

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 11, Verses 30-40
Notes From Class on April 13, 2010
Last Revised on (April 19, 2010)

Songs

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father

Thank you for this day and all the marvelous things you have done in it.

Please forgive us our lack of faith in you, and grant us more faith.

That we could trust you more and obey you more perfectly and more willingly,

in confidence that **all** things work together for the good of those who are called according to your purpose.

Some of us have pains and problems of various kinds.

Where healing and help will glorify you O Lord and help us serve you better, we ask for healing and help.

But where our pains and problems will give you greater glory and build us up the more, we accept them gladly.

Saying after our Lord Jesus, not our will but thy will be done.

Please be with us always, O Lord, in times of pain and in times of joy and now especially as we study your word together.

Please open your word to us and make us teachable.

Please comfort us by your word and change us.

And grant us your perfect peace which passes all understanding.

In Jesus Name

Amen

Introduction

Welcome and thanks for coming to our weekly Bible study.

Presently, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of **Hebrews**.

 Last time our discussion took us to Verse **29** of Chapter **11**

 Tonight we will continue our reading from Verse **30**.

 But first let's begin, as usual, with a quick review of what we have studied so far.

 And before we begin our review, let me give you a chance to get whatever you might need.

 If you do not already have one, please pick up a copy of the handout containing the ESV text for Hebrews.

 Tonight there is a second handout, with the ESV text of the first 17 verses of Joshua, Chapter 6. Please pick up one of those also.

 There is coffee and tea at the back.

 Please get what you need and let's get started.

Review

OK, let's review.

 As we have continually noted,

 Hebrews appears to be the text of a **sermon**,

 written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D,

 to be delivered to a group of **Christians**

 at least some of whom were in danger of "**falling away**"

 and who needed to be encouraged to "**hold fast**" to their faith in Jesus Christ.

 The preacher reminds them of the **unqualified** supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

 and urges them not to repeat the mistakes of the Children of **Israel**,

 who had so often fallen away from **God**. **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

 He portrays Jesus as a great **high priest** **(4:14 - 5:10)**

 and tries to help them understand that to reject **Jesus**, would be to reject **all** hope of salvation. **(5:11 - 6:20)**

 The old **priesthood** and **law** have been superseded and replaced **(7:1 - 8:7)**.

The Old **Covenant** has been replaced by a **New** Covenant (**8:8-8:13**).

The **ceremonies** and rituals of the Old Covenant are **obsolete**. (**Chapter 9**)

The death of **Christ** atoned for sin --- once for all (**Chapter 10:1-18**).

Now **all** may draw near to God with confidence (**Chapter 10:19-22**).

and if we have **faith** and **persevere** until the end, our souls shall be **preserved**. (**Chapter 10:23-39**)

That is a very quick review of the first **ten** chapters of Hebrews.

The preacher clearly intends to encourage his **listeners** to have faith and to persevere until the end.

Chapter 11 (which we are still reading) supports this message by reviewing some **examples** of faithful men and women who would have been well known to his listeners

With minor exceptions, these examples are **Biblical** and arranged **chronologically**.

Please follow along in the text as I very quickly review what we have covered **so far** in Chapter 11

It is by **faith** that Adam (Man) knows that the universe is **created** by God. (**Chapter 11:1-3**)

It is by **faith** that Abel was able to **worship** the Creator properly. (**Chapter 11:4**)

It was by faith that **Enoch** maintained his special **relationship** with God (**Chapter 11:5-6**)

By faith **Noah** was able to **obey** and **trust** God through great tribulation (**Chapter 11: 7**)

By faith **Abraham**, **Isaac**, and **Jacob** continued to obey God and trust in his **promises** despite the fact that only a small part of what they were promised would be fulfilled in their lifetime (**Chapter 11:8-10**)

By faith **Sarah** finally looked beyond the utter **impossibility** of what she had been promised and received her son Isaac, and she rejoiced, although she was very old and would **not** live to see the fulfillment of most of the things promised to her offspring. (**Chapter 11:11-12**)

Indeed **all** of these great heroes of faith died **before** having received most of what God promised.

Their hope looked **beyond** their death and **above** this earth toward a time and a place God had prepared for them, and so God was not ashamed to be called their God. (**Chapter 11:13-16**)

Abraham's faith was **proved** by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. (**Chapter 11:17-19**)

It was **because** of this faith that God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, and He resolved to come down in Christ and save the whole world through the faithful Abraham and his descendants.

By faith Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph **pronounced** these blessings in each successive generation. **(Chapter 11: 20-22)**

By faith, though they lived under cruel slavery and threat of genocide, the generation of Moses' **parents** still had hope that God would keep his promises. **(Chapter 11:23)**

By faith **Moses** set aside his advantages as an adopted member of the royal house of Egypt to associate himself with the people of God and, therefore, with God. **(Chapter 11:24-26)**

A Digression

Notice the exact wording of verse 26:

(Verse 26)

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

*Someone wrote and asked me what this means: Did Moses **literally** foresee Jesus of Nazareth?*

Let's stop our review for a moment and talk about that ...

