

# Joshua and Rahab (PM)

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, in this series this summer we've been looking at Hebrews 11 and 12. And I don't think we planned this very carefully in the beginning of the series, but it's turned out that it's really been a series about faith.

What faith is. What it means to have faith. And if you read Hebrews 11, you know that it reminds us of the whole history of God's people and how they had to do things by faith.

So, from beginning to end, they were trusting in God's promise, God's power, from the very beginning of God's people all the way through to today. So, we've had a little bit of a chance to see what faith looks like.

What is it? What is it to have faith? And we've learned a few things. So, I'm going to remind us of some of the things that we've learned. I'll go through some of those. Some of this might jog your memory. And then I'll tell you a couple more.

So, the first thing that we learned is that faith is reasonable. And this is because it's grounded in God's promise. It's grounded in God's word. So, faith isn't just trying to believe something that you don't really understand.

[ 1 : 04 ] Actually, it's explained to us by God and his word, and we can put our trust in it. So, faith is reasonable. The second thing is that faith is reliable. And so, this is because God is reliable.

So, faith is about the power of God and his strength. It's not about our ability to drum up belief and kind of really get our faith going. It's about God and his power. We also learned that faith is obedient.

And so, that is, when you trust in God, it's going to change the way that you live. It's going to change how you act. And then last week, we heard about how faith is hopeful. So, faith trusts in this invisible future.

Trust that what God is going to do in the future is more real than what's happening right now. So, our focus today is Jericho. And I think if you wanted to, out of that passage we just read in Joshua 6, you could probably illustrate all four of those things I just read.

But instead, I'm going to add two more. So, you've got to keep track. And we've been following Hebrews, so I'm just going to use the two verses out of the book of Hebrews.

[ 2 : 13 ] And the author of Hebrews focuses our attention on faith in two specific ways. He talks about faith being patient and faith being available. So, faith being patient means it's enduring.

It's long-suffering. It's continuous. It takes some time. Faith being available means that it's for everybody and anybody. And so, I'm going to read from Hebrews 11.

And you're going to recognize some of the things that we just heard from Joshua 6. So, this is what Hebrews 11 says. 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. So, I think what's really interesting about verse 30 is how sparing it is.

How sparing the details are. So, it doesn't mention these promises of God. It doesn't mention Israel's obedience or anything that Joshua does. Those are all themes in that chapter.

[ 3 : 21 ] It doesn't talk about those. It doesn't even actually mention Joshua, which is really interesting because we're talking about Jericho. Joshua is their God-appointed leader in general.

He's really a great guy. He's really faithful. It doesn't talk about Joshua. It says, By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

And I think that's the key here is that after seven days. So, think about this. This patient, circular grinding that the people of God did around Jericho, waiting on God, enduring, holding on to God's

promises.

They wait and wait and wait as they walk through a lot of discomfort and doubt. And this reenactment was pretty fun. It took a few minutes. It was pretty fast.

But imagine every day for seven days, out in the hot sun, walking around a city. They didn't do anything to directly solve the problem that was in front of them, which is really difficult for us.

[ 4 : 26 ] So, they didn't build siege engines. They didn't build fortifications. They didn't make tunnels. You couldn't properly call it a military strategy. You couldn't even really call it an attack. They didn't do anything except walk in circles.

By day two, no progress. By day three, four, five, six, most of day seven, no progress at all. Nothing happened.

They just walked. And they must have seemed out of their minds to the people in the city. They must have felt slightly ridiculous as they did it.

But every day they walked, and they were casting their hopes and their energy into God's plan and God's promise. They were relying on him. They were literally walking by faith as they circled around this city. And I think that our lives of faith are the same.

We endure, and we trust, and we pray, and we walk. We wait on God together. Faith is patient. Faith endures. Faith is long-suffering.

[ 5 : 26 ] And that's an encouragement to me because this is what my walk of faith is like. It's encouraging to know this is not just my situation. This is what faith is like. And Jericho is this kind of indelible monument, this demonstration of faith being patient, faith being long-suffering.

And that's our experience as God's people. So how do we endure in faith? How do we lay hold of that promise? There's a few ways. So I think the first way is by rehearsing this history of faith.

So we look at Hebrews 11. We look at the history of God's people. And we look at Jesus. And we see that this is the way that their faith works. And so we need to walk in the same way. Faith endures, and it suffers, and it waits.

We also do it by remembering God's promise in his word that we have to trust him for salvation.

And so I just think about the people of Israel outside of Jericho literally doing nothing, knowing that that wall to them, there was nothing they could do to move the wall.

I think the people in Jericho also knew there's nothing you can do to move the wall. And similarly, we can't attain salvation by a direct assault. We can't storm the castle.

[ 6 : 42 ] We have to wait on God. We have to wait on God to transform our hearts. It's impossible for us to do. I think the final thing to say about this is that we have to walk together.

And so I just imagine waking up in the morning, maybe you've got blisters from your sandals one morning, and they come out of their tent, and you don't really want to walk around Jericho another day.

But everyone else is. And so you walk. And I think that there's something to that in our faith as well, that as a community, we walk together, and we hold each other up.

And I can look to my right and to my left and see that person walking, and I know that I need to keep going. And that's what we do for each other. That's what Aaron was talking about in terms of community groups.

So faith is patient. It's not just you. It's part of what it means to trust God and to walk with him. All right. Second point. Faith is available. Faith is available to anyone from any place.

[ 7 : 43 ] So I haven't been here for all the family services that St. John's has done, but I think this is the first family service where we've had prostitute in a reading. So we're breaking new ground here.

