

Bible Conversions (3) - Rahab

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn now to Joshua and chapter 2 where we read. Joshua chapter 2, we're going to read again at verse 8. But we'll focus particularly on Rahab's confession.

As you find there in verse 11 particularly, 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. I'm going to take with us as well the words of Hebrews chapter 11 and 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.

The emphasis there being on the fact that Rahab acted by faith or out of faith in what she did in hiding these men who had been sent by Joshua to spy out the land or bring a report back about Jericho particularly.

[1 : 1 3] Isn't providence fascinating? There are so many things as you look at the unfolding of providence that causes us sometimes just to stand back and admire and wonder at the way God arranges things.

Last week we looked at the conversion of Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite who came into contact with the people of Israel when Naomi and her two sons moved from Bethlehem Judah to the country of Moab.

They married. One of them married Ruth. And then of course the two sons died leaving the two young widows to come back with Naomi.

So there was a woman brought up in Moab not under the teaching of Israel or the things that God had given to his people in Israel in Bethlehem Judah and yet there she was.

She came to know the Lord. She came to accept the Lord as her God. She came to be integrated into the Lord's people. And we're looking at the conversion today of Rahab who actually turns out to be Ruth's mother-in-law.

[2 : 2 2] Now there's another fascinating connection. Rahab came to be incorporated into Israel and she became the mother of Boaz who eventually married Ruth.

So here's another woman, this time a Canaanite who came in the providence of God to know him, to accept him, to believe in him and came in the way God arranged things to bring into the world a son called Boaz who then came to marry this Moabite woman Ruth who'd become a believer.

And there you have it. And as you look at the genealogy of Jesus both of these women are part of his genealogy humanly speaking.

They appear in the lists that you have of Christ's ancestors as the New Testament records them. They are significant people. And yet where did they begin?

One in Moab, the other in Canaan. Let's never write anybody off just because we think it's unlikely that they'll ever be Christians, that they'll ever be significant in God's kingdom, that they'll ever have much to contribute to the cause of Christ.

[3 : 38] Very few people would have thought that Ruth and Rahab would have had such significance in the history of God's people that not only would they come to be prominent believers and examples of faith, but that they would actually come to be Christ's direct ancestors in the line that led to his birth.

Amazing. Providence. God in charge. God overseeing. God arranging. God in his wisdom. Let's stand back and admire that.

If we do nothing else today it'll be worth our while doing so. God never makes mistakes. Even the things that we think are out of place in his providence.

Things we can't understand why they happen. But he knows. And it's not out of place with him. We have to bring it to him and ask him to show us the way forward.

So that's what we're seeing in the providence that here again comes to arrange for the conversion of Rahab. Now we'll see aspects of conversion itself from Rahab as well.

[4 : 53] We've seen that previously with Ruth and also with Manasseh before that. How you can see different elements of what conversion is as you see people and the way they were converted or came to be converted.

And you see that with Rahab as well. And there are three things we want to look at. The first thing that we see and it's an aspect of conversion that's very important is that conversion involves acceptance of the truth.

An acceptance of the truth. Here is Ruth. Here is Rahab actually saying that the news that she and the people of Jericho had received had filled them with fear.

You had verse 8. Before the men lay down she came up to them and said to them I know that the Lord has given you the land. That's this land she belongs to. And that the fear of you has fallen upon us.

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.

[5 : 53] 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. You see one of the things you can take from that we're not going to develop the point but it's an important point. God's reputation goes before him.

When God actually works in a way that's noticed in a way that really changes things in a way that shows his power and demonstrates his own sovereign might people take note of that.

You can't avoid taking note of it. When God is at work it doesn't happen really in a way that leaves things hidden. When God is at work even in somebody's life individually it gets noticed.

And here is Ruth sorry here is Rahab saying we heard about this. This news went before you before you ever reached Jericho.

[6 : 57] We knew about you. We knew about what your God had done. We heard about the way you overcame these great kings. And she had given such a reception to that that she believed these reports but more than that she believed in this God that she heard about in these reports.

She accepted the truth not only about what had happened but she accepted the God about whom these things were true. That's really what made the difference with Rahab.

That's why in Hebrews 11 we're taking this verse with us. Hebrews 11 31 By faith Rahab hid these men.

