

“Keep Walkin’, But You Won’t Knock Down Our Wall” // Hebrews 11:30 // Hebrews 11: Broken People & Famous Faith #10¹

Summit, summer is rapidly barreling to a close, which I know is depressing for some of you, but let me give you heads up about something coming up... Coming up this fall we’re going to enter a special season where we really want to seek the Lord together as a church through a dedicated time of prayer (and fasting, if you’re willing). In the coming weeks you’ll hear more details about what that is going to look like, but I just wanted you to go ahead and start preparing your heart for it, and I want to give you a prayer to pray. We’ll send this out on social media and over email this week. Here it is: “God, I know this Christian life is not about what I want to do for you but what you want to do through me. So, speak, Lord, I’m ready to follow.” Will you pray that over the next few weeks? Let me pray that on our behalf right now...

Introduction

Alright... Heb 11, if you have your Bibles. One of my favorite movies from the 1980's is called *Hoosiers*. How many of you have seen it? (Quick Hot Take, btw: I can’t prove this, but I’m pretty sure when we get to heaven we’re gonna learn that God brought Western culture to its pinnacle *in the 1980’s*. I mean, before you object, just think about it: *Chicago, REO Speedwagon, Run-D.M.C, Whitney Houston, Chuck Norris, the advent of Nicolas Cage, Prince, Guns and Roses, Back to the Future, the Outsiders, Bon Jovi, Rocky Balboa, the Indiana Jones*

¹ Sources consulted: Tim Keller, “[Joshua and the General](#)”, September 22, 1996, Redeemer Presbyterian; Joby Martin, “[Glory Days](#),” April 10, 2023, Church of Eleven22; Steven Furtick, “Don’t Stop on Six,” sermon preached at Elevation Church; Chris Dolson, “[Joshua - Trust and Trumpets: Eat this Book - Portraits of Israel](#)”, March 4, 2012, Blackhawk Church; Ray Vander Laan, “[That the World May Know](#),”

Trilogy, Karate Kid before all the guys got old; Top Gun before Tom Cruise got weird, Star Wars back when the stories were actually interesting... I know not everyone agrees with me on this, but that’s just because certain things are only spiritually discerned, so he who has ears to hear, let him hear.)

The movie *Hoosiers* came out in 1986 when I was in the 8th grade. We watched it before every basketball tournament I played in in high school, In the movie, which is based on a true story,² you have a little **backwoods, country basketball team that overcomes incredible odds and makes it all the way to the **Indiana state championship**, where they face a **school that is 10x bigger** than theirs before this **humongous crowd in Indiana University’s** main arena, which is 100x bigger than anything they’ve ever played in before.**

(PIC) **The day before the game**, everyone’s nerves are on edge, so **Gene Hackman**, who plays the coach, **walks** them into this massive arena and gets out a tape measure and has one of the boys measure **how tall the rim is**—the guy says “10 feet;” then he has him measure the **distance from the free throw line** to the base line and says, “How long is that?”—and the kid says, “15 feet.” And Gene Hackman says, “See, just like everywhere we’ve played all year.”

His point: *The arena you’re playing in tomorrow is much bigger, but all the basics are the same.*

That’s going to be really important as it relates to today’s story in Hebrews 11. It’s Hebrews 11:30--this is one of the most dramatic, most epic, most iconic stories of faith in the Bible--God knocking down the walls of Jericho, and what you’re going to see is basically

Bryan Lorrits, “[Blueprint for Battle](#)”, October 8, 2017, Abundant Life Christian Fellowship. And others as noted throughout.

²<https://roadtrippers.com/stories/the-real-story-behind-the-movie-hoosiers-told-by-the-leading-scorer>

God pull out his tape measure and say, “See? 10 feet. The venue may change, but the basics are the same.”

