

Fellowship Bible Church
Sermon Series: God's Hall of Fame
"Faith Is Mission"
11-20-2011
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TEXT: HEBREWS 11:23-31

I appreciate, and I speak for our elders, our staff, and all of us, for just the generosity of our church. We have been saying this over the last few months that it has been a blessing to us to see how we have responded with regard to our generosity initiative. You recall we painted the vision. We said that we are believing God first of all to help meet some of the incredible needs here in our own body. Twenty percent of our body is either underemployed or unemployed and a lot of people just suffer quietly. Our benevolence was being drawn down, which is a good thing as it is being used, but we wanted to believe God to raise up \$200,000, the first leg of this vision, to replenish that so that no one in our body who has a legitimate need will go without. God has blessed in a great way. We also said that part of that overall vision, too, are some opportunities that our current mission budget and targeted resources are not covering; but there are just great opportunities for the advancement of the gospel here locally and globally. We said if God would be so gracious over a year's time and we commit to a total of a million dollars then it would really help us to meet these things. We also said that the vision was not so much the amount as it was the participation of our body. I just want to share with you that to date, and this is wonderful, we have already received \$290,000 in commitments. This is absolutely amazing. This is wonderful. Praise God! Our benevolence team is now working to help unleash this generosity and provide for those who are in need. I just want to thank you for doing this. In an economy that is struggling to see the faith family here respond by faith is absolutely wonderful.

I also want to say that we are still in process right now and we are trusting the LORD that over the course of the next few months to just continue to believe God and raise up the resources to help us with some of these other needs. If you haven't responded yet or you are not involved there are some cards in the seatback in front of you. You can go home and pray about what God might have you to do. Some of you might want to change your commitment. Karen and I did that. I had a certain amount and I felt uncomfortable about that after I wrote it down. I felt that God was saying I want you to do more, so we wrote down a bigger number. God is blessing. I don't know where it is going to come from, but it is all about Him. Do what the LORD lays on your heart to do. God will bless. Remember this is an ongoing initiative. It is not so much saying to ourselves, "Man, where am I going to get this from," as it is the attitude, "Look at what God can do to use me to be a resource and a blessing to others."

All right, if you have your Bibles I want you to meet me in Hebrews chapter 11. We are going to be reading verses 23 through 31. I am going to read the verses here and then I am going to connect with the context in terms of what we have been talking about here. I want you to pay attention to the seven prepositional phrases, this expression "by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith."

"By faith Moses,
when he was born,
was hidden for three months by his parents,
because they saw that the child was beautiful,
and they were not afraid of the king's edict.
By faith Moses,

when he was grown up,
refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.
He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt,
for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt,
not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood,
so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land,
but the Egyptians,
when they attempted to do the same,
were drowned.

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

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

(Hebrews 11:23-31 ESV)

This is the fourth in a five-part series on faith. In the first message on faith I talked generally about the nature of faith and went through the first few verses of Hebrews chapter 11:1-3 and then down to verse 6. Now we are in this section where I am highlighting four great statements that the writer of Hebrews chapter 11 makes about faith. A few weeks ago I said, number one, that faith is obedience. It is obedience. There is no such thing as faith if there is disobedience. Faith is obedience. Secondly a few weeks ago I said that faith itself is movement. It is movement. You can't go with God and stay where you are. I have said repeatedly that faith is a verb even when it is a noun. Faith presupposes that we are going somewhere. Faith presupposes that we are doing something. Even when we are waiting on the LORD, as I said a few weeks ago, waiting on the LORD is not passive indifference. It is active contemplation. It is pressing into. It is always believing. There is never a time in a believer's life where he or she is not believing. Faith is the canopy over which we live the Christian life. There is no such thing as Christianity apart from faith. It is our activity and our action.

Well, today I am going to say that faith is mission. It is mission. You say well how do you differentiate that or distinguish that from movement? Well, on one hand you can't, but technically there is a difference. Faith is mission, and I know there is a difference between these words, but I will use them synonymously in the sense that faith is purpose. Faith is purpose. Faith is always specific. It is always specific. There is always something to believe God for, something to believe Him for. It is not just a general faith. It is a faith for something.

