



Hebrews 11:30-31

³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

SUMMARY

Forty years before the walls of Jericho fell, God had brought the nation of Israel to the brink of the land of Canaan. Most of the spies who scouted out the land had returned in despair, saying the land's inhabitants were too strong for them (Numbers 13:25-14:4). In response, the people refused to enter, and God in turn punished them by causing them to live in the wilderness for forty years (Numbers 14:34).

For this next generation of Israelites to even enter Canaan was itself an act of faith, then. Though they knew "the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large" (Numbers 13:28), they entered anyway and approached one such fortified city, Jericho.

Which brings us to another act of faith, the one mentioned in Hebrews 11:30. God instructed his people not to attack this fortified city but to walk around it once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Afterward, the priests were to blow their trumpets (Joshua 6:3-5).

Strange as this "battle plan" was, nevertheless for seven days Israel persistently trusted God and obeyed commands that didn't make sense to them. And in the end, God came through and caused Jericho's walls to crumble.

One of Jericho's inhabitants, Rahab, provides another example of faith (Hebrews 11:31). Having entered Canaan, Joshua sent out two men to spy out Jericho. Rahab, a prostitute living the city, risked her life to hide the men from the king. According to Rahab, the city had heard reports of what God had done through the Israelites and were terrified (Joshua 2:8-14).

But those reports had a different effect on Rahab. By faith, they convinced her that "the LORD has given [Israel] the land" and that "the LORD your God...is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9, 11). By faith, then, she was incorporated into the people of Israel and was given the honor of being included in Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:5).

DISCUSS

Imagine being one of the soldiers marching around Jericho. What thoughts would have gone through your mind as you encircled the heavily-fortified city for a whole week? How difficult do you think it would have been to persist in carrying out God's battle plan?

What is something that God is calling you to persist in?

As a pagan prostitute living in Jericho, Rahab probably didn't *seem* like someone who would put their faith in Israel's God. Who in your life seems unlikely to put their faith in Jesus? What hope does Rahab's example give you for them?

Everyone in Jericho heard of God's works through Israel. Most felt threatened by the reports. But Rahab wanted to join in. In what way can Christians today expect two different responses to the gospel message? (See 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16)