

A Conquering Faith

Joshua 2:1-21

Take a close, hard look at your faith. Is it weak and immature? Does it bow in defeat at the first sign of the enemy? Or is it strong and growing? Is it what could be called “a conquering faith”? That’s the kind of faith we need! That’s the kind of faith Jesus provides for us and intends us to have. We read in 1 John 5:4, “*This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.*”

For too long our faith has cowered in fear when the demands of the day call for it to march out strong and fearless. For too long our faith has stood meekly in the unemployment lines. Now is the time for us to put our faith to work!

If you are in need of a conquering faith—one that really works—then you need to learn what a conquering faith really is. We need to understand how a conquering faith really works. Special insights into this conquering faith can be found in Joshua 2, demonstrated in the lives of two individuals who at the time had never met—Joshua, the new leader of the Hebrew people, and a prostitute named Rahab.

* * * * *

Some have tried to gloss over Rahab’s occupation by saying that she was merely an innkeeper. That she may have been, but the Scriptures also make it very clear that she was a prostitute.

But somewhere along the line she had learned about the God of Israel. She had heard the stories and she believed in the power of this God of the Hebrews. Scripture commends her, not for her occupation, nor for her falsehoods, but for her faith:

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. (Hebrews 11:31)

...was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? (James 2:25)

The Scriptures tell us that Rahab later married Salmon, of the tribe of Judah, and that she became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth. Ruth, in turn, became the ancestress of King David—and even of Jesus Himself!

As we read the second chapter of Joshua, we discover that a conquering faith works in three tenses: present, past, and future.

1 A conquering faith is practical in the present, vv. 1, 4, 12-13

We read in Joshua 2:1 that Joshua secretly sent spies into the land: “*Go, look over the land, especially Jericho.*” Some have criticized Joshua as not acting in faith when he sent the two spies into the area around Jericho. Had not God promised to give them the land? Of course! So why was Joshua doing this?

He had a good precedent, remember. Moses had sent spies into this land on another occasion, about forty years before this, and this was something God Himself had commanded. The Scripture reference is Numbers 13:1-2, where we read that the Lord had said to Moses, “*Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites...*” Remember that Joshua himself had been one of those spies Moses had sent out.

Now that Joshua found himself the successor of Moses, his faith required him to act responsibly in leading the Israelites as wisely as possible. As far as we know, none of them had ever been to Jericho. It was important that they discover the layout of that city. They had to learn whether the people there were prepared for battle. After all, it would have been common knowledge that nearly two million Hebrews were camped out just across the Jordan River! Joshua and his soldiers needed to know where the weak spots were! This was a very practical move.

We can even see a conquering faith beginning to blossom in Rahab! In verse four, we find that Rahab had taken steps to hide the two men who had slipped into the city of Jericho, and had entered her house. Then, in verses 12-13, we see that she negotiated with those two men to spare her life and the lives of her family when the Hebrew people invaded her city. She was being practical. Some would say that she was just acting out of a survival instinct to save her life and the lives of those whom she loved. However, as we shall see shortly, she was acting out of a faith in the power of Almighty God, as she was beginning to understand that no one could stand before Him or oppose His purposes for His people.

Having faith does not release us from our natural obligations. A working faith does not merely fold its hands in quiet satisfaction. A working faith is not satisfied to merely say, “Well, praise the Lord.” A working, conquering faith is practical in the present in that it recognizes our relationship to God has two facets: (1) faith in

God's promises, and (2) responsibility to fulfill our obligations. Having faith in God does not mean that you never have to do anything else for yourself, or that you should not use the intelligence, reason or skill which God has given you.

In fact, the opposite is true. The stronger your faith in God, the more active you become in fulfilling your duties and responsibilities in God's kingdom. There are some things God expects us to work out for ourselves!

One who is always talking about his faith in God, but who rarely attends Bible Study and worship, who never gives or gives very little, who takes no responsibility for influencing others for Christ—that is the person who has never actually learned to *trust* God! Regardless of what he may say about his faith in God, if he trusts God so much, then why doesn't he tithe? It is simply because he does not believe that God can and will meet all his needs. Does he think his pompous profession of faith in God somehow excuses him from all duty or obligation?

The Scriptures have much to say about this:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession of faith in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

So a conquering faith is one which is practical in the present, making application of Biblical principles for our lives today. On the other hand...