And, FWIW, I think this is going to be **really timely** for some of you, because some of you feel like you are in a brand new season: maybe you’ve just gotten married or just had kids or you’re starting retirement. Or maybe you’re facing a new season of suffering or some new challenge you’ve never faced before: a new job. Or something big thing you want to see happen in someone’s life that you’re trusting God for. Some ministry opportunity. Or maybe you just feel stuck and can’t figure out what God is doing--you’ve been doing what you think you’re supposed to be doing but nothing is changing; the **relationship hasn’t gotten better**, no matter how hard you’ve tried, or **you’re still single**--it feels like a new chapter and you are not quite sure what you should be doing.

Through this story, God basically takes out his tape measure and says, “The arena is different, but the basics stay the same.”

Hebrews 11:30, By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. That’s it. That’s all it says. But so much packed into those **16 words**.

A little bit of background. Joshua was the newly inaugurated leader of Israel. He’s been Moses’ right hand guy for years; **he’d come to fame as one of the only 2 spies to give a positive report of the land when the 12 spies had been sent out.** Of all those spies, only Joshua and Caleb had come back and said, “This is good land. Sure, the people of his land are strong, but our God is stronger. We should go and do what God says.” **The other 10 had said**, “No way. The people of this land are giants—literally giants. There’s no way we can do this.”

³ The “Walls of Jericho [were] massive stone walls surrounding an ancient Neolithic settlement in Jericho, built about 8000 bce. These walls, at least 13 feet (4 metres) in

- We remember Joshua and Caleb because of their faith; we don’t remember any of those other 10 guys, for two reasons: One, because they were a bunch of cowards, and you never remember cowards. And two, they had **strange names**. Joshua and Caleb are awesome names. But these others? **Like Sho-phon**. That’s one of their actual names. **Parents, if you’re looking for biblical names for your kid, I’d suggest you stay away from Sho-phon**. If you name your kid *Sho-phon*, it’s not going to go *sho-well* for him in high school. He’s definitely going to prom by himself.

Joshua had established himself as a man of faith, and God made him the next leader of Israel. As the book of Joshua opens, this is what God promises him: Joshua, [3] Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. [5] No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Why? Because you are awesome? No, because: Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with YOU. That’s the promise of the Christian life: **as I have been with all these great heroes of faith, so I will be with you.**

OK, fast forward to JOSHUA 5. Joshua is on the eve of his **first major challenge as the leader of Israel**. Between the children of Israel and the Promised Land is the mighty city of Jericho.

Jericho at the time was the **most fortified city** in the world (By the way, archaeologists not too long ago uncovered the ancient city walls of Jericho—for years before this, a lot of scholars debated whether it existed at all—but they dug it up, making it the oldest walled city in the world that we know about.) Its walls, they say, were so thick that you could race two chariots across them.³

height and backed by a watchtower or redoubt some 28 feet tall, were intended to protect the settlement and its water supply from human intruders.” John F. Guilmartin, “Jericho,” Encyclopedia Britannica online, <https://www.britannica.com/place/walls-of->

This scene here in Joshua 5 takes place on the **eve of that battle**. As you can imagine, Joshua was pretty nervous. I mean, war is **imminent**, and this is his **first true moment** of leadership. Everybody is looking at him thinking, “I mean, Moses was awesome. You have what it takes to fill his shoes?”

- We have a **CFA operator at our church, Katherine Wade**, who took over the Lake Boone Trail location here in Raleigh from another CFA operator in our church, David Langston, because David was moving over to the Brier Creek location. Well, just before Katherine took over, David had set the one-hour drive-thru record--most cars in one hour through a drive-thru. By the way, this was the record not just for CFA, but for any drive-thrus in the world. He and his team got 476 cars through the drive-thru in one hour. You gotta love CFA. You pull in there and there’s like 300 cars; it’s wrapped around the building twice, and you’re like, “No problem, this will take 4 minutes.” Well, now she’s taking over, and she’s like, “Well, I definitely gotta break that record!” So she got her team trained and that first Saturday she got 501 cars through in one hour, a new world record. *(BTW, I think it’s pretty awesome that the #1 and #2 spots for “most efficient drive-thrus in the world” are both in our church. I feel like this should be an Olympic sport, right? They have everything else. If a Turkish guy can win a medal shooting a pistol gangster-style, drive-thru efficiency should get some recognition, too) (BTW, we make a habit of not promoting church members’ businesses from the stage, because it’s not fair, but hey, we’re talking about CFA--that’s Christian chicken, right? It doesn’t count.*

