

We have been studying the examples of people of faith. The author is reminding the Hebrew church of the examples set by the men and women of faith, believing the unseen, and realizing this world is not their home. They believed the promises of God even when they didn't see them fulfilled in their lifetime (Hebrews 11:39). They passed on that conviction in God's promises to the next generation. Moses was our last example. He left everything the world had to offer because His faith told him following God was worth much more (Hebrews 11:26). Today we can look back and see that his name is more well-known than that of any Pharaoh. He certainly gave mankind more than any Pharaoh ever did.

Our verses today begin a section of victorious people of faith. It continues with Moses' example. *²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.* Hebrews 11:29 The account in Exodus 14 is so important to the history of the Jews and mentioned throughout both the Old and New Covenant that I think we should take a moment to read it. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 14. (I'm not going to copy the text here. Please read it.)

The Jews were being led by this pillar of cloud and it appeared to lead them to a dead end (Exodus 14:2-3). According to Josephus, they were between two mountains where a wadi created a large beach on the shore of the Red Sea. The Bible text sounds like they were led another direction first and then led back to this canyon, the name of which means "entangled." Sometimes we wonder if God isn't making some kind of mistake or if we missed where God was leading us because we seem to be going backward. But God always has a purpose. He was using it to make the Pharaoh think they were lost and entangled by the terrain.

The chariots came charging in during the evening between those two mountains. Remember the Israelites had "borrowed" from the Egyptians all their back pay, and Egypt was ravished by the plagues (Exodus 12:36). These soldiers of Egypt are out for revenge. The Jews began a "woe is me" song one of several that they resorted to every time they faced a difficult situation. "Weren't there enough graves in Egypt that you took us out here to die" (Exodus 14:12). The cloud that led them turned into a pillar of fire by night. It came and stood between the Jews and the Egyptians. It was light to the Jews but darkness to Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14:20).

Moses was crying out to the LORD. God told him to quit crying and tell the people to get ready to move out. He told Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea and explained to him what was about to happen. It doesn't appear that the people had faith after all the plagues they had seen, but Moses did! He passed on God's orders and made a proclamation. *¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."* Exodus 14:13-14

Commented [PW1]: Hebrews 11:39 (ESV)

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

Commented [PW2]: Hebrews 11:26 (ESV)

²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Commented [PW3]: Exodus 14:2-3 (ESV)

² "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea.

³ For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.'

Commented [PW4]: Exodus 12:36 (ESV)

³⁶ And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Commented [PW5]: Exodus 14:12 (ESV)

¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

Commented [PW6]: Exodus 14:20 (ESV)

²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

One day that will be true forever. One day all the enemies of the LORD will never be seen again. One day evil will be banished and never return. One day sickness, death, and tears will be forgotten. We stand on the shore of the Sea of Eternity. God says to us, "Stand still and see the salvation/yeshua of the LORD." Watch God at work. See what that cloud is doing, for the presence of the LORD is in the cloud (Exodus 13:21).

Our story is the same. Satan sees us entangled in sin and sends his army to destroy us. What can you do to save yourself from the army of Satan? Nothing! We look to the cross and saw His salvation, Jesus/Yeshua (John 3:14-15). The Angel of the LORD stands between us and Satan's army. He helped us believe, and lo and behold, the east wind of the Spirit began to blow, making a way for us to escape the destruction that the enemy of our souls had planned for every one of us (1 Peter 5:8) and God deals with our great enemy.

The author of Hebrews is emphasizing faith in a situation to which the Hebrew church could relate. Persecution was coming. They were trying to think of a compromise to flee from it instead of looking to God to save them in the midst of it. The answer to the threat was to listen to God and obey Him. That is what Moses did by faith. No matter how crazy it sounds, just trust and obey. I don't think Moses doubted. After all, he'd seen God use that rod to turn the Nile to blood, bring swarms of frogs, flies, and lice. He'd seen it turn into a snake and swallow the magicians' staffs. Part a sea? Why not! Is anything too hard for God (Genesis 18:14)? Was the persecution the Hebrew church was facing too hard for God? Did God somehow miss something and say, "Oh no, I didn't see this coming?" No! God is still on His throne.

The scenario not only applies to salvation, but to every difficulty we face. We see something that seems so impossible and unforeseen, such as health, financial, or relational issues, and we wonder where God is. He's right in the midst of it. Sometimes He tells us what is happening, and other times He just wants us to trust Him, to hear and obey in faith.