I will tip my hand a little bit. God has written a signature in everyone's heart and life here. There are assignments and missions that every single believer has, and those unique assignments and missions release our faith and launches us on that experience to discover who God is. Remember I have said repeatedly here that there are gaps in our lives, and that gap is called faith. The gap between what I think I can do and what I think God is calling me to do is where faith happens. Your vision, the purposes that God places on your heart and my heart are always bigger than I have the resources to pull off – always – always bigger – always greater – always beyond – because it is through the faith journey that He produces the character of Christ-likeness in us. There is something of God that needs to be demonstrated about your Christianity and my Christianity. If my circumstances are not overwhelming then there is nothing of God about my life. Do you follow me? Do you hear me? If I am not over my head, then there is not anything supernatural about my Christianity, about my life. So as you go through this incredible passage you discover that the writer of Hebrews is driving into us

a sense of calling that is beyond us, and we all have it. So, that is the flavor of Hebrews chapter 11:23-31. We will never walk by faith, and you might want to write this down as I really believe this is anchor thread through this whole chapter and it is really showcased here in these two paragraphs. We will never walk by faith until we become desperate. I hate making that statement because I am like you. I don't want to be desperate. I want to be in control. I want my life to be predictable. I want to know what is going to happen tomorrow and I want to know that I have the resources to meet the challenges, and we all do. But the truth of the matter is we will never ever walk by faith until we become desperate, until we become desperate, and our desperation may be a gift from God.

Also, faith assumes opposition. I have been saying that repeatedly, but I feel the need to review that, to underscore that, that faith always assumes opposition. If something is coming up against you it does not necessarily mean God is not in it. It may mean that God is very much in it because faith assumes opposition. Now God's personalized mission is meant to drive us through life. Don't get me wrong. There are purposes and callings in each one of our lives. There are dreams that God has given to us. There is a mission that He has called us to, and that mission is meant to drive us through life. I am going to go to a place here, and some might disagree with me on this, but I happen to believe that personalized mission also is God's calling for us to experience His sanctifying power. What do you mean by that, Crawford? Well, your calling is God's primary tool by and through which He will cause you to press into the LORD, the primary way. I have grown so much in my walk and relationship with the LORD by being a pastor and in learning what it means. I have come face to face with what I don't have and what the ministry and what the calling requires. I have had to press into gaps in my life. I have had to confront weaknesses in my life. I have had to go to Jesus to get what I need and it has been a wonderful journey to see God do things in and through my life. I only use that as an illustration because it is also true with your calling. That is God's primary way of calling you to Himself. So, I want to encourage you to view differently the challenges and the opportunities and the callings associated with what God has placed on your heart, because it is His primary way of making us like Jesus.

Now the mission in Hebrews 11 is the Promised Land; that is Canaan. So, when you read this section, verses 23-31, historically what he is talking about is the book of Exodus and the first six or seven chapters of the book of Joshua that have to do with the occupying of Canaan; but we also know that Canaan is used throughout the Bible as a metaphor and as a picture of God's program and what His calling is for each one of us. We have personal "Canaan's" in our lives, personal promised lands, and I am not over spiritualizing that. There is a promised land for you and there is a promised land for me along the journey. What He has placed on our hearts to believe Him for is our promised land. You say, Crawford, you are sounding spooky. Well, hold your finger there and look at this familiar passage in Ephesians chapter 2:8. We have quoted this text here a number of times, beginning at verse 8.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God,
not as a result of works that no one should boast.

[now verse 10]

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works."

I can really park it here because that expression talks about the sanctifying process, and I actually believe that this text validates what I said earlier on that God uses the God works that He has provided for us ahead of time to make us more like His Son. We are His workmanship. The way that workmanship shines is when we walk in those good works.

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The good works that He has prepared beforehand are not just generally the doctrine of salvation. They are the specific assignments that God has for each one of us to meet and to greet and to fulfill. I am not one of these preachers that teach the will of God is generically anything that you determine to do. I believe that God has specific things for each one of us to do and places for us to be and to disobey that is to miss what God has in store. This is over against the backdrop of what is being said here in Hebrews chapter 11. Now the point in this section that the writer wants us to know is that faith confronts opposition and hostility. I really believe that is the heart of these two paragraphs that the writer wants us to know. It is almost as if he is saying, “Listen to me readers. Listen to me. Just because you have a hard time is no reason for you to stop believing God.”