By faith Rahab believed. She believed in this God. She trusted in this God. She came to accept that God you see what she's saying here the Lord your God he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

She didn't say well I know I've come to respect your God and I'm going to put him alongside of all of these gods that we have in Canaan all of these bales that we have in Canaan that our people have been worshipping for years and years and years and you know your God is worthy that he's right up there with these bales.

[8 : 18] That's not what she's saying. She's saying I've come to realize that your God is a lone God. That he's the only one who's worthy of my worship of my trust in him of committing my life to him.

That's what she did. Now we mustn't think that faith does away with fear. You mustn't think that the fear that she mentions here is a fear that really doesn't belong at all with faith.

Fear of God's awesomeness of God's work. Fear in the sense of being filled with awe. Well of course the Canaanites were afraid in the sense of being really afraid literally.

But there are elements of fear the fear especially of respect and being filled with awe and with a sense of wonder at God and at God's acts and of God's coming judgment of the world.

You stand in awe of that if you have faith. You don't just dismiss it and say well yes I know it's going to take place but I don't need to have anything at all to do with fear. Well you can say that you don't need to be afraid of it.

[9 : 32] If you're in Christ you're safe. But it doesn't mean every aspect of fear has disappeared because when you go to Hebrews 11 again and see what it says about Noah Noah by faith built an ark.

He believed the truth that God sent him that he was going to destroy the earth with a flood. Noah believed that. Noah accepted the truth of that. He believed in the God who had actually sent that message to him.

But that's not all Hebrews 11 says there about Noah because what it says is by faith Noah moved with fear built an ark.

You don't cut the element of fear out of it when you start thinking about faith. When Noah thought about this coming flood it filled him with a sense of awe.

It filled his heart with thoughts of the majesty and the awesomeness and the greatness of God. You don't think about the judgment of God as something that isn't worthy of your awe.

[10 : 44] We're used to the word wow nowadays aren't we? We're so used to saying that word over something that really strikes our minds as pretty amazing or pretty remarkable.

But every time you come and read your Bible and read there about these works of God and especially God's great work of redemption in Christ the death of Christ on the cross the greatness of God the awesomeness of God in that and you turn your mind to the future and the coming of Christ and the judgment by Christ of the world you and I should instantly say wow how awesome is that?

How awesome is this God? How far beyond anything we can imagine is this God in his greatness? well that's something of what Rahab felt and what Rahab experienced and what came into Rahab's mind and faith the workings of her faith included through her conversion not only an acceptance of the truth of these victories of Israel but an acceptance of the truth of God of this God and what this God was like your God he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath you see in conversion God opens our minds sin has closed our mind don't listen to the humanist and secularist and atheistic arguments that says it's religion that closes your mind and it's the Christian religion especially that closes your mind to reality and the message then following on from that open up your mind let your mind actually be set free from the trammels of your

Christianity and your narrowness and following the ways of the Bible and the teaching of this Bible and conversion everybody who's converted knows that they have come to be released from the narrowness that sin has caused that's come about in our fallenness it's our fallen sinful lives that are restricted and narrow and need to be opened up that's what God does in conversion he opens the mind to receive the truth the truth about himself the truth about his death on the cross the truth about the resurrection it's not a closed mind that accepts the resurrection of course it's a closed mind that rejects it but when God opens your mind then you come to see that everything God has done is true not just a possibility or a potential it is fact Christ's resurrection from the dead becomes a fact to you it becomes a very precious fact conversion opens the mind it's no longer dismissive of things that God and his truth sets before us and what that means basically is that by opening our minds by in our conversion by bringing us to accept the truth

God pretty much gives us a shake up of life what I mean by that I mean by that is just imagine Rahab before this news reached her what was she she was a prostitute not a nice way of life maybe she had no choice in the matter we don't know but we know that's what she was and she probably like all of us had her her life laid out in nice neat little compartments we all do that don't we we have our own views of what our life should be like we throw up these boxes of life of daily life we don't like to have them disturbed we keep them nice and neat we know that it fits together in the way we want to fit it together we have our plans we look ahead in certain ways and all of these things that we arrange in our own lives in our own minds at least they're all nicely compartmentalized this compartment there that compartment there this aspect of life that aspect of life when conversion comes it's shaken up all these nice lines disappear because they're just of our own making and on our own plans we suddenly realize well what am I doing

