

Rahab and the Spies (Joshua 2:1-24)

The covenant-keeping God demonstrated grace by saving His people and Rahab's family. In spite of Rahab's pagan background and imperfect past, she demonstrated courageous faith, confident faith, concerned faith, and covenant faith in the true God, who used unexpected individuals to carry out His will.

Introduction:

This past week has been a very stressful week. Ellie came down with severe abdominal pain with a fever. The doctor was not able to diagnose the problem until five days later. She had perforated appendicitis and was rushed to emergency. We were all set for her to have the appendix removed. However, when the surgeon came in, he explained patiently how Ellie's colon, small intestine, & the appendix were inflamed. Based on these extra complications, he advised not to have surgery, but to be put on an aggressive IV antibiotic therapy. Surgeons usually have a bad reputation of being cold and knife-happy. However, this surgeon was very different; he had excellent bedside manner. He took extra time to explain in detail all that was going on in Ellie's body. When we asked if he would repeat his explanation so that I could video tape him, he was glad to do so. As a matter of fact, he went to find a marker and drew a diagram as he patiently explained everything. We yielded to his recommendation and Ellie was discharged last Friday. I see this surgeon as my hero. Actually, he was an unexpected hero. Ellie told him that she was glad that he wasn't knife happy. He chuckled & said, "I usually am."

A couple of Sundays ago, we started a new preaching series called, "Heroes of our Faith." Today, we will be studying the life of Rahab, who is actually an unexpected hero. She was introduced in v.1 of our passage as a prostitute, an immoral pagan Gentile. Yet, she was acknowledged as one of the heroes of our faith in Hebrews 11. Out of that long list of heroes, there were only two women, namely, Sarah, the wife of Abraham and Rahab, the prostitute. Sarah was a godly woman, the wife of the father of the Jewish race. God has used her to bring Isaac into the world. However, Rahab, had a very different background. First, she was an ungodly Gentile who worshiped pagan gods and sold her body for money. Prostitutes were viewed as rejects and terrible sinners. Here we see two great contrasts with these two heroes. What do they have in common? Although they were so different in background, they both demonstrate saving faith in the true and living God.

Rahab was also mentioned two other times in the Bible. In James 2:21-26, James used Abraham and Rahab as illustrations of what saving faith is as it proves itself by good works. The third occurrence of Rahab was recorded with Jesus, the Messiah in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1. Rahab is listed with Jacob, King David, and other well-recognized heroes in the Old Testament. Although she was a pagan prostitute, she ended up in the genealogy of the Messiah. Rahab was the mother of Boaz, whose great grandson was King David. Out of God's grace, He used an unexpected individual to do great things for the Lord. God has said in 1 Cor. 1:27-29 that he uses the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise and to use the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

ILLUSTRATION: I knew a gangster that has served in prison for violent crime. However, he got saved. And now he is serving as a deacon for the Lord in his church. God can transform

anyone inside out no matter what kind of past we might have. For some of us, we might have an ugly past, but God can still use us to do great things for Him.

Well, what did Rahab do that deserved so much recognition? She was recognized for her faith. What does that look like? I want to point out four characteristics of her faith. 1) Courageous faith 2) Confident Faith, 3) Concerned Faith 4) Covenant Faith. [Let us look at each one more in detail. First, Rahab's courageous faith is demonstrated as she risked her life to protect the spies. Let us read v.1, "And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there."]

A. Rahab's courageous faith is demonstrated as she risked her life to protect the spies (vv1-7)

Jericho was a very strategic city in Joshua's plan to conquer Canaan. It was located in the middle of Canaan. After taking Jericho, Joshua could cut straight across to divide the land. As a result, it would be easier to overcome the cities in the North as well as in the South.

God has promised Joshua back in Joshua 1:3, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses." The covenant-keeping God has promised to Joshua that God has given the land to him. However, he needs to claim it. For every step that he makes, God will give it to him. The Word, "given" is used many times through Joshua to reaffirm God as the covenant-keeping God. Joshua knew that God has given the land to him already. However, he still has personal responsibilities to check out the land and the people. A good general wants to know as much about the enemy so that he can be prepared for battle.

As Joshua sent the two spies to check out the city of Jericho, it reminds me of a similar incident that took place some 40 years ago, where Moses was leading God's people into the Promised Land. Moses sent 12 spies to check out the land and the people. Just as God promised, the land was filled with milk and honey. However, ten of the spies were overwhelmed by the large inhabitants and they were not willing to trust God to lead them into the Promised Land. Because of their lack of faith, the people were disciplined as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. How will these two spies sent out by Joshua respond? Are they going to focus on God or on the difficulties before them?

God being a sovereign God directed the two spies into the house of a prostitute. Although it seems to be illogical, God had good reasons. I believe God's purpose for the spies to go to Jericho is more than securing military information. I am convinced that God in his grace sent the spies to Rahab's house to save Rahab and her family. It appears that Rahab was the only person in Jericho that believed and responded to the God of Israel.

Another reason why Rahab's home was selected is because it was on the wall of Jericho. We will find out later that the spies escaped through the window of Rahab's home. This shows that God is in control of everything. He had everything planned out.

Somehow, the spies were detected and someone reported to the authorities that they went into Rahab's house. When the king heard about it, he quickly sent soldiers to Rahab's house to capture the spies. They demanded Rahab to bring out the men. Rahab had an

important decision to make. Will she turn them over to the soldiers or will she not turn them over. Rahab's courageous faith was demonstrated as she risked her life to protect the spies. Let us read what she said to the soldiers in verse 4-7, "But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out."]

Rahab did not deny seeing the two spies, but she told them that the spies left the city. She encouraged the soldiers not to waste any time and pursue them quickly so that they could catch them. Without any hesitation, the soldiers took Rahab at her word and left in pursuing the spies without searching her place.

Her courageous faith enabled her to assist the spies in their cause. She was not afraid to hide them. Faith and work goes hand in hand. James 2:17 says, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." If the king found out about her deception, it would have caused her life.

You might say, "Wait a minute. Rahab just lied to the soldiers. How can she be commended for such ungodly behaviors?" Can we say, "The end justify the means?" The Bible says clearly that lying is wrong (Prov. 12:22). The lie of Rahab was stated, but never approved. The Scripture approved of her faith demonstrated by good works as she risked her life to protect the spies. Her faith was not hidden.

APPLICATION: Are we willing to stand up to God's truths although it might not be well accepted by our culture? God is pro-life and we should be pro-life. God has compassion for the poor. May we have compassion for the poor. God hates divorce; we should hate divorce.

[We have seen Rahab's courageous faith demonstrated. A second description of Rahab faith is her confident faith, it goes beyond her head knowledge of God to her belief in action. Let us read vv. 8-11, "Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you have fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath."]

B. Rahab's confident faith goes beyond her head knowledge of God to her belief in action (vv. 8-11)

Faith is only as good as the object of our faith. May we not put our faith in something that is false or based on superstition. Rahab based her faith in the God of Israel, who has done great things. She realized that it could only be accomplished by the true God of the universe.

ILLUSTRATION: Ellie had excruciating pain during the week. We were talking with our grandson, Toby, who is 4 years old. He said, “God will take care of you.” He said it three times. He said it with great confidence. That is confident faith.

ILLUSTRATION: I was talking to a member that applied to dental school. Although she knew a friend that knew the dental school interviewer, she did not mention his name. She trusted that God will open up or close doors and she was willing to be obedient to God’s direction. She had a confident faith in the Lord.

All the inhabitants of the land have heard what the God of Israel has done. The key is how one would respond to it? Rahab heard that God had parted the Red Sea and His people walking on dry land. The second magnificent act of God is the victory over the two kings of the Amorites. They were destroyed. She acknowledged that the Lord was responsible for drying the Red Sea and giving victory over the two Amorite kings. After she heard it, she probably said, “That is impossible. It can only be an act of God.”

One thing is to know intellectually, but it is another to believe in her heart personally. It is one thing to be convinced in your mind, but another to respond in action. In v.9, it said that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. But it was only Rahab that responded in confident faith. She was so convinced of who God is that she was willing to risk her life to protect the spies.

Rahab made a proclamation, “For the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.” You need to remember that Rahab was a pagan that worshiped false gods. Yet, she acknowledged that there is a supernatural designer that created the universe. She believes that this God is the God of Israel. She is going against her culture and tradition. That is a bold move. She was confident that the miraculous acts are the work of the true God. As a result, she placed her trust in the power and authority of the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: This reminds me of a former Indian classmate of mine. When he placed his faith in Christ, he turned away from Hinduism, which was his family religion. Although he was kicked out of his family, he still held true to his faith in the Lord Jesus.

Rahab’s confident faith goes beyond her head knowledge of God to her belief in action. We see in the latter part of the passage how Rahab was requested to do some very odd things, but because of her confident faith, she obeyed. She was asked to tie a scarlet cord in the window to identify that she and her family were living there. True confident faith will result in action.

[We have witnessed Rahab’s courageous faith and her confident faith; another description of her faith is a concerned faith. We see this in vv. 12-14, “Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father’s house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death. And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.” Rahab’s concerned faith is displayed when she asked the spies to save her family.]

- C. Rahab’s concerned faith is displayed when she asked the spies to save her family. (vv.12-14)
 - 1. Rahab’s Petition

Once Rahab has witnessed & experienced the grace and mercy of God, she immediately desires for her family to be rescued also. We have seen a number of examples in scripture, where an individual has personally experienced God's mercy, they immediately think about someone else that need to be rescued. We have seen this in the woman at the well, she had a burden for the people in her town. We have seen this in Andrew, who immediately thought about his brother, Simon. Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. There is the example of the cleansed leper, who told everyone about Jesus because he wanted them to be cleansed.

APPLICATION: Do we think about those closest to us that need to be rescued from the bondage of sin? Do you value your free gift of salvation from the Lord so much that you want to make sure that your loved ones will know also?

ILLUSTRATION: My daughter's mother-in-law did not know the Lord and I asked God to give me opportunity to talk to her about the Lord. I was thrilled when she placed her trust in Christ and was baptized two years ago. I prayed for my unsaved parents for 38 years. It was in God's timing when He used my dad's doctor to lead my parents to the Lord. On one of my doctor's appointments, his doctor shared that he was planning to have heart surgery. Whatever happens, he knew for certain that he was going to heaven. That prompted my dad to ask him how does he know? The doctor shared the gospel with my parents in his office and my parents believed and were saved.

Rahab wanted assurance from the spies that her family would be protected when the Israelites came to take the city of Jericho. She asked that she and her family be spared when the Israelites capture Jericho. She did not have any doubt that God was going to be victorious. Just as God has parted the Red Sea and overcome the two kings, He would also be victorious at Jericho.

2. The Spies' Promise

The spies agree to spare Rahab's family. They assured her in two ways: 1) They pledged their words. 2) They pledged their lives. In v.14, "And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land, we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." This promise is based on a condition. Rahab must promise to not tell anyone in the city what happened other than her family members.

One can ask for big request when he have confidence in the object of your faith. The more you know the Lord, the more confident you can go before the Lord with big requests. Rahab is making a big ask, but she know that God is not only powerful, but he is merciful. [We have covered three descriptions of Rahab's faith: She has a courageous faith, confident faith, concerned faith, and fourthly, a covenant faith. Before the spies were let down a rope through the window, the men made a covenant with Rahab. Let's read vv.17- 18 "The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household."]

- D. Rahab's covenant faith is shown by her commitment to carry out her portion of the covenant (vv.15-24)

A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties, where there are certain conditions laid down for each party to obey. Throughout the Old Testament, there are many covenants that are introduced: such as the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, the new covenant. Before the spies left, they reiterated their covenant to each other. For the spies, they promised that they will deal kindly toward Rahab and her family members when the Lord gives them the land. However, there are several conditions that Rahab needed to uphold to:

1. Not tell anyone in the city what happened except his family members.
2. Tie a scarlet cord in the window, where the spies were let down.
3. Gather your family members in Rahab's home.

Note how Rahab responded in verse 21: "And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window." It requires covenant faith to be obedient to the three unusual requests. If she truly believed, then she would be saved. But if she thinks that is not believable, then she would not respond. Right away, Rahab tied the scarlet cord in the window. She did not waste any time. This speaks about her covenant faith. Quick to respond. Quick to obey.

Often in biblical covenant, God provides a physical sign to remind the people of what God has promised. God gave a rainbow as a sign for the Noahic Covenant. He would not destroy the world with a flood again. God's covenant with Abraham was "sealed" by the rite of circumcision. The Lord Jesus used the broken bread and the cup of wine as the sign for the New Covenant.

For Rahab and the spies, the sign was the scarlet cord tied to the window of her house. This scarlet rope was a sign to the army of Israel that this house is redeemed. The color scarlet or red reminds me of the blood that was placed on the door posts in Egypt during the Passover. All those that believed in what God said through Moses to put blood on the doorpost were saved. The angel of death passed over them. All the first born that did not have blood on their doorpost would face death.

The spies returned to the camp of Israel safely. They told Joshua all what has happened to them. Let us read vv.23-24, "Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us." Note this final statement from the spies. They gave reassurance that God would deliver Jericho into their hands. Their response was so much different from the spies that Moses sent out 40 years ago. They focused on the Lord, who is a covenant-keeper God, who has promised to give them the land as promised to Moses.

The covenant-keeping God demonstrated grace by saving His people and Rahab's family. We have seen Rahab as the hero in this story. However, Jesus is the ultimate hero for all of mankind as He has paid the ultimate price by dying on the cross to take away the penalty of sin to provide salvation for those that place their faith in Jesus. Our sins they are many, but his mercy is more.