Somebody needs to hear that today. Just because you have opposition and you have a hard time and something is coming up against you and things are not working out it is no reason to stop believing God. That is the reason why in rapid fire he gives us in these two brief paragraphs seven prepositional phrases: by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith. After that prepositional phrase is an amazing barrier. Resistance is all a part of the Bible, okay? This is the difference between Christians who make a difference and those who just cave in. Resistance is all throughout the Bible. You read in Ezra chapter 4, for example, that the rebuilding of the temple was stopped because the people were threatened and got discouraged. So, what God wanted them to do they just stopped. They got scared. They rationalized. “Oh, God must not be in it because we have problems.” Contrast that with the book of Nehemiah; every step of the way of rebuilding the wall they were opposed – every step of the way. What does Nehemiah do? He keeps pressing into God, pressing into the assignment, and even when he was by himself. That is absolutely amazing.

Now with all of that as a setup I want to talk about the seven roadblocks to your mission, seven roadblocks to your mission. They are all right here in this passage. There is an assumption again, and I want to underscore this. Roadblocks will be thrown in our path to block movement. The devil does not want you doing what God has called you to do. It is as simple as that. It ain’t that heavy. It is as simple as that. The enemy does not want you and he does not want me doing what God has called us to do and to be. Remember your Christianity and my Christianity is taking place in the context of warfare. It is taking place in the context of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. He knows that the purposes that God has given to you and the mission He has placed on your heart is His primary leverage for making Jesus known and making a statement about the glory of God during your moment in history. So, do you honestly think that the devil is going to leave you alone? Do you honestly think that? No, we are engaged in battle. So, over against the backdrop of these seven things, although it is not mentioned here, is assume the battle, assume opposition. Again I have to tell you that each one of these roadblocks is introduced by and greeted with a prepositional phrase “by faith.”

SEVEN ROADBLOCKS TO OUR MISSION

1. The Future (11:24)

The first roadblock is found in verse 23. The first roadblock to our mission is simply the future or not knowing what the future looks like. Where do you get this from? By the way if you want to get the broader context of verse 23 look at Exodus chapter 2:1-10, the story of Moses and his parents saving his life. Verse 23 says:

“By faith Moses when he was born

was hidden for three months by his parents
because they saw that the child was beautiful,
and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

Let me just summarize this story. What had just happened was after Joseph died, and he was really the protector of Israel, the nation of Israel, the Jews moved to Egypt. They begin to expand and to explode. In fact the Egyptians got scared because there were so many Jews and they were fearful that they were multiplying so much that they would enter into an alliance with some of their enemies and overthrow the Egyptians. You read that in Exodus chapter 1. So, this Pharaoh or new king that knew not Joseph decides, "Well, we better clamp down on these people." They had two strategies. One was to make it really tough on the builders. They will make bricks without straw, work them to death, and just tighten up the oppression. The other one was it seemed the more you oppressed them the more they prospered. He said, "Okay, round two is to kill all of the firstborn baby boys. Throw them in the Nile River that was filled with crocodiles. Kill them." Moses' parents did not believe that God wanted their son killed. So, they came up with their own strategy where they put the baby in the Nile River in a basket. His sister watched from a distance and strategically placed the baby in the basket in a place in the river where she knew that royalty would be bathing. I think the point here is that Moses' parents believed that God had something better for this baby boy than death so that they acted on their faith. Do you catch the point here? Faith does not acquiesce. Faith presupposes some fight. Faith does not deal with the fear of the future as if it is a certainty. Faith says not what we can't do but what can we do. Do you believe God for what you can do, and that is what Moses' parents did.

By the way I need to say this as a little aside. Godly parents cannot pass on their faith as they do their family traits. You are not going to pass on your faith like you do your hairline, your nose, you know -- features; that ain't going to happen. We can create an environment, an atmosphere of faith. Home should be the first school of faith for a child. Where does this connect with the story? I think it is all over this. I think there are some assumptions, and when you read the life of Moses you come to the conclusion that his mama must have really told him about this. By the way, when he is rescued, do you know who his nurse was? -- his real mother. His sister went and got her. You can bet your life that his mama began telling him stories of how God saved his life.

Here is the point that I want to say to us here concerning this first roadblock. Don't let the unknown frighten you. I have to tell you, and this has been true in my own life. I have talked to too many people who have become paralyzed because of the fear of the future. Don't let the unknown frighten you. Where God is taking us is always better than where we are. You have to believe that. Where God is taking you is always better than where you are. Now I didn't see it always more comfortable. I didn't say you are going to have more money. I didn't say you are not going to suffer. Wherever God is taking you, you have to understand that is always better than where you are. The question is not about the future. The question is what does God want me to do and how can I believe Him for that.

