. So they brought her and her relatives out. After Rehab and her family got out, then the second thing happened, they burned the city and all that was in it with fire (Joshua 6:24).

Warren Wiersbe said –

**“Christians today see the world shaking all about them, but they can be sure God will rescue them before He sends His fiery judgment on the world.”**

1 Thessalonians 1:10 tells us

*“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*

1 Thessalonians 5 verses 9 and 10

*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>10</sup> who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*

By faith, Rahab risked everything to hid the spies, welcoming them in peace. By faith, Rehab believed the accounts of the Israelites, and believed that God, is God. By faith, Rehab helped the spies escape and by grace, she received saving faith. By faith, she was delivered from judgement and destruction, and by faith, Rahab went to a Wedding.

Matthew 1 tell us that she wasn't just saved, but there was a purpose she was saved for. She believed God's promises not just regarding the land, but also about the seed. She married a man named Salmon even though she had a shameful passed, God was gracious to her. She became a mother, and not just any mother. But her son was Boaz, who married Ruth, another gentile. Boaz and Ruth had a son Obed, and Obed had a son Jesse, whose son was David, King of Israel. Rahab was the great great grandmother of King David. The Messianic line.

You know, the story of Rehab is very like yours. A sinner, condemned, who was extended grace, heard the word of God, believed the word of God, told the family, delivered from Judgement and you too are invited to a Wedding... but not of this world. In Revelation 19 verse 7 to 19 we are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Warren's Wiersby said –

**“Rahab was saved by faith, not by character or by religious works. This is the only way God saves people (Ephesians 2:8-9) Have you trusted Jesus as Rahab trusted Joshua?”**

For her faithful courage Rahab not only was spared but was honoured.

The faith that is spoken of here in this chapter is the kind of faith that takes God's word and acts on it. It takes real courage to follow the Lord, especially when you are confronted with arguments, ridicule, trials, persecution, and remain standing unwavering in faith. The aforementioned may not come necessarily from without, but within one's own family, friends, even community. We don't necessarily have great faith because we have great courage, we have great courage because we have great faith. We have seen this with Moses in facing Pharaoh.

John MacArthur said that there are four types of faith. th

In the fall of Jericho we see the faith that reckoned and risked. These demonstrate the courage of faith. Jericho walls were indeed formidable and the flesh would not overcome them, nothing but faith in God's word and in God's way. We need to remember that we do not fight a carnal fight, but a spiritual one. We have victory, we need to listen to God, obey Him unreservedly. Remember for Joshua, believing and obeying God, lead to the revelation of the Lord and eventually to the victory. For Rehab, believing and obeying God, lead to salvation and deliverance, which ultimately seen her at a wedding. Whatever you are facing, and let's be honest, it's not always the *giants* necessarily out there but the ones in here, in the heart; we can let them grow, we can let their presents terrify us, like doubt, fears of all kinds, weakness, even the strength of the flesh itself. We need to encircle these with constant prayer and practically dealing with the issues in faith with God's word. Let me leave you with the words that the Lord told Joshua at the beginning of his leadership, and I hope you take them to heart, even if this means that today you will, with God's power and grace, turn over a new leaf.. Joshua 1 verses 7 to 9 –

*Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may <sup>(b)</sup>prosper wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you <sup>(c)</sup>shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

