

## **A Surprising Example of Exemplary Faith** **Joshua 2:1-24**

This morning, we are going to consider the example of a courageous individual. This woman hid and protected spies sent out from Israel, her country's enemy, an offense punishable by death. Not only did she demonstrate amazing courage by her actions, but also exemplary faith in God. She trusted in the God of Israel after having only heard what He had done. This woman is the last individual we might expect to be an example of faith for us. She was a Gentile prostitute living in the pagan, idolatrous and immoral city of Jericho. The person I am talking about is Rahab. Rahab is a surprising example to us of exemplary faith.

How does Rahab's story fit in the book of Joshua? The book of Joshua as a whole demonstrates that in spite of God's provision of a homeland and all of the needs of His people and in spite of His complete faithfulness to His promises, Israel as a whole is unfaithful and will have to be corrected. In sharp contrast to Israel stands Rahab. A subtheme of Joshua is to highlight the faith of a select group of pagans who recognize His authority and trust Him, even when His people fail to do so. Such individuals are examples of faith and Rahab is clearly one of them.

### **Read Joshua 2:1-7**

#### **In her concealment of the spies, Rahab demonstrates courageous faith (2:1-7)**

Joshua sends two spies into Canaan to gain military intelligence. He instructs these men to give special attention to Jericho, one of the many "city-states" in Canaan. Jericho covered 8-9 acres of land and there is archeological evidence that double walls about fifteen feet apart protected the city. Jericho was a key city to conquer as it guarded the pass leading westward into the mountainous region of the land God promised to Israel. By conquering this city, Joshua could cut straight across and divide the land, making it easier to defeat the cities to the north and south.

While Joshua sent the spies to Jericho for military purposes, God had another purpose. The spies enter and stay at the house of Rahab. Why do they pick her house? We aren't told why, nor are we told whether or not they were aware she was a prostitute. Regardless of the reasons they had for selecting Rahab's house, we know this—God providentially led the spies to go there as it was His purpose to show His grace and spare a prostitute, who had placed her faith in Him, from the impending judgment of Jericho.

While the mission of the spies is supposed to be secret, they are discovered by the king of Jericho's elaborate spy system. Specifically he is informed Israel's spies have entered Rahab's house. Rahab is given orders from the king to bring out the men. Instead, she hides them. Rahab admits to the king's messengers that the men came to her house, but lies telling them she didn't know where they had come from or where they had gone.

Rahab demonstrates great courage by concealing the spies. As I mentioned earlier, by hiding these men, Rahab was risking her life. Consider the following provision from the ancient law code of Hammurabi- "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death."

Why does Rahab show such concern for the two Israelite spies? Why is she willing to take such risks? Rahab is convinced the LORD is going to give Israel victory over her people. Her helping Israel's spies demonstrates she has sided with and openly identified with Israel and against her own people. Her actions demonstrate her faith in God and the fact that she is on the side of the God of Israel. Rahab's allegiance has changed.

**The question is asked, "Does the fact that good came out of Rahab's lie indicate that she was justified in lying?"**

The fact that lying is a sin is taught in the Old and New Testament.

Proverbs 12:22- "The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful."

Ephesians 4:25- "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

It is Rahab's faith that she is honored for, not for her sin of lying. She is commended for daring to believe that the God she's only heard about will protect her, but Scripture never commends her for lying. Rahab exhibits exemplary faith by her willingness to risk her life to protect the spies representing God's people. However, the manner in which she conceals the location of the spies—lying about it—is still sinful. Rahab's lie isn't justifiable even though it was common in her pagan culture and resulted in a good end. The ends do not justify the means. It is never right to do wrong. Some argue that the spies would have perished had Rahab been truthful and that she is justified in lying. However, such reasoning ignores the fact that God could have sovereignly protected the spies through another means.

Kenneth O. Gangel writes, "...Remember to distinguish between what the Bible reports and what it recommends, what it records and what it requires. Rahab's lie is never condoned..."