2 A conquering faith remembers the past, vv. 10-11

Joshua's conquering faith caused him to remember the past, and remember it quite well! For example, he remembered the precedent God and Moses had set for sending out the spies. Joshua had a painful memory of how the invasion/conquering/possessing of Canaan had been postponed through the lack of faith of the spies sent by Moses. He remembered that two of the spies on that earlier occasion (himself and Caleb) had believed God then, while ten had disbelieved.

I believe those recollections were valuable to Joshua now that he was in this position of leadership, so heavy with responsibility. In order to be victorious in the task just ahead, Joshua remembered the past. It is very likely that Joshua chose the two men he sent into Jericho with a great deal of caution, based on his own experience in the past. So he probably chose two men who were known for their skill, faith, daring, quality of character, trustworthiness, obedience and loyalty.

Rahab's faith also caused her to remember the past. In verse ten, we read that she said,

We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

Then she said,

For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below (v. 11b)

Her faith was beginning to blossom! But pay attention to this carefully. Rahab's faith in God was based on what God had done for His people in the past. That is what enabled her to have such a conquering faith at this point.

We should never forget the lessons of the past. In every life and in every church there have been times both of victory as well as defeat. As we stop and look back over those, what have we learned from them? What has God been trying to teach us through these events which we remember even to this day? Perhaps He would remind us that He has always taken care of us and every need we've ever had, and on that basis, our faith goes to work to assure us that He will continue to be faithful to us and to all He has promised us. Perhaps He would remind us that at times He has led us into places we'd never been, or to do things we'd never done, and in all those times He has never deceived us nor led us in the wrong direction.

Joshua and Rahab did not know Jesus. But we have the privilege of looking back into the past to remember what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross of Calvary. Our faith in Him today is based squarely on His death and resurrection in the past, and having such a foundation as that for our faith gives us victory for our lives today and for all the tomorrows which shall come.

3 A conquering faith prepares to advance into the future, vv. 1, 9, 12-13, 21

In the first verse of chapter two, even while Joshua is telling the people to get ready to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan, he is preparing his military strategy. Joshua knew and was convinced that God was going to give them the land of Canaan, but he also recognized that before that long-range goal could be achieved, there were some smaller steps which had to be taken. He is planning ahead by focusing on the city of Jericho. That was the immediate obstacle facing them.

Why Jericho? First, it was situated between them and where they wanted to go. It would have to be conquered before they could go beyond it. Second, Jericho was in a strategic location, serving as a buffer of sorts for the territory just behind it. It would have to be taken before Joshua and the Hebrew people could go any further. It was because Joshua had his eyes on the future that he chose to attack Jericho. It was because of his conquering faith that Joshua prepared himself and the people he was leading to advance into the future.

Rahab was doing the same thing. She said to the spies in verse nine:

I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.

The people of Jericho and the surrounding territory were “*melting in fear*” because of what might happen in the future. You see, when the future is uncertain and threatening, the stance of the world is to “*melt in fear,*” or to make gloomy predictions of the terrible calamities which are coming. The Christian has a different viewpoint. Those gloomy predictions may come to pass, but the one whose hope is in Christ can be propelled along by a conquering faith, which makes preparation for the future. Rahab spoke with assurance that comes from a conquering faith when she declared “*I know that the Lord has given this land to you.*” But that conquering faith also caused her to make preparation for the immediate and long-term future. So she made a request in verses twelve and thirteen:

Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death.

The “*sure sign,*” or the guarantee, that she and her family would be spared was that she was to tie a scarlet rope from the window of her house, which had been built into the walls of the city. When the approaching Hebrew soldiers would see that scarlet rope hanging from her window, they would know, even though they had never been there before, that that was the house of Rahab the prostitute. They would spare the life of everyone who stayed inside her house.

So on the basis of her conquering faith, in verse 21 Rahab “*tied the scarlet rope in the window.*” She was making preparation for the future.

In the same way, I believe today’s Christian, and today’s church, should be making preparation for the future, and for whatever the future holds. With our eyes on the long-range goal, we should realize that there may be several interim steps which have to be taken in the process. There may be a Jericho which must be conquered before we can possess our Canaan!

What does your personal Jericho look like? What form does the Jericho for our church take? Whatever it may be, we learn from God’s Word that a conquering faith is one that really works! It works best by:

- 1. Being practical in the present**
- 2. Remembering the past**
- 3. Preparing to advance into the future.**

What about your faith today? The only way you and I can have a conquering faith is by surrendering ourselves to the power and Lordship of Jesus Christ. Won’t you do that today, and experience all the wonderful things that our Heavenly Father has in store for you, and for our church?