Moses stretched out that rod and the wind began to blow and the waters began to part. Apparently the murmuring multitude didn't truly repent of their murmuring for they would be at it again a few days later (Exodus 17:3). Experiences should build our faith. **Remember what great things God has done for you (1 Samuel 12:24)!** Apply those lessons to the next trial, because God wants to increase your faith. That is what the last verses in the chapter declare (Hebrews 11:40). The people believed in the LORD and in Moses His prophet. They failed to cling to that belief, which is the subtle warning to the Hebrew church.

The army of Pharaoh went into the sea pursuing the Israelites around dawn so that Israel could watch. The wheels of the chariots began to clog up, and the pillar of fire threw the Egyptians into a panic. God had Moses stretch out his hand and the sea closed and drowned them all. The destruction the enemy wanted to do to Israel, came upon them instead. And did you note God's reason? ¹⁸ *And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his*

Commented [PW7]: Exodus 13:21 (ESV)

²¹ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Commented [PW8]: John 3:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Commented [PW9]: 1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Commented [PW10]: Genesis 18:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

Commented [PW11]: Exodus 17:3 (ESV)

³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

Commented [PW12]: 1 Samuel 12:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

Commented [PW13]: Hebrews 11:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

horsemen. Exodus 14:18 God reveals to the heathen nations of the world that He is the LORD. The pattern is repeated at Armageddon and at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).

³⁰ *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.* Hebrews 11:30 The next account of a conquest by faith is the battle of Jericho. Israel crossed the Jordan river at flood stage and for the first time camped in the Promised Land (Joshua 3:15-16). The account begins in Joshua 5:13. Joshua was surveying Jericho when he met someone called the Captain of the Hosts. Later on He is referred to as YHWH (Joshua 6:2). I believe this is another account of an encounter with the pre-incarnate Christ. He told Joshua the same thing the LORD in the burning bush told Moses (Exodus 3:5). "Take off your shoes for you are standing on holy ground" (Joshua 5:15). Then he proceeded to tell Joshua the plan. It was the strangest thing Joshua ever heard. Nothing like this happened under Moses, except in a remote way the crossing of the Red Sea. Yet, it is the same overall pattern of hearing God's instruction and obeying in faith. He was to march around the city walls with the priests, the ark of the covenant, and the people for six days and on the seventh day march around seven times and then blow trumpets and shout. What kind of a plan is that?

Joshua had faith to believe that if God said it, then God would be true to His Word. It is the same example set by most of these people in Faith's Hall of Fame. It is believing God is all-powerful and all-knowing and cannot lie. So Joshua ordered the people to do just as the LORD commanded. I wonder what kind of response he had from his officers? "But sir, our stomping and shouting will not produce sufficient vibrations to have any effect such a massive wall. What if we...?" We always have a reasonable solution that we can imagine possible in our own power without God. That is just the human response because we have more faith in ourselves than we do in God. But great things are accomplished when we believe God can do what we can't. When we follow His direction and not human intuition and intelligence, we find greater things are done and He gets all the glory.

The people obeyed Joshua and marched day after day. And when those trumpets blew and the people shouted, the walls tumbled down. That is, all the walls but one tiny section where a scarlet cord was hanging out a window. ³¹ *By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.* Hebrews 11:31

To understand the faith of Rahab, we need to understand the background in Joshua chapter two. Joshua sent two spies to look over Jericho. They were recognized and a search went out for them. Rahab, a prostitute, hid them in the flax on her roof and told those seeking them that they had already left and were headed for the Jordan River. She kept the spies hidden until they could safely flee, sending them out her window. That was a very dangerous thing to do. It risked her life and that of her family. It was treason. But Rahab did so by faith. Here is her declaration in Joshua 2:9-11: ⁹ *and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.* ¹⁰ *For we*

Commented [PW14]: Revelation 20:7-9 (ESV)

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison
⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.
⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

Commented [PW15]: Joshua 3:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest),
¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

Commented [PW16]: Joshua 6:2 (ESV)

² And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

Commented [PW17]: Exodus 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Commented [PW18]: Joshua 5:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

She heard what God had done. They knew about the Red Sea parting some forty years earlier. They knew about the battles in the wilderness and the nations Israel defeated. She realized the God the Israelites worshiped was the true God of heaven and earth. What a declaration! Here is an example of someone in a heathen country who hears the news of what God has done and comes to faith and risks their life for that new found faith (Hebrews 11:6).