[15 : 21] I need to bring my plans to this God so that he can plan my life what he already has what we realize he already has planned our lives and we come to submit ourselves to this plan of God so God brings about a shake up God brings about a certain rearrangement he begins to rearrange our minds and our thoughts and our aspirations and our plans and our aims and our purposes and we realize that when God does that even if it's difficult for us at first and even if we just sometimes perhaps don't realize exactly what's going on we pretty soon come to realize actually this is the best for me it's the best for me because God knows what he's doing and God knows how to arrange my life and I don't know it myself I can't control it myself but I know he can and that's what Rahab really did just imagine

Rahab hearing the news about these people and about this God they worshipped she didn't dismiss it she began thinking about it she began thinking who are these people who is this God what's happening in the world when I see such people and when I hear about such a God and how they have come to just conquer all before them even though they appear to have been slaves in Egypt at one point they actually came through the Red Sea by the power of this God who's been leading them who brought them out who brought them through the desert they're now on my doorstep they're just at the doors of Jericho who are these people why are they like this where did they get this power from why are they so superior to the likes of these people that they have conquered here's the beginning of faith when you and I begin to ask these serious questions what is my life where am

I going who is God what is providence how do I plan my life what's my future what's the meaning of all of these things that have happened at Calvary in the life of Jesus in the spread of the gospel through the apostles what's happened in the life of these people who already converted people that I know what's caused that see there's the mind being opened up there's conversion underway if you like and there's what Rahab teaches us what God is teaching us through her about conversion it is an acceptance of the truth and especially the truth about God himself but secondly there's something else there and it's also important as we look at what conversion is and see it from the conversion of this woman acceptance of the truth is accompanied by action for God's sake action for God's sake what did she do when these two men came to her house well she did what was completely unexpected she actually hid them she welcomed them into the house and she made arrangements to have them hidden from those that she knew would come knocking on her door this was a society obviously where the secret police were stationed all over the place where the things that you tend to associate nowadays with regimes like

North Korea in the past with communism where you have people informing on each other where you have spies for the state actually positioned strategically that's what it was like in Jericho because the news soon reached the king there are men who have come to spy out the place they knew they would be she knew that they would actually be discovered and even that they would be seen entering her house so she took measures immediately to hide down now there's a problem not going into the problem it's a problem that theologians have wrestled with for centuries she told lies she protected these men by saying what was not true she said yes they came but I didn't know who they were and so when the gate was about to be closed the men went out and I don't know where they went to they were actually up on her roof is it okay to tell lies no are there circumstances when telling an untruth is justified you can answer the question yourselves but that's what she did that's one of the dilemmas from the passage and you know there are places in the world today where for example if your children were under threat of their lives sheltering you in your home from whichever evil power was coming to annihilate them would you tell an untruth for their protection

I probably would I'm sure you would too it doesn't mean it's actually right in itself but in any case that's what Rahab did and she actually hid these men she took action and Hebrews again Hebrews 11 commends her faith and indeed James chapter 2 speaks about her faith seen by these actions that she took this action in hiding these men because Hebrews 11 and James to focus on the action she took by faith she did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies it was by faith that she gave the friendly welcome to the spies she didn't come to believe in God after these men had appeared she was already a believer she had received this message that had reached Jericho about this God she had put her trust in this God she had realized this was the God that she needed to trust in and so when people came representing this God these people of Israel she welcomed them into the house she gave them refuge that took courage they don't look at this and say well okay she maybe knew that they were safe from being discovered she didn't she had a lot to lose she would be classed as a traitor she had to think of her family she obviously had family because as we'll see in a minute she actually asked that they be taken into consideration what would her family think would she be disowned would she be led out if she was discovered and put to death very likely if the authorities saw that she had given refuge to these spies who were a threat to

[22 : 29] Jericho and to the security of Jericho she would obviously have been seen as somebody who was a threat to the security of Jericho and been led out and just put to death no doubt about it she ran that risk she put herself in danger but she did it why did she do it because she acted in faith and faith does give you a boldness that's greater than anything you have in yourself and faith as it gives you a boldness as it gives you a strengthening it makes you do things that you wouldn't otherwise do or you wouldn't do at least easily as easily or as readily and in fact what she did there really is something that at great risk to herself showed the genuineness of her faith and that's what our day needs that's what your life and my life needs to be a life that speaks up for Jesus a life that actually is not afraid to come publicly and show that we are his and show that that's where we belong that this is our king that he is the one we actually have placed our confidence in you don't find people who worship in terms of

