

Faith Continued

Salutation:

This message is to those Peter describes as **the people of God**. (1 Peter 2:10). More specifically, those who were **not a people** at one time **but are now the people of God**. (Id.)

Such language obviously refers back to the following remarkable passages in the book of the prophet Hosea: **[A]nd it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God**. (Hosea 1:10). And this: **And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God**. (Hosea 2:23).

These Old Testament Scriptures plainly refer to the 10 tribes who, because of their idolatries and unbelief, were delivered up to long captivity and visited with divine displeasure. But, as John Brown writes on this matter –

At a period, which we believe still to be future, these outcasts are to ‘return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.’ Then they who have long not been a people, but a collection of wanderers among the nations, shall become and be made to appear to be, as a nation, the peculiar objects of the divine favour, the people of the Lord.

The general meaning of Peter’s text mentioned above is that the previous state of Christians to whom he was writing, scattered about, and those Christians down through the years since then by virtue of his letter being included in the New Testament, I say that previous state of Christians resembled that of the outcast remnant of Israel – that they were not a people, but their present state, and your

present state, embraces all the dignities and advantages of which the dignities and advantages of Israel, the ancient people of God, were a type and emblem.

And such salvation is individualistic. It is not as groups of people, families, or other wholesale conversions, but as individuals that men and women are made Christians. It is seldom that a whole family is converted at once; and even when this takes place, as in the case of the family of the jailer of Philippi, they are converted as individuals. **And they (Paul and Silas) spake unto him (jailer) the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.** (Acts 16:32-34). There is certainly Bible support for individuals within a family or household being saved together, but it is yet an individualistic thing.

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14). As the prophet Jeremiah said, **Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.** (Jeremiah 3:14).

His church, thus selected and formed throughout the church era, is a body of individuals **redeemed from among men** (Revelation 14:4) that no man can **number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.** (Revelation 7:9).

It is to a collection of those types of individuals, meeting in Topeka, Kansas, generally known as Westboro Baptist Church, that I address these comments today.

Joseph:

By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. (Hebrews 11:22).

Now Joseph lived an exciting and interesting life. When young, Joseph the Dreamer was sold into slavery by his brothers after their original plans to murder him fell by the wayside when Reuben got cold feet. (Genesis 37). Ending up in Egypt, **the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man[.]** (Genesis 39:2). Imprisoned on false charges levied by his master's wife, Joseph survived that calamity by his dream-interpreting abilities. Listen to Joseph's ultimate station: **And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.** (Genesis 41:39-41).

When providence brought Joseph's father and brethren to Egypt following a severe famine, a remarkable family reunion occurred landing them in Egypt. The intricate details of that story are found in Genesis Chapters 42 through 47. In the end, **Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.** (Genesis 47:11, 12).

That's my effort at summarizing the highlights of Joseph's pilgrimage. Now consider Stephen's: **And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.** (Acts 7:9-14).

Yet all this drama plays no role when it comes to recording Joseph's act of faith in Hebrews 11. Instead, the focus is on Joseph's dying time. When he died, he held an important position in Egypt's society. But that was not important to him. Joseph's eminent position in Egypt did not make him regard that country as his home. In faith, he looked to God's promise of Canaan being fulfilled and desired that his bones should rest there. His wish was fulfilled. **And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.** (Joshua 24:32).

And by faith, Joseph (when dying) wanted to talk about what was coming, that is the remarkable event to be played out of the children of Israel leaving Egypt. John Gill gives these remarks on that topic: *he (Joseph) made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; that is, out of the land of Egypt: he remembered it himself, and put his brethren in mind of it, by speaking of it to their comfort, with great assurance; he knew they were well situated in the land of Egypt, and yet speaks of their departure out of it; he foresaw, and firmly believed they would be greatly afflicted in it, and that God would look upon them, and visit them, and bring them out of it, into the land of Canaan; all which shows the strength of his faith, and that it was about things not seen.*

This prediction of Joseph rested solely on faith in God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There were no events then occurring which would be likely to lead to such an exodus. Indeed, on the ground, things looked the opposite. Joseph had a firm conviction that what God had promised would be fulfilled, even when there were no appearances that to human view justified it.

Parents of Moses:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. (Hebrews 11:23).

Here our attention is drawn to the parents of Moses, who are unnamed; and more particularly, to their faith in hiding Moses for three months immediately after his birth. Their acts of faith appear to be hiding Moses **because they saw he was a proper child** and being unafraid of the king's commandment.

Goodly child: It would seem that the remarkable beauty of the infant was understood by his parents as a divine sign given for the guidance of their conduct. (Ellicott). From Stephen's final sermon we learn that when Moses was born, he was **exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months[.]** (Acts 7:20). The baby's uncommon beauty and comeliness was the reason which particularly influenced these parents in this endeavor. *Some glorious aspect was by God put upon him as a signal of some great person, and of great use in God's design to his church; some extraordinary stamp of God on his countenance, which faith could discern there, and so influence them to conceal and preserve him.* (Poole).

These parents were convinced that God would make future use of Moses by way of some extraordinary service to his people so they preserved and safeguarded him during the frailest of times, i.e. the first three months after birth, so that he did not fall prey to the cruelties of Pharaoh. *They believed that he was destined to some great purpose, and that he would be spared, notwithstanding all the probabilities against it, and all the difficulties in the case.* (Barnes).

It appears from our passage that both parents were diligently involved in this concealment and preservation, both driven by divine faith, although Exodus 2:2 suggests the mother played the primary role: **And the woman conceived, and**

bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

No fear of the king's commandment: Pharaoh's commandment, found at Exodus 1:16, was for the Hebrew midwives to kill all boys at birth. Specifically, **if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.** In short, this faith we are told of enabled these fresh parents to brave the anger of the king.

