

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

## The Characters of Faith (Joshua – Part 6) Hebrews 11:30

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.*

I know some of you have heard this account before, but when I was about five years old, I was “recruited” to participate in the church Christmas program as part of a children’s choir. My huge function was to be dressed in a choir robe, hold a burning candle and sing “Away in a Manger” along with a number of other children. While the picture may seem to be perfect enough, I remember quite well the horror I felt in the situation. The last place I wanted to be was before this congregation of gawking parents singing this song. I had not at this time any conception of who Jesus really was, nor a desire to worship Him. But don’t assume that a five year old is without theology – for I believed there was a God and as clear as day I can recall making this vow before Him in my head – “I will never again, as long as I live, stand before a group of people and sing or speak about Jesus.”

Well, obviously something happened in the course of the next 35 years to follow that find me standing before you today both singing and speaking of Jesus. And if I had to give an explanation for the change of heart; if I am to give account for what it was that convinced me that singing and speaking of Jesus was not so bad, but in fact was joyously desirable, I would sum it up in a word. Do you know what that word is? “Faith”! And what is faith? May I remind you that faith, as I have been defining it, is a firm trust in the person, promises and provisions of God through Jesus Christ; a trust that results in behavior consistent with the Word of God? How’s your faith? Consider this - faith enables a person to do what he otherwise could not have done, and by so doing, to obtain what he could not have obtained.

I, as an unregenerate five year old, could find no joy or pleasure in singing about the little Lord Jesus; nor would I have found it much more meaningful when I was fifteen. But when I turned seventeen, the Lord granted me faith; He enabled me to love to worship Jesus and to speak of His glories. Faith enables a person to have **“the assurance of things hoped for”** (an eternal relationship with the Lord), **“the conviction of things not seen”** (being face to face with my Savior).

In our text this morning, we find this enabling power of faith; to do what otherwise could not be done, to obtain what could not be obtained, realized in the experiences of Joshua and the people of Israel. From our text, I would like to springboard back into the Old Testament as this single verse gives reference to the walls of Jericho falling down – a statement that would have taken the first readers right back to Joshua 5:13-6:25 and the first great miracle of God experienced by Israel in the promised land. Let me then offer you this simple outline from Hebrews 11:30 that we will use to consider the Joshua text, namely we see the OBSERVANCE of faith (**“by faith”**); followed by the OUTCOME of faith (**“the walls of Jericho fell down”**); ending with the OBEDIENCE of faith (**“after they had been encircled for seven days”**).

### I. The Observance of faith

So turn with me if you would to Joshua 5:13-6:6 as I set the stage for our first point, the OBSERVANCE of faith. What we are going to do is observe first the faith of Joshua the then observe the faith of the people of Israel. Here in Joshua 5:13-6:6 we read this –

---

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

**13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14 He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15 The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. 6:1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2 The Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. 3 You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead." 6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord."**

Perhaps my take is a bit different here but remember that Israel had just crossed the Jordan. As soon as the last priest's foot left the river bed, the Jordan River, that had been cut off by the hand of God, had returned and was actually overflowing its banks (4:18). In other words, any way of escape had been cut off. There was no turning back, only a looking forward, an anticipation of what God was going to do. According to Joshua 5:9-10, Israel camped at Gilgal.

Now, some five or six miles to the southwest of Gilgal was a fortified city called Jericho. If Israel was to be successful in its campaign to take the land of Canaan, Jericho would have to be captured. But how? How would this city, this city that was seemingly impregnable, this city of which Joshua 6:1 informs us was "tightly shut" to be conquered? As we reflect back upon Hebrews 11:30 for a moment, let me remind you that between Hebrews 11:29 and 11:30 is 40 years. It had been some 40 years since a great act of faith on the part of the people of Israel. Well, after celebrating the Passover meal, Joshua evidently slips away from Gilgal and makes a personal two-hour hike to the outskirts of Jericho. Joshua 5:13 tells us that "**Joshua was by Jericho**" – the word "by" meaning in close proximity. Joshua was personally spying things out, when, according to our text, "**he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand...**"

Joshua sees a warrior, with sword drawn and what happens next is nothing short of a great faith. For while some may think that Joshua was struck with fear and timidity, I see the faith of a great man for verse 13 goes on to say, "**and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"**" In other words, "What side are you on?" Are you for us or for our enemies over there in Jericho? I believe Joshua must have had his hand on his own sword, ready to engage this stranger, steel against steel. There is nothing in the text up to this point to suggest otherwise. Joshua believed that God had brought him safe this far and faith would lead him on.