Though Rahab demonstrated remarkable faith, she still was a harlot and one who easily told lies. While Rahab responded in faith to the Word that she had heard about God's works, and had demonstrated her faith by hiding the spies, it was later in her life that she responded in obedience to God's standards for her life as she was made aware of them. Rahab responded to the light she had. Rahab was a new believer whose knowledge of God was adequate to bring her to saving faith, but certainly limited when it came to the practical things of life.

After Rahab lied and sent the men who came to question her about Israel's spies on a wild goose chase, she went to the roof where Israel's spies were hiding and spoke with them before they turned in for the night.

**Read Joshua 2:8-13**

**In her conversation with the spies, Rahab declares exclusive faith in the God of Israel (Joshua 2:8-13)**

Rahab reports to the spies the great fear that had come upon her and her people from the reports about what the LORD had done on behalf of Israel. When the people of Jericho heard what God had done on Israel's behalf, their hearts melted and their courage failed. The dread and fear of the Canaanites towards the people of Israel is yet another instance we will see in the book of Joshua in which God fulfilled a promise he had given to them.

Exodus 15:14-16- "The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone—until the people you brought pass by."

Deuteronomy 2:25- "This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

The terror of the people of Canaan was specifically tied to two events: 1. How the Lord had divided the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-25)—An event that took place 40 + years before Rahab's encounter with the spies. 2. The defeat of the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og (Numbers 21:21-35; Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11). (See Deuteronomy 3:11-The size of Og's bed was 13 feet long and 6 feet wide—this explains why Israel's victory in battle against Og caused the Canaanites to be in fear. He was a giant).

Rahab's faith puts Israel to shame. She only heard about what the Israelites personally experienced. While the Israelites responded to God by doubting Him, rebelling against him, and trembling in fear in the face of their enemies, Rahab trusted God and risked her life to identify with them.

Notice with me the difference between Rahab's response of faith upon hearing of what God had done and how Israel responded after seeing and experiencing God's mighty works firsthand.

Rahab said in Joshua 2:8- "I know that the LORD has given this land to you..." Rahab was confident that God was going to give the land to Israel. Forty plus years prior to this, the Israelites responded in unbelief to Caleb and Joshua's confident declaration that they could certainly take possession of the land.

Rahab responded in faith to the Word she had heard about the work of the God of Israel some 40+ years earlier in the parting of the Red Sea. Israel's people responded in unbelief after having so recently walked on dry ground through the Red Sea as God parted the waters for them.

Rahab responded in faith to the God of Israel after having only heard of how the Israelites had defeated giants (i.e. Og). Israel, on the other hand, failed to have faith that God could help them conquer the land because of the giants living there.

We learn from the story of Rahab that faith is not a matter of having a bunch of knowledge about God, nor is it a matter of having personal experience seeing the work of God with one's own eyes. Israel had more experience and knowledge than Rahab, and yet it was she who responded in faith.

Not only does Rahab put Israel to shame by her faith in God, but her faith also represents a markedly different response than that of her fellow Canaanites. While all of the Canaanites heard of Israel's victories too and were in fear because of Israel and her God, Rahab was very different in that she responded in faith while the rest of her people decided to resist Him. She trusts the LORD and chooses to identify with Him and His people. Rahab expresses to the spies the following statement of faith.

Joshua 2:11- "When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

Rahab acknowledges Israel's God as the true God of the universe.

Warren Wiersbe writes the following about Rahab's statement: "What a confession of faith from the lips of a woman whose life had been imprisoned in pagan idolatry! She believed in one God, not the multitude of gods that populated heathen temples. She believed He was a personal God, who would work on behalf of those who trusted Him. She believed He was the God of Israel, who would give the land to His people. This God whom she trusted was not limited to one nation or one land, but was the God of heaven and earth. Rahab believe in a great and awesome God."

After declaring to the spies her exclusive faith in the God of Israel, Rahab makes a request of the spies, asking them to promise to protect her family. She asks the spies to promise to return the same kindness to her family that she had shown them. She also asks for a sign that that her family will be spared from death.