Now some may say these parents were duty-bound to obey the king's law. **Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors[.]** (1 Peter 2:13, 14). But we answer, when the human ordinance contradicts the divine ordinance, requiring us to do what God forbids (don't kill!), or forbidding us to do what God requires (don't kill!), the rule is plain: **We ought to obey God rather than men.** (Acts 5:29).

As a rule, new parents are in a difficult, challenging condition. New mothers are physically and mentally spent. New fathers, as a rule, are in way over their heads and are generally (like the new mother) working day and night to keep things going. The legendary football coach Vince Lombardi famously said "fatigue makes cowards of us all." If ever there is a time in the human experience when fatigue, weariness and exhaustion exists, that time surely includes new parents.

But these parents, in the face of life-threatening circumstances under a brutal Pharaoh, overcame. Their confidence in God allowed them to successfully disregard the bloody governmental edict. The difficulty they faced in doing so is hinted at when we see that they were only able to hang on for three short months. But it was enough. Their trial of faith ended successfully after **a season** whereby they received **the end of (their) faith, even the salvation of (their) souls.** (1 Peter 1:6, 9).

Closing the loop on this point, consider Gill's remarks: *And they were not afraid of the king's commandment; nor did they observe it, for it was contrary to nature, and to the laws of God, and to the promise of God's multiplying of that people, and to their hopes of deliverance: there is a great deal of courage and boldness in faith; and though faith may be weakened, it cannot be lost; and a weak faith is taken notice of, as here; for though they feared not at first, they seem to be afraid afterwards; but when God designs to work deliverance, nothing shall prevent.*

Brief Timeout:

Taking a temporary break from Hebrews 11, thinking and writing on faith I am sensitive to verses that pop up in different contexts having to do with that topic. One such verse recently called to my attention is 2 Timothy 4:7: **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.**

Keeping the faith in this brief earthly journey, such as Paul there mentions, includes at least the following, more or less, for each child of God:

- Guarding and safekeeping the treasure of this faith in Christ and handing it over, unpolluted, to the Lord's people you have traveled with, as one would keep valuables in a safe deposit box;
- Steadfastly upholding and maintaining the faith of the gospel while living, against all opposition, not concealing or keeping back anything; and,
- Spending your life faithfully endeavoring to serve the Lord.

Rahab:

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. (Hebrews 11:31).

In a nutshell, the story of Rahab is this: She was surrounded by, and lived in the midst of, unbelievers. To her, and to all those she lived amongst, came the

knowledge of what the Lord had done for Israel, drying up the Red Sea and utterly destroying Sihon and Og, two kings of the Amorites. (Joshua 2:10). But unlike her countrymen, she recognized from these signs, and acknowledged, the supremacy of Jehovah, and she cast her lot with His servants. The day came when she made that decision. Consequently, she and hers were saved while this happened around her: **And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.** (Joshua 6:21).

Rahab's faith was manifested by words and actions! Both are required. Words are good; some are better at expressing words than others, but words are required. Here were her words of faith: **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. 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. And as soon as we have 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. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.** (Joshua 2:9-13).

And here are her actions: Rahab hid the spies Joshua had sent secretly into the land of Jericho. She not only hid them, she did so in a most effective and clever fashion, in the **roof of the house . . . with the stalks of flax.** (Joshua 2:6). Then she lied to those who pursued the spies, so that they went off on a wild goose chase while the spies safely hid. Then, having diverted the government hounds, she counseled the spies on how to get out safely. **And she said unto them, Get you to**

the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. (Joshua 2:16).

It doesn't take a genius to recognize this was deadly business. One ill-advised move, one bad decision, one misstep, and Rahab, her household, and the spies are all dead people. To say that Rahab risked her life would be a gross understatement.

So what was the faith displayed by this lady of ill repute? She believed the God of Israel was the true and living God. She believed that the Israelites were His people. She believed adhering with fidelity to God and aligning herself with His people would lead to her salvation. And she knew talk of faith, alone, was cheap, and that action (or works) was required. So we see James speaking of this example: **Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:24-26).**

The result of Rahab's faith was simply that she **perished not with them that believed not.** (Hebrews 11:31). Of which result Dr. Gill writes: *perished not with them that believed not; the inhabitants of Jericho, who were unbelievers, and disobedient, and all perished by the sword: but Rahab perished not, neither temporally, nor eternally; her temporal salvation was an emblem and type of her spiritual salvation; her receiving the spies was an emblem of a soul's receiving the Gospel, and the ministers of it; the scarlet thread, that was hung out, was an emblem of the blood of Christ, by which sins, though as scarlet, are made white as wool; and the saving of her whole family is an emblem of the complete salvation of all the elect, soul and body, by Christ[.]*

Before wrapping up Rahab, there is a jarring effort by most expositors to convince the reader that Rahab was simply an innkeeper, and not a practicing

prostitute. Likely some of that is driven by a phony desire that the lineage of Jesus not include a harlot. (Matthew 1:5, where Rahab is listed in the Savior's lineage). But that dog doesn't hunt. There are too many occasions where Rahab is so identified, including our text and James 2:25, not to mention Joshua 2:1: **And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.**

So, for example, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown say: *Many expositors, desirous of removing the stigma of this name from an ancestress of the Saviour (Mt 1:5), have called her a hostess or tavern keeper. But Scriptural usage (Le 21:7-14; De 23:18; Jud 11:1; 1Ki 3:16), the authority of the Septuagint, followed by the apostles (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25), and the immemorial style of Eastern khans, which are never kept by women, establish the propriety of the term employed in our version.* Let it go, folks. Her lifestyle and subsequent salvation merely highlights the power of Christ's blood and the expiatory nature of the Messiah's death – he extinguished all guilt of his children.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.
(Ephesians 6:24).