It is not until verse 14 that we see a dramatic change in Joshua as he hears the response of this warrior stranger who answers Joshua's question with, "**No, rather I indeed**

---

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

**come now as captain of the host of [Yahweh] the LORD.”** And with this statement, Joshua now does what? He fell on his face, bowed down and offers himself to the service of Adonai, the lord or master. And then, in a scene reminiscent of Moses and the burning bush, this “captain” tell Joshua in verse 15 to remove his sandals because he is on holy ground, showing us that Joshua was in the presence of the Almighty God. And what we have here is what is called a theophany or more specifically a Christophany. A “theophany” meaning a “God-appearance” is an OT appearance of God in some material form. Generally speaking, when such a theophany takes on a human form, we see it as a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, Joshua was face to face with the Savior. And Joshua believed and by faith took off his sandals, offering himself to the Lord’s service. Then, in Joshua 6:2, we see this captain identified as the LORD, as Yahweh, giving Joshua instructions concerning the taking of Jericho.

How great is the faith of Joshua? Consider the message of the Lord. “Joshua,” says the Lord in effect, “I first want you to know that you are going to take this city!” What a relief! To know that it is God’s will that Jericho be taken. But how will the Lord have Israel take this city? Again, to paraphrase 6:3-5, the Lord says, “I want you to tell the priest and the people that they are going to take a five mile hike from Gilgal to Jericho, a two-hour trip and then, in absolute silence on the part of the people, with nothing more than the sounding of a shofar, a ram’s horn, you all will march around the city, something that would take them about 45 minutes and then you will march back to Gilgal, another two-hours and wait to do the same thing on the next day. And you will do this for six days. Then on the seventh day, you will make the same two-hour march, but now you will encircle the city not once, but seven times, something that would take about 5 hours to do, and then you will say to the people “Shout”, which they will do – and, according to the promise of the LORD in 6:5, **“the wall of the city will fall down flat”** and the people will take the city.

What would be a seemingly appropriate and typical response to such a command given to a captain of war? “You want us to do what? Are you crazy – that will never work?” But not so with Joshua. When Joshua heard this word, it produced in him the fullness of faith. He had the assurance of things hoped for, namely the fall of Jericho and the conviction of things not seen as he knew that the **“captain of the host or army of the Lord”** was with him.

Beloved, consider this, that the faith of this one man, Joshua, had a profound effect upon the people of Israel. In Joshua 6:6 we see that Joshua began to communicate to the people the plan of God and Joshua’s faith in the promise of God, in the revealed plan of God, in the provisions of God, elevated the faith of the people as a whole. Oh that we would be so moved to faith. Our faith must be elevated to expect great things from God. It does not matter whether you are the leader of a nation, stuck behind a desk, working some machinery or caring for a house – if we would live a greater life of faith, seeking a greater trust in the person, promises and provision of God through Jesus, we will be used of the Lord, even as Joshua was, to elevate and energize others to faithfully serve the Lord, to go out and do what was otherwise impossible. As William Carey, the great father of modern missions and thoroughly Calvinistic has said, “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.” That is faith.

But let us also quickly observe the faith of the people, for beginning in Joshua 6:7 we find that Joshua told this plan to the people and guess what? We do not have a recorded instance of dissent on the part of the people. The people believed what Joshua told them, they believed in the promise of God and they went out, marching for four to five hours a day to

---

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

encircle the city for about 45 minutes – doing this for six days straight. I am sure they must have encountered some ridicule and mocking. Never had any of the inhabitants of Jericho or the land of Canaan seen such a seemingly ineffective strategy of war. But our Hebrews 11:30 text does tell us that the walls of Jericho were encircled for seven days, not by human reason or for human scrutiny, but by faith. These then are the observations of the faith of Joshua and the people of Israel

## II. The Outcome of Faith

But not only do we observe the faith of Joshua and the people, but we are also provided what we can state as our second point, the OUTCOME of faith. According to Hebrews 11:30, “by faith” – the outcome was what, **“the walls of Jericho fell down...”**

Now there is not a lot of exposition needed to explain the meaning of this statement. It is simple, forthright and pointed – because the people believed in the promise of God and, as we will explore in a moment, acted accordingly, what was promised came to pass. In Joshua 6:16, 20-21 we read,

**16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city...” 20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.**

Remember that I asked you to consider this statement - faith enables a person to do what he otherwise could not have done, and by so doing, to obtain what he could not have otherwise obtained. In this case, faith enabled a nation to do what they could otherwise not have done (fight against Jericho) and by so doing, to obtain what they could not otherwise obtain (the victory over Jericho as the walls fell down).

Beloved, God is faithful to His promises. I have yet to find something in the Scriptures that God has promised that He has reneged on. His promises to Israel have come to pass literally and as foretold. For Joshua and Israel, God promised the fall of Jericho and there is a sense in which this account becomes the greatest manifestation of corporate faith ever recorded in the history of Israel. Israel believed and it came to pass just as God had promised – the outcome was promised.