Jericho. Accessed July 31, 2024. Until the middle of the 19th century, scholars were unsure if Jericho was really old enough to have existed during Joshua’s time. But archaeological evidence from Charles Warren in 1868 and John Garstang in the 1930s uncovered an ancient city at Jericho’s site. The city shows evidence of having been walled as early as 8000 BC, making it the oldest walled city in the world. (*Revell Bible Dictionary*, 548.)

But I share that because **Joshua felt a little bit like Katherine did**: He doesn’t want anybody to think they’re about to experience a drop-off in competence from Moses. So, understandably, he is having a **little trouble sleeping**, so he goes out for a **walk**.

- It’s **late at night**; and he’s out **praying**, or smoking a cigar or **scrolling through TikTok** or whatever he does to unwind.

Verse 13: When Joshua was by Jericho, By the way, in Hebrew that word “by” Jericho means “right up next to” the walls of the city. Literally it means, “at Jericho, standing by the walls,⁴ ...he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” Now, first, can we acknowledge--Joshua is a **man’s man**. I mean, he’s **right by the enemy wall, by himself**, and he encounters a strange man in the dark who has a sword drawn. **A lesser man, like me, would have hightailed** it out of there--but not Joshua. Joshua, who is most likely 70 or 80 at this point(!), goes **over and challenges** the man to a fight. Come on, now! **Write this in your Bible: Joshua is the truer and better Nicolas Cage**. Some people wear Superman pajamas. Superman wore Joshua pajamas.

And Joshua said to him: “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” [14] And he (the Man) said, “No;

- “No.” Had Joshua asked him a “yes/no” question? Sounds to me like he asked him an either/or question: “Are you for our adversaries?” The Man’s response was “No.”
- **It’s kind of like when my kids do that thing where they try to trap me with some yes/no question as if I’ve already agreed to**

⁴ “The preposition here is –ב[bi], commonly translated “in.” But the preposition also frequently means “at” (*HALOT* 104), and “at Jericho” fits the scenario easily: Joshua was somewhere near it, not within its walls (cf. 6:1, which says that Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites).” D. M. Howard, Jr., *Vol. 5: Joshua*, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 155–156.

something, like, "Dad, are we gonna go out for ice cream before lunch or after lunch?" And I am like, "Wait, did I promise we were going out for ice cream today?" Kids are natural gaslighters, aren't they?

- So, as I've gotten wiser as a parent, I just answer their question with, "**No. No, you're asking the wrong question.**"

The Man says, "Wrong question, Joshua: **"No; but as the Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."**

- The **question, Joshua, is not**, "Am I on your side; the question is are you on *my* side?"
- I'm **not coming as the Lieutenant in this battle**; I come as the **General**. I don't work for you; you work for me.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What (then) does my lord say to his servant?" [15] And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

BTW, who exactly is this that Joshua is standing in front of? Some say, "Well, obviously, an angel." But y'all, it **can't be an angel**, because it says that Joshua worshiped him and whoever this strange Man was let Joshua do it. **Angels in the Bible never let you worship them.** In Revelation 22, for example, when the Apostle John fell down to worship the angel revealing all the visions to him, the angel said, "What are you doing? I'm a creature just like you. Worship God only." But this Man says to Joshua, "Very good. And take off your shoes, too, because MY presence HERE makes this ground holy."⁵

This is what theologians call a "**christophany**," which means a pre-nativity, Old Testament appearance of Jesus in human form. This is

Jesus before he was conceived in Mary's womb. It's an awesome thought: before Jesus was born as a helpless babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, he was **the Commander in Chief** of the Lord's armies, **and the question is never, "Whose side is he on?"** The question is whether we are on *HIS*. These are his battles he calls us to join him in, not our battles that he comes to assist us in.

