

Rahab

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[0:00] In Joshua chapter 6, we read at verse 25, But Rahab, the prostitute, and her father's household, and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive.

In examining this text today, I'd like us to look briefly at a few aspects of it. First of all, the status of Joshua. Secondly, the status of Rahab.

Thirdly, the reason that she was saved. And fourthly, the effect of that salvation. And finally, a few thoughts of application, a couple of thoughts of application for ourselves.

So these four things, the status of Joshua, the status of Rahab, the reason she was saved, and the effects of that salvation. First of all, then, the status of Joshua.

We read, Rahab, the prostitute, and her father's household, and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. He didn't do it personally. He didn't run into the city himself and fish her out and get all her family free.

[1:07] We know from verse 22, if you look at your Bibles, that he used other people to do it. He gave the orders. He made it happen. He caused it to happen. To be done through, yes, secondary causes and third parties were used to do the actual saving.

He, rightly, in Scripture, is named as the one who delivered her. As without him, it could not have happened. If Joshua had not given the orders, it wouldn't have happened.

Joshua is the one who saved Rahab and her family in that respect. Just as it is through Joshua that the wall is demolished, the city is destroyed, the population are slaughtered, so it is through this same Joshua that Rahab is saved.

The same individual is an instrument of both mass destruction on the one hand and individual deliverance on the other at the same time.

And there is no contradiction here. Joshua is the agent of a righteous God who will destroy iniquity and condemn sin, but who at the same time will deliver those who put their trust in him.

[2:30] Joshua did not appear in person, as we said, to do the saving. Indeed, as far as I'm aware, we have no record in Scripture that Joshua and Rahab ever personally, physically met.

Third parties and secondary causes were used, but Joshua did the saving. This Joshua who is the same individual at the same time, an instrument of both mass destruction, widespread slaughter and bloodshed, and individual deliverance at the same time.

Third parties and secondary causes, yes, they're used, but it's Joshua who does the saving. Most of you will be aware, of course, that Joshua is the Hebrew, the Old Testament name for Jesus.

It's the same name. It's just that Jesus is the Greek version, which we have now in the New Testament, and Joshua is the Hebrew version that we have in the Old Testament. And if you had an old authorized version of the Scriptures, there's two instances where the name Joshua is literally translated, actually, as it is in the Greek, into the word Jesus, even though it's Joshua that's meant.

And that's in Acts 7 at verse 45 and Hebrews chapter 4, verse 8, where the Greek name Jesus was used. It's a literal translation of the name in the New Testament, but the person being referred to is Joshua.

[4:00] And normally, of course, as we know the name Jesus, it refers to somebody else. Very much New Testament and very much alive. But as Joshua was one of those used in the Old Testament, one of those Old Testament heroes who ultimately points us to Christ, we might, in all reverence, say that Joshua saved, past tense, from physical death, from physical death.

But Jesus saves. Jesus saves, present tense, now, today, from eternal death. Not just physical death, but eternal death.

Joshua saved then and there. Jesus saves now and forever. Of course, we don't see him in person. And when he saves, he makes use of secondary causes and third parties, servants, foot soldiers, just like the old Joshua did.

But it is Jesus who saves, just the same. Let there never be any doubt. Jesus saves now and forever. All that Joshua was able to deliver anyone from was physical death.

But these people, if they did or didn't put their faith in the God of Israel, if they put their faith in the God of Israel, they would be saved eternally. If they didn't, they would perish eternally.

[5:25] Joshua could only save from physical death. Jesus is able to save from eternal death. Thus far, then, the status of Joshua. Secondly, we have the status of Rahab.

Now, there are no bones about it in the Bible. She is Rahab the prostitute or the harlot, as the old scripture would put it. And even in the Saints Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11, we read at 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.

There is no attempt to deny or sanitize her profession or her status. Now, of course, it's possible that this status carried no stigma in a pagan city like Jericho.

Many of the Canaanite religions and idols were based on nature worship, which invariably included a certain amount of pagan fertility cults.

People were perhaps understandably obsessed with the fruitfulness of the earth, of their fields, of the trees, the vegetables, the vegetation, the fruitfulness of their flocks and herds, and so on.

[6:38] Now, allowing for the fact that they lived a lot nearer the breadline than we do today, what is such a religion, essentially? You know, obsession with the fruitfulness of the fields, with the number of flocks and herds, with the strength of the harvest, and so on.

What is that other than just basically good old-fashioned materialism? That's all it is, basically, with a bit of superstition thrown in. That's what it amounts to.

It's materialism with superstition thrown in. Many of the pagan temples carried temple prostitutes, of which it is possible that Rahab was one.

And since much of paganism was fertility cult-based, the idea was, of course, that one brought one's offering to the idol in question, and then sealed or consummated the offering by a liaison with one of these individuals at the temple.

And needless to say, such a pagan religion would be hugely popular with those who were not in a state of grace, and those who thought, yes, this appealed to all their base instincts.

[7:46] And people say the Bible is old-fashioned, when it understands and recognizes that's what society was like then, materialist, superstition, and obsessed with sex.

And that's exactly what the fallen world is like today, isn't it? Materialism, superstition, taking the place where Christianity used to be, and an obsession with sex. That's really the world today, just like it was the world then.

The Bible is describing human nature. Whatever the state, whatever the condition, whatever the century that we're in, it's the same fallen human nature. That's what our society is like, just like theirs.

So Rahab may have been a temple prostitute, but we have to say there's no reference to her as such directly in the Bible. And while it's possible, it's equally likely that she was just an ordinary person of that particular profession, a commercial prostitute, we might say.

In a pagan society, again, that probably carried no stigma at all, and in one sense, why should it? If men were virtuous, there would be no call for such a profession.

[8 : 53] Such a profession would not exist in our cities if men were virtuous as they ought to be. There's no point us looking down our noses at those who supply something for which it is people who create the demand.

We shouldn't have that demand if we were virtuous, if we were as we ought to be. The interesting thing, however, is that her status appeared to have no bearing whatsoever on her treatment, either by the Israelites or by the king of Jericho.

She was counted neither less trustworthy, nor indeed more honorable, neither up nor down, for being what she was. It was just accepted as a fact without comment.

All that mattered was the side that she had chosen in this conflict, a conflict where no neutrality was possible.

You couldn't have somebody in Jericho saying, well, actually, as the Israelites come in, it's all right because I'm against this war. I've been against this war from the start, actually, so I'm just going to walk out of here, and you take the city, but I want no part of it.

[10 : 00] No, you're going to get slaughtered just like everybody else. And the Israelites can't say, well, actually, I don't really think we should be attacking Jericho because they were here before us. You know, the Lord has given them their instructions.

He's given them their orders. No neutrality is possible. Nor can one, as we find out a little later in the book of Joshua, simply use it as an opportunity for self-enrichment.

Remember Achan who went and helped himself to the goodly Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold and so many talents of silver and what ended up happening to him and happening to the Israelites because of it.

No neutrality is possible in this conflict. And there is no neutrality possible in the ultimate spiritual conflict between God and the evil one. There is nobody going to be in a halfway house between heaven and hell.

There's nobody going to be sort of in between, kind of vaguely neutral. We will either be with the Lord or against him. All that matters in Rahab's life now is the side that she has chosen in this conflict and the trust that she had placed in two complete strangers, the representative of the people of Israel's God.

[11 : 14] They might, of course, prove faithless. They might let her down. She might die and all her family, but she risked and she trusted and she acted accordingly.

She acted on what she believed. Which brings us to the third point, which is the reason Rahab was saved. Our text tells us that it was because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

But that again begs the question, why did she do it? What made her want to give the spies a friendly welcome? Why did she receive them?

Why didn't she just turn them in as she was asked to do? In one sense, we've already answered that question with a reference to Hebrews 11, 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.

But was that true saving faith? Or was it just a belief that Israel was going to win? You know, see which way the wind's blowing and say, well, I'll make sure that I'm safe in this respect.

[12 : 22] Well, I think we could say in all reverence, Hebrews would not list her with the likes of Moses and Abraham and Samuel unless everyone involved, unless the Lord himself, inspiring scripture to be written down, was pretty sure that it was saving faith that she had.

