

The Courage of Faith

Hebrews 11:30-40

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

INTRODUCTION:

- **Hebrews 11**

- **The theme—“What true saving faith looks like”**
- **Paul is calling these unbelieving Hebrews who have been sitting on the wall of unbelief to finally embrace Christ by faith**
- **They have been greatly exposed to the truth of Christ**
- **And because they have set in unbelief for so long—Paul warns them that they were getting to a dangerous place of *falling away* and never returning again**
- **And thus their condemnation would be even greater—because they spurned what they knew was true**
- **Paul’s pleading—is that they would not continue to sit in unbelief—but that they would enter into this new covenant—BY FAITH**
- **And so Paul tells them through this chapter—that this is nothing new**
- **That even their forefathers—stepped out by faith—embracing Christ whom they had never seen**
- **And their faith—didn’t just STAY HIDDEN**
- **It MANIFESTED ITSELF by actions of faith**

- **So Paul gives them the examples of people who demonstrated true saving faith**

- He pointed to Abel—who by faith offered a sacrifice that was acceptable to God
 - He pointed to Enoch—who walked with God by faith
 - He pointed to Noah—who built an Ark by faith—and saved his family from the wrath of God’s judgment
 - He pointed to Abraham—who left his home by faith—awaiting God’s promise of a seed and the inheritance of the land
 - He pointed to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph who in the face of death—believed God’s promise concerning the coming Christ—by faith
 - And last, we looked at Moses—who chose to suffer with the people of God—rather than embrace the riches of Egypt—by faith
- But there is one thing that all of these patriarch’s and forefathers have in common—that the Hebrews of Paul’s day did not
 - They died not having received the fulfillment of these promises
 - They were all looking to the coming of Christ—who would redeem men from their sins

Hebrews 11:13—“*These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*”

Hebrews 11:39—“*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, **received not the promise***”

- In some way, we could honestly say—that the faith of Israel’s forefathers was greater faith than even what the faith of the Hebrews of Paul’s day could ever be
 - The Hebrews of Paul’s day saw the fulfillment of these promises
 - They saw the coming of Christ
 - They saw that He died—and that He paid for their sins
 - They saw that He did what no high priest could ever do—make His people right with God
 - He did what no sacrifice could ever do—remove the sins of the people forever
 - And they knew that He verified His work—by His resurrection from the dead
- And yet with all of that knowledge—these Hebrews were still sitting on the wall of unbelief—trying so desperately to hang on to their old Judaism
- They were afraid of truly stepping and embracing Christ

- **True Saving Faith**

- **True saving faith—will demonstrate itself in the actions that follow it**

James 2:14-17—“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

- **So there is good reason to doubt a person’s profession of faith—if they demonstrate no works of Christianity**

Matthew 7:21—“*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*”

- **These works are also called “fruits”**

Matthew 7:15-20—“*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn*

down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

- **It’s not a mere profession—that Paul is calling these Hebrews to**
- **It is a transformation of life—that is characterized by acts of faith**
- **All that starts with the original step of faith—Faith in Christ**
- **Today we will look at the last few examples that Paul’s gives of the Patriarchal Faith— to these “on-the-wall” Hebrews**
- **One of the characteristics of faith—is that it behaves itself *COURAGEOUSLY***
 - **It’s willing to believe God—and step out by faith—even if everyone and everything is against it**
 - **To see God do great and marvelous things—which have never been seen before**
 - **Or even if it means to suffer greatly—and never see physical deliverance in this life**
 - **For a Jew to become a Christian in the first century was nearly always costly**
 - **It would cost him his friends**
 - **His family**
 - **His synagogue privileges**
 - **His job**
 - **His social status**
 - **And his community respect**

- It would take great courage to step out and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ
- **TO OBTAIN THIS FAITH—YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE COURAGEOUS**
- **You simply must believe—that God is Who He says He is**
 - **That He is a God that does not and cannot lie**
 - **That He cannot make a mistake**
 - **That He cannot do wrong**
 - **That He cannot be defeated**
 - **That He cannot be surpassed**
- **A God like this CAN BE TRUSTED**
- **In fact, with a God like this, it doesn't make sense to do anything but trust and obey Him!**
- **And when we trust and believe that God is Who His Word says He is—then stepping out courageously will be NO PROBLEM!**
- **When we find ourselves STRUGGLING TO OBEY or STEP OUT—it's not a matter of having little courage—it's a matter of having little trust in God's Word**
- **But when we trust Him completely—then we can't but help be courageous!**
- **Genuine faith—true saving faith—is courageous**

CIT: What Does Courageous Faith Look Like?

I. Courageous Faith Conquers in Struggle (vs. 30-35a)—

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. 32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again:”

A. Joshua and the Israelites at Jericho (vs. 30)—

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”

1. The City of Jericho

- a. The city of Jericho was a massive fortress that between Israel and all the rest of Canaan
- b. It existed out in the middle of the desert
- c. But it stood as a major obstacle toward any threat to the land of Canaan

- d. It was this city that God brought the nation of Israel to—to attack and destroy it

NOTE: If we remember, 40 years prior to this point (in the book of Joshua), Israel had sent spies into the land to get an accurate report of the land that Israel would be conquering. Ten of the spies brought back an evil and unbelieving report—while two tried to encourage the people that the land that God promised to Israel could be taken. Ten didn't believe God's promise—and two did.

As a result—the nation of Israel, as a whole, chose not to believe that God would give them this land—because the obstacles were too big for them to handle. So God swore in His anger that that generation would NOT enter into this land.

Thus, for 40 years they wandered in the desert, just outside the land of Canaan—the land of promise. And every one of those people who were 20 years and older died—leaving a younger generation to inherit the promises of God.

By the time we come to Joshua—that younger generation has just crossed over the Jordan River—and they are now facing this massive fortress city—named Jericho.

e. The description of the city

- i. The city was surrounded by walls—that were so thick—that 2 chariots could ride side-by-side on top of it

- ii. There were even houses on top of these walls—where people lived
- iii. Humanly speaking—there was no way this rag-tag nation could defeat this massive city

2. The Plan of God

- a. God's plan was different—than what man's plan would have been

Joshua 6:1-5—“ *Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. 2 And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. 4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. 5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*”

- i. God tells Joshua that he is to command Israel to send out all their warriors—with their priests leading the way—bearing the ark of the covenant on their shoulders—**and walk around the city walls of Jericho**

- ii. Every day they were to walk around the walls—once a day—and then return back to their place of dwelling
- iii. Then on the 7th day—they were to walk around the city 7 times
- iv. Then after that—the priests are to blow their trumpets—and everyone is to shout
- v. And then God would knock the walls down flat—for the nation of Israel to charge into the city and take the city

- b. That was God's plan
- c. Imagine what kind of faith that would have taken

- i. Jericho is one of the biggest cities they will face
- ii. And instead of flexing their muscles—and coming up with some kind of strategy to scale the walls—and overtake the city—they are told to walk around the city—**with the priests leading the way**
- iii. Everyone who participated—must have been tempted to think—that this plan was **CRAZY**

- And really—it was crazy

- If God was unable to do what He said
- If God was unable to knock the walls down
- If He was not as big and powerful as He said He was
- Then it would be **CRAZY TO DO WHAT HE SAID**

NOTE: Can you imagine the ridicule that they faced from the people of Jericho—as they paced around the wall day after day?

Can you imagine the personal embarrassment they must have felt as they did this? By the time they got to day 5 and 6—it may have really reached its peak.

Yet because they believed, that what God told them—He would do—they chose to obey. They chose to be courageous.

3. The Defeat of Jericho

- a. And sure enough—on the 7th day—the walls came down just as God said they would
- b. And Israel was able to rush into the city
- c. And the bewildered citizens of Jericho were defeated

- i. Not because of Israel's might

ii. But because of Israel's God—
Who was able to defeat them

vs. 30—*“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”*

B. Rahab (vs. 31)—*“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

1. The spies sent into Jericho

- a. Before Israel encompassed the walls of Jericho—they sent a couple spies into the city—to spy out target areas for their future battle
- b. Word gets out in Jericho that a couple of spies from Israel have entered into the city—to spy out their weaknesses
- c. So men were sent to catch them and get rid of them
- d. But a woman—named Rahab—took them in and hid them from those who were trying to capture them

i. She did this by faith—because she believed that God had already promised the land of Canaan to Israel

ii. And it was foolish for anyone to try to stand in the way of Israel's purpose

Joshua 2:8-11—*“And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9 and she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: **for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.**”*

iii. She had come to a place of faith—in the God of Israel

- He was the One Who had made the nation of Israel so successful
- He was the One Who had fought for them and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies
- And He is the One Who would destroy Jericho—and give it into the hands of the Israelites

2. Her act of faith was put on display in the midst of great unbelief

vs. 31—“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them *that believed not*, when she had received the spies with peace.”

a. The unbelief—among the inhabitants of Jericho—was not intellectual doubt about Who the God of Israel was

i. They all knew of His might and strength

ii. He had put it on display—and their hearts melted within them—out of fear

b. That unbelief was an unwillingness to surrender to the God of Israel

i. Somewhere along the line—they had been made aware that the God of Israel would give the land of Canaan—and Jericho would be one of the places they would possess

ii. But instead of yielding to that—and repenting and getting right with God—they chose to defy the God Israel—and resist His command

NOTE: This needs to be made clear. Jericho wasn't some nice little city. It was a city filled with incredible evil.

“The point is that if we shall at all evaluate the reported event, then we have to see what God says for His own defense. His statement implies that the Canaanites were guilty of every kind of perversion, which was a dominating state in their society. It is instructive to mention some of them: pedophilia (raping children, not so unusual in their days), zoophilia (sex with animals), ritualistic sacrifices, and slavery including sex slavery. Sexual slavery included also selling small boys and girls into forced prostitution. Their society was also notorious known for the ritualistic practice of child sacrifice. The child sacrifice in question involved the ritual burning of children to Moloch. Moreover, we should not forget usual occurrence of the torture for pure sadistic joy, where slaves were usually victims of their sadistic masters. Furthermore, overwhelming violence and personal insecurity were a constant state in ancient societies. Individual life, per se, had no value; you could expect to be killed. All these mentioned crimes were present according to God. So, should He just have been a passive observer, in allowing them to continue with their evil practice? Well, what would you do if you have a minimal sense of justice? What God had done was to warn them and patiently wait if they should repent, which is a theme of the second point. God waited 400 years for them to repent.”

iii. And even at the time of God's patience being exhausted with them—and the rest of the Canaanites—

God was willing to show mercy in the midst of judgment

iv. Which is exactly what happened with Rahad

- She was saved
- Because she courageously believed God
- And she was put into the line of the Messiah

C. Many Others (vs. 32-35a)—*“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again:”*

1. Gideon

a. God chose to use this man (during the time of the judges) to save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites and Amalekites

i. And when God picks him—he is not demonstrating great trust in God

ii. He’s hiding in fear of the Midianites

b. God tells him that He has a plan to use this Gideon to save Israel from their enemies

c. He tells Gideon to gather up men to fight

i. 32,000 men are gathered

ii. But that’s not enough

- They still are incredibly outnumbered

Judges 7:12—*“ And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.”*

iii. But God tells Gideon—that he’s got too many men

iv. And through a test of how the men respond to drinking water he sifts out only 300 men of the 32,000 that had been recruited

d. God’s choice of weapons

i. Trumpets

ii. Water Pitchers

iii. Torches

e. God's plan

i. They were going to surround the camp

ii. And in the middle of the night—they are going to blow the trumpets

iii. Smash the lanterns—that concealed the lit torches

iv. And then they are going to shout, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*"

v. And then they are going to stand there and let God fight the battle for them

f. How foolish that would be—if God did not tell them to do it

g. But God did what He said—and all the Midianites and all the Amelikites were struck with confusion and turned on each other

h. And they were destroyed and driven out of the land

i. And Gideon's men did nothing, but stand there and watch it happen

2. Barak

a. God chose to use Barak to deliver Israel out of the Canaanite King's hand—Jabin

b. He had placed over Israel his army led by Sisera

i. He was a great commander

ii. And the army boasted of having 900 iron chariots at their disposal

iii. Plus a whole host of soldiers

c. And all God chose to give Barak was 10,000 men from only 2 tribes in Israel

i. This was just a token army compared to Sisera's

ii. Humanly speaking, there was no way they could win

d. Yet God gave them victory—by sending a sudden storm—that cause the iron chariots to get stuck—and a "flash flood" swept many of them away

e. And Sisera escaped—hiding in the tent of Heber

i. Who was supposedly confederate with Jabin

ii. But Heber's wife Jael wasn't

iii. She gave Sisera a glass of milk—and caused him to lie down and go to sleep

iv. And then as he slept—she took a spike and drove it through his head—and he was killed

3. Samson

- a. We often think of Samson as being a man—NOT of great faith
- b. But Samson—though immature, self-centered, and unable to cope with God’s power upon him—was a man of faith
- c. He knew that the physical strength he had been given was from God
- d. And God chose him—before He was even born to use him as an instrument to fight the Philistines
- e. And that’s what he did—all through his life
- f. Many times—he fought one-man battles against hundreds of Philistines
- g. And even though—his motives were mixed—he knew this strength was not of his own power—but from God
- h. And God used him to save Israel—from her enemies

4. Jephtha

- a. Jephtha was another Judge in Israel that God used to subdue the Ammonites—one of Israel’s many enemies

b. And though he made a dumb vow—he demonstrated faith in God to defeat Israel’s enemy

5. David

a. David’s first great act of faith—was taking on a nine-foot giant—Goliath—that none of the other Israelites were willing to do

- i. And he did this as a young boy
- ii. Not as a seasoned warrior
- iii. David’s confidence:

1 Samuel 17:46—“*This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.*”

- b. And David was victorious over the giant
- c. And God used him to do many other great act of courageous faith throughout his life—though he wasn’t perfect

6. Samuel

- a. He wasn’t a warrior—like all these others who have been mentioned

b. But he did something that was probably more courageous than any of them

- i.** He stood for right—in the midst of a wicked nation
- ii.** Calling them to repent
- iii.** He stood up against social pressure
- iv.** He stood up against a wicked king
- v.** And he was faithful all through his life

7. The Prophets

a. And we could spend a lot of time talking about the many prophets—who did courageous things

- i.** Often times they were called to be the voice of God to the people of Israel—who were so far backslidden—that they wouldn't even listen
- ii.** And many of the prophets went through many difficult things—because of their courageous stands

8. Their Victories

a. Subdued Kingdoms

- i.** God used these of courageous faith—to subdue kingdoms
- ii.** To put down wicked and threatening enemies

b. Wrought Righteousness

- i.** They upheld justice
- ii.** They held justice high—even in the midst of great pressure against them
- iii.** Doing the right thing—when everybody was against the “right thing”

c. Obtained Promises

- i.** God gave them many promises
- ii.** And if they obeyed—God would see to it that His promises came to pass
- iii.** And many saw God do just as He said He would do—because they trusted Him

d. Stopped the mouths of Lions

- i.** This is a reference to Daniel who was thrown in a den of lions for praying to his God—rather than to the King
- ii.** And Daniel didn't pray secretly

- He prayed boldly
- Opening up the windows and praying toward Jerusalem
- Despite what the law said

Daniel 6:21-23—*“Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, **because he believed in his God.**”*

e. Quenched the Violence of Fire

- i.** We think of Daniel’s 3 friends—who refused to bow down and worship the idol
- ii.** And so King Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the furnace of fire—to have them burned alive
- iii.** But when they were thrown in—in came a 4th man that protected them
- iv.** God was with them in the fire

- f.** Escaped the Edge of the Sword
- g.** Made Strong in Weakness

- i.** King Hezekiah was promised by God—that his line would continue on the throne if he would be faithful to God
- ii.** It came time for Hezekiah to die—and he had no son
- iii.** So he prayed and reminded God of His promise
- iv.** So God, in hearing that prayer, healed Hezekiah, and gave him 15 more years to live—and a son to take the throne

h. Waxed Valiant in Fight

i. Women Received Their Dead Raised to Life Again

i. Elijah is sent to the widow of Zarephath

- And her young boy became so sick that he died
- But Elijah was there and God used him to raise that young boy back to life

ii. Elisha raises the child of the Shunamite woman—who had fallen out of a tree and was killed

I. Courageous Faith Conquers in Struggle

II. Courageous Faith Continues in Suffering (vs. 35b-

38)—*“And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”*

A. God Doesn’t Always Deliver

1. Many of them saw God’s great workings on their behalf
2. But others didn’t
3. God doesn’t always demonstrate His great power—on the behalf of those who trust Him
4. Sometimes courageous faith shows up by faithful endurance

- a. Even through great suffering

B. The Suffering of the Saints

1. Tortured

- a. The idea of that word means they have been beaten to death—by being stretched out over something—like a skin and clubbed
- b. Their motive to endure—was the FUTURE

i. *“not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection”*

ii. They were willing to endure—because they were focused on a future reward

iii. A better resurrection

2. Cruel Mockings

- a. Going through mental pain
- b. The anguish of being criticized and make a joke for other people
- c. Many of the OT saints were mocked—by those who were supposed to be God’s people

3. Scourgings

- a. Being whipped and beaten

4. Bonds and Imprisonments

- a. Being thrown in jail for the faith

5. Stonings

- a. They would literally take a person and throw them off a pinnacle
- b. And then from the top of that pinnacle—have stones thrown down upon them to kill them

c. Many of the people of God—went through such things

6. Sawn in Half

a. Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn in half by wicked men who were tired of listening to the prophet speak

7. Tempted

a. Tested by wicked men—to try to get them to fail morally

8. Slain with the Sword

- a. The idea—is that of mass slaughter with the sword
- b. Whole groups of people murdered because of their faith

9. Poverty—*“wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; ... they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth”*

- a. Because of their faith—they were forced out of their homes
- b. Lost jobs
- c. Lost friends

C. The World is Unworthy of Saints Who Live by This Faith--(of whom the world was not worthy:)

- 1. These are the kind of people that God says—the world doesn’t deserve to have in their midst
- 2. People who live by faith—that endure such suffering—are very special people in this world
- 3. Could God say that about you?

I. Courageous Faith Conquers in Struggle

II. Courageous Faith Continues in Suffering

III. Courageous Faith Counts On Salvation (vs. 39-40)—
“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

A. These Never Saw The Promise

- 1. The promise: was the coming Messiah
 - a. They never saw Jesus come in their midst
 - b. But they all—From Abel down to the final OT saint—lived by faith in hopes that He would come
 - c. And they never saw that promise fulfilled in their lifetime

B. But We HAVE

- 1. God provided for us—what He never did for them

- a. They never knew what it was like to be saved (in the sense we understand it)
- b. They still lived under the Old Covenant faith

2. We, however, live after the time of Christ

- a. We have the privilege to experience the NEW BIRTH
- b. The Spirit of God living in our lives
- c. The new heart (with the Law written on it)
- d. The completed Scriptures
- e. And yet, how often we choose not to live courageously

C. We Have No Excuse

- 1. To not be saved
- 2. To live like cowards

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

There is a man—though not an independent Baptist—an American pastor who is in an Iranian prison called the Evin Prison. It is considered to be the MOST BRUTAL prison in the world. People call it HELL ON EARTH. His name is Saeed Abedini. He is originally from Iran, was born a Muslim, and converted to Christianity. Back in early 2000 he helped start several house churches—

because Christianity is illegal to be practiced there. He was caught and arrested. He was freed on the conditions that he would never evangelize in the country again. He left Iran, came to the United States, married and became a citizen. Later he decided to go back to Iran and help establish an orphanage—which he was legally allowed to do. The authorities then changed their mind and arrested him, illegally tried him, and sentenced him to Evin prison for 8 years. He has very little contact with family. He’s not allowed to talk to his wife or children by phone. And he is told he will never get out of that prison.

The last report that has been given about him is that he is suffering internal bleeding because of the severe beatings he is facing all the time.

His Letter from prison

When I heard that empty Christmas settings were placed during Christmas as a reminder of my imprisonment and those imprisoned for Christ, tears of joy filled my eyes. I was able to share about this with other prisoners and they were shocked by the love and support we have for each other in Jesus. I told them how in the Bible we are all considered brothers and sisters (despite race, color, or nationality) and we are to share in each other’s pains. This comes from our Lord.

The Word of God says that when we are persecuted for our faith, we are to count it all joy. When I think that all of these trials and persecutions are being

recorded in heaven for me, my heart is filled with complete joy.

The Bible says that the Joy of the Lord is our strength. Without the joy of the Lord we cannot live. It is this joy in our life that gives us strength to continue in this life. Without strength, we cannot continue the work of the Lord and without joy, there is no strength.

I always wanted God to make me a godly man. I did not realize that in order to become a godly man we need to become like steel under pressure. It is a hard process of warm and cold to make steel. This is the process in my life today: one day I am told I will be freed and allowed to see my family and kids on Christmas (which was a lie) and the next day I am told I will hang for my faith in Jesus. One day there are intense pains after beatings in interrogations, the next day they are nice to you and offer you candy. These hot and cold days only make you a man of steel for moving forward in expanding His Kingdom.

When for 120 days you sleep in a room with a giant light that is constantly lit, not allowing you to separate day from night, and when you can only see true sunlight for a few minutes a week, that's when you are becoming His Workmanship and you can be a vessel in bringing His Kingdom in a dark place and you are able to share the Gospel of Peace and Life to the dying world. And this is where you learn you can love your enemies with all of your heart.

I am looking forward to the day I can see all of you who are behind me with your prayers and to embrace

you in my arms. Thank you for the love you have showed me.

What is in us is stronger than what is in the world and it has conquered the world.

Pastor Saeed Abedini, in chains for our Lord Jesus Christ