BTW, we **skipped this part**, but at the beginning of chapter 5, just after Israel had gotten up to Jericho, it's right there in their sights, **God had Joshua circumcise** all the male soldiers. Now, I don't want to go into all the details of circumcision, but that left the army feeling rather... vulnerable. No guy is going to feel like fighting after that, at least for several days. Amen, guys? Why would God do that then? I mean, God could have given that command to them at any point-- they'd been wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years before this--why not do it there? Why wait until they are right up at Jericho and it leaves them really vulnerable?

You know the answer. It was to show them that victory and strength did not belong to them. This was God's battle, not theirs, and what God wants from them is surrender, not a show of strength. So he puts them in a position of weakness so they'll be reminded to lean upon them. And this is what Jesus is reinforcing to Joshua, again, on the eve of battle: "*I'm the Commander, not you. I don't come to assist you; I call you to follow me.*"

Chapter 6: **1 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. 2 And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor."** Joshua's like, "I don't really see all that. All I see is a big ol' city." The Lord then proceeds to **give Joshua instructions** on how to take Jericho, but the **instructions are...**

⁵ THIRD, If there **were any doubt**, Joshua actually refers to him as "**the Lord**" in the next chapter. Joshua 6:2

odd... to say the least. The Lord tells them to put the Ark of the Covenant out in front of them (the Ark of the Covenant being the little mobile tabernacle that housed God's presence)--put that in front of you, he says, and march around the city once a day for six days. In total silence. And then, on the 7th day, march around the wall 7 times, and at the end of the 7th time, shout, and **I'll take care of the rest."**

Don't lose **how bizarre** and humiliating this is. The army of Israel is all **amped up for a fight; and** Joshua is itching to **prove himself**, and God tells them to march silently around the walls 13 times and on the 13th time... shout.

- I mean, imagine if this were a **football game**. Your team, which is being coached by a brand new coach, is down by 3 points on the 2-yard-line with 5 seconds to go, and the brand new coach, whom everybody is wondering whether he will make it, says, "No offensive play right now; I want you guys just to hold hands at the scrimmage line and sing "Away in a manger."
- And how hard must this have been **for Joshua?** He's looking to prove his mettle as a General, but God says, "I want you to walk a bunch of newly-circumcised soldiers around these walls and then sing to it."

I want to draw out for you some basic faith-lessons from this story, but first, I need to warn you about misapplying these lessons, because most people do that with this story and stories like this.

We read these stories as if they were all about us, as if we're the main character in the Bible, and God exists to help us with whatever Jericho is keeping us from what we want, as if building our little personal kingdoms is the focal point of what God is doing in the world.

- So some guy is listening to this and thinking, "My Jericho, my impossible situation, is getting a date. So I'm going to walk around

this girl 7 times and on the last time shout 'Go out with me!' And I expect her walls of resistance to fall down."

- **That's not 'bold faith,'** my brother; that's **Exhibit A in a PETITION for a restraining order.**

Hey, newsflash (tighten up): The Bible is not primarily about you. It's about Jesus. I hate to break it to you, but in this story, you and I ain't Joshua. If you're looking for something or someone in this story to represent you, you and I are Jericho. Jericho is the citadel of our sin that stood between us and the Promised Land of our salvation, and there was nothing we or anybody could do about it--so along came Jesus, the truer and better Joshua, who through the **counterintuitive, humble obedience of the cross** overcame that barrier. His final cry of "It is finished" brought down the walls of sin and death that held us captive. **(By the way, Joshua's name means literally "the Lord saves."** In Hebrew, Yeshua; *Yeh-* (the Lord) *-shua* (saves). 2000 years later, when the Jewish people adopted Greek language and culture, they changed the pronunciation of Yeshua, *slightly*. Do you know what the Greek version of Yeh-shua is? **'Jesus.'** Our sin was Jericho; Jesus was Joshua who destroyed our sin all by himself without us so much as lifting a finger to help him.)