And strictly speaking, there's an end to it. She's there, listed with the heroes of the faith in the Bible. So, end of story. Yes, we could say that. It must have been saving faith. But, you know, let's just look at it for ourselves also.

Look in the actual incident where she receives the spies. If we go back to chapter 2, we see at verse 8 in chapter 2, it says, 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 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 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.

[13 : 43] 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, 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.

So that's the actual incident itself. But like all the inhabitants of Jericho then, Rahab has heard how the Lord has done great things, incredible things for Israel and has been terrified by it.

She says, you know, our hearts melted. All the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. When we heard it, our hearts melted. They are terrified. She is terrified.

They're all scared half to death. But whereas they heard and hated and feared and resented God for it, just as the devils, if you remember, hated Jesus, even though they were afraid of him in Galilee when he would come into the synagogue or when he would appear and they hadn't expected of all of you come to torment us before the time.

[15 : 02] We know who you are, the Holy One of God. They didn't love him, but they were afraid of him. They were terrified of him. But they still trembled before him.

They hated him. It didn't make them love him. But here in the heart of Rahab, something else has happened. Whereas they hated and feared and resented the God of Israel for all that he had done.

She feared and believed and trusted in this great God that if he was able to save his people from Egyptian slavery, from the Red Sea, from Og, the king of Bashan, from Sihon, king of the Ammonites, then if she too trusted in him, might she also be saved?

The report that she heard was no different from the report heard by her fellow countrymen. I'll say that again. The report that she heard was no different from the report heard by her fellow countrymen.

But the effect in them was very different. As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it in chapter 5, it says, whereby it comes to pass that they, that is the lost, harden themselves even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

[16:26] You know, the same sun melts wax and hardens clay. It is the element itself that is different. It's the same sun doing the same work.

But at the same time, the same work of God's grace, it has a different effect depending on the heart of the individual that receives it. So likewise, we read in Isaiah chapter 8, verses 13 and 14, but the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.

Let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

You know, if you want to be afraid of anything, fear the Lord. That will only ever do you good. That will only ever benefit you. And likewise, we read in 2 Corinthians, in chapter 2, verses 15 and 16, for we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

To one, a fragrance from death to death. To the other, a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

[17:45] And again, in 1 Peter, we read in chapter 2, verses 7 and 8, So the honor is for you who believe, or as the old Bible puts it, to you who believe he is precious. But for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do. You see, this is one reason why although it is all of God's grace, it is we who must make the response to God's grace.

God's grace will be the same grace, the same mercy, the same message of salvation which is spread abroad to all humanity. We cannot just sit in our hands and look at our watches and say, well, I'll wait till a more congenial message comes along.

I'll wait till God comes with a message that lets me keep my old life and my old sins and my old priorities and have the Lord as well so that I can go to heaven with both hands full of the world and the Lord and that will do me just nicely.

There's not going to be such a message. There's not going to be such a gospel. The only gospel that is ever going to come for your salvation is the gospel of Jesus Christ who has died and risen again that we who believe and trust in Him should likewise die to self but live with Him and in Him.

[19:11] You cannot hold on to this grace with hands that are already full of all the world and all your old sins and all your old past. You've got to let go of that and you've got to lay hold on Christ.

It is our response which will be distinctive across every individual person. The same sun melts the wax and hardens the clay.

The same grace causes the inhabitants of Jericho to hate the Lord but Rahab to submit to the Lord and to love the Lord. This is what she's doing.

The report she heard was no different to that of her fellow countrymen. She risked. She trusted. She acted accordingly. She might lose everything. You know, the spies might end up having been unfaithful to her in which case she'll get slaughtered with everybody else but if she doesn't throw in her lot with the Lord and the people of Israel she's going to die anyway.

You know, at the end of the day what do we have to lose by embracing Christ? You know, he is no fool. One of these old missionaries I can't remember which one it was who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.

[20:23] We cannot keep this life. It is passing away from us like the sand running through the hourglass. We can't hold on to it even if we wanted to. We can't hold on to this world even if we lived to the end of the world.

