

GOD'S ART GALLERY ... and three of its wonderful pictures
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(HEBREWS 11: 29-31)

The writer of this epistle has created an art gallery in which the greatest spiritual portraits are on display. The artist used a brush called faith, and while some of these pictures are alone in splendid magnificence, here and there some are grouped together—they are displayed in series. For example, the pictures of Israel, Jericho, and Rahab, suggest an inspiring progression of New Testament teaching.

The Divided Waters (v. 29)

This portrait is a masterpiece! The scene depicted is one where hope struggles to overcome abject despair. Israel, so recently delivered from Egyptian bondage, looks back at the pursuing enemy. Hemmed in by hills, and halted by the sea, it could only be a matter of time before Pharaoh again subjugated the fearful people. The women clutch their children, and are terrified ; the helpless men bite their lips in vexation. In the forefront of the scene, the artist has placed Moses with rod lifted high. See, the waters are going back. It is unbelievable! -God has opened a highway through the sea. Moses smiles and waves his people on ; but just for a moment they hesitate, as three awful possibilities loom before them. (i) Would they sink in the mire left by receding waters? (ii) Would the waters return to overwhelm them? (iii) Would the dangers of the new land be too great? These suggestions find a response in many hearts ; for all three are apt to recur when a man faces the challenge of the unknown. When he obeys the command of God, will he be overcome by weakness? Will spiritual emotions be swamped by the crashing waters of temptation? Will the conflicts of the new life be too fierce?

The Destroyed Walls (v. 30)

The artist's second effort is no less picturesque. The nomadic peoples of the Jericho plains have retired into their fortress city. The gates are closed, and the watchmen are on the walls. The invaders move toward the citadel. Jericho is the first of the Canaanite cities to be taken, and the task seems to be hopeless. How can inexperienced people conquer without arms? How can indescribable weakness overcome planned strength? It cannot be done! But Joshua smiles. He has been in touch with God, and knows exactly what to do. The long procession encircles the city ; and but for the fear which grips their hearts, even the Canaanites would laugh. It is ludicrous. These people were substituting the blast of bugles for battering rams! Around and around they go, and the whole scene savours of fantasy. And then the earth trembles ; the walls bulge outwards, and the last line of defense is flattened. These strange people of God possess a secret weapon against which no army can stand. By faith they crossed the sea ; by faith they conquer Jericho. Saving faith brought them from bondage ; the same faith enables them to walk with God. This is the second lesson in Christian experience.

The Delivered Woman (v. 31)

We stand before the third picture of this inspiring group, and the scene is animated! The fallen masonry of Jericho's ruined walls can be seen everywhere. Smoke furiously probe billows from burning homes, while relentless soldiers probe the narrow alley-ways. Yet in the forefront of the scene a

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woman stands with her back to an undamaged part of the
wall, upon which stands her home. Clearly, a scarlet thread
hangs from her window frame. We remember the commands
given by Israel's men. Probably the idea had been suggested
by the fact that long before their people had acted similarly
in Egypt. The blood on the doorposts and lintels of their
homes had been a preventative of judgment. Hence Rahab
the harlot was instructed to act similarly, and her obedience
saved her life. Yes, this is a very thought-provoking trio of
Old Testament portraits. The first suggests freedom from
the bondage of sin-Egypt was left behind. The second
suggests freedom from the dominion of sin-Jericho was
taken. The third might easily suggest freedom from the pre-
sence of sin-Rahab the harlot escaped judgment and became
a dignified woman of God. These were mere shadows of
reality ; but they clearly illustrate the central message of
the Gospel. By faith they passed through. Faith is the key to
every problem; and no man need be bankrupt when heaven's
treasure house is before him!

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