Hebrews 11:30-31; Joshua 6:15-27; By Faith, the Walls Fell I. The Act of Faith II. The Reward of Faith III. The Extent of Faith

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is the hardest thing that you have had to do? This is not necessarily the most strenuous act- but I imagine that one of the hardest things you have ever had to do is wait! Waiting patiently is one of the more challenging aspects of life. Even as Christians, we are called to wait upon the LORD. Last week, the Israelites were told to fear not and stand firm for the God was fighting for them. They had to wait upon the LORD to open the way for them to pass through the sea. This week, we find the Israelites at the end of their desert pilgrimage and once against they are being instructed to wait upon the LORD. He will open a way for them- they need only stand firm and believe. Last week we also saw the contrast between those who believed and those who did not. Although the Egyptian army tried to follow Israel through the sea, they did not believe and thus they perished. Today we will see again that those who do not believe will perish in their way. So we find ourselves at the end of the 40 years of wilderness wandering as the Israelites begin to take possession of the promised land. But right away we notice a problem- the promised land is already occupied! How could God give this land to the descendants of Abraham if there were people already living here? So today we consider this theme: by faith the Israelites destroy strongholds because God is fighting their battle.

**I. The Act of Faith**

In our first point, we consider the act of faith that is presented to us. This act is commendable and worthy of emulation- it was an act that proves the faith of these people. What was this act of faith? Well, by faith the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho for 7 days. Now this would be a challenging act of faith to be sure. Having just arrived in the land that God had promised to them, the first act was not to fashion swords and attack but rather to march in silence. This was not a military campaign but rather an act of submission. Instead of attacking the enemy, they engage in corporate worship! Now this act of marching around the city is a seemingly foolish act- it would be ridiculous for an army today to engage in battle this way. But even though this act goes against common knowledge and flies in the face of established logic, the Israelites obeyed! They went out and marched around the city. They may have been tempted to say- what are we doing here? This makes no sense! Walking in circles day after day- what are we accomplishing. But humble faith submits and obeys. There are things that we do in our life that the world would call foolish as well. Acts we perform that do not make sense to the watching world. In other words, there are a lot of things that Christians do that seem foolish or ridiculous. For example, why would we pay all that money to send our children to Christian school. Why would we tithe and give 10% of our money away? Or even, why would you pray for your enemies and bless those who curse you. Why would your trust in a God you cannot see? That makes no sense- it is like marching in a circle for 7 days. But the act of faith is not based on human logic or reasoning- it is an act of faith built upon the promise of God! What has God called us to do? What has He promised to bless? Blessed are you when you walk in the way of righteousness. As Psalm 1 puts it, you will be like a fruitful tree planted by the water that produces its fruit in due season. The fact is, God is wiser, and His way is better! By faith we know this- by faith we believe this is true! That God knows what is best- and He has revealed the way in which we will truly prosper! Or as I Cor. 1:25 puts it, the foolishness of God is wiser than man. So God’s people obeyed and they marched around the city of Jericho for 7 days- and on the 7th day they marched around the city 7 times. At the appointed time, they shouted for the LORD had given them this city. And the walls fell down flat. So God’s people acted in faith and obeyed God’s command. They waited for the LORD to act- knowing that the LORD was fighting their battle. Again- they believed in the LORD and listened to the instruction of their appointed leader. Joshua was God’s appointed mediated- instructing them in the way that they should go. And God does as the name of Joshua declared- He saves His people! Salvation includes both the reception of blessings but also the destruction of your foes! The congregation of Christ needs to be firm in this- following God’s way is the only sure way to victory! Obeying God and submitting to His appointed mediator is the only way in which we will be saved! Living by faith is a risk- to be sure! You are giving up trust in yourself as you depend on someone else! Obeying God can even put your own life in danger- as you walk by faith and not sight! But by faith we know that the reward is worth it!

**II. The Reward of Faith**

So the people of Israel walked by faith- and by faith the walls of Jericho fell down. The reward of faith is simply this- the enemy that threatened was completely defeated. The enemy was destroyed and the strong tower of the enemy was reduced to rubble. Now it is important to remember that this wall was not like the walls of our southern border. The wall between the US and Mexico is in many places a metal fence that is around 20 feet high. The wall around Jerich was a massive wall of mud, rocks and bricks that was around 40 feet tall- and it was wide enough for homes to be built into the wall. Yet this massive wall falls down and crumbles into the dust. Added to this, the city of Jericho was the first major city that the Israelites came into contact within the promised land. It was a major stronghold that stood in the way of the Israelites taking possession of the land. The enemy felt secure behind the walls- they were impenetrable. The Israelites did not have battering rams or siege towers- they were powerless against this foe. But as the Israelites walked by faith- the promised reward of victory was granted! The enemy city was destroyed- the foe of the church was taken down- the first foothold in the promised land was established for the Israelites. Remember that the land of Canaan was the very land promised by God to Abraham and his seed. So the residents of Jericho were actually the ones who did no belong. They were usurpers- trespassing on the holy land. But by faith- this enemy would be defeated. Cast out. As the wall fell down, the Israelites could rush straight in and take possession of the city. The Jericho army and its residents were powerless to stand against them. So that all of the enemies were killed and all of God’s people were spared. Just as it was with the Egyptian army- the enemy is completely defeated and the people of God are completely protected. No loss is experienced in Israel- complete loss is experienced in Jericho. So by faith, the enemy’s wall crumbles. By faith the foe is defeated, and the people of God are protected. Now this fact applies today as well. Every foe is being placed in subjection to Christ who is king of kings. But let’s apply this victory of Jesus to one specific area. Lets read from II Cor. 10:3-6. Notice that Paul says that with the spiritual weapons we have in Christ, we can destroy strongholds. The truth of God’s Word and the power of Christ’s Spirit do not topple walls of cities today- but rather these destroy false arguments and humble lofty opinions. Jesus is continuing His work of destroying the foe today. The walls that are falling today are these- lies, deceit and pride! In other words, the truth that we have in the Word of God destroys and dismantles every lofty opinion of man. Our thoughts are being conformed- being made captive to obey Jesus Christ. So the walls that Jesus is bringing down today are the walls of rebellious thoughts and false ideas that we and others have! Every foe- even false teaching and worldly wisdom- must fall before Jesus!

**III. The Extent of Faith**

So, as we have seen, not everyone has faith. The Israelites under Joshua believed and obeyed- and the walls fell down before them. But the king of Jericho and the residents of the city did not believe. In fact, when Israel entered the land they shut up the gates and bared the doors in defiance. They did not believe the warning of God- that this land was His and these Israelites were the rightful owners. So, because they did not repent and believe they were consumed by God’s wrath. But as our text continues in Heb. 11:31- not all of the residents of Jericho were killed! In fact, there are some in Jericho who do believe! By faith, Rahab did not perish. So Rahab did believe- and her faith was evident in her actions. Looking back at Joshua 2:9, Rahab said these words. I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us. For the LORD your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. That was her confession of faith- I know that the LORD is God and that He has given you this land! And then she accompanied this profession of faith with her own act of faith. By faith, she hid the spies! Like Amram and Jochebed before her, hiding God’s children from their enemies was an act of faith. So Rahab the harlot did not perish with everyone else in Jericho- because she had faith! She was friendly to God’s people- aligning herself with the Israelites. So Rahab believed and obeyed by faith- and was herself spared from destruction. She and her family were set apart from the others in the city- being grafted into the line of the covenant from this point on. We note that small faith is still true faith- small acts of faith are still true acts of faith. From hiding your baby from Pharaoh to hiding spies on the top of your house. Faith the size of a mustard seed is still true and living faith- and as Mt. 17 says- faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains into the sea! By faith, nothing is impossible because by faith we are joined to Christ- and nothing is impossible for our God! So by faith, the impenetrable walls fall down. By faith, the army of Jericho is destroyed. And by faith, Rahab is spared! So the extent of faith includes both Jews and Gentiles! Faith is often found in unlikely places! A harlot in Jericho, a widow in Nain. A eunuch of Ethiopia and a Roman centurion. These all lived by faith! Even among the Gentiles- those who have faith are not excluded but these are also saved by grace through faith! You see, God is not a respecter of men- He gives grace to the humble and He lifts up those who are broken down. Jesus will gather His sheep! Jesus will get everyone- He will have His prize! No wall can stop Him from destroying His foes- and no boundary can stop Him from gathering His sheep!

To conclude, the battle of Jericho was not fought by Joshua! By faith, the Israelites marched in circles and watched the salvation provided by God! The walls fell flat- because God was fighting for them! And concerning Rahab- she was graciously spared by God because she too lived by faith! By faith the Israelites destroy strongholds because God is fighting their battle. May we remember this truth today- that Jesus will have His victory! He has overcome! By faith in Him we too can flee the coming wrath and find rest with God’s people! For none can resist Him- nothing will stand in His way! Every wall will fall- every tower crumble- every knee will bow before the coming Lord of Glory!