We read of how in scripture it says this world will melt and the elements will melt with the fervent heat. It will all be done away. It will not last. Ultimately, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

His soul will still be alive long after this world has been burned up and melted away. You can't keep it. So letting go of it is not a big price compared to laying hold on the glory and salvation that is in Christ.

And even if it was all a lie and the Lord forgive me but understand I'm trying to put across here even if it was all a lie even if everything in the Bible was false we know it's not.

But even if it had been the worst case scenario all of our lives we've been seeking to do good and pray to a God who allegedly didn't exist and believe in a life that isn't going to be there and so we live we die and that's the end of it.

[21:32] You've still not lost anything have you? Your life here will have been improved infinitely by living and believing what teaches you to be good and faithful and kind to others and trust in a higher power who is good and loving and kind even if supposedly he doesn't exist your life would be infinitely improved and your death would cost you nothing you've got nothing to lose but you've got everything to gain and likewise if we were so foolish to say well I don't actually believe there is anything so I'm not going to trust even though I might I'm not going to put my faith in this God of Israel even if I wanted to and you end up being wrong oh well you have lost everything yes you've got your few passing years in this world but none of us knows how long those will last none of us can predict when our time might be it is passing away from us that which Christ offers is life in all its fullness so Rahab took a risk yes she trusted and she acted upon it but at the end of the day if she didn't do that she's going to die anyway the whole city is going to be slaughtered anyway it's a no brainer you put your trust in the Lord and his people and his and the God of Israel you might live if they're faithful if you don't you'll definitely die you put your trust in the Lord God of Israel there might be a blessed eternity or you might just die but you're going to die anyway so what have you got to lose what did she have to lose she had the wisdom she had the wit to see that she risked she trusted and she acted accordingly and so she was saved she hoped she believed in what she had not yet seen fulfilled she saw the armies going round Jericho she heard the horns she saw the wall falling flat she didn't know for sure they would keep their word but she put her trust in what she believed what she hoped what she had not yet seen come to pass and she trusted it would happen

Hebrews 11 verse 1 faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen not seen yet but we shall see them we trust and believe so this then is the reason rehab is saved what then is the effect of that salvation the effect of rehab salvation well in the first instance the redemption of her life she who had been numbered with those appointed to death was physically sought out and brought out from the scene of destruction she had her life back she had a fresh start it might go nowhere but at least now she had a choice and you'll notice that the gift of faith in one life will always have a direct bearing on those around it you see you might think oh well it's just little me my life it doesn't matter much if I come to faith in Christ nobody else is affected you are so wrong if that is what you think it's like dropping the stone into the pond the ripples spread out and out and out and out you touch you affect the lives of your work colleagues of your wider family your relatives perhaps your children's friends everybody when you come to faith in Christ know that something has changed in your life it always has a direct bearing one way or the other upon those around you look at Rahab's father's household they are delivered they are spared she had no husband but she engineered the safety of seemingly every other person in her whole family not necessarily for their own eternal salvation we cannot by our efforts or our own response obtain salvation for others but we do all that we can to give them that chance that is one of the crucial things that God's intervention in a person's life achieves his salvation his grace gives them by faith at last the freedom the chance to choose a chance that Satan would not give them because without the intervention of God in a person's life without the light of Christ we are in permanent darkness in perpetual slavery real genuine bondage from which we are powerless to break free it's called sin separation from God and it is fatal both physically and spiritually as well as of course eternally only by God's grace and the gift of faith and the light of Christ are we enabled to see our condition and to learn the remedy this is one reason why it is so pitifully sinful for people to squirm out of responsibility for example for the Christian upbringing of their children on the pretext of letting them choose for themselves when they get older if they have known something of Christ they may indeed have the freedom either to accept them or to reject them they then have the freedom to choose yes if they have known something of him but there again they might choose to follow him rather than just reject him they may desire to know him better but if they know nothing of Christ if they are willfully kept in the dark if they are deprived of the oxygen of knowing God's love for them how can anyone pretend that that is a choice the excuses so often well I had religion rammed down my throat as a child