But while Hebrews fails to mention Joshua, it certainly does directly name Rahab and her profession. The Bible's not shy about this at all. It says Rahab was a prostitute.

She's living, according to the law of Israel, a publicly immoral life. We also know she's a pagan. She doesn't know anything about Yahweh. She's not following the law.

She's also a Canaanite, which means that she's a direct enemy of God's people. As they're coming into the land, the Canaanites are their enemies. Despite all of that, which we could say maybe marks against Rahab, she appears not only in Hebrews, but she appears three times in the New Testament.

So she's listed in the genealogy of Jesus, and that means that she's Jesus' great, great, great, great, great, et cetera, grandmother. She appears in the book of James, where she's commended as an example of what faith looks like, faith turning into obedience.

[ 8 : 58 ] And the author of Hebrews here, who takes just two verses to talk about this really kind of exciting thing that happened in Jericho that illustrates faith, doesn't talk about Joshua, but instead chooses to talk about Rahab.

Rahab makes the hall of faith. Joshua doesn't. So why is Rahab in the hall of faith? What does she have to teach us? And I think it's about availability. So it says that she's among the disobedient. That's what Hebrews says. Rahab was among the disobedient. And that means she was in a city that was marked for destruction. She didn't know God's law. She didn't have a pedigree. Rahab hadn't been to Bible college, right? She hadn't been to regent. She didn't know anything. She was among the disobedient. She was outside of God's people. And add to that that out of the whole city of Jericho, I don't think she would have been anybody's pick as a person that would have been faithful.

Her entire life was cutting against faithfulness. She was leading a life of unfaithfulness. But it says she didn't perish along with her contemporaries because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

[ 10 : 10 ] If you have time, when you go home, you could read Joshua chapter 2. And it's just a wonderful chapter.

So the New Testament authors, I think that they read the book of Joshua and they were awestruck when they came across Rahab. Because of just the unlikeliness of her faith.

In Joshua, we find out that Rahab had heard stories of God's terrifying power. So she had heard that there were these plagues. She had heard that there was fire.

She had heard there were floods. That rivers were drying up. That God was scattering his enemies. And she said to herself, That's the true God. His purposes are not going to be stopped.

If I have any chance at all of being saved, if I have any chance, I have to protect his people. I have to protect his spies. I have to welcome them and not betray them. I have to turn against my own people.

[ 11 : 10 ] I have to lie to the king. I have to put myself at risk. And throw myself on God's mercy. And throw myself on the mercy of these spies. That they will keep their promise to protect me and my family when they come back.

That is some faith. If I've ever heard it. And I think that there's a lot of us here that can identify with Rahab. We know that in our life, we're people that didn't have any business becoming a Christian. Or trusting God. Coming to know him. And yet, like Rahab, we're plucked out of the fire. We've been grafted into God's people. Through the grace of God that we found in Jesus.

So, Rahab is just astonishing. And the reason Rahab is astonishing is because she highlights something incredible about God. Which is that you can't be outside of God's reach.

There's no one that is too far gone. There's no one that is too sinful. There's no one that is just too from the wrong family or the wrong place.

[ 12 : 17 ] That they can't find him and know him. And if Rahab can throw herself into God's hands and be saved, then it means that faith is truly available to any person.

And that's why she's a hero of faith. So, I'm going to give two applications. And then we'll see if there's any pictures to look at. I see some good art happening back there.

Just a couple minutes, okay? Okay. So, first application. Perhaps you haven't found God's grace yet. And you haven't done like Rahab.

You haven't thrown yourself on God's mercy. You haven't been brought into his people. This story is a story for you. If that's you. Rahab says, don't delay. Don't put it off.

Throw your trust on God. And you may think to yourself, I'm an unlikely Christian. You should meet my family. There's no way. And yet Rahab says, faith is available to you.

[ 13 : 18 ] And I think the second application is from Israel's perspective. So, if you imagine being Israel, all they can see is the purpose of God in taking down that wall.

So, they're walking around the wall. And in their mind, the plan of God, the whole plan of God, is that that wall comes down and they take the city. That's what they understand the plan of God to be.

But God's plans are actually bigger than just that. God's purpose wasn't just bringing down the walls of Jericho. It was also reaching into Jericho, this enemy city, and saving Rahab and her family out of it.

And joining them to the people of God. And writing them into the genealogy of his son, who was going to be born through the line of Rahab, many generations down the road, who Rahab would bear the true Joshua.

So, Jesus is the name Joshua. But the true Joshua doesn't descend from Joshua. He descends from Rahab. So, I guess the question is, are we willing to be surprised by God's purposes?

[ 14 : 28 ] Can we look at that wall? And I think, as Christians, there's a lot right now that we look at it and it looks like a wall. We're in a defensive posture, I would say.

Culturally speaking. And we look at the things that are wrong or the ways that people are opposing God and we just think God needs to bring down that wall. And he will in this time. But can we look beyond that and say, what is God doing inside that city right now that we can't see among enemies?

People that are living in that city that might be our friends, that might become our family. God is at work there as well. And so, I think that speaks to our posture and our approach to the world and to people that don't know the Lord yet.

We want to react to them as an enemy, but they might be a person that God is pulling out of the fire as we speak. And I guess the question would be, who is that person in our life?

Who is the Rahab in our life? The person that we say, that person would never come to faith. That person is outside of God's reach. But we learn today that nobody is outside of God's reach.

[ 15 : 44 ] Hebrews reminds us that God doesn't just bring down walls to prosper his people, but to love his enemies, as he did with Rahab.