The spies told her to have her whole family come into her house and hang a scarlet cord out the window so they could save her. They didn't save her; God did, for it was God that kept that part of the wall standing. He not only saved her, but she became an ancestor of Joseph, step-father of Jesus. And a similar scarlet cord shows up later in Jewish history. A scarlet cord was placed on the scapegoats head each year to differentiate it from the goat of sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:10). The cord was taken off its horns and hung over the entry of the Holy Place before the scapegoat was driven into the wilderness. The Talmud describes how in a few days it would turn white to show that God had accepted the sacrifice of atonement. Faith that God could cover their sins, along with genuine repentance, resulted in the salvation of those who from their hearts observed the Day of Atonement.

What's the connection between these scarlet cords? Faith! Rahab believed God and that her sins of prostitution and idolatry were forgiven if she would trust in Him. Like Abraham, her faith was counted as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Faith has always been God's way to save mankind. Every one of these heroes of faith to this point believed God and placed their faith in Him and they were saved. Jesus' death in the future would be the culmination of their faith that God would save them. If God can save an idolatrous prostitute and her family because she heard a testimony of Moses' faith and believed, then anyone can be saved in a similar way. **Notice how the faith of one man inspired faith in her.** In church history, witnessing the faith of those who were martyred resulted in the salvation of many.

Faith conquered the army of Pharaoh. Faith conquered the walled city of Jericho. Faith conquered the sins of Rahab and saved her family from destruction. What has faith done in your life? I hope it has saved your soul. And that is where life in the Spirit begins (Galatians 5:25). Then we walk by faith and let God do what we can't imagine. Faith prays and then expects an answer and watches for that answer to come. Faith listens to God and obeys what is heard. Faith takes risks from the world's point of view, but from faith's perspective it is the only rational thing to do.

We are moving into a section of the chapter that speaks of the conquests of faith over difficulties in life. It is followed by what appears to be defeats from a worldly

Commented [PW19]: Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Commented [PW20]: Leviticus 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

Commented [PW21]: Genesis 15:6 (ESV)

⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Commented [PW22]: Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

perspective, but death in faith is the ultimate victory. Faith does not fear him who kills the body, but rather Him who can destroy body and soul in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Faith is not just some ancient historical event. It is at work in every part of the world today. People are coming to Christ and standing for their faith against life threatening persecution. In a recent Voice of the Martyrs newsletter, the story of Daniel of the Fulani tribe was told. He had received a dream from the Lord about heaven and Jesus. He searched for and finally found a Bible. After reading it, Daniel committed his life to Christ. When the men in his village found out about his conversion, they tied him hand and feet. As they prepared to cut his throat, he told them to go ahead. He explained that he knew where he was going. He had seen it in his dream. He told them he only wished they could know Jesus too and be assured that they were going to heaven. As a man began to cut his throat a police car pulled up and the men scattered. The policeman asked Daniel what was happening and Daniel told him he was being executed for turning from Islam to Christ. The policeman told him that he was the only Christian in the police department. Before the other officer with him approached, he untied Daniel, put money in his pocket and told him to quickly leave town. He warned Daniel that the chief of police was a Muslim and there is no telling what would happen if he found out.

The traumatic event did not dissuade Daniel. He began sharing his faith. Over 800 have come to Christ from his witness, 400 of them from his own tribe which was formerly 99% Muslim. It has not come without a cost. His brother was beheaded for his faith in Jesus. Daniel is victorious. He is victorious over fear, over attempts on his life, and victorious in winning many souls to Christ. I met an Indonesian woman on the far western side of that tribal range that learned Fulani and is starting churches in villages that were 100% Muslim. She prays for the sick and ministers to them the Word of God and eventually the chief of the village gives her space to live that becomes a church. We help to support outreach to those remote villages.

This kind of faith can be expressed in our own country today. We can have the faith to do whatever God leads us to do. Whether it is to give to support our persecuted brothers, or to reach out to a neighbor, or to start a ministry which God is directing us to begin, like brother Ron Vachon-Vierra has, or assist in one others have started by faith. Faith hears, believes, and acts on that belief; and when it does, it inspires faith in others.

These testimonies invite us to live lives of faith that make a difference. They tell us that by obeying God in faith, great victories can be won. They tell us nothing is too hard for God, not the armies of the world, nor the heart of a prostitute, nor any difficulty we face. God can and will see us through if we will by faith trust Him and obey His leading.

Commented [PW23]: Matthew 10:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Questions

1 What situation was Israel in at the Red Sea?

2 How did Moses express faith?

3 What is the spiritual parallel to that victory?

4 What Red Seas do we face?

5 Why did God drown the army of Pharaoh?

6 What was Joshua's expression of faith?

7 What was Rahab's expression of faith?

8 How can it encourage us?

9 How are people saved?

10 What does a life of faith look like?