Q. What do you all think?

A. Well that is possible, I suppose that Moses could see so far and so clearly, but I don't think so.

*A. Clearly the author of Hebrews equates the **reproach** which Moses chose with the **reproach** which Jesus later chose when each associated himself with God and God's people in opposition to the world.*

*Remember that the word "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew "**Messiah**" meaning "God's anointed."*

*Moses was aligning himself with **Israel**, God's anointed **people**, and exposing himself to the same reproach which they suffered.*

*In the same way, **Jesus** of Nazareth, the Son of God, would later endure reproach.*

*All of most of the people showcased in Hebrews 11 are what we would call "**types**" of Christ.*

That is they are (partial and imperfect) copies of the perfect Son of God.

So, too, must all of us who come after and choose to follow Jesus be ready to endure reproach, and seek to copy, and hope to be made into copies of the perfect son of God!

If we want to know what faith looks like, the purest picture is Jesus Christ.

Review Continues

It was by **faith** that Moses defied **Pharaoh** and led the people out of Egypt (**Chapter 11:27**)

and by **faith** that he obeyed and trusted God's instructions for the **passover** (**Chapter 11:28**)

and by **faith** that the **people** followed Moses through the Red Sea (**Chapter 11:29**)

And so through the examples given to this point, we see faith at work in the relationships between God and his people, along a line drawn from Adam until Moses and the exodus from slavery in Egypt, all of this pointing **forward** to Christ and, as it were, **copying** Christ in advance --- **foreshadowing** Him.

This completes our **review**.

Any questions before we read on?

Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 30-31

OK then, would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 30-31 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read these verses in English (ESV)

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Thank you.

In verses 1-29 of Chapter 11 (as we have just reviewed) we have examples of faith from the beginning of the world **until** the exodus of Israel from captivity in Egypt.

Q. **Following** the exodus, what happened?

Q. Did all of God's people **remain** faithful to him?

A. No! The people **rebelled** against God and Moses and were therefore doomed to wander in the desert for 40 years.

 Almost **none** of those who were adults at the time of the Exodus were still alive when Israel entered into the promised land.

 Not even **Moses** entered! Because even Moses **rebelled** (Numbers 20:12).

 The author of Hebrews treats this whole interval, from the exodus until entry into the promised land as an example of **unfaithfulness**.

 This is the sort of falling away from God against which he is **cautioning** those to whom he is preaching.

 Q. But did God allow Israel's faith to die **completely** during this interval?

 A. No. **God** is faithful and merciful and long-suffering.

 Finally it was **time** for the nation to enter the Promised Land.

 The first step would be taking the city of **Jericho**,

 in connection with our preacher has remembered two stories that illustrate the **renewed** faith of Israel.

 The **first** is the story of **how** the walls of Jericho fell down.

 The **second** is the related story of why the household of the prostitute **Rahab** was spared,

 These are **alluded** to briefly in Hebrews 11:30-31 as we just read, but lets go back and read a little more from the Old Testament, to remind ourselves of what was going on here.

 Will someone please read Joshua, Chapter 6, Verses 1-17 in English (ESV)

(Joshua 6:1-17)

1 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.

2 And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

3 You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days.

4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

5 And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him."

6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD."

7 And he said to the people, "Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

8 And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them.

9 The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually.

10 But Joshua commanded the people, "You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout."

11 So he caused the ark of the LORD to circle the city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

12 Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

13 And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually.

14 And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days.

15 On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.

16 And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.

17 And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

Thank you. We have just read from Joshua 6:1-**17** a part of the story that is being remembered in Hebrews 11: 30-31.

If we had **continued** reading it would have become very clear that the people **did** do what they were told to do before the wall fell, and that the wall **did** fall as it was supposed to.

The author of Hebrews somehow understands this as an example of **faith**.

But how?

Again, Verse 30 reads

(Verse 30)

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

Q. How are we supposed to understand this?

Q. Did the marching and trumpeting and so forth physically **cause** the walls of Jericho to fall down flat?

A. No. It is **unlikely** that noise and vibration alone would have accomplished that.

Q. So **what** caused the walls to fall down?

A. We do not know **what** physically caused it, only **who** caused it.

Q. So **who** caused it?

A. **God** did, through secondary causes unknown to us.

Q. So where does **faith** enter in?

Q. Did God somehow use the "**psychic energy**" of the people to bring the wall down?

A. Nah...that's not the way I read it. I am not aware of anyone who does read it **that** way.

Q. So what does the author of Hebrews **mean** when he says that it was by faith that the walls of Jericho fell down?

A. The people **did** what God commanded them to do (i.e. they **obeyed** him) and they trusted **God** to do what he said he would do.

A. That is what is meant.

Had they **refused** to obey, it is very likely that God would **not** have crumbled the walls of Jericho, at least not at that time...

because it is unlike **God** to reward disobedience.

So in that sense, through disobedience, they might actually have **prevented** the fall of Jericho,

And in that sense, conversely, their **obedience** was necessary for the fall of Jericho.

Something similar happens with Rahab and her family.

We read in Verse 31

(Verse 31)

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

She did what she was supposed to do (i.e. help Israel) and Israel kept its promise to her.

Furthermore she helped **them** because she believed in their **God**.

So in some sense, she was actually rewarded for her faith in the **God** of Israel.

Notice that her faith did not have the power **physically** to compel Israel to treat her well afterwards.

They easily **could** have killed her along with everyone else.

However **their** faithfulness at this time assured her protection.

There is a very important **lesson** here for all of us, I think.

Our **prayers** and **blessings** and **ordinances** have **no** power in and of themselves.

All power belongs to God.

And we have absolutely no way to **conjure** God or to **compel** God to do anything at all;

He is the **sovereign** Lord of all creation --- i.e. he is always free to do **as** he pleases.

God is, however, true to **Himself**. He always acts in accordance with his nature and his word.

He **always** keeps his promises.

Therefore God's **character** is a force we can depend on, more certainly than gravity.

For those who trust and obey God, this is infinitely **reassuring**.

For those who mistrust or disobey God, this is infinitely **threatening**.

Because God will **always** be God, and will **always** behave in a manner perfectly consistent with his character, our trust and obedience, our faith, will **always** have powerful implications!

Not power in itself, mind you, but power through **association** with the God of all power!.

For example the **smallest, weakest child** who trusts in God is safe from all the powers of Hell, not because the child has any power of her own, but because her **Father** in heaven has **all** power.

A man who trusts in God will certainly have a blessed eternal life, not because he has any power **at all** over satan, sin, or death, but because his Father in heaven has **all** power and has promised to forgive the sins and to sanctify and preserve the souls of all who believe in him, in view of what was accomplished by Christ on Calvary.

This principle applies to the **whole** church of God, from Adam until the second coming of Christ.

Everything depends on placing our trust in God.

Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 32-34

Now, will someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 32-34 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those verses in English (ESV).

32 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---

33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 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.

Thank you.

Up to verse 31 the preacher had covered selected examples of faith from the period beginning with Adam and culminating with the fall of Jericho and **entry** into the promised land.

In Verse 32 he means to **continue** the vast sweep of this pattern from that time, up until the time in which the kingdom of Israel was established under **David** and beyond that to the time of all the **prophets** which ended in the fall of the northern kingdom and the exile of the southern kingdom in Babylon and finally the return from Babylon to Israel.

In all these cases it has been the **trust** and **obedience** of God's people which has **manifested** their faith in God and his power and greatness

This is certainly no **less** true now that Christ has come and made the basis for our trust and obedience so much greater than ever it was before.

Surely **now** there is no excuse for a **Christian** to fall away.

Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 35-40

Will someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 35-40 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those verses in English (ESV).

35 Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.

36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated---

38 of whom the world was not worthy---wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Thank you.

Up to verse 34 the examples of faith all seem to be from the period stretching from Adam to the time of the **prophets**.

And mostly the examples given are rather **happy** --- cases in which the faith of God's people is rewarded

In what we have just read (i.e. verses 35-40) more **hardships** are noted, and it seems to me that time period mainly in view here is the from the time of the prophets up until the **Christian** era.

This was a time of both Jewish and Christian **martyrs**.

And it is to be noted that faith (and also God's greatness) is more richly displayed by the stories of earthly **suffering** than those of earthly **deliverance** and **reward**.

Indeed the more we **believe** in the resurrection and eternal life, the less we **care** about earthly deliverance and reward, because we are ready to **leave** this world just as soon as it is pleasing to God to receive us.

In verse 38 we read that the world is not **worthy** of those who have suffered for their faith.

By this we are taught **not** to consider suffering and deprivation as a sign of **punishment** or **failure** but, on the contrary, as a sign of **merit**, particularly where such suffering and deprivation has arising from our faith in God and brings him glory!

The "prosperity gospel" so popular in our day is **exactly** wrong!

It is precisely those who have been **most** faithful who have **not** received their reward in this world.

Q. And why should **this** be so?

A. Because God is withholding their reward until the appointed time, when Christ comes and all things are made perfect.

There is therefore **no** excuse for those of us living in the **Christian** era to lose faith and fall away, simply because we have trouble in this world.

Such trouble has **always** come to the faithful, and the faithful of an earlier era did not have the very great blessing that we have of knowing openly of Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death.

This, I think, is the lesson being taught here.

Questions? Comments?

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Please forgive us for our weak faith,

which is so easily shaken by the difficulties in this life.

Please help us to understand better that we are citizens of heaven and not of this world.

Please enable us to endure the troubles of this world calmly and patiently and even joyfully,

understanding that being asked to share in the suffering of the cross is an honor and a blessing and not a punishment or a curse.

As often as we need it, please call to our mind these men and women of faith whom we have studied in Hebrews, Chapter 11, who turned away from what was comfortable and easy in this world and chose instead the reproach of Christ, even though they did not know of Christ so fully as we do.

If we must suffer in order to be with this company of men and women of faith who foreshadowed Christ, and with this company that saw Christ and then took up their crosses and followed Him, then please let us suffer well and please minister to us by your Spirit until our work is done and we can be with you in paradise.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen