

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part XXI: Handling Huge Barriers To Achieving God's Will By Faith"
(Hebrews 11:1, 30-31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

There are times when achieving what we believe God would want us to achieve seems almost insurmountable:

(1) One of the young women in our church recently faced approaching the school year without a good fall and winter dress coat. She had a job, but the money mainly went to care for other needs, and she and her parents really didn't have much money to spare for the coat. Her mother discussed the need with her about ten days ago.

(2) Another young woman in our church recently saw a pair of shoes in a Penney's catalogue. She wanted the shoes and needed them for her wardrobe, but when she called to order them, the company said they did not have them in stock.

Normally one would adjust and shift to get another pair of shoes, but this young woman was distraught! She had been through many trials of all sorts recently, and had gone to picking out shoes as an outlet in part for her pain. After many days of combing the catalogue only to find the shoes out of stock was too much!

(3) A young man in our church who was planning to enter college this fall found out a week ago that the educational financing had not come through in time for him to enter his classes. Accordingly, he sadly resigned himself to missing college this fall and working full-time. He and his family then wondered how in the world he was to get going in his life in view of finding God's will in his career. It was a discouraging time to say the least!

How do we handle sudden, overwhelming obstacles to what we believe is God's will for our lives?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "In some area of life, I face what seems to be an invincible barrier to progress in my life, and I lack the strength, stamina, insight or courage to tackle it! What would you suggest NOW?!"

- I. **The author of Hebrews urged Jewish Christians to worship Christ rather than using the temple rituals under godless peer pressure, Heb. 9:7-10, 11-14 (sermon XII); Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1729.**
- II. **Thus, these believers were to LIVE by FAITH in Scripture's revelation versus yielding to godless peer pressure, Hebrews 11:1.**
- III. **In an APPLICATION of this, they were to follow Israel's and Rahab's ancient faith in handling the problem of Jericho's WALLS to deal with huge barriers they faced in achieving God's will.**
 - A. The readers of Hebrews faced great barriers to achieving God's will:
 1. For standing for Christ, the readers were persecuted, Heb. 10:32.
 2. This suffering included the emotional and mental drain of public insults and confiscation of personal property that put a financial hardship on their family lives, Hebrews 10:32-34 NIV.
 3. This suffering stretched over a period of time, implying it cost these readers in a **drain** on their emotional, mental, spiritual and financial resources, Hebrews 10:32, Bible Knowledge Com., N.T., p. 806.
 4. With such a **drain**, their **continuing** to live for Christ became a problem that the author sought to shore up, cf. Hebrews 10:35-36.
 - B. Well, to illustrate the handling of such great obstacles of suffering in achieving God's will, the author utilized Israel's and Rahab's examples to overcome barriers to blessing by faith, Heb. 11:30-31:
 1. On the **one** hand, Israel's **faith** that Jericho's walls would **fall** in accord with God's word was put to the test for 7 days, Heb. 11:30:
 - a. Jericho's walls were humanly insurmountable: (a) Garstang's excavations (1930-1936) uncovered the wall remnants of Joshua's era, Unger, Arch. and the O.T., p. 147; (b) What he found had been **two massive** brick walls, each thirty feet high with the outer wall being 6 feet thick and the inner wall, about 12 to 15 feet away and itself being 12 feet thick, Ibid.! (c) Homes were built over the space between the walls, Ibid.
 - b. Also, God's order to overcome these walls left Israel **humanly** open to emotional, mental and physical drain and danger: (a) God told Israel to march around the city wall **verbally silent** once each day for six days in a line, blowing the rams' horns, and on the seventh day to do so seven times before shouting. Then the walls were **miraculously** to fall down, enabling Israel to capture the city, Joshua 6:2-5, 10! (b) Yet, as Campbell notes (Ibid., B.K.C., O.T., p. 340-341), these actions could have left Israel drained and exposed: the people would be stressed at hearing the taunts of the Jericho warriors as day-after-day they couldn't respond verbally to their war cries on the wall; mentally, they would have faced repeated fear from being strung out in a thin line as easy prey for arrows raining down from the enemy on the wall; they could have faced a quick charge out of the city by the enemy that would break their line and lead to defeat!
 - c. As this march was to occur repeatedly for seven days, Israel would have faced the threat of mental drain due to the stress!

