

Faith to Conquer Sin and Enter Into New Life

In the book of Hebrews, God calls us to a bold and confident faith in him. Of course we become discouraged or downcast at times, but God is always calling us UPWARD and out of unbelief to that kind of ROBUST faith. We are commanded to come BOLDLY to the throne of grace, we are commanded to hold fast our CONFIDENCE, and to BOAST in our hope firm to the end. One of the main ways this kind of faith is built into our lives is by hearing the stories of men and women, just like us who had this kind of faith.

This morning we come to a stunning list of accomplishments by men and women who believed God. let's read these verses in Hebrews 11:30-35 "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. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life."

So many amazing things have been done by faith, that the writer says he can't take time to tell us about all of them. So he only mentions a few names and some of the feats they accomplished by faith. We know some of their stories. Gideon defeated a massive army of 135,000 Midianites with only 300 men. David killed the giant Goliath. Daniel was delivered from the lions den. Others

quenched the power of fire, probably a reference to Shadrack, Meshack and Abednigo. Others escaped the edge of the sword, put foreign armies to flight, and so on.

These stunning accomplishments of faith, do NOT mean that a life of faith is easy or that it ALWAYS leads to outward success. Verse 35 commends the faith of those who were tortured. They could have been released, by denying the Lord. But they chose death, in the confidence that God would raise them to a better life. Some times our faith is shown by confidently trusting God in the greatest OUTWARD DEFEATS, when everything around us is crumbling. But that is not the ONLY way faith is manifested in us!

Faith in God, ALSO gets us on our feet and gets us marching! Faith makes weak, ordinary people like us, soldiers, conquerers and overcomers! Faith defeats enemies. Faith brings escapes from dangers or even death. Faith goes after, and OBTAINS the blessings promised to us by God. Faith finds power to do something when all you can feel inside of you, is weakness. Faith boldly does things for the kingdom of God. Daniel 11:32 says “the people who know their God shall be strong, and take action”. KJV -carry out *great exploits*.

Only God could do the mighty things listed in these verses, but he would not do them without people having faith. So the emphasis is that these men and women did these things BY faith. The walls of Jericho came down by faith, Rahab’s life was spared because of her faith. These people all did something remarkable by faith, that they could NOT do without faith. Daniel 6:23 says, “When Daniel was lifted from the (lion’s) den, no wound was found on him, BECAUSE he had trusted in his God.” Faith affects outcomes!

Jesus said, "All things are possible with God. All things are possible to him who believes". "If you had faith you would say to this mountain be taken up and cast into the sea and it would obey you". Who could say what God might do through any one of you, if you believe God and act on what he has set before you to do?

But the 64,000? is: JUST WHAT IS IT THAT WE NEED TO DO BY FAITH? What mountain is it that needs to be moved?

In one sense, we are to do everything that we do by faith. We trust in God's hand to support and help and bless. We do our job by faith, we run our business by faith, we raise our children by faith, we face money problems and health problems by faith, we face our discouragement and fears by faith, we face all our problems with confidence in God to work and deliver and heal and help!

A couple of weeks ago, I asked God to help me put the canopy on our boat lift. It is a two or three person job ideally. But I said, God if you can help David leap over a wall, you can help me get this canopy on by myself. And he did, and I praised him for it.

But *The MAIN thing we need to do by faith is to conquer every thought and every tendency in our lives that is raised up against God, and to lay hold of the new life we have been given through Jesus, with all its riches and power and privilege.

The Holy Spirit was NOT telling the Hebrews to go tear down the walls of a city, or to conquer Rome, or put out a fire, or close a lion's mouth, or dodge a sword. And he is not telling us that either! There were OTHER, obstacles facing the Hebrew Christians that they needed to overcome by faith, SO they could enter into the full blessing purchased for them by Christ. There are other obstacles

facing us that we need to overcome by faith so we can enjoy and experience our access to the Throne of Grace as we ought!

The Hebrew Christians needed to tear down walls of spiritual hardness and unbelief. They needed to escape the deadly effects of drifting and dullness. They needed to conquer their tendency to shrink back from Jesus. They needed to overcome their superstitious attachment to the old system of sacrifices. They needed to boldly enter into the promises of the New Covenant. They needed to press on to maturity. They needed to conquer their fear of being outcasts for Jesus' sake.

Everyone of these conditions are powerful forces that can hinder us from going on with Jesus, too! They can keep us from enjoying the privilege of nearness to God, that Jesus died for us to have.

Some of the changes that need to happen in your life probably seem as impossible as the walls of Jericho falling down. But they CAN BE OVERCOME THROUGH FAITH IN GOD. JB "Nothing else but faith can carry the Christian Church forward to it's predicted triumph over the world and hell". "Barriers more difficult to be broken down, than the walls of Jericho, stand between (us) and holiness and heaven". "How are these barriers to be removed? Nothing but faith can do it".

Those walls that stand in the way of your spiritual maturity, those walls that stand in the way of your happiness and holiness, do not come down by self help books, or by superstitious formula's or by any form of human effort. It is only by the work of Christ, declared in faith, that these walls can be destroyed. BUT, they CAN be destroyed!

JB “Let all the allurements and all the terrors of the world be laid before the Christian, with their combined influence to draw him away from truth and holiness and God. And through means of believing, he WILL overcome...“Difficulties vanish, great mountains become a plain, there is no inclination so strong but he finds it now possible to resist... and just in the degree to which he believes he can do all things through Christ strengthening him”.

Jesus used the language of conquest, to communicate the kind of people we must be. He said, “To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life”. “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with the Father on his throne.” He said that 7 times, once to every church in Revelation! He calls every person in every church to be “one who conquers”!!

The very essence of life as a Christian is conquering or overcoming stuff that’s in our way! - That includes sins of every sort (by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the flesh). We must overcome discouragement, fears, unbelief, and weariness. We must overcome Satan, and all his clever and wicked schemes against us: temptations, hindrances, and accusations. He sows conflict and misunderstanding and confusion among families and among the saints. These obstacles, and attacks come at us nearly every day! We overcome by holding fast our confidence in God and resisting the devil. Peter said, “Resist him firm in your faith!”

Sometimes we don’t want life to be a fight... but it is! We must conquer! And we do that primarily with faith! Paul said, “The weapons we fight with are NOT the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We

destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

We are IN the kingdom of God, through faith in Jesus but in another sense we are still ON OUR WAY to the kingdom of God. Paul said, “We must go through MANY tribulations to enter the kingdom of God”. Every single one of those “many tribulations”, will test your faith and must be overcome. Also “on the way” there are life qualities, ways of living, and thinking that desperately need to be removed from our lives. And there are ways of living and thinking, that desperately need to be added to our lives!

Peter said to “make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” “For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you.”

It will take every effort OF FAITH to overcome the things in your life that need to be overcome; it will take every effort of faith to ADD those qualities to your life that you need. WITHOUT faith, very little, or nothing will change! But WITH faith you can overcome things from your past that you thought you were stuck with for the rest of your life. And you can enter into a life lived near to God you thought was only reserved for others!

I have four areas of applications for us this morning.

*First: By faith in the blood of Jesus, overcome the walls of condemnation that keep you from drawing near to God with full assurance.

AB Simpson wrote, “Seldom have we seen a sadder wreck of even the highest, noblest Christian character than when the enemy has

succeeded in undermining the simple trust of a child of God, and got him into self-accusing and condemnation. It is a fearful place when the soul allows Satan to take the throne and act as God, sitting in judgment on its every thought and act; and keeping it in the darkness of ceaseless condemnation. Well indeed has the apostle told us to hold firmly the shield of faith!

This is Satan's objective point in all his attacks upon you, to destroy your trust. If he can get you to lose your simple confidence in God, he knows that he will soon have you at his feet.

"Beloved, hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." The blood of Christ is sufficient to deal with your sin problem!! (and mine!) We must, by faith in the blood of Jesus we overcome the condemnation and shame and separation that our sins ONCE made, and now come confidently to the throne.

*Second: Use faith to conquer spiritual sluggishness and apathy. The Hebrews were in danger of "neglecting" their salvation. There was a dangerous lack of eagerness. The author said, "We have much to say, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand". "We desire that each one of your show the same earnestness of hope to the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises of God". By faith, we must wage war against spiritual passivity, and stir up earnestness or fervency! Psalm 63 "O God you are my God, fervently I WILL seek you". Earnest pursuit of God is a choice! Choose that! "Earnestly, I WILL seek you!" Pray that Psalm and make it YOUR prayer!

*Third: Use faith to attack anything that stands between you and holiness. It might be some kind of sexual immorality. Maybe it's being easily offended, or jealous. It might be fear, or anger, or just plain lack of love and compassion for someone. Don't passively

accept these blemishes in your life by saying, “Hey nobody is perfect!” Don’t keep giving the devil a foothold in your life. Resist him by faith. Aggressively renounce these things!

The Lord said to Cain, “Sin is crouching at the door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it”. We conquer sin by faith in Jesus Christ and HIS power to liberate us from it’s bondage!

Revelation 1:6 says, He is “the One who loved us and RELEASED us from our sins”! (What did he do for us?) By faith in his death and our death with him, we are freed from sin!

*Fourth: By faith overcome the enemy of discouragement. We overcome the urge to quit! When you suffer hardship or the mountains just aren’t moving discouragement can settle into your heart and block all your joy and progress in the Lord, and your experience of God’s presence.

The Hebrews were in danger of losing their will to persevere. The writer tells them in the next chapter to fix their eyes on Jesus and strengthen the knees that are weak and to lift their drooping hands. They are told to run with endurance the race set before them.

That is the language of faith! It will make a big difference for you when you just start talking the language of faith! (instead of the way you have been talking) Preach the Word of God to yourself! “Get up! Keep running the race! Keep fighting the fight! Keep your eyes on Jesus!”

There is a promised land out in front of you! It is called the New Covenant. It is the promise of a new heart with the power and desire to do God’s will. It is God’s promise to you, “I will be your God and you will be my people”. It is the promise of first hand experience of God. They shall all know me! It is the promise that you can live near to God! It is the promise that God will never remember your

sins against you! YOU OBTAIN THOSE PROMISES BY FAITH!
You live near to God by aggressive, robust bold faith!

Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven is taken by force” and “the violent take it by force”; he was not talking about literal violence but the people were so eager to hear the gospel that they were like a violent army attacking a city and beating down the doors. That is the kind of eager, aggressive, robust faith that we need! The blessings of the kingdom of God belong to the one who conquers, through faith in the blood of the Lamb!!

Pray: Father, we often feel so weak in ourselves. But in our weakness, make us strong. Make us soldiers, conquerers, overcomers! Wake us up to the things in our lives that need to be torn down. Help us renounce the things that need to be renounced. Wake us up to the qualities, thoughts, attitudes, that desperately need to be added. Help us enter boldly into all the blessings of the New Covenant now by faith. Amen