2. Privilege/Comfort (11:25-26)

The second roadblock to our faith is introduced in verse 24 -- and that is privilege and comfort. Look at verse 24. He says:

"By faith when he was grown up Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God
than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

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

Let me give you some implications here. First of all, true faith causes followers of Christ to hold to the right values and make the right decisions. True faith never prostitutes the Word of God. True faith never holds onto circumstances as being superior, but true biblical faith always holds on to the principles found in this book and is passionate about it. Faith always chooses the deeper pleasure, and I am going to say this and you are going to think I am crazy, but faith always chooses the deeper pleasure of disgrace for Christ’s sake over the temporary superficial pleasures of sin. Faith says I would rather be joyfully disgraced and identified with Jesus than to be seen and affirmed and stroked by others but to deny Him and His mission for my life. That is what this text is teaching us, that Moses gladly, although he didn’t see Jesus in his time, looked forward to that provision and he knew that the call of God meant everything for Him and that he couldn’t live on both sides of the street at the same time. You know in Philippians 1:29 Paul puts it this way, looking backward, he says:

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ
you should not only believe in His name but also suffer for His sake.”

I have to tell you this. This is foreign to those of us who live in the United States of America, foreign to those of us who God has blessed and enjoy life, and by the way there is nothing wrong with enjoying life as long as we are holding that like there is nothing wrong with enjoying the pleasures and privileges of this, but there is a joy [I can’t explain this], there is a joy, in suffering for Jesus’ sake. There is a joy in identifying with our Savior. Sacrifice for Jesus’ sake is not deprivation. Those of us in the west can’t think in those categories. Some of you are looking at me like you are “a deer in a headlight.” “This dude is crazy.” Moses models that for us. Let’s be specific here. Can you imagine what Moses looked like to Pharaoh? You have to understand this Pharaoh knew Moses. Moses had grown up with privilege. He lived in the palace. He wore the finest of clothes. He went to the dinners. He was the “man.” People looked up to Moses. He had status and all of this stuff. After 40 years in exile my man comes back, and to be a shepherd was a despicable thing to Egyptians and also despicable to Jews. Here he comes, and you have to picture this, walking into the palace where the king is sitting on his throne regaled in finery and Moses comes in with nothing more than a shepherd’s staff. Can you imagine how this arrogant king looked down his nose at Moses? “Hey, come on Moses. Don't you know where you are? Yeah, you don't have to live like this. Look at you. You stink, man. You have the nerve to talk to me that way. Oh yeah, there is a stick. Aren't you ashamed? Look at people. Don't you know what side of town this is?”

Some of us have awful hidden attitudes about missionaries. Some of us feel sorry for them. “Don't you know where you could be living? Yeah, all those years you went to college and I paid that tuition and you are raising your support? You are living in this 1,000 square foot place and you could be living better than that.” I wonder who is to be pitied. That is what this text is really all about. I don't mean to throw anybody under the bus, but our little arrogance gets us in trouble. The text tells us that he refused to enjoy the pleasures of sin. I want to correct something here. Most of the time you hear this verse quoted you think they are talking about “the pleasures of sin” or they are talking about lust and gross immorality. In context I don't think that is what it is talking about. The expression, “pleasures of sin,” here I don't think is about gross immorality. I think it is about lifestyle. I think in context the phrase describes a way of life that we would call success today – power, prestige, and position. Moses gave up power, prestige, and position. I don't think it is directly talking about lust and that kind of thing. I think it is talking about the life that he walked away from.

Now I have to say we have to be openhanded. God gives platform. God gives success and if you are making money and enjoying life I think you ought to enjoy life. I am not talking about that at all, but I am talking about if faith is movement toward our mission, then everything is openhanded. Because I live in a big beautiful house today does not mean that God won't call me tomorrow to live in a tiny place in Bangladesh. Moses models that for us. Moses left the palace and never went back to the old life. Why? Because the joy of God's calling eclipsed all of the finery of Egypt and he couldn't get away from the pounding of the horses of God in his bosom. That said, I have got to do this. I have got to believe God for this! I wonder what pounds in your chest? It is one thing to temporarily suspend pleasure and privilege but it is quite another to sever ties with Him completely. I am just saying, Fellowship, and I am just putting it out here, we all have got to be open. We all have to be open to God. Don't make assumptions about your lifestyle. Be completely open to Him.