### **Read Joshua 2:14-21**

#### **In keeping her part of the covenant she made with the spies, Rahab put her faith into action (2:14-21)**

The spies immediately agreed to make the agreement with Rahab she requested- "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly (hesed) and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land."

The men set three conditions upon which they made the covenant agreement with Rahab. If she broke any of the conditions, the covenant would no longer be binding:

1. Her house had to be marked by a scarlet cord hung from the window, the cord by which she let the spies go down the wall.
2. Rahab and her family were to remain in the house during the attack on Jericho.
3. Rahab was not to expose the mission of the spies.

Rahab put her faith into action. She tied the scarlet cord in the window to let the spies down the wall and left it there. She told only her relatives about the coming judgment and the promise of salvation. She helped the spies escape undetected and did not expose what they were doing.

While this agreement, or covenant, was made by the spies, it was the LORD who was ultimately responsible for seeing that the agreement was kept. When Israel later is given the city of Jericho by a miraculous act of God, Rahab and her family are protected. The wall around Jericho is totally destroyed, but Rahab's house remains in tact. Rahab is protected in accordance with the oath the spies made with her.

What was the significance of the scarlet cord? In the Ancient Near East, it was common that when making a covenant agreement, there would be a physical sign to serve as a reminder for the people involved of what had been promised. Rahab asked the spies for such a sign (Joshua 2:12). The scarlet cord served as this sign. It was the instrument through which the spies were delivered. It would be the instrument of deliverance for Rahab and her family too. It was a demonstration of faith for Rahab to put this cord in her window. Being scarlet, it would have been bright and noticeable. It could not be hidden. What would people say about the bright cord hanging in her window? Remember, the king and his messengers knew Rahab at one point had the spies in her house. She risked exposure of what she had done by having the vehicle of the spies escape hanging in her window. It was a demonstration of faith for her to leave it in the window.

### **Read Joshua 2:22-24**

#### **In their report, Israel's spies demonstrate their faith (2:22-24)**

The ten spies of Israel's first expedition reported, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." The two spies on this second expedition report to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." What changed? The difference is one of focus. The ten spies focused on the giants. The two spies focused on God and His promise to give Israel the land.

#### **Lessons learned from Rahab's story:**

##### **Lack of faith in God is not a problem of insufficient physical evidence, but of the heart.**

If coming to faith in God or not coming to faith is primarily an issue of whether or not enough evidence is put before people, then Israel would have believed in God and Rahab would have suffered certain judgment because of unbelief. They had ample physical evidence of God's presence, power, and faithfulness to His promises, but failed to trust Him. Israel saw everything God did in parting the Red Sea and in defeating Sihon and Og. Even so, the generation of adults in Israel who saw all of these things firsthand died in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

Most of those who insist they have to see demonstrations of God's presence and power before they will believe in Him will remain in unbelief, not because there isn't enough evidence, but because their hearts are hard and they refuse to believe. Rahab never saw with her own eyes what Israel saw. She just heard about what God had done and responds in faith.

## **If God can save Rahab, He can save anyone.**

I meet so many people who don't believe God could ever save them because of their sin—they had an abortion, they committed adultery, they committed murder, they lived for years as a liar, cheat, and thief, etc. Rahab's story is one of many in the pages of God's Word that serves as testimony to God's mercy and grace for sinful people—people who don't deserve it! Rahab was a prostitute. Rahab was a liar. Who knows what other sins she committed! She was deserving of judgment, but God saved her by His grace. If He can save a sinner like Rahab, He can save anyone.

## **We Are All Sinners deserving of judgment!**

Romans 3:23- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

God's glory is His splendor or the outward manifestation of His attributes. One of God's attributes is perfect holiness. Not a single human being, by his own efforts is able to measure up to the glory of God. We all fall short. We have all sinned. We have all missed the mark or standard of perfection God has set. Notice that God doesn't say that this or that person doesn't measure up because of the heinous sin they have committed. God says that not one single person in this universe measures up—all have sinned—all fall short.

## **The Penalty Of Death Is What We Earn By Our Sins and Deserve!**

Romans 6:23a- "For the wages of sin is death..."

