

Prayer of Preparation: *We’ve come this far by faith. Leaning on the Lord. Trusting in his Holy Word. He’s never failed me yet. Singing oh, can’t turn around we’ve come this far by faith. Speak Lord, tell us of our faith. Amen.*

Paul is still talking about faith, the faith of the Hebrew people we read about in scripture and our faith. Paul is writing to a group of people scattered across the world who have become disconnected from their roots. People who have forgotten their heritage. People who do not know or remember the God they left Egypt to serve.

So, Paul reminds them...and us. We continue Hebrews 11 today with verse 29. Paul writes, *By faith the people passed through the Sea of Reeds as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.* Paul reminds the Hebrews that the God they left Egypt to worship is a God who will make a way out of no way. Paul reminds the Hebrews that God is God who makes the impossible possible.

When Paul writes in verse 30, *By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days,* Paul reminds the Hebrews that God is God of ALL creation, God is God who placed the stars in space, created the earth and all that it contains, and that yes, the bricks in the walls of Jericho fell at God’s command because God created those bricks.

When Paul writes in verse 31, *By faith Rahab did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace,* Paul reminds us that we will indeed find help in foreign lands; that God **will** make a way out of no way. Paul reminds the Hebrews in the diaspora that God can and will touch hearts and minds of people **everywhere** to do God’s will.

Paul goes on to say that he did not even have **time**, dare I say even enough paper, to tell the Hebrews about *Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.* Those faithful, imperfect people *who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 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* weren’t looking around to see their present circumstance.

They weren’t looking in fear at the Roman government. They weren’t looking in fear at the current religious establishment. They weren’t looking in fear at the money in their hands. They weren’t looking at anyone anywhere. They were looking at God!

It’s because the Roman government was big...but God is bigger. It’s because the current religious establishment was exclusive...but God is inclusive. It’s because the Hebrews would never have enough money...but God would provide for all their needs. It’s because God is at work in all things, through all things, and at all times. God even at work in our imperfections.

Paul is very careful to mention the most imperfect people in scripture...Moses, Noah, Samson, and David. All of whom Scripture is careful to tell us of their faults **and** their faithfulness. Our heroes of Scripture were some of the most imperfect people we will ever encounter. Ask yourself why...why does Paul add them by name? Why does Paul add a “Bad Boys” of scripture list?

Paul adds them to remind us that our God can and will use us to bring heaven to earth. Scripture tells their stories *in detail* to remind us that God knows our imperfections, God will continue to use us, and that God will send someone perfect to show us who God is and who we should be.

And there are others...*Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured...Others suffered mocking, flogging, chains, imprisonment, they were stoned to death, sawn in two, and killed by the sword.* By faith...because of faith. Those unnamed people died because of their faith in God, faith in the resurrection, faith in a life in heaven with God because of their faithfulness.

The faithful of God *went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented--of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground.* Paul tells us about them to remind us that they suffered for the faith, and we will too. They did not live to see the fruition of God's work and neither will we. Yet, at a word from God, they continued in faith of the resurrection. And so should we.

We are continually surrounded by those who died in the faith...always and everywhere. We are surrounded by those who have prayed for us, taught us, and lifted us on their shoulders so that we may do the same for this generation. It's time to lay aside everything that separates us from God, all sin, in this marathon that is life. We are called to run, always looking to Jesus, who will perfect our faith because God is looking forward to meeting us. God is ready to receive us with great joy, and rejoicing, because Jesus.

In case you're wondering, Paul's letter is all about Jesus and the resurrection to eternal life. And Jesus did it for the sake of joy in seeing the Father's face when he sees each of us in eternity.

Response to the Word: *We've come this far by faith. Leaning on the Lord. Trusting in his Holy Word. He's never failed me yet. Singing oh, can't turn around we've come this far by faith.* Gracious God, send us out of this place with the strength of our ancestors so that we too may be resurrected with Christ. **Amen.**