

# Faith and a rescue plan

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's reading is from the book of Hebrews chapter 11 starting at verse 28 till 31.

! By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. A very warm welcome to everyone here this morning. If you're a visitor for the first time with us it's wonderful to see you.

And as already been mentioned please stay around after for tea and coffee. Well my name is Mark Whitton. I'm a member here at Grace Church Dulwich and it is my honour to be able to stand up here to see you this morning and to bring the word of God to us.

[ 1 : 16 ] Well we've been looking at the chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews over this summer period. It's a very famous chapter in the Bible. It's sometimes been called the Roll of Honour chapter, the Hall of Fame chapter.

It lists out the men and women of faith of the Old Testament and tells us the remarkable events that took place in their life and the faith that they had to endure.

The question is why the writer of Hebrews wants to shine a light on the brothers and sisters of the Old Testament and the things that they went through.

Well I believe to do this we may need a bit of a recap. I don't know if you remember in the early 2000s there was a TV show called 24. It was groundbreaking at the time and it used to start every episode like this.

Boom boom. Boom boom. Previously on 24. If you've not seen it that is a fantastic impression of Keith O'Sullivan.

[ 2 : 26 ] And what it would do over the next 40 seconds to a minute it would detail what had happened in the previous episodes. There was so much going on in each episode.

People dying, new characters coming in, plot twists, betrayal, denial and all manner of deaths and different chaos which leads to a great TV show. It had to recap you and bring you back to where you were.

And you'd be sitting there watching it on the sofa going oh I forgot she died last week. Or I forgot he's now the president. And I feel likewise I need to do the same this morning.

We need to come back to see where we are. And Hebrews chapter 1 if I can take us back there briefly. Feel free to follow along.

Hebrews chapter 1. And verse 1 says this. Long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

[ 3 : 28 ] But in these last days it was spoken to us by his son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews, wants us to see the glory of Christ. He wants to lift Christ high up and show that he is better than anything that has come before.

But in doing so he's going to do it through the lens of the Old Testament and the men and women of faith. We started this series didn't we? A few weeks ago.

And Bruce took us through the first few chapters. The first few verses of chapter 11. And in the following weeks people have taken us through these men of faith.

The writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage Jewish Christians of the day who are being persecuted for following Jesus. I say again he wants to shine a light on them but also show that there is a rescue plan.

[ 4 : 43 ] There is a rescue plan that God has put in place. I was trying to think of a little analogy, a little funny story maybe I had when maybe I needed rescuing or someone I knew needed rescuing.

But in fact this week a story come across me that wasn't really funny, was quite terrifying but it had a good ending. On the south coast of Greece there was a young girl playing on an inflatable unicorn.

We've all done it, let's be honest. On the beach with her parents. And a gust of wind took her out instantly. So fast and so quick that her own parents didn't have time to swim together.

She went out so quick that even the coast guard on the beach struggled to get there. They had to radio any boats or any passing vessels. Can they help?

There was a passing ferry. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of yards off of shore. The captain reportedly said after, I couldn't believe my eyes.

[ 5 : 48 ] When in the midst of this ocean, I could see a little dot floating around with a small child on it. She was three years old. By God's mercy she was rescued by this ferry.

The captain said I had to be very careful. If I went too close to her, I was scared we were going to tip the little girl off of her inflatable unicorn. It took a lot of time, a lot of effort.

But she was rescued. They said that she was clinging on to that unicorn for dear life. Well today, I want us to see that there is a rescue plan that God put in place.

A rescue place, a rescue plan that requires faith. I hope this morning that we can see God's rescue plan for mankind.

And in doing so, those of us that are Christians, it can renew our faith in him. So my first point this morning. Embracing God's plan for us.

[ 6 : 55 ] Well let us start in verse 28 of chapter 11. Well today, like I said, we're going to need to dive back in to the Old Testament.

Hopefully still keeping an eye very much on what the writer of Hebrews 11 wants us to get from these verses in front of us. But to go back, we go back to Exodus.

Exodus chapter 2, 11 and verse 1. And for a bit of a background, a very brief background, I recommend that these stories that I'm going to mention in the Old Testament are wonderful stories. And if you get time later, please go home and read them. And see God's working in the Old Testament with his people. God's people have been in captivity for many, many years, hundreds of years in captivity.

Held in Egypt as slaves. They'd been through the nine plagues. God's hand was upon Moses. He was his spokesperson for God.

[ 8 : 13 ] And now God tells Moses in chapter 11, verse 1. The Lord said to Moses, yet one more. And I will bring you upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt after he will let you go from here.

There was one more plague that was going to befall Egypt and Pharaoh. And this was the last plague. And this is what it involved. God says to Moses, you've got to take a lamb.

You've got to take a lamb in verse 3 of chapter 12. In verse 5, it says it can be without blemish. No deformities. It's got to be a perfect lamb. It's got to be a male.

And it's got to be of one years old. And you've got to cook it. You've got to roast it. And your family have got to eat it. And none of it can be wasted. If your family's too small and you can't get through the whole of the lamb, well then go to your next-door neighbour and eat it with them.

None can be wasted. But you've got to keep the blood back. And the blood of the lamb that you're going to sacrifice and eat, you've got to put on the doorpost of your house.

[ 9 : 21 ] On the two-side post and on the lintel above. Well, this is the first sign of great faith we see from Moses.

Because God tells Moses to do this. Moses doesn't keep this information to himself. He could have walked away going, that seems a bit strange, doesn't it? I've got to put blood on the door so that the destroyer, the angel of death, doesn't come through and kill the firstborn.

That's what God told him. God said, if you don't do this, the firstborn child, the first male of every household is going to die. But in verse 21, Moses calls the elders together and explains what needs to be done.

Moses showed great faith. He acted on God's command. And that is what the people did.

The people sacrificed the lamb and they put the blood on the doorposts. It's interesting to see that one of the other things they had to do, they had to be inside the house.

[10:34] So it wasn't good just putting the blood on the doorframe. When the angel of death was to pass by, people had to be in the house. Otherwise, it wouldn't have worked.

We see again, Moses showed great faith in listening to the word of God. He didn't just listen, he acted on it. We see a couple of wonderful things from this.

First of all, we have to see and acknowledge the great picture this shows us of our Lord Jesus Christ. The blood-soaked doorframe is clearly a picture of the blood that was shed on the cross of Calvary.

And the fact that you had to be in the house to be saved, it was no good just putting the blood on the door and thinking, well, that's done, I'm done now. No, you have to be in the house, just like anyone here this evening, accepting that there was a man called Jesus that lived 2,000 years ago. He's not good enough. You need to be safe in Jesus this evening. It was only people who were under the blood that were safe. Well, Moses showed great faith, and he acted on God's rescue plan.

[11:47] Well, the second by faith we see in our reading today was by faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

Well, again, this is very much back in Exodus, not long after the Passover has taken place. God's people leave Egypt, as he has told them to do.

Pharaoh, after the death of the firstborn, and he tells us that it affected from Pharaoh's house down to people that worked in the field and even to the cattle.

Pharaoh tells the people to leave, the Egyptians, the Israelites, get out, get out, get out of my land. I've had enough of you. Go. And they leave, and they get to a point where they come to the Red Sea.

And again, maybe it all seemed lost at this point, but God tells Moses to stretch out his hand and to put the rod on the ground.

[12:53] And in doing so, the Red Sea parted. The whole sea parted in two. And it tells us that there was walls of water on either side.

And for just for a moment, I want us to take ourselves back to that moment. There would have been a vast number of people. The estimate of people that was there varies.

Up to two million people may believe in Egypt. Maybe there's little 500,000. Whatever the number is, a vast amount of people.

Can you imagine being in that position? As the waters part, and you've got walls of water on either side, on their right hand and on their left.

You go first. No, no, you go first. What type of person would you have been walking through the Red Sea? Would you have been eyes closed the whole way, telling me when we're at the other side?

[13:59] Would you have been the husband that kept saying to his wife, it's going to collapse in a minute. It's going to go. Honestly, I can see it. The wall's coming back in. The water's going to consume us. Maybe you'd have been like the young kid who kept going over to the wall, touching it, and his mum pulling him back.

Obviously, we don't know for sure. But you get the idea. What great faith it took these people to go through. And how incredible. Not only did they go through the Red Sea, but they went through on dry ground.

What a great miracle. God delivered these people. It took great faith. And again, these people acted on God's word.