The wage or penalty we earn by our sins is death. The penalty God's Word says we deserve is not just physical death, but also spiritual death. We deserve to be eternally separated from God's presence is a terrible place the Bible calls the Lake of Fire.

## **Jesus Christ Gave His Life On A Cruel Roman Cross To Pay The Penalty For Our Sins!**

Jesus died in our place. He died as our substitute.

John 3:16- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Romans 5:8- "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

2 Corinthians 5:21- "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus, who has no sin, who is perfect, took upon Himself our sins so that His righteousness could be given to those of us who trust in Him. Jesus died for us in order that we might have life in Him.

## **Jesus Did Not Stay Dead, But Was Victoriously Raised To Life From The Grave!**

1 Corinthians 15:3-4- “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

## **We Need To Accept Christ Through Faith!**

Faith in Christ means that we believe in, trust in, rely upon Him as our Savior from sin’s bondage and penalty.

John 1:12- “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

John 3:36a- “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”

John 6:40- “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

## **Jesus Is The Only Way To God!**

John 14:6- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

Acts 4:12- “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

## **We Are Incapable Of Being Saved By Our Works!**

Ephesians 2:8-9- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

## **There Will Be Ongoing Torment For Those Who Reject Christ!**

Revelation 20:15- “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

John 3:36b- “...But whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

## **There Will Be New & Eternal Life For Those Who Trust In Christ!**

2 Corinthians 5:17- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

John 3:36a- “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...”

## **If God can use Rahab, He can use anyone.**

So many who trust Christ for salvation don't believe they have real value in God's sight or could be of use in His Work. They think their past is too scarred. That is a lie from our enemy Satan. The fact is, God delights in using weak, wounded, ordinary people—this way He gets all the credit. If you are in Christ and in fellowship with Him, don't ever believe the lie that God can't use you because of your sinful past!

Consider how God used Rahab:

He used Rahab to deliver the spies.

He used Rahab to bring deliverance to her family. Rahab's life was transformed by her faith. Her faith in God fundamentally changed who she was. The significant change in her life is evident by the fact that her testimony was believable when she went to try to convince family members to join her. Rahab's pagan, Canaanite family saw something in her that convinced them to trust God and stay in the house to be delivered from judgment with her. God delights in making us new transformed creations who then in turn can be used of Him in leading others to Him.

Rahab became a member of the royal family and was a progenitor of the Savior. She was the great, great Grandmother of King David.

If God can use Rahab as He did, He can certainly use each and every one of us who knows Him and is in fellowship with Him.

## **When we openly identify with God's people in enemy territory, it's dangerous and requires that we live by faith as Rahab did**

There were risks in Rahab's hiding the spies. There were risks involved in telling her family what was going on. She could have been killed for what she did.

Even today, we are living in dangerous, enemy territory. The moment we stepped out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son, we put ourselves at odds with the king of this world, Satan. Satan is the prince and power of the air who is in control of this world's system. In this world, we live in dangerous territory. There is spiritual warfare going on all around us.

In a dangerous environment, Rahab openly identified with the people of God and trusted God. She took a stand that was contrary to her culture. She stood against the seen, trusting God for the things she couldn't see that He said He would do. Like her, we need to trust God and openly identify with the people of God even though it is contrary to our culture. Based on what we can see, this doesn't make sense given all of the threats and abuse we might incur upon ourselves for taking such a stand. However, based upon God's Word and what He has promised, trusting God to help us stand for Christ in the midst of a pagan world that opposes us is the only decision that makes sense.

Think about it. How many people do you know who have walked by faith instead of walking by sight and have thereby messed up their lives? How many people of faith do you know who presently regret having trusted God and done the right thing? On the flip side, how many people do you know who walked by sight instead of trusting God and presently regret their decision?

Yes, it can be frightening when we find ourselves at odds with others because of our stand for Christ, but friends, Biblical history demonstrates again and again that far more frightening are the consequences we face when we fail to trust God. Rahab is an example of faith to us. May God help us to follow her example.

Hebrews 11:31- "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."