



Living a Life of Faith

An ABF Series on Hebrews 11

Moses, Israel, and Rahab: A Faith that Moves Mountains

Where we've been (vv. 1-27)

The author of Hebrews has argued that his listeners must have faith, believing who God is, what God says, and what God does even and especially when life doesn't make sense. Faith makes the unseen real so that we can claim the promises of God. We've seen that faith. . .

- Pleases God (Abel and Enoch vv. 4-6)
- Stands against the corrupt culture (Noah v. 7).
- Doesn't live by sight (Abraham vv. 8-12).
- Lives for eternity (The Patriarchs vv. 13-16)
- Clings to the promises of God (Patriarchs vv. 17-22)
- Submits to God first (Moses' Parents v. 23)
- Waits for the greater pleasure (Moses vv. 24-27)

Building an Empire on Faith

In October 1830, shortly after getting married, a British pastor gave up his salary wanting his church to give out of free will, not compulsion. What sounded like a failure ready to happen and a

very short tenure as pastor ended up as a five-building orphanage, and forty years after George Muller renounced a regular salary 1,722 orphans were living in those buildings. Not a single penny for those buildings was ever requested, and yet Muller received the modern day equivalent of over 140,000,000 pounds.

What examples were there in previous lessons of people who didn't see their faith rewarded in their life?

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In the last few lessons, we have focused on people who lived for God even though they didn't see that belief in him rewarded. Now, the author of Hebrews follows up on the life of Moses with 3 powerful examples of how faith made an impact – both on a national and a personal level.

Can you think of any examples of people you know whose faith accomplished much for Christ?

The Ministry of Moses' Faith (v. 28)

The Ministry of Moses for the People

All the people of Israel exercised faith when they put the blood on their door during the Passover. But this passage marks Moses as the person, however, who is credited with the faith that kept the Destroyer of the firstborn from destroying Israel along with Egypt.

Why is this? Why would Moses' faith be seen as the reason and not the faith of Israel?

Moses may not have been the only person to show faith, but his demonstration of faith was the example that everyone else followed. He gave the instructions, and he kept the Passover along with all of Israel, and for that reason it is his faith in God that sticks out. Moses had been the one leading the people to continue to trust God when things got hard (Exodus 2:20-23), and they eventually followed his example of faith.

Whose faith have you watched? Who has impacted you and encouraged you to follow God?

Your faith will affect others in big ways, both positively and negatively. When you choose to follow Christ that faith will inspire and impact other Christians and following generations. When you choose to disobey God and live for self, that rebellion will impact others for generations to come, too. Who is looking to your example?

In what ways can you be an example of faith to those around you?

The Ministry of Moses as a Picture of Christ

The Passover was a one-time event, but this event had long reaching implications. Every year after, God expected His children to celebrate this victory in an annual holiday. The point of the holiday was twofold. First, it was to remind the people of Israel what God had done for them in the past. Just as communion is meant to remind us of Christ's rescuing us from the oppression of sin, so the Passover was intended to remind people of God's rescuing them from the oppression of Egypt.

Why does God include these events to remind us? In what ways can we seek to remind ourselves of God's truth?

But there was a second reason for this feast – it taught that a lamb’s blood was necessary to turn away God’s wrath. Just over 1,400 years later, a Jewish rabbi would be eating the Passover dinner with his disciples. Shortly afterwards the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world” (John 1:29) would be slain to turn away divine wrath from God’s people (cf. 1 Cor 5:6-7). Moses’ faith became a pattern for the people of Israel to follow. And that faith led to a holiday that painted a shockingly clear picture of who Jesus was and what He was coming to do.

The Impact of Israel’s Faith (vv. 29-30)

The People of Israel Cross the Red Sea

Here we begin to see the truly miraculous power of faith. The author mentions the fact that the Israelite’s faith split open an entire sea and gave the Israelites dry ground to walk on, while killing the Egyptians who tried to do so. For the first time in this chapter, we begin to see some powerful effects of faith that are seen in one’s own lifetime.