Jesus is the main point of this story, and I **know a lot of worship songs** make it sound like, "Oh, God's gonna knock all the walls down for me, he's gonna come through for me, he's going to give me the miracle..." But that's not the main point! The main point is for you to worship and obey Jesus; *to stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene*, and wonder how he could love me, a Jericho sinner condemned unclean. **Don't read the Bible like a narcissist; read it like a worshiper.**

And yet--hear this!--And yet! Heb 11:30 does point to this situation as an example of faith that we should emulate. That Jesus is truer and better Joshua might be the main point of the Jericho story, but it's not the only point. There are **things about Joshua's faith the writer of Hebrews thinks we should emulate.**

So let me give you FOUR "basics of the faith" we see in this story that we should emulate. Let's call them **"The Jericho Rules"**

1. The Christian life is something we do *with* God, not *for* him

- **This has been a major thing** I've been emphasizing all year—because I've been relearning it myself. Christianity is not ***you for God***; it's **Christ *in* and *through* you**.
- And that changes the equation. The question is NOT, "What do I have to do to get God on my side?" The question is, as Joshua shows us, "What does God want me to do & how do I join him in that?"

So, let me ask: How do you relate to God? I'd say many of us look at God like our faithful lieutenant: He's there to influence, guide, comfort, take care of us, help us through tough times, and, most of all, escort us to a safe place after death.

- And listen, God **wants to do all those things** in your life—he wants to bless and he most definitely wants to take care of you and take you to heaven.
- But he **comes first** as *Commander of the Army*. He comes first as Lord.

Which means, the point is not, "What do I need to do to keep him on my side." If you see your life as primarily yours and God is there to assist you, your question will be Joshua's--"*God, what do I gotta do to*

keep you on my side? How do I keep the blessing flowing? How do I keep this tap open?"

- *How much do I have to give to get your blessing? Is 10% enough?*
- *Or, How involved do I need to be in the church? If I were more involved, would God bless me more?*
- *How good do I have to be? Which sins really tick God off? He grades on the curve, right? So how do I get from a D to a C to a B?*

And if you think this way, when something goes wrong, you'll always ask, "**OK! What didn't I do?** What is he punishing me for now?"

But if you see the Christian life as YOU following JESUS, the only question you'll have is: "Where does he want to go?"

- *I don't give him 10% of my money so he'll bless the rest. FOR 100%* of it I ask, "What does he want me to do w/ this?"
- You don't give him 1 or 2 days a week at church so he'll bless the rest of your week; he owns 24 hours of all 7 days of your week.

BTW, some Christians try to go so far as to even separate out the Lordship of Jesus from his being their Savior and their Help, as if you can have part of Jesus but not all.

- But see, you can't bifurcate Jesus. He's the LORD Jesus Christ. You can't separate him into parts and take the Savior part but leave the Lord part.
- If you invited me to your house and I rang the doorbell and you said, "Come in J.D.! Stay out, Greear!" I wouldn't know what to do. I'm all J.D.; and I'm all Greear.
- People say, "I want loving Jesus, helpful Jesus, save me and take me to heaven Jesus, but not **Commanding** Jesus, or **Holy** Jesus, or giving-me-rules-about-my-sexuality Jesus, OR LORD Jesus. *If that's you, you aren't going to get any of Jesus. You can't divide him up like he's a salad bar.*

We come not to solicit his help, just to follow him. And believe it or not, this is incredibly comforting:

- **See, that means, for example, in my parenting, I'm not coming to beg for his help, I'm offering myself to be used by him.** I'm not responsible for saving or bringing up my kids; THAT'S HIS BATTLE. He's the Commander. I'm only responsible to follow and obey him as he does that. So I don't have to sit around and think, "Where am I not strong enough? Or, how do I fix these kids?" He says, "As Commander of the Army of the Lord I come. That means that's my battle, not yours. Follow me."
- **When it comes to the success of this church, I don't have to say,** "Are we good enough to win this community? How much money do we need?" When something goes wrong I don't say, "Oh, what are we gonna do now?" WE CAN'T WIN this community! But that's not my battle. He comes as the Commander of the Lord's Armies. It's his battle. He leads; we follow.
- **Some of you are praying right now, "God, bless my career."** Let me give you a better prayer: Why don't you surrender your career and all the days of your life to him, and then you don't have to ask him to bless it. The orders he gives come "pre-blessed."

Do you see the difference here?

- **Listen, some of you came to Jesus because you knew you needed his help. You were up against some Jericho you can't overcome. And that's great:** But what you find, coming to Jesus, is that what he's looking for is far more radical than you ever imagined.
- You came wanting comfort; he came demanding control.
- **C. S. Lewis said that coming to Jesus was like living in this old, rickety house** where there's a lot of leaks and a bunch of things are broken and so you send for Jesus the Repairman. And Jesus comes in and gets to work, fixing the leaks and patching the roof and unplugging the drains... and you're like, "This is great." But then, without warning, he takes out a sledgehammer and starts

tearing down a wall. And you are like, "Uh... what is happening? This is not what I wanted." C.S. Lewis said (this is one of my favorite passages he ever wrote), *"The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you imagined—he launches out on a new wing here, puts up on an extra floor there, he runs up towers, starts making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage, but he is building a palace. And he intends to come and live in it himself."*⁶

God had a better plan for Joshua than just helping him win a battle, and he's got a better plan for you. And it starts w/ surrender to him as Commander. *The Christian life is not something you do for him, but something you do with him.*

2. God's way often seems crazy

- **A key point in this story is the absurdity of what's being asked.** I mean, God could have had them show their faith in a bunch of different ways--ways that wouldn't have involved weird demonstrations of public humiliation. I mean, it's an army marching around a city in silence, and, not to be graphic, they are probably still walking a little bow-legged from the recent circumcision. This is not an awe-inspiring sight.
- **But the crazy nature of these instructions is intentional,** because lots of things Jesus commands us to do seem crazy and counterintuitive.
- (smile) And I know some of you feel so gratified right now. But listen: By this, I am **NOT referring to weird Christian rituals** that some Christians engage in, either. Over the years I've been given my share of wacky instructions to procure God's blessing on something: rub oil in certain places and wave banners and shake tambourines and blow shofars and other forms of Christian loony-

⁶ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

weird. I'm not talking about any of that stuff. You do that stuff on your own time.

- **I'm talking about the counter-intuitive WAY of the CROSS:**
- Like, responding to someone who has wronged you with forgiveness instead of vengeance. Everything in your mind says, "Vengeance is the only way to make this right." But Jesus says "Be humble. Forgive, because vengeance belongs to me." And it feels CRAZY. But here's the thing: with forgiveness comes the power of God.
- Or **taking a Sabbath:** You think, "I can't afford that time-wise. I got so much to do. I can't get everything done in 7 days, let alone 6. It makes no sense." But, see, you do it and God multiplies your time.
- Or **tithing.** You say, "I can't afford to tithe." But then God multiplies your resources because of your obedience.
- Or **being patient** in a situation when you feel like giving up.
- Sometimes that crazy way means taking a risk when you feel God is leading you somewhere. You're like, "God, resigning my career and going to this mission opportunity seems crazy, but you are saying it, so I will go."
- **Jesus was the preeminent model of this crazy obedience.** He overcame evil not through a display of strength and power, by forcing all his enemies into submission, but he overcame evil and the devil himself **through his own submission and weakness** of the cross--there he unmasked evil and stripped it of its power and overcame the curse of death--and we **now follow** in his steps.

3. Beware the off-ramp of compromise

There's a little addendum to this story that's worth mentioning briefly, and I can only do it briefly.

