



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 10:

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS BY FAITH

Hebrews 11:30-31

Forty years separate the events of verses 29 and 30; that is, the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the walls of Jericho. The miracle of crossing the Red Sea marked the beginning of the wilderness journey under Moses while the miracle of the walls of Jericho falling down marked the beginning of conquering Canaan under Joshua. During the period of those forty years, many mighty acts of faith were recorded: bitter water made sweet (Exodus 15:22-25); manna and quails supernaturally provided (Exodus 16:4-18); water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7); defeat of the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-13); the crossing of river Jordan (Joshua 3:9-17) and others.

For many of the miracles in the ministry of Moses, the Israelites did not wholly believe God as Moses and some faithful remnants believed. However, at the time of Joshua, Israel believed God as much as Joshua did. Jericho was a great obstacle before Israel. It was a stronghold. Its location was strategic, its walls were high and thick, and its soldiers were well-trained and well-armed. Faith brought victory over Jericho. The obedience of faith brought victory. Rahab also demonstrated faith and was protected and preserved while the unbelieving people in Jericho were destroyed. The faith that pulls down strongholds also saves the vilest of sinners and brings despised aliens into the commonwealth of Israel – into the household of faith.

CONQUERING BY FAITH

Hebrews 11:30; Joshua 6:3-5,12-16,20; Deuteronomy 1:28-30; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; 2 Kings 5:1,9-10,14; 1 Kings 18:41-45.

Before coming to Jericho, a powerful fortress barring them from entering the promised land, the Israelites had crossed river Jordan by faith. To enjoy the benefit of the previous act of faith, we must overcome the present obstacle by faith. Israel was faced with formidable difficulties and powerful oppositions. To unbelievers, Jericho and the other cities seemed impregnable, but faith laughs at impossibilities. Satan's strongholds cannot stand before godly people of faith who rely fully on God and obey His Word implicitly.

God's instructions to Israel were very simple. Those instructions might have seemed childish or ridiculous. God promised to deliver Jericho into their hands if they would only believe and obey. And divine power overthrew Jericho's walls when Israel manifested the obedience of faith. At the command of the Lord, they were to be silent; and at the command of the Lord, they were to shout. Implicit obedience to God's word is absolutely essential if we are to have His blessings. These accounts in the Scriptures show us the wondrous power of real faith to bring to pass that which is beyond nature. Walls of Jericho between us and the promised blessings, barriers between us and holiness give way and fall when we truly believe God.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:31; Joshua 2:1,8-12,18-21; 6:22-25; Matthew 1:1-5; Romans 10:8-10; 2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 8:31,32,37-39.

Rahab was a Canaanite, a stranger – “**an alien from the commonwealth of Israel**”, “**a stranger from the covenants of promise**”, yet “**by faith she perished not with them that believed not**”. Rahab had heard of the God of Israel and His mighty acts done on behalf of Israel. She had heard of God’s plan to give the land of Canaan to Israel. Others heard and believed not; they rebelled in their unbelief. But she heard and believed. And she confessed in faith. “**And she said,... I know that the LORD hath given you the land,... For we have heard how the LORD dried the water of the Red Sea for you... For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath**” (Joshua 2:9-11).

Others in Jericho heard the same things that Rahab heard. What they heard brought fear in their hearts but she had faith. Rahab’s confession was full and sure. She accepted the testimonies as true. She exalted God because of His wondrous works. She acknowledged Him as the God of heaven and earth. She was sure that God had given the land of Canaan to His people. With an expectant faith, she asked for mercy and salvation, not only for herself but also for her household. Her faith perceived something of the infinite mercy of God that she believed He would be willing to show mercy and grant grace to her as well as her family. Her confession and demand revealed her faith. Our confession is absolutely inseparable from our faith.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:30,31; Mark 11:24; Romans 4:19-21; Hebrews 4:3,10; Luke 5:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Isaiah 28:16; 2 Chronicles 20:20-22; John 11:40.

The historical account connected with these two verses (Hebrews 11:30,31) reveals some striking characteristics of faith. There is **faith that receives**, when we come empty-handed to Christ for salvation. There is **faith that reckons**, that counts on God to undertake for us. There is **faith that risks**, that moves out on God’s word, daring to do the impossible. There is **faith that rests**, that when facing persecution, we remain confident that God will deliver. Unbelief is hesitant but bold faith is confident and courageous. Reading Joshua chapter 6, we observe (1) the **obedience of faith**. After receiving God’s instruction and promise to deliver Jericho into their hands, Joshua and Israel obeyed without modifying God’s word. There was also (2) the **discipline of faith**. Everyone among those millions of Israelites manifested faith and knew that there is “**a time to keep silence and a time to speak**” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). (3) Their **patience of faith** was remarkable. The walls of Jericho did not fall on the first day when Israel marched around them. It was not until the thirteenth time, on the seventh day, that the power of God was displayed to make the walls fall down. We must not overlook (4) the **expectation of faith**. The people shouted before the walls fell down – their faith expected victory and was rejoicing before the victory came. (5) The **ground (basis) of faith** for Joshua, Israel or Rahab was the word of God. “**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**” (Romans 10:17). The word of God is a surer foundation for our faith than feeling. We have already spoken about (6) the **confession of faith**. There are those who remain silent or quiet in confusion, fear and unbelief. Others like the ten spies utter negative words that doubt the promises of God. Faith confesses with assurance and says what God has said in His promises. (7) **The effect and reward of faith** is always the same. For an individual (Joshua), or a family (Rahab and her household), or a nation (Israel), faith always pulls down the enemy’s strongholds and delivers us from temporal and eternal perdition.

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