They listened, and they acted. They see the rescue plan that God had in place, and they executed what God wanted them to do. It has to be said, the Egyptians were not so fortunate.

Verse 28 of the chapter tells us that once they was in the midst, the wheels of the chariot started to clog in the sand, in the muddy seabed.

[15:10] It was no longer dry for them. And not one of them remained when the tides came back together. Again, great faith was needed.

The third faith we see, by faith, is, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been circled for seven days.

Well, this takes us to a passage in the book of Joshua. Again, a very famous passage. When I grew up here at the church where I grew up, when I was little, there used to be a lovely chorus.

We used to stack the chairs up as kids, and used to walk around, and then used to all fall over. I won't perform it now. I'll do it after. I'll do it after if you want. Well, God has worked with his people, the Israelites, and he's gotten to the point where they're outside this great city, Jericho.

He has promised his people, this is their land. He's going to give it to them. But the land, the city is shut up, we're told. No one's coming in, no one's coming out.

[16:20] The king of Jericho knows that the Israelites are camping around about, but they cannot get in. The Israelites cannot get in to this city.

This would have been a large city. Walls very thick. We know the walls must have been thick because we'll see from Rahab shortly that Rahab lived in the city walls. What was the answer? Well, God tells Joshua that he's got to go and tell the priest and tell the people that they've got to march around the city, get the men of war, march around the city six times for six days, and blow your trumpets.

And then when the time is ready, you've got to march around the city seven times, and the first time they march around the city seven times, blowing their trumpets and shouting to the glory of God, the walls are just going to fall down.

Again, it seems utter madness, doesn't it? Can you imagine an army today in many of the conflicts around the world, those that are justified and those that are not, tending the people on the front line, what we've got to do is just blow your trumpets, do a bit of shouting, you're going to defeat your enemy.

[17:40] And I think that this is a picture maybe sometimes of the way we can feel as Christians. What we believe and what we do at times to other people and even to ourselves might seem like madness.

Maybe you're witnessing at work to your fellow colleagues and you're working amongst people who are atheistic and humanistic and materialistic and they are bitter and they are angry and they've got no time for the God of the Bible and the idea that you're telling them about a man who lived 2,000 years ago who died on a cross and if they put their trust in him they can have eternal paradise in heaven.

Well, it seems like madness. Maybe a young person here today at school or at university or college and trying to tell your friends that to live a moral life is the best life to live or you feel like you're just blowing the trumpet at school.

You feel like you're standing out from the crowd. What is the point? Maybe witnessing to fellow parents at school. What is the point?

I'm just blowing the trumpet. But what seemed like madness was in fact God's perfect plan and it was that that means of the trumpet blowing that God was going to do the work.

[19:06] You see, God has to get all the glory all of the time and this is what he done with Joshua. Joshua acted by faith. A bit like Moses, Joshua got the news from God, he got the information and he acted on it.

He went and told the priests and the people what needed to be done. And the book of Joshua tells us that the walls fell down flat.

Didn't just fall down a little bit, the city walls fell down flat. They crumbled before the very eyes of the people. And just to note if there's anyone here today who is not a believer maybe a little bit sceptical about this.

Maybe the walls wasn't built too well. Maybe it was something that needs to be on DIY SOS. A bodged cowboy builder. No, this was a strong city wall. These were thick walls but under God they crumbled.

What great faith did Joshua have and the men to blow the trumpets and to do what God wanted them to do. Well the fourth by faith we have in these verses today is of Rahab.

[20:19] And again this is in the same story of Joshua. For Rahab as we see was a prostitute who lived in Jericho. And in chapter 2 of the book of Joshua Joshua sends out two spies to go and see if he can get inside the city gates and see what is going on within Jericho.

And these two spies they go to the city and they go to Rahab. It has been suggested that the reason they went there because there was not men of the city it was a place where they could go maybe undercover people might not want to be seen in that sort of place visiting the lady of night so

it was easy for them to get to and to be a bit undercover of darkness.

But while they are there the king of Jericho hears that there are two men coming to spy the land and he sends to Rahab and he asks her to bring out these men.

But she has already hid them. Rahab showed great faith. She hid the men on the rooftop of where she lived. And before she covers them up and hides them in chapter 2 she says some incredible things to them.

