

Faith Under Testing

Hebrews 11:28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 2

Ultimately, he turned away from the religion of Egypt. By establishing the Passover tradition and using the sprinkling of blood as a symbol, he clearly and permanently separated himself from the Egyptian practice of worshiping idols. He boldly challenged the accepted religious authorities.

12

He believed that salvation came through the sacrifice of the lamb, not through the Egyptian belief in the power of the Nile River. As a consequence, the firstborn sons in Israel were spared from death, while the firstborn sons in Egypt were killed by a destructive force.²²

Hebrews 11:29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. 2

At first **the Red Sea** seemed to spell disaster to the Hebrew refugees. With the enemy in hot pursuit, they seemed to be trapped. But in obedience to God's word, they moved forward and the waters parted: "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided" (Ex. 14:21). 12

When **the Egyptians** tried to follow, their chariot wheels became clogged, the waters returned to their usual place, and Pharaoh's armies **were drowned**. Thus the Red Sea became a causeway of deliverance to Israel but a dead end of doom to the Egyptians.²²

Hebrews 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 3

The walled city of **Jericho** was the first military objective in the conquest of Canaan. Reason would claim that such an impregnable fortress could be taken only by superior forces. But faith's methods are different. God uses strategies that appear foolish to men in order to accomplish His purposes. He told the people to encircle the city **for seven days**. 13

On the seventh day they were to march around it seven times. The priests were to give a loud blast on their trumpets, the people were to shout, and **the walls** would fall.²³

Military experts would write off the method as ludicrous. But it worked! The weapons of the spiritual warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4).³³

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. 2

We do not know when **the harlot Rahab** became a worshiper of Jehovah, but it is clear that she did. She abandoned the false religion of Canaan to become a Jewish proselyte. 12

Her faith received a rigorous test when the spies came to her home. Would she be loyal to her country and her fellow countrymen, or would she be true to the Lord? She decided to stand on the Lord's side, even if it meant betraying her country. By giving friendly welcome to **the spies**, she and her family were spared, while her disobedient neighbors perished.22

Faith That Overcomes

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 9

At this point the writer asks a rhetorical question: **And what more shall I say?** He has given an imposing list of men and women who demonstrated faith and endurance in OT times. How many more must he give in order to make his point? 19

He has not run out of examples, but only out of time. It would take too long to go into details so he will satisfy himself to name a few and catalog some triumphs and testings of faith. 29.

There was **Gideon** whose army was reduced from 32,000 to 300. First the timid were sent home, then those who thought too much of their own comfort. With a hard core of true disciples, Gideon routed the Midianites. 39.

Then there was **Barak**. When called to lead Israel to battle against the Canaanites, he agreed only on the condition that Deborah would go with him. In spite of this cowardly facet in his character, God saw real trust and lists him among the men of faith. 49.

Samson was another man of obvious weakness. Yet, in spite of that, God detected the faith that enabled him to kill a young lion with his hands, to destroy thirty Philistines in Ashkelon, to slay one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, to carry away the gates of Gaza, and finally to pull down the temple of Dagon and slay more Philistines in his death than he had in his life. 59.

Though an illegitimate child, **Jephthah** rose to be the deliverer of his people from the Ammonites. He illustrates the truth that faith enables a man to rise above his birth and environment and make history for God. 69.