

Hebrews 11E (2014)

- Today, our tour through the Hall of Faith comes to an end
 - We've spent over a month wandering the halls, studying example after example of saints who lived according to a faith in God's promises
 - Our tour started by understanding the definition of faith
 - Then it progressed through the corridors of time
 - We've looked at Abel, Enoch, and Noah, who acted in confidence that God would do as He promised
 - We studied the patriarchs, who lived their earthly lives in expectation that they would only see God's rewards after resurrection
 - We studied Moses's example of trading the easy life of the world for the hardships of serving God among His people
 - And today, we end with mention of a few more saints, followed by a flurry of named and nameless examples to reinforce his point
 - And that point is, that those of faith will orchestrate their lives in keeping with what they believe
 - They will take action consistent with an expectation that God will fulfill His promises

A guy named Joe finds himself in dire trouble. His business has gone bust and he's in serious financial trouble. He's so desperate that he decides to ask God for help.

He begins to pray... "God, please help me. I've lost my business and if I don't get some money, I'm going to lose my house as well. Please let me win the lotto."

Lotto night comes and somebody else wins it.

Joe again prays... "God, please let me win the lotto! I've lost my business, my house and I'm going to lose my car as well".

Lotto night comes and Joe still has no luck.

Once again, he prays... "My God, why have you forsaken me? I've lost my business, my house, and my car. My wife and children are starving. I don't often ask you for help and I

have always been a good servant to you. PLEASE just let me win the lotto this one time, so I can get my life back in order."

Suddenly, there is a blinding flash of light as the heavens open and Joe is confronted by a voice from Heaven: "Joe, meet Me halfway on this one...buy a ticket."

- Likewise, these saints took steps of faith in confidence that God was true to His Word
 - And as we'll continue to see today, their faith revolves around the expectation of resurrection and eternal reward
 - Consider our first example this morning

Heb. 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

- Last week, in v.29, the writer mentioned Israel's passing through the Red Sea as an example of faith
 - It was an act of faith for Moses to rebuke the nation for their fear
 - He knew the Lord had promised to bring the nation out of Egypt
 - And though the situation looked hopeless, Moses maintained hope, knowing the Lord was faithful to His promises
 - It was also an act of faith that Israel itself walked through the waters
 - They must have had fear of the walls of water on either side
 - Still, they ventured forward, confident the Lord would hold back the water
 - Because they trusted in the Lord, they were saved in a physical sense
 - There were many other supernatural displays of God along the journey, but the Red Sea marks the beginning of Israel's departure from Egypt
- Now the writer moves to the other bookend in the Exodus journey: Jericho
 - Israel's encounter with Jericho serves as the official end of their wanderings and their entrance into the Promised Land

- Just as the beginning of their journey was marked by an act of faith, so was the conclusion
- The story of Jericho begins with Joshua leading the people of Israel into the land
- He has circumcised all the nation, celebrated the Passover for the first time in 40 years, and began eating off the land, as the manna ceased
- Then the Lord appeared to Joshua and told him that the walled, fortified city of Jericho had been delivered into his hands
 - All that Joshua and the army had to do was to march around the city for seven days, carrying the Ark and blowing horns
 - At the end of the process, on the seventh day, the walls of the city will crumble
 - The Lord gave very specific instructions, and Joshua relayed them with equal precision
 - And the people followed them carefully
 - And the walls fell flat
- Faith in God's Word may require we do some crazy, outlandish things from time to time, depending on what the Lord may ask of us
 - In this example, the Lord gave instructions that ensured that when the walls fell, there could be little doubt in Israel and in Canaan that God knocked the walls down
 - Israel's laughable display of walking and blowing horns looked like a children's game
 - It was intended to look ridiculous to the unbelieving world
 - So that all glory for the outcome rested on the Lord
 - Remember what the Lord said to Israel before they entered Canaan

Deut. 9:1 "Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven,

- The people were told they would face Jericho's strength in the land

- But the Lord also told them:

[Deut. 7:7](#) "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, [Deut. 7:8](#) but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Israel wasn't going to be victorious because they were inherently powerful
- They would overcome because the Lord would be their strength
- And just to make sure the world knew where to assign credit, the Lord devised plans that center on our faith in Him
 - Rather than our faith in our own strength
- The compliment to this lesson is found in the example of Rahab

[Heb. 11:31](#) By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

- Rahab is one of two Gentile women listed in the genealogy of Christ
 - She was a resident of Jericho and, more than that, she was a prostitute in the city
 - She occupied the lowest rung on the societal ladder
 - And being a Gentile, she carried even less stature among the people of Israel
- And yet, when the spies of Israel entered the city to assess the strength of their enemy, it was Rahab who secretly protected the spies from her king
 - Why would Rahab risk her own neck for foreign spies?
 - She explains it this way

[Josh. 2:9](#) and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.

[Josh. 2:10](#) “For we 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 utterly destroyed.

[Josh. 2:11](#) “When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

[Josh. 2:12](#) “Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father’s household, and give me a pledge of truth,

[Josh. 2:13](#) and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”

- Rahab says all the people in the city knew of the exploits of Israel in Egypt and in the land
 - They understood the miraculous things that God had done
 - They knew that the people of Israel were being led by a God more powerful than all the so-called gods of Egypt
 - And the news of this God’s power caused the people of the land to faint in fear of Israel
 - As Rahab says, the people knew that the Lord Who led Israel was the God of Heaven and earth below
- You might think that if an entire city knew this truth, they might seek to reconcile with a God of such strength, but they didn’t
 - When the king learned that the spies had entered the city, they came to Rahab’s home to capture and kill the spies
 - But Rahab responded to the knowledge of God in a different way
 - She exhibited faith, knowing that these men were agents of the Living God
 - So she sided with God against her own people
- She acted in faith, knowing that if she sided with Israel, then the Lord would protect her from the judgment that was soon to come against her city
 - She took a chance that she would be killed either by her own people or by Israel

- But she acted with confidence that the Lord Who led Israel would show mercy to the one who acknowledged Him and served Him
- And certainly, God honored her faith by rescuing her from Israel's army
- When the walls fell and Israel entered the city, Joshua gave instructions that no one in the city was to be spared, except Rahab's family
- Notice, the writer says she welcomed the spies in peace, in contrast to the way the rest of the city welcomed them
 - She didn't have more information or better reason to accept them
 - She simply believed the reports, while the rest of the city rejected them
 - And so she was saved
- Taking these two examples together, we see complimentary messages about living in faith
 - Jericho was an example of faith resting in the strength of the Lord
 - We serve Him, knowing that He uses weak things to shame the strong
 - And when we triumph over the enemies of God, faith says it was all God
 - Rahab is an example of faith trusting in the mercy of a righteous God to rescue us from coming judgment
 - Rahab threw herself on the mercy of an all-powerful God Who was preparing to destroy her and her home
 - Rahab knew she wasn't worthy of anyone's respect
 - And she certainly couldn't appeal to God on the basis of her own righteousness
 - But she trusted by faith that the Lord would show mercy on her because she loved Him and His people

- And in both cases, faith required a step of action to acknowledge and reflect that faith
 - The people of Israel had to walk around the city and blow the horns before the walls fell
 - Their walking and horn-blowing didn't knock down the walls
 - God knocked down the walls
 - But would the walls have fallen had Israel ignored the Lord's instructions?
 - The Lord gave them a ritual to ensure that observers throughout history could look back and see that God was working through Israel
 - Their pitiful actions were important in only one way
 - They were a testimony to faith which served to glorify the Lord
 - And Rahab's step of faith was to hide the spies of Israel
 - Rahab's faith was present even before the spies showed their faces at her threshold
 - Still, it was her decision to hide them that led to her rescue
 - The Lord brings faith into our hearts for a purpose, and that purpose goes far beyond ourselves
 - While we certainly celebrate faith as a means to our own celebration, don't forget that you weren't saved for your own sake
 - You were saved to glorify the Lord
 - And your mission of bringing Him glorify requires a life lived as a reflection of faith
 - One that does crazy things, one that goes against the current, so that we can bring attention to the work and power of the Lord
- At this point, the writer has barely entered into the period of Joshua, and yet, the examples of the Old Testament continue on unabated
 - I assume that if he had continued to relate all the significant examples of OT saints, we would need another book of Scripture just to summarize them

- So does he, which is why he moves to a summary of his own at this point

[Heb. 11:32](#) And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

[Heb. 11:33](#) who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

[Heb. 11:34](#) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

[Heb. 11:35](#) Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

[Heb. 11:36](#) and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

[Heb. 11:37](#) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

[Heb. 11:38](#) (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

- What more could he say? Too much, he agrees, so he acknowledges that time would fail him if he tried to list them all
 - He then mentions a series of names, each of which we could spend considerable time examining
 - But since the writer chose to gloss over the details, so will we
 - It's enough to note that the names are arranged in a pattern
 - The first four names are judges
 - The next two names are kings
 - The last one is a prophet, and he mentions the other prophets in passing, as well
 - All of these men faced various trials, fought battles while greatly outnumbered, took steps that seemed crazy, until the Lord showed up and vindicated them
 - They conquered kingdoms like Gideon, shut the mouths of lions like Samson and Daniel
 - They quenched fire, like Elijah and Daniel's friends
 - Some escaped death on some occasions, like Elijah

- Others endured terrible deaths for their faith, like Isaiah
 - Women saw their children raised from the dead because they exhibited faith in God's Word
 - While other saints suffered greatly at the hands of God's enemies
- Interestingly, the writer ends his list focused on the suffering of those who live by faith
 - Saints who died not for any other reason except for the fact they loved the Lord and desired to live according to their faith
 - And because of their faith, they were stoned, sawn in two, tempted to dishonor the Lord
 - Suffering various indignities, sharing in the Lord's reproach among those not worthy of Him
 - Living like rats in holes, on the run and without any of the comforts of this world
 - Look at the contrasts in this list
 - For some saints, living in faith brought rejoicing and relief
 - While for other saints, living in faith brought deprivation, suffering and death
 - Clearly, living in faith doesn't lead to prosperity or easy living, not automatically
 - In fact, that's never the point of walking in faith
- So what does it bring?

[Heb. 11:39](#) And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

[Heb. 11:40](#) because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

- First, the saint gain the approval of God through living in faith
 - Living according to faith pleases the Father and meets the purposes for why we have been ushered into the family of God by His grace

- We are like children who do as their father requires
- And in so doing, the father is pleased by his child and seeks to reflect that pleasure in rewards
- Secondly, we please Him even though we do not receive what was promised
 - These saints in the Hall of Faith were willing to endure suffering and even death because it mattered not to them
 - Their faith focused them on the eternal realm and all that it offered
 - They knew they would see the Lord's pleasure reflected there
 - And that was enough
- Thirdly, they knew that what awaited them in the Heavenly realm was far greater than anything they could earn for themselves in this world
 - They were willing to sacrifice earthly comfort, wealth, security, family and even their lives to obtain what awaited in Heaven
 - A person would only do such a thing if they were confident that the things in Heaven are of far greater glory than what we can obtain here
 - They knew it was a good trade
- Finally, the writer says that these saints were required to wait past their earthly lives, because the Lord had something good in store for us also
 - He's referring to the plan of salvation to include the Gentile nations of the earth
 - While it was possible for the Lord to bring the Kingdom to these people earlier and end their waiting, He didn't for our sake
 - He made them wait a lifetime and longer to receive the promises
 - Because that waiting has as its purpose the accumulation of Gentile saints, who will join these earlier examples
 - Notice the writer says that these heroes in the Hall of Faith will not be made perfect without us

- Being made perfect refers to the resurrection prior to the beginning of the Kingdom at Christ's Second Coming
- These saints will not receive their new bodies and enter the Kingdom and receive their bodies until the very last Gentile appointed to believe has been found
- Only at the conclusion of this age will the Lord bring all things to conclusion and our reward will appear in the Kingdom
- So in a very real sense, these earlier saints were called to wait and even to suffer for our sakes, so that we might be given the opportunity to join them in the Kingdom
 - Knowing this, how can we not also follow their lead and live according to faith?
 - Are we not obligated by history and example to honor their sacrifices by serving the Lord as well as they did?
- That's the call of the Hall of Faith
 - It's not a dusty museum of relics we're supposed to visit once in a while for inspiration or encouragement
 - It's the price that has been paid to bring us into the family of God
 - It's the record of God's faithfulness to His promises
 - And it's our call to live according to our testimony, a testimony these heroes shared for our sake
 - Consider their examples the next time you feel your faith wavering
 - More importantly, consider the inevitability of your death
 - The inescapable judgment moment that follows
 - A righteous and demanding Lord Who will require we give an account
 - And the unimaginable rewards that await every servant who lives according to faith