

Joshua 2: Rahab's Faith

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[0 : 00] from Joshua chapter 2. This can be found on page 169 in the Pew Bibles in front of you. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Joshua chapter 2. In 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. And it was told to the king of Jericho, Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.

Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land. But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them.

And she said, True, the men came to me, but I don't 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.

[1 : 03] 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.

Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to them, Men, I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has 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 have 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 your Lord God, he is God in the heavens and above and on the earth beneath.

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.

[2 : 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.

Then she let them down by a rope and through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so then she lived in the wall. And she said to them, Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned.

Then afterward you may go your way. 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.

Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in your house, his blood shall be on our head.

But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear. And she said, According to your words, so be it.

[3 : 28] Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned. And the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing.

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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon.

It's good to be in God's house with you, to be able to share God's word. Good to be in God's house with you, and we're glad for the opportunity to shepherd God's people.

What an honor. What a privilege to be so called and used of God in that way. Pause with me for prayer. Oh God, we give thanks to you.

[4 : 39] We love you, and we worship you, and thank you that we have gathered with these who are called by your name. Lord, if anyone is not in that particular position in the family, we pray that you would be pleased to bring them in today, even through your word and through our worship.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Second Sunday of Advent, we're looking at the second of the five women of Christmas.

The lady's name is Rehab. She's mentioned in Matthew 1 and 5, along with another woman or two that we're looking at, as a person who is in the family tree of Jesus.

The biblical introduction, though we see her in Matthew and other places in New Testament, the biblical introduction is in Joshua chapter 2. That's been read. Here's the question before we saw it this afternoon.

How does what we see of Rehab in Joshua 2 help to explain her inclusion in the birth record of Jesus that we see in Matthew chapter 1?

[6 : 07] How does it explain her being there along with the other women that we are looking at in this series? Stated differently, what do we see in this chapter that explains the honorable mention of Rehab in the New Testament?

That's the question before us today. I am not going to get bogged down deeply in the text. As a matter of fact, there's some real ambiguities in the text.

Some of the questions that we may have as to in what way was Rehab a prostitute? Or what about her deception? Well, it seems like Scripture does not necessarily zero in on her faults.

It zeroes more on her faith. We see that particularly in the New Testament. And I know that there are probably a lot of answers and guesses about those things.

Well, perhaps see me later on those. But notice how chapter 2 begins. Two men from the camp of Israel had been sent to the well-fortified city of Jericho as well as into the land as a whole.

[7 : 32] They were on a reconnaissance mission. It was an intelligence-gathering kind of pursuit that they were on. Jericho, five miles west of the Jordan River.

And it was the gateway, the very gateway into the promised land, the land that God had promised to give to his people. And here we find them, these two men taking up lodging in the place that was owned and operated by the innkeeper, the prostitute, Rahab.

The word reached the king, didn't it? As we look on down in verses 2 and 3, that men of Israel had come into the city as spies. So the king, as we probably would do too, dispatched his men to see what these guys were actually up to.

Well, there's several things that I want us to see in the chapter. And what I'm going to do, I'm going to highlight them, go deeper in some than others. But then I want us to see some other of Scripture's testimony as regards to the woman that's in view.

First of all, I want you to see Rahab's courage. We see that in verses 2 through 4. What she did was she defied the local authorities in order to bring, who had told her, hey, bring out these men that had come into your place.

[9 : 08] Rather than giving them up, she hid them on her roof and did not give in to the authorities that were pressing her to bring them out.

Rahab would have been expected in that day, just like in our day, to do the patriotic things. I mean, you got these outsiders coming in. Hey, give them up. They're not coming here to do us any good.

She did not do that. At the risk of her own life and the life of her family, she gave refuge to these Israelite men.

She misled the pursuers who were searching for the spies and on the flat roof where the stocks were late, that's where they took their refuge, there in her home. Rahab's courageous conduct is what's in view in verses 4 through 7.

Rahab's confession is what we see in verses 8 through 11. Her words in verses 9 through 11 really amounted to a confession of faith in the God of Israel who had acted redemptively on behalf of his people.

[10 : 24] As a matter of fact, look there with me. Read along with me in verse 9. And said to the men, I know that the Lord has given you the land. And that the fear of you has 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 look at verse 11. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted and there was no spirit left in any man because of you. And listen to this.

For the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. A confession of faith in view of the Lord's redemptive work that he had done actually before certainly the inhabitants in the land in that day in Canaan as a whole and on the other side, on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

Because of this, because they had heard of the Lord's reputation, there was meltdown in Canaan. Fear had actually seized and gripped the people.

[11 : 51] Such a reaction had been prophesied by Moses in the Song of Moses in Exodus chapter 15. Listen to it as I just read a portion of it. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed.

Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab and all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them because of the greatness of your arm.