She says in Joshua chapter 2 and verse 8 I know sorry verse 9 I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the fear of you has fallen upon us.

[ 21 : 49 ] In verse 10 she says we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you. We've only just seen that haven't we? It had gone word had gone round the history had gone forward.

People had heard what God had done. She wasn't there. She hadn't witnessed it but by faith she believed it had happened. And in doing so she took great courage and great fear of her own life by hiding the spies in the roof of her apartment house where she lived.

And she says to the spies can you do me a favour? Can you save me? I know the city is destroyed I know we're done for but please save me and my family. And the spies give her a promise in chapter 2 they say we will but very similar to the Passover anyone who is in your house will be saved.

Leave a scarlet called out of the window a scarlet called needs to be hanging out of this window. If it's there when we come the city this part of the building will stay stay up and you and your family will be safe.

But if anyone leaves your house well that's on you not on us. And so it was. In Joshua chapter 6 they get victory over Jericho.

[ 23 : 13 ] The walls fall down flat because of the blowing of the trumpets and the shouting to the glory of the Lord. The city is devoured and destroyed but the two spies Joshua sends him to save Rahab and her family.

Well again what great faith Rahab had. She heard the word of the Lord and she acted on it by great risk to herself and to her family. Well we have seen very briefly a snapshot of these four great accounts in the Old Testament.

It is clear that the writer of Hebrews wants us to look at these four accounts together. The way they are positioned in Hebrews.

What have they all got in common? Well they all needed a rescuer and the people in these verses needed rescuing. And this brings me on to my second point today.

Disobedience to God crumbles. It is also very clear what happens to people who disobey God's word. And the writer wants us to see that quite clearly.

[ 24 : 38 ] The first born sons across the whole of Egypt died. the whole of Pharaoh's army were wiped out in the passing of the Red Sea.

Not one remained. Jericho walls were flattened and the city destroyed. And Rahab and her family survived.

Today is no different. People who disobeyed God's word ultimately will end up separated from him in a lost eternity.

But it is a big but God made the greatest rescue plan the world has ever seen. He sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners which everyone in this room are.

we all need saving. We are no different to that little girl alone on an inflatable Unicorn!

[ 25 : 44 ] We are drifting without Jesus we are drifting aimlessly across life. You may not think it this morning but that is the case for you if you do not know Jesus.

And what we need to do is rather than drift aimlessly we need to cling to Jesus. We need to cling to the cross of Calvary knowing that that is the only hope of salvation.

We need to see from Hebrews and the writers wants us to see that Jesus is greater than Moses. Jesus is greater than Joshua.

Jesus is greater than the law. Jesus is greater than the sacrifices of the Old Testament. He is all in all. And as it says in Hebrews one that we're Hebrews I mentioned at the beginning I take us back to that so very briefly.

Hebrews chapter one again. Long ago at many times and in many places God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in his last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed the heir of all things from whom also he created the world he is the radiance of the glory of God the exact

imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the word of his power!

[ 27 : 14 ] And just quickly I'm going to cut it there just to move over to verse 7 But of the son he says your throne oh God is forever and ever that is who Jesus is he is God of the universe he is all in all there is none like him or none unto him do you believe that this evening this morning to the unbeliever I would say Christ is the only way of salvation there is no other way put your faith in Jesus this day come to him as your personal Lord and saviour to the Christian I would say who is struggling maybe there's troubles and problems in your life maybe your troubles seem like the walls of water either side of the Red!

just remember this Christian friend that even though you may be going through troubles you are going through on dry ground God is with you it may not seem it but encourage yourself Christian friend God will be with you and those of us that maybe have got troubles that seem taller and thicker than the walls of Jericho God can bring them down flat may God give us more faith in the coming days to trust in his word and may we ever be thankful for the rescue plan of Jesus Christ that he came he lived he died and rose again so that one day we can be with him forever more let me end in prayer our father and our God we do thank you for your precious word we see there is so much in it for us to glean for our own lives we pray for anyone here this day who is not yet yours we pray that you would open their hearts and their souls we pray that they would see the rescue plan of salvation so clearly and for those of us that our

Christians Lord help us to cling to the cross of Jesus help us to live more Christ like lives and we ask this all now in your glorious name Amen