2. Conversely, **Rahab's** hope she would be **saved** if **she remained on those walls when they fell** put **HER** faith to the test, Heb. 11:31:
 - a. Rahab's home was built on **top** of Jericho's **walls**, Jos. 2:1, 15!
 - b. Now, to be spared alive, she and her kin agreed to stay **in her house** which was **on that wall** until **after the battle**, 2:19, 21!
 - c. Well, **that agreement** came **before** God **told** Israel that Jericho's **walls** would **FALL**, Jos. 6:5, and there was no way of informing Rahab behind enemy lines about that **additional** issue, 2:18-21!
 - d. Thus, when the walls suddenly, fearfully and surprisingly crashed down around her, Rahab would have been sorely tempted not to wait for the battle to end, but flee from her precarious perch!
3. Israel and Rahab each obeyed God by faith with rich blessings:
 - a. Israel obeyed God and saw the walls fall **outward** (Ibid., Unger, p. 148), allowing the soldiers to enter the city and sack it of its uncrushed loot for God's treasury, Joshua 6:20-21, 24.
 - b. When the walls fell, Rahab's wall-home stood tall and she **obediently stayed PUT** by **faith** until **after the battle**, 6:20-25.
 - c. As the **ultimate** reward for her faith, Rahab the harlot became an ancestress of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mtt. 1:5-6; Lk. 3:32!

Application: *To handle obstacles to progressing in God's will, we must BELIEVE God's Word and obey His will: (1) that means trusting Christ as Savior from sin to become one of God's true children, Jn. 3:16; 1:11-13. (2) It means TRUSTING God's Word to ACHIEVE what He has SAID we are to achieve no matter how humanly insurmountable seems the obstacles we face en route!*

Lesson: *Since they believed God concerning the city walls' fall, Israel AND Rahab enjoyed conquest of overwhelming obstacles to blessing!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) I mentioned at the beginning of the message the need of a young woman in our church who recently faced the approaching school year without the funds to get a decent and much-needed fall and winter dress coat. Well, since then, her Dad received an unexpected financial surplus in his job, and he gave it to his wife for her to use as she saw fit. She in turn donated the money to her daughter to use to buy her needed coat! **God overcame the obstacle of a steep financial strain on this young woman HIMSELF so a nice dress coat could be purchased!**

(2) I mentioned in our introduction the other young woman who had shopped for shoes only to be frustrated in calling the catalogue people to find her shoe style was not in stock.

But the *size* she had wanted was *too BIG!* After trying them on, she asked for a half size smaller, and the store clerk produced the **single** remaining pair of shoes in that style of the **size** that actually **fit** her! She then **purchased** them! The cost ended up being actually less than she would have paid for ordering the shoes by phone due to the absence of shipping costs for the shoes at the mall!

So, God overcame the obstacle of getting the RIGHT shoes with the RIGHT size for the RIGHT price to offset great discouragement for a needy party!

(3) I mentioned the young man who was saddened to learn that his financing had not come through in time to take his college classes.

Since then the financing has come through, so he returned back to the college registrar to try to re-enroll! Amazingly, all of his original classes were **still** left intact for him to enroll through a certain technicality! He was able to enroll and drop a class he had really not wanted, buy his books, and start classes with missing only a single class session! **God overcame the obstacle of financing and class registration, and getting the right classes for that collegian!**

God is our Overcomer when our **obstacles seem to be overwhelming! Just trust in Him and lean on Him as HE MUST** open doors for us to be able to do HIS will!