They are still as a stone till your people, O Lord, pass by. Till people pass by whom you have purchased, you will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

Key words. The place that God had ordained for his people promised long before Genesis chapter 12 where God was going to give his people a place of his choosing.

The Israelites spies on the roof in Jericho were hearing the deeds of the Almighty being rehearsed by a Canaanite woman.

[13 : 03] The Lord's fame had reached the other side of the border. And the people were trembling in view of what they were anticipating even in their own land.

Clear confession in verse 11. What we see here helps us to see that the compelling power of the Lord's redemptive works. When people hear of his redemptive works and see his redemptive works, it does something in the hearts to those who are hearing.

Similarly with the cross, whether it is God's work of salvation in redemptive kind of ways of deliverance and wreaking havoc on nations or the work of the cross, God's redemptive work is so compelling when it is on display in the lives of those who have received those kinds of redemption.

They had witnessed Rehab's courageous conduct. They had heard these spies the confession of faith in the Lord as the God of heaven and earth. But then, look in verses 12 through 21, we see Rehab's contract there.

Rehab's contract secured the kindness that was reserved, this is key, for covenant people. I mean, when, in working, you might say cutting this deal with them, she knew basically that the handwriting was on the wall for the people of Canaan.

[14 : 35] and she moved in a strategic way in order to secure her well-being as well as the well-being of her household. Look at verse 12. Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that as I have dealt kindly with you, you 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.

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.

She got them to sign, as it were, the dotted line. The appeal that Rahab made to the spies was yet another indication that this woman believed that the Lord was giving the land to his people.

Rahab wanted some insurance, a token, a sign that she and her family would be spared from the judgment to come.

She had them enter into a covenant. She wanted their pledge that they would be, in fact, delivered from death. And you can go, you can see the details. The appeal was based on mercy for the kindness that had been rendered by Rahab to these men.

[16 : 00] The agreement called for deliverance from death for her entire household. Verse 13b. The spies subsequently signed off on this contract and there's a sign that she's going to be delivered.

At least she told him to hang the red card or the scarlet card to be hung in the window. Family members needed to be in the house where the scarlet card was.

This arrangement was reminiscent of the Passover when there was blood to be on the doorposts of the house and wherever the blood was there would be deliverance from judgment.

No blood. No safety back then in our text. No scarlet card. No safety, huh? The contract would be void for all who were not in the house in verse 19.

Huh? So Rahab signed off on these stipulations and off these men went. Back to Joshua in the camp with the report and what a report it is.

[17 : 02] As a matter of fact look at verse 24. They said to Joshua truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands and also all of the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.

In Joshua chapter 1 the Lord tells Moses excuse me Joshua that I am giving you the land. That was the message from above.

The message on the ground in Canaan was the same as what God had said above. He's giving us he's giving them the land. The word up below was an echo of what was from above.

God is giving his people the land. This was from the lips of one who was indeed marked for destruction. Rahab the woman of Jericho.

What was it that was underneath Rahab's courage her confession and her contract? It was her faith.

[18 : 06] Fueled by faith Rahab acted with courage articulated her confession and entered into a contract that guaranteed the preservation of her family.

Here it was a stranger an outsider to the covenant and the promises of God. Rahab believed God in a manner that really should characterize the people of God.

This Canaanite woman modeled the kind of faith that was necessary and essential for the conquest that they were about to enter into. Faith that trusts the God of heaven as one who keeps his promises.

Do we not hear the echo three times in Joshua chapter 1? Be strong and be courageous. Be strong. Be courageous. And in Joshua chapter 2 we see that faith in a strange place in Jericho in a strange person a woman who is a prostitute but there it is nonetheless.

The rest of the story we find in Joshua chapter 6 and turn there with me if you would please. Joshua 6 verses 21 through 25. The walls of Jericho chapter 6 did indeed fall.

[19 : 31] The city was devoted to destruction except for Rahab and her household and initially and you'll see this as we read initially Rahab and her family were put outside of the camp.

But then she was brought in and became a part of the covenant community. Look there chapter 6 verse 21. Then they devoted all the city that's the city of Jericho to destruction both men and women young and old sheep and donkeys with the edge of the sword.

But to the two men who had spied out the land Joshua said go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belonged to her as you swore to her.

So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her and they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.

Verse 24 and they burned the city with fire and everything in it only the silver and the gold and the vessels of bronze and of iron they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.

[20 : 42] And here it is. But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And, listen to this, she has lived in Israel to this day.

Time of writing because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out. Jericho. Her confession, her courage, her contract, and underneath all of that was this woman of faith and courage.

Rahab's story, I mean, just look at it here. You might say, well, she's pushed off to the side. So, a great Old Testament story. It doesn't end there, does it? Because we see her in, again, in Matthew chapter 1, along with the other women, and we see Rahab in two other New Testament passages.