When God gave them the instructions about taking Jericho, he told them, don't touch any of Jericho's spoils. It was customary in those days for soldiers of conquering armies to collect some of the spoils for

themselves, but God said, "In this case, don't touch any of it." Why? Because, he wanted them to know: this is not about you winning a battle. The spoils don't belong to you. Everything belongs to me."

Chapter 7 opens like this: 7:1 But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan... of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things (in Jericho). And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.

When the walls fell down and the soldiers went in, one of the Israelite soldiers took some of the riches in Jericho and hid them in his tent. So, when the people of Israel went out to their next battle after Jericho--against a little tiny city called Ai that they should have had no problem with (a village, basically)--they LOST. And Joshua says, "God, what in the world? Did you just suddenly leave us?" And God says, "One of your people broke faith." (That's the word he uses)

Now, I'll be honest. It looks like Achan just got a little greedy; like he wanted to grease his own skids just a little bit. But God calls what he did a breaking of the faith of Hebrews 11. A betrayal of the faith.

How so? How is that "breaking the faith"? Well, in short, he quit depending on God to meet his needs and took charge of filling his own life with happiness. He took matters into his own hands. He didn't want to wait for God's plan; he wanted to go obtain it for himself.

Listen! The deadly offramp in any venture of faith is always small compromise. And not even big compromises. Small ones.

- **I don't want to wait for the spouse that's a gift from God,** so I'll compromise. Or I'll hook up with this person even though I know I don't want to marry them because they satisfy a temporary need.
- **I really can't afford to tithe right now,** so I'll keep back part of it for me to meet my needs.

- **If I don't put this person in their place they'll never learn.** I know God says vengeance is his, but I'm going to take just a little of it.

Beware compromise! When you take matters back into your own hands and stop obeying, even for a little bit, you are bringing curse into your life, and cutting yourself off from the power of God.

4. Endure, endure, endure, endure, endure, endure, endure

You'll see I wrote that 7x, once for each of those final laps! Seriously: How many times in those final laps did they feel like quitting?

Because, here's the thing: halfway through the 6th lap on the 7th day, the walls looked NO different than they did the first day.

I'm an incrementalist, which means, I don't mind working hard, but want to see progress over time. Right? I read *Boys in the Boat* a few years ago; it's about a U.S. rowing team in the 1930's that won the Olympics. I always thought that the worst part of being on a rowing team is you have to sit backwards to row, which means you can't see how close the finish line is. The coxswain, who's facing forward, is the only one who can see. In this story, the coxswain would play tricks on the crew to get the best effort of them. He'd say, "OK, boys, just 15 more seconds and we'll be across the finish line. Give it all you have!" And they'd row like crazy for 15 seconds, and then he'd say, "Just 15 more seconds!" That would drive me CRAZY. I want to see the finish line coming closer with every stroke. But that's not what happened to Israel. Every day they marched and nothing happened. No falling bricks. No quaking. The walls looks the same at the end of day 6 that they did on day 1.

A friend of mine says: I imagine these guys coming home to their wives and kids each night. I mean, you know how that goes, right? After the 1st day, the wife says, "Well, how was your day?" And men, you know what that means. That means, "Tell me all of the details, everything that happened, what you thought about what happened, and then what you thought about what you thought about what happened, and then what your friend and you discussed about what you thought about what you thought about that happened." And these guys were like, "Well.. we just kind of... well... we walked around." She's like, "You... just *walked*." And you're like, "Yeah, I don't know what's going on. Maybe this is some kind of creepy scare tactic. I don't get it."

And then, the second day. You come home and she says, "Oh, baby! How was the battle? You killed the big bad Canaanite guy, didn't you, my big warrior man?" And you're like, "Well, no. We just...walked around again." Btw, there's no indication Joshua even told them how many days it would be!⁷

Every day they had to walk, seeing no progress at all! I mean, if I were God, surely, and I wanted the people to stay motivated, I'd at least have a couple of bricks fall here and there. But nothing. Until that 7th lap on the 7th day--when it all comes crashing down.