3. Security (11:27)

The third roadblock to mission is security closely associated with privilege and comfort. Verse 27 says:

“By faith he left Egypt,
not being afraid of the anger of the king,
for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

I suppose you could say security and/or people pleasing and that is what I happen to believe when you read this verse. You say to yourself, “Now wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, what does he mean “By faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king?” If you know anything about the life of Moses you go, “Oh, oh, oh, yes, he was afraid. That is why he left.” Yeah, the first time he was afraid. The first time he was afraid and that is why he did leave. Do you remember he murdered the dude who was mistreating the Egyptian and they said well, they are going to find out about it and they are going to kill you? He got scared and left. So, the first time he was afraid. However, when he encountered God at the burning bush and God made clear what his mission was through his life and what He wanted him to do the second time he wasn't afraid. This is talking about the second time. This is talking about the exodus when he walks in and he announces to the king “Let my people go.” The time of the exodus Moses was not intimidated at all by Pharaoh's anger. He understood that there was One who would always take care of him.

I often tell young leaders this. One of the things that I have had to learn in Christian leadership is that if I am afraid of people I will never lead them. God will never use me if I am afraid of folks. I will never be completely God's man as long as I am afraid of people. I want to share that with all of us here. You will never ever completely obey God if you are looking for someone else or something else to take care of you other than God, for you will be a prisoner to your security needs. You will be a prisoner to the opinions of others and life and circumstances will always edit what God wants done in your life. Moses forever teaches us by confronting Pharaoh he says the only One that I fear and has the mastery over my life is Yahweh. It is Jehovah God. He is the One that takes care of me. He is the One that meets my needs.

There are some great things that God wants to do in this body, but I happen to know that I am probably talking to a number of us who won't move on those things because we are afraid that we won't have what we need. Yet, there is a little bit of an irony here because my understanding of how God works is that God will never give you what you need to do ahead of time to do what He has called you to do. So, there is this little emotional checkmate. Moses teaches that when we catch a glimpse of who God is and how great God is it is not that we are not occasionally afraid of people. Any person that tells you that they are not occasionally

afraid of some imposing figure has a poor self-concept, but we know that God meets our needs. We should not allow the fear of loss of human security and the threat of man to stop us. So, again the question is what are we not willing to give up to fulfill His mission?

4. Disobedience (11:28)

The fourth barrier or roadblock to mission is the tragic but simple word disobedience. Verse 28 is interesting.

“By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood,
so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.”

You say, “Crawford, what does that have to do with disobedience?” Well, think with me for a moment. By the way this is a reference to Exodus chapter 12 when the Passover was instituted. Now what Moses could have said was, “Look. God says now Moses I need to tell you I am sending the death angel through Egypt. I am sending him through Egypt and you need to know that. The only way the death angel will not come visit the house of Jews is to kill the firstborn is if you put on the post (which is a sign of the cross) the blood of a perfect lamb and when he sees that he will Passover.” Now he could have said, and I know this is a tad bit of conjecture on my part, “Well, you know what? Why don't we just go hide out in caves and like get out of the house and that kind of thing. We don't have to do this blood thing and all of this stuff. That does not make sense and we will just kind of do it our way.” No, when God tells you to do something and how He tells you to do it, you had better obey it. You had better obey it. We do not have the prerogative to do God's work our way. We do not have the prerogative to orchestrate our lives and then ask God to bless us. I believe that God holds us accountable not only to the written Word of God but also to the impulses and direction that He gives us concerning our future and we have to obey God. Point being, and I said this some weeks ago, there is never a reason to disobey God – ever. There is never ever a reason to disobey God. It is never a good thing to tell God “no.” Please do not misunderstand grace. It is never a good thing to say “no” to God, and it is never a good thing to ignore Him. “Moses, I want it done this way. You need to obey Me.”

There are two big reasons why we don't obey God. Obviously one is pride. We make terrible assumptions. There are some of us who have a little bit of control in us and we make the terrible assumption that we know how to do things and so I will just kind of like do it. I am in charge. The other reason is fear. Sometimes we disobey because we are scared and we won't do it.

Let me give you I think an interesting take away. The very thing God is telling you to do may be the very thing that will save your life. Sometimes we think we are giving up something. No, you might be gaining something. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 10:39. He says:

“Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

5. Doom (11:29)

The fifth roadblock or barrier to this mission is the term doom or dread. In verse 29 the children of Israel have left Egypt now and they are at the Red Sea; that is Exodus 14:10-18. Now he says:

“By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land,
but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same,

were drowned.”