Islam you don't find them afraid to show where it is they have their trust doesn't matter where they are what time of day it is out comes the mat and there are all these Islamic prayers they don't mind being seen are we as Christians are we like that do we say we're Christians yet we're not prepared like Rahab was to put ourselves out to show that Christ is ours that Christ is worth worshipping that Christ is king this woman actually went so far as to take action that showed both the genuineness of her faith and acted for the sake of God and for the sake of his cause and for the sake of his people and even put ourselves in danger because of that there are many many people in the world friends we are so sheltered ourselves to a great extent at least compared to other places in the world where people have to actually put themselves or even family in danger because they want to be true to

Jesus they want to be true to God they don't want to actually in any way pretend that they're other than Christians and even if it means the threat of their life being taken away they're not going to be untrue to God and sometimes that's the only way that faith really can be seen here is a new allegiance for this woman we saw last time with Ruth coming from being brought up in Moab and joining the people of God there's a new allegiance in conversion it brings about a new allegiance and it brings about a new allegiance even in terms of boldness and in terms of putting yourself sometimes in danger at least risk of being accused of things of being ridiculed of being mocked of being spoken about in derogatory terms well Jesus deserves that didn't he do that for us wasn't he mocked wasn't he spat upon wasn't he accused falsely wasn't he ridiculed weren't many things said about him that were just simply blasphemous didn't he give his life didn't he go so far as to put himself on the cross for us why did we deserve it were we worthy of it no but he's worthy that we should show that we're his he's worthy that we should be believing noticed faithful people she acted for God's sake in protecting the men but then you notice she was concerned for her family that's another thing that conversion actually brings into somebody's life it brings about a concern for others it's a bit like being taken into a lifeboat if there's been a tragedy at sea and you've managed to make it into the lifeboat perhaps you've been in the lifeboat as it was lowered down but there's all of these other people around you in the water and because you're in the lifeboat and you're safe what's your concern is it just to look after yourself well no you're concerned for all these people who are drowning around you you want them in the lifeboat with you you want them to share the security that you've got and that's what conversion brings about it brings about a concern for other people you want them to share the things that you now possess the things that God has actually in his kindness given to you he's converted you he's brought you into the possession of salvation he's brought you eternal security and your concern now is not just to keep that to yourself but you want others to come and know this God for themselves and share with you in this wonderful redemption salvation forgiveness acceptance acceptance acceptance with God that you have through your conversion we're going to enlarge on that

God willing this evening a bit and looking at the essential of mission a very important thing for every congregation for every church indeed but here is someone concerned now for others and she mentions especially her family she moves immediately to speak about her family now then as the Lord has dealt kindly with you please deal kindly with my father's house give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father my mother my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death conversion awakens in us a concern for others and a concern perhaps first and foremost was our own immediate family and relations we start praying for them we want them to be saved we want them to come and possess these things that God by his grace has given us possession of it's a wonderful thing when people are converted through the testimony of other members of their family there may be people here indeed who have been converted through the witness of their children through the way God converted their children and brought them to know him and through their testimony they came to know the

Lord for themselves but conversion does have an impact upon our parenthood upon the way we are fathers or mothers or children whatever age we're at it affects our sense of responsibility in that regard for our children for our relatives for our neighbors indeed for others out with our homes it brings about this concern a concern especially for their spiritual well-being for their spiritual state for them to be right with God if you look at Acts chapter 10 there's a couple of verses there you know that's the story of Cornelius who was not brought up as a believer but came to be a believer in God he was a centurion he was a Roman and as he came to faith and thus he came to meet with

[30 : 56] Peter and his companions in Acts chapter 10 notice in verse 24 I'll just read it out for you on the following day they that's Peter and his companions they entered Caesarea and Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends isn't that interesting he knew that this man of God Peter was coming that he was coming to bring him an important message about God about salvation what did he do he called together his relatives and his friends he wanted them to share in this moment and you go further