So, we go from her courage and confession and her contract to Rahab's commendation that we see in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 11.

Of course, you're familiar with Hebrews chapter 11. That includes the who's who of faith of the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, this Canaanite prostitute is seen as a part of a fraternity of faith.

[22 : 15] And it's not her faults that are clicked on, it is her faith that comes into view. The expected luminaries of the Old Testament come clearly into view in Hebrews chapter 11.

Folks, that you would expect to be there. Noah is there. Verse 7, 11 and 7. Abraham is there. Much is said about him. Verse 8 and even verse 17.

By faith. By faith, Isaac verse 20. By faith, Jacob verse 21 and Joseph in verse 22 and Moses verse 24. Only two women are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11.

You might expect Sarah. Abraham's wife is there and certainly she is there. In verse 11. By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive even when she was past age since she considered him faithful with promise.

The only other woman there and she is a Gentile. The only Gentile in Hebrews chapter 11 is Rahab.

[23 : 26] Huh? Verse 31. By faith, Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Huh? The reference in Hebrews 11 is what Rahab had done in Joshua chapter 2. And she is commended because of her faith.

Commendation doesn't stop with the writer of the Hebrews. James, our Lord's brother, similarly commends Rahab. Huh? In chapter 2, verse 25.

And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? The reference again, Joshua chapter 2.

And James uses Rahab as an illustration of faith that works. Her actions displayed the genuineness of her faith. Rahab, the Gentile woman, is positioned or mentioned right alongside Abraham, the prototypical person of faith.

[24 : 36] A man of faith, Abraham, a woman of faith, Rahab. And so we see Rahab at Christmastime in Matthew chapter 1.

The appearance in the Matthew chapter 1 picture was not by sleight of hand. It was not by Photoshop creativity just putting her in.

She is rightly there because she is in Jesus' family by blood. But the way that she got into Jesus' family by blood was by reason of her faith.

First and foremost, she was in the family of Jesus because of her faith. How did Rahab get into the family picture? Just like everyone else who gets in the picture of Jesus' family, the sovereign grace of God.

And so this second woman of Christmas helps us to see the scope of God's grace. It's matchless. It is genderless.

[25 : 44] It is without discrimination. Speaking about the faith of a Roman centurion, our Lord had this to say. And it's interesting how Matthew, at the beginning, he includes this Gentile woman in Jesus' family.

And Matthew talks about those coming from outside Israel and coming and putting their feet at the table of the family of God. And even at the end of the book, we see him sending his disciples into all of the nations.

But listen to this word in Matthew chapter 8, Jesus says, Truly I say to you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

Speaking about a centurion, I tell you, many will come from the east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness, and that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The kind of faith that we see in Rahab is the kind of faith that God wants in all of his people. The kind of be strong and courageous faith displayed in Rahab was the kind of faith that was needed for receiving the promise of land from the Lord.

[27 : 01] It's the kind of faith needed for receiving Christ, the person that is promised, the promise delivered. The kind of faith that is needed, and I trust is resident in us as those who are even on mission with God, for all of God's people, for all ages.

That kind of faith. Hebrews 6 and 12 remind us, so that you be not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

It's the kind of faith that we need today. A major turning point in the life of the nation was when Rahab showed up and demonstrated the kind of faith and courage to embrace God's promises.

An outsider became an example of the be strong and courageous kind of faith. God's promises are to be met with this kind of faith, the faith that we see both in Rahab and Tamar.

These ladies, check them out, they were both take charge women of faith whose behavior lined up with their beliefs.

[28 : 19] Marginal or outside women displayed the kind of faith that should be at the core of the identity of God's people, who we are. Those who have experienced God's grace are to live in that grace and act in that grace in view of that grace.

faith that enables strength and courage to do the right thing. What's needed? Faith in the gracious God of the promise.

So Rahab's faith serves as a rebuke on the one hand, but a model on the other hand for God's people of ages. Through this woman of faith, we are reminded not to be frightened, not to be dismayed, but to be strong and courageous, placing faith in the God of promise, that he in fact will act on his promise.

Right? So we come at Christmas time. How do we meet the Lord? Do we meet him with true anticipation and genuine kind of faith?

The God of grace deserves nothing less from you and me than this kind of faith. really find that kind of faith in us at Christmas time, 2010, and throughout the year.

[29 : 44] I pray that that would be the case with me. I pray that that would be the case with all who identify themselves as a part of this body of people.

What am I saying today? That the God of grace, who has revealed himself in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, deserves our act of faith.

The God of grace deserves our act of faith. Will that be a part of the content of your heart that you give to him? May we learn through the second woman of Christmas.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we give you praise on today, God of grace. And thank you for Rahab's faith. That reminds us on the one hand, perhaps even rebukes us on the other.

May we meet you even at this season with that kind of faith is our prayer. In Christ's name, Amen. Amen.