Sometimes we might be tempted to think that God moves at the whims and impulses of man. For it is stated in our Hebrews 11:30 text, **“by faith the wall of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled seven days.”** But notice what Hebrews 11:30 really says – there is no mention of Israel or Joshua in this text at all – to be sure, they are implied, but our text says that the walls fell down by faith, after they, that is the walls, had been encircled. The emphasis here is on the outcome, the promised result of faith. The promise of Jericho’s fall came first. God planned and then put that plan into motion. Then, through faith, the faith of God’s people, which was part of the plan, the outcome was realized. We see this very same principle at work in the plan of salvation. Look with me at Ephesians 2:8 – here we read – **“For by grace [that is the plan and promise of God] you have been saved [this is the doing of God] through faith [the part of God’s plan that we are to engage and interact with – we must believe in that plan];**

---

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

**and that not of yourselves**, [this plan and its outcome – salvation – is not the doing of man but rather] - **it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

Just as Israel could not boast in themselves that the wall of Jericho fell, for it was a miracle, the work of God, neither can those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for deliverance from sin boast that their deliverance was of their own doing. The outcome of faith in Jesus Christ is salvation, but faith did not plan or ordain salvation, that is the work of God. The outcome of faith for Israel in Joshua 6 is the felling of the walls of Jericho, which they did not plan or ordain, for such was the work of God.

### III. The Obedience of Faith

This brings us then to our last point of consideration this morning. We have seen the Observance of faith in the lives of Joshua and the people of Israel and we have also see the outcome of faith, the fulfillment of the promise of God. Now let us consider this – the Obedience of faith.

Beloved, genuine saving faith always manifests itself in obedience to the revealed will of God. It has been said that *a life of faith is evidenced by a life of obedience to God's word*. The end of Hebrews 11:30 tells us that the walls of Jericho fell **“after they had been encircled for seven days.”** As seemingly crazy and absurd the word of the Lord to Joshua and Israel may have seemed; as temporarily demoralizing as it may have been to be laughed at and mocked by the people of Jericho for six days, these believed God – they believed not only in the outcome the promise of God that the wall of Jericho would fall, but they also believed in the process God-ordained and they daily and faithfully encircled Jericho for seven days according to the Word of God. And so we must learn that the evidence that a person believes in the Word of God is found when he obey it. No one has a right to say they have faith when they are being disobedient to the Word of God. We have here then a spiritual principle that we would do well to know and consider daily in our lives. The principle is this – *disobedience to God's word reveals our unbelief while obedience to God's word reveals our faith*.

The problem is that sometimes obedience to God's word can seem foolish, if not to ourselves, certainly to unbelievers around us. We have been praying for a young man in our neighborhood, a friend of Luke's, who has been coming regularly to Wednesday night Bible study. Starting this month, he will be missing youth group because in their wisdom, the football coaches have called for practice on Wednesday nights and for anyone seemingly foolish enough to miss such a practice is guaranteed extra workouts and the scorn of the team. When asked in a group from the neighborhood why he chose football over church, the unbelievers in the group quickly responded with the attitude “who wouldn't choose football – what is so important about church?” In other words, Luke and Beth were made to look foolish for wanting both themselves and their friends to attend church. But I know my kids will be faithful, joyously faithful to attend youth group because the Lord has put it on their hearts to be there, to learn and to encourage. Perhaps, sometime in the future, some of these teens that mocked such a commitment, and such an obedience will look back on the faith of these and it will make a difference in their lives. For as we have already noted, one person's faith, such as the faith of Joshua, can have a huge impact upon God's people. Some of these for whom we pray may be God's people. Luke and Beth are simply called to be faithful regardless of their responses.

Beloved, we are all called to be faithful, to be obedient to the calls and commands of God, regardless of how foolish they may seem, regardless of how convenient or inconvenient they may be, because such a faith desires the glory of God over personal satisfaction. Too

# The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

often the measure of one's faith is nothing more than the measure of personal satisfaction one feels – but I say to you that the true measure of faith is how obedient you are to the word of God.

So, how is your faith? What are some of the calls to which God has spoken to us that we must take and experience by faith? Remember that one of the greatest calls of God to people today is this – **“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...”** (Acts 2:38). Have you repented of your sin? Have you truly forsaken those things that miss the mark or standard of God, or do you continue to dabble in them. By faith, you can have victory over such sins if you will “repent” and confess your sins. Those familiar words of 1 John 1:9 express the principles we have considered this morning –

***If we confess our sins [an act of faith], He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [the outcome of His promise].***

Did God make the promise to forgive sins and cleanse us before we express faith? Yes, look with me at Ezekiel 36 where we see the provisions and plans of the New Covenant that Jesus would inaugurate with His blood on the Cross. In Ezekiel 36:25-27, after calling Israel back to Himself, the Lord declares:

***25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.***

Do you see it? God causes faith and then in faith we are to be careful to observe His word, to be obedient. Has God caused you to walk in His ways? Have you been obedient to His word – for obedience to God's word always reveals the reality of our faith. Beloved, let us then be diligent to observe faith, both in ourselves as well as in one another, that we might inspire one another to greater faith. Let us know the outcome of faith, the fulfillment of the promises of God, just as He has said. And Let us experience the obedience of faith, believing and demonstrating that belief by following the calls and commands of the Lord.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Copyright © 2007 Edward K. Godfrey. This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, 2300 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street Rogers, AR 72758.