VAMP

Isn't this the way it feels in your life sometimes? **You're obeying but you're just not seeing** the fulfillment of the promises.

- You're reading the Bible and you just don't see any change in your life yet. You're like, *Am I getting any better?*
- Or you're trying to raise these kids right but they keep doing stupid stuff.

⁷ I owe inspiration for this section to Steven Furtick in his message, "Don't Stop on 6: Joshua 6" given at Elevation Church in Charlotte, NC.

- You're trying to be what you should be in your marriage but your spouse just isn't changing.
- You tried to do the bigger thing and forgive but that friend, that neighbor, they just don't forgive you back; they stay mad at you.
- You've prayed and you prayed but there's no change.
- Or you're paying off your bills and you just got your head above water but then your car breaks down, or you get a medical bill.
- And you're like, "God, come on, let me see a couple of bricks fall!"

And God says, "But see, I want you to walk by faith, not by sight." And you're going to have to believe God is working even if it does not look like it at all. *That even when you can't see it, he's working.* Even when you can't feel it, he's working. He never stops, he never stops working.

Write this down: **Endurance is faith expressed over time.** It's easy to have a big moment of faith in here. But endurance is *faith expressed over time*. It's faith saying, "I believe you're working just like you promised. And even though I don't see it yet, I believe it."

Listen: just because your progress is not obvious does not mean your faith is not working. You gotta keep walking.

You see, the reason God sometimes lets us walk without seeing results is that he wants our faith to be less focused on the outcome and more on his promise. *Outcomes are his responsibility; faithful obedience is ours.*

See, listen: No changes may have been happening to the wall while they were circling, but I guarantee you changes were happening in them. And the reality was that God wasn't just preparing the Promised Land for them; he was also preparing *them* for the Promised Land, and every single lap reminded them that it was God's strength and God's strength alone that could win the battle, not theirs. I imagine that had God knocked down those walls on the first

lap, Israel would have quickly forgotten it was God's strength that won this battle. At least, that's what I would have been like. So every awkward, bow-legged step of every lap reinforced, "*It's not by might, not by power but by my Spirit,' says the Lord.*"

A friend of mine says, "***It is in circling the walls that we are prepared for the promise.***"

So, thank God for the extra laps, because the long, lonely laps of unfulfilled promise are where God infuses the Promised Land into us. Here's the reality of the Christian life: God is not just taking you to heaven; he's putting heaven into you.

I feel like this whole story, these 16 words of Hebrews 11:30, is for somebody today who feels like they're walking in circles this weekend.

- You're trying, but this whole time you're wondering: How much further? How much longer, God?
- How much longer is this relationship going to stay ruptured?
- How much longer until I see this person come to Christ?
- How much longer until God answers this prayer, or tears down this wall?
- How much longer until I see my kids come back?
- How much longer until I see blessing and fruit in my career? How much longer until I break out of this terrible financial cycle?
- How much longer do I have to live with this pain?
- How much longer do I have to be single? How many more friends do I have to watch get engaged? How many more weddings do I have to go to? God, I am trying to stay pure, but how much longer?

And Jesus says, "*Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because my cross and resurrection shows you that God always brings resurrection AFTER the cross of obedience. So keep walking, keep obeying.* Act like every lap is your last. And one day,

you'll be right. One day, you will see the goodness of the Lord break into the land of the living." **Endurance is faith expressed over time.**

Invitation: Bow Heads...

Who needs to come down here and ask for strength to keep walking?
(Prayer Teams)

And I think some of you need to come down here and make Jesus the commander of your life. He's the only one who could conquer your sin, and he did that through his death and resurrection. And when you surrender to him as Lord, he applies that salvation to you. And then, after that, his Spirit will start to lead you onward. You get all that by making him the Commander of your life. I want to invite you to come down here and surrender, give it all to him.

Or just come to pray to ask for strength to keep walking.