Egypt at the time was the most powerful nation around. They had an impressive military, and when they followed the people of Israel, they absolutely terrified them (cf Exodus 14:10-13).

In what way can Israel be said to have faith, given their initial response to the problem at hand? How can this encourage us in our spiritual lives?

Israel had just watched God do incredible things as he sent the plagues on Egypt, yet their faith wavered when faced with a new challenge. We, too, often find ourselves questioning God’s ways and care for us, even after he comes through time and time again.

What are some ways we can remind ourselves of God's care and power in difficult times?

The People of Israel Conquer Jericho

Jericho is one of the most ancient cities we know of. Archeological discoveries have shown that Jericho had not one wall, but two walls that needed to be conquered, an inner and an outer wall. Some of these walls were 4 and a half feet thick! Bringing down a city this heavily fortified was no easy task. Yet the Israelites did so easily by simply obeying God's somewhat odd command: "March around the city!" By doing this, the second great miracle of this chapter occurs in response to faith, a heavily fortified city is brought to its knees by God's power.

Some people will twist passages like this to say that whatever you ask of God, you will get. What is wrong with that thinking?

Both examples of faith occurred in obedience to God's command, and both were ultimately for God's glory. The "name it and claim it" theology which turns faith into a way to get free stuff is nothing like what we see in Scripture. Both instances of faith were initiated by God, not man, and both were ultimately about His saving purposes, not just helping people have a good life.

God rewards the faith of groups, not just individuals. In what ways can we as a church show faith in God?

How can you do your part to help our church demonstrate a life changing faith?

What would it look like for God to reward the faith of our church?

The Reward for Rahab's Faith (v. 31)

Rahab is the last person in the typical pattern of faith in this chapter. Although we will look at the names in the following verse, they are technically part of the conclusion. Rahab is an interesting choice for the last person for two reasons.

First, she is a woman. Other than Sarah, Rahab is the only woman to appear on this list. Second, she was a prostitute, and yet she is shown to be a hero of the faith here and elsewhere (cf. Matthew 1:5; James 2:25).

What do we learn about God's character from these mentions? Why don't we see more former prostitutes in the church?

Rahab made the choice to welcome people who trying to destroy her city. Her rationale was that she believed God had given this nation the land (Joshua 2:8-14).

What Rahab did was technically treasonous. Why is she then counted as a hero?

Rahab lied to the guards and said the men had already left (Joshua 2:4-6). This becomes one of the most famous lies in the Bible! There are two ways people explain Rahab's lie:

- Rahab's lie was wrong, but her faith in God was what mattered. Rahab was a pagan who knew very little of God, and shouldn't be the example for us. While God rewarded her faith, he didn't reward her lying.
- Some lies are acceptable in a fallen world. Surrendering God's servants to a wicked government to be killed would be wrong, and lying would be wrong. In that instance, the less wrong thing would be lying.

In either case, the emphasis in this passage is not on the lies, but on welcoming the spies. Rahab showed great faith by hiding these men and siding with them against her country.

If you really want to open a can of worms, ask whether it's okay to lie ;)

God presents Rahab as a model of saving faith. Her faith saved her literally from physical death, but also spiritually from eternal death. The greatest reward for our faith is not anything we can see in this life, but rather the spiritual deliverance from sin and the acceptance into God's family, despite ourselves. Rahab is a beautiful picture of this, for surely the last person anyone expected to be included in God's covenant people was a Canaanite prostitute.

Application

One day our faith will be sight. Yet often God graciously allows us to get a sneak peek of what that will look like by rewarding faith here on earth. Although we cannot make any final judgments by what we see on earth, we may be given just a taste of what God can and will do for us.

Faith has the power to influence the coming generations. It has the power to do far greater things than we could hope or think for. And it has the power to perform the greatest miracle of all: to turn a rebel into a son and an ambassador!

We may not always see such dramatic effects of our faith, but in what ways do we see God reward faith today?

How do we respond when it seems our faith is not being rewarded as we think it should be? (think Job)

Whose faith will be impacted by your faith? How can your faith have a greater impact on those around you?