

HEROES OF FAITH - ISRAEL  
"They Walked on Dry Ground"  
Hebrews 11:29

INTRODUCTION ... I'm really not sure we can call the people of Israel 'HEROES OF FAITH' - they really did not show much faith, but rather fears, doubts, and unbelief! ... maybe we should again talk about the faith of Moses - he knew/trusted that the Lord would act to save His people. Yet after the people finished WALKING ON DRY GROUND, "when [they] saw the great power with which the Lord had defeated the Egyptians, they stood in awe of the Lord; and they had faith in the Lord and in His servant Moses." (Exodus 14:31) Let's hear the story of one of the men of Israel ... we'll call him Ben(jamin).

I. Hi! I'm BEN ...

"Two weeks ago you saw how Moses went to the Egyptian king and said, 'The Lord says: Let My people go!' At first the king just laughed ... then when the Lord began sending the plagues, the Egyptian magicians could do the same through the power of Satan ... finally the Lord sent the angel of death across Egypt, killing all the first-born sons - except where the people of Israel painted their door-posts with the blood of the Passover lamb ... then the king called for Moses and commanded, 'Leave! You and all the people of Israel, go!' ... and we left! What a parade that was - with the Lord going before us in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night ... we were free - just as the Lord had promised! Sad to say, many of us doubted it would ever happen.

"Then someone looked back and saw a big cloud of dust ... the Egyptian king had changed his mind about letting us go - he sent his army with those awful chariots to chase us and bring us back or, even worse, to kill us all! ... and ahead of us was the water of the Red Sea ... we were trapped!

All confidence left us ... we were afraid ... we called to the Lord for help, but didn't really believe that He could do anything! ... we complained to Moses, 'Why did you lead us out here to the desert to die? Better to be slaves in Egypt and live!' ... Moses said, 'The Lord will fight for you - you will see what He will do to save you!' ... but few of us believed that - our faith was gone!

"Then something happened that none of us expected: the Lord told

Moses to hold his staff over the sea ... then He sent a strong wind to divide the water, so that we could see dry ground - and the pillar of cloud (the Lord Himself!) moved between us and the Egyptian army ... and Moses led us through the sea, walking on dry ground! When we were safe on the other side and the Egyptian army was in the middle of the sea, the water returned and destroyed them all! Yes, the Lord did fight for us - and won! ... He did make us free!

"We saw that happen and were shocked - 'The Lord did that for us!' - and we believed in Him ... I wish I could say that our faith continued strong, but it didn't! ... three days later we began complaining again - no water in the desert! ... the Lord always gave what we needed, but our faith never lasted very long before we complained again ... that continued for 40 years while we wandered in the desert, while the Lord taught us to believe/love/serve Him ... sad to say, we never learned very well."

II. Like Israel, so also us - the Lord saves by grace!

How much we are like Israel ... in trouble we cry to the Lord for help - we see His help/salvation and believe - soon we forget His goodness and faith dwindles - over and over again! Our faith is not always very strong, sometimes very weak, sometimes forgotten.

The Good News: the Lord God doesn't save/help us because we have a strong faith ... He does so because of His love/mercy to us ... remember the Scripture: "While we were sinners (un-believers!), Christ died for us" ... like Israel, we believe because we see what the Lord does to save us ... every time we see His saving works, our faith grows ... may it continue to grow stronger each day!

Then with that faith we can go before our loving Father in prayer, just as our Savior Jesus taught His disciples and us... we can ask, confident that our Father will answer our prayer. For Christ has made us God's children ... and the Father indeed loves us as children.

So don't copy Israel's example of unbelief/doubt/complaining ... but instead, learn from Jesus's example of perfect trust/obedience during the 40 days of temptation in the desert.