I was made to go to church so I won't do it to my children no what I'll do instead is I'll ram the world down their throat I will shut them off from Christ and his people I'll be made to stay at home or just drift into the world because in truth I have made their choice for them every bit as much as my parents made a choice for me I have made their choice by giving them no choice Rahab's faith saw her rescued and deposited outside the camp of Israel verse 23 the God in whom she trusted had saved her from certain destruction now she could walk away and make her home where she wanted but we read instead that she chose to dwell in Israel and her descendants are there to this day not just any descendants either if you look in St. Matthew chapter 1 at verse 5 we see that she is part of the covenant line it is through her according to the flesh that the Messiah finally came she is not just honored in Israel she is given a unique position in that unique covenant line this is this privilege this privilege that was hers because Rahab like Ruth the Moabites after her was accepted into Israel through faith in Israel's God she was not by race or by ethnic origin or nationality an Israelite but she was grafted in because of her faith in Christ we are not ethnically or racially most of us

I imagine Jewish people we are not Israelites according to the flesh but we are of the Israelite of Israel of God by faith adopted into his family this is the privilege that becomes ours like it became hers the effect of Rahab's faith was not simply to save her life but to give her a life the dignity of a home a husband children a people to call her own and the salvation of her soul but what about her father's household we do not read that they dwelt in Israel Rahab who had the faith turned into the camp of the Lord's people the family who benefited life changingly from Rahab's faith appear to have just turned away and sought to begin afresh without her and without God you see with them another's faith had given them the choice it's like the parents who bring up their child in the knowledge and love of the Christian faith but the child turns against it and says well thanks very much

I appreciate everything you did for me but now I'm walking away I don't want any of this at least they had the choice at least Rahab's family have the choice the chance to know God or the chance to walk away they chose to walk away grateful no doubt that they hadn't perished in Jericho but here's the tragedy of it all give or take a few years they might as well have done it is appointed unto men once to die and then the judgment Rahab went on with the Lord and was saved they went away from the Lord and ultimately were lost but they need not have been none of us will be able to stay before the judgment seat of the Lord and say well it's not my fault Lord I just obviously wasn't one of the elect so that's why I'm lost and the Lord will set before us all the times we were given the choice all the times when we heard the invitation all the times when the Lord put somebody of faith in our lives somebody who's witnessed whose testimony witnessed to us or gave us the opportunity to ask and we just let it all pass it will be nobody's fault but our own if we are lost it will be nobody's action but God's if we are saved if there is one thing we learn from this text it is that who we are and what we are is no barrier to the Lord if we go on into the New Testament we read of an incident in Luke chapter 7 with Jesus and a woman it says behold a woman of the city who was a sinner when she learned that he that is Jesus was reclining at table in the Pharisees house brought an alabaster flask of ointment and standing behind him at his feet weeping she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself if this man were a prophet he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him for she is a sinner that probably means she too was a prostitute a little further down it says then turning toward the woman

[32 : 28] Jesus said to Simon do you see this woman I entered into your house you gave me no water for my feet but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair you gave me no kiss but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet you did not anoint my head with oil but she has anointed my feet with ointment therefore I tell you her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much but he who is forgiven little loves little and he said to her your sins are forgiven as we say probably another prostitute let's look in John chapter 8 where we read of the woman taken in adultery and it says Jesus was left alone with a woman standing before him Jesus stood up and said to a woman where are they has no one condemned you she said no one Lord and Jesus said neither do I condemn you go and from now on sin no more probably another prostitute but she calls him

Lord their sins were open and obvious ours may not be the same sins they may be better hidden but they are there and we know it and God knows it but he does not judge at least not yet he loves much because he longs to forgive much he loves you and me and because he longs to forgive you and me he wants to get us out of the bondage and degradation of a life without Christ and a worldliness that is about to crumble faster than the walls of Jericho he wants to reach into that loneliness and knowledge of sin that hides so well behind the outer facade of godly or worldly contentment and to reach you he was willing to do anything to become homeless yes to become an outcast yes to become a child yes to become a baby yes even to lie in a trough yes because that is what it means to be laid in a manger even to go to the cross yes he is serious about you he is serious about us thus far he has preserved and saved you alive hitherto hath the lord helped us and because of what he has done for you so far now at least you have a decision to make or to avoid to embrace or to turn away from but now because of Christ at last and at least like rehab you have a choice let us