Again, the whole thing here is they could have caved into their fear. I just need to quickly read something to you in Exodus 14 beginning at verse 13. Now here they are. The Egyptians are pursuing them. The Red Sea is in front of them. Two and a half million people have left Egypt. They are terrorized and uncertain about their future. This is real time dread and don't know what is going to happen. Verse 13 says:

“And Moses said to the people,
“Fear not. Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord,
which He will work for you today,
for the Egyptians who you see today you shall never see again.
The Lord will fight for you.”

Somebody here needs to hear that. “The Lord will fight for you. The Lord will fight for you.” You have only to be silent. There are times in which we need to turn to our fear and say “Shut up!” We need to speak to our fear for the voice of faith. Vance Havner, the great communicator and Bible teacher who has gone on now, but he said this. “Moses chose the imperishable, saw the invincible, and did the impossible.” God will speak.

6. "Logic" (11:30)

The sixth barrier is “logic.” I want you to put quotes around “logic.” Sometimes God does not make sense to us, but He makes perfect sense to Himself. He does not always make sense -- go to Joshua chapter 2 through chapter 6, the whole conquest of Canaan. We did this in our study in a series of messages that I preached on the book of Joshua. You know, Moses is off the scene by the way, and I can't miss making this observation. Moses is dead, but Canaan is still not occupied. Here is the point I want to make. God changes His workmen but He does not change His principles of operation. Faith is always going to be operative, so He just says “next.” So Joshua shows up here. Verse 30 says:

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

Not an arrow was shot – nothing. They just walked around. I want to encourage you by saying this now. To be sure, God does not want us to commit intellectual suicide. The book of Proverbs is there for a reason and God does deal with us in a reasonable way, but there are times in all of our lives that God will tell us to do something that does not make any categorical sense. It does not make any sense. Don't allow your reasoning and your logic to edit God's great purposes in and through your life. That can be a barrier to us.

7. Background (11:31)

Number seven and finally the writer of Hebrews says that our backgrounds can be a barrier to God's mission. Notice Rahab the harlot in 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.”

Go back and read Joshua chapter 2. Rahab was a prostitute. You know so many of us let the failure and the shame of our past stop us. Some of us are imprisoned by shame. We won't do what God has placed in our hearts to do because of the shame of our past. I talked to a young man just this past week, who does not go

to this church, and this is where he is at. There is a healthy guilt that drives us to repentance, but the cross takes care of all of that. Some of us are just beating ourselves up and we are blaming ourselves saying, "God can't use me because He doesn't know what I did. You don't know what I did. You don't know what I did. You don't know what I did." It has been long gone. It is under the blood, and here Rahab gives us hope. Rahab's shame did not stop her from doing what was right. By the way you need to know that Rahab is in the genealogy of Jesus. Read Matthew 1:5.

Well I need to wrap it up. I have two questions for us today Fellowship. As I was studying this passage I just felt so ashamed even in my own heart of how I had let certain things maybe not flat out stop me but sort of trip me up. I want to ask you what is it that God has been calling you to do that you have not been giving yourself to? What is it under here? What is it? What is it? You have allowed life and reaction and stuff to sort of tamper it down, which leads to the second thing I want you to do today. I want you to go home. Look at your notes and ask God which of these roadblocks do I need to confront? Which of these roadblocks do I need to look in the eye and say by faith you are not going to stop me anymore. You are not going to stop me anymore. There are no more excuses. I am going to keep moving, trusting, and believing. Let's stand together.

If you don't know Christ today and are maybe not sure if you are a believer, the biggest roadblock of sin has been taken care of by Jesus. He died on that cross. He removed it. He rose again on the third day and all you have to do, all anyone has to do, is say LORD Jesus I believe, and the burden and barrier and guilt and weight of sin will be lifted from you. Even right now you can say LORD Jesus, please forgive me. Come into my heart and life, and He will do that.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word. We thank You, LORD Jesus, for the life that You have called us to live. LORD, each week I am just reminded that the clock is ticking. The days are fleeting by and LORD we don't want to waste our time, neither do we want to live our lives in fear and reaction and build a tent in front of the roadblock rather than challenge the roadblock and go to that Canaan, that destination that You have for us. So help us, Father, and may we not look at ourselves and see what we bring to the table because we are always weak but may we see an all-powerful, all-knowing God who has everything that we need, and may we trust You with every ounce of strength that we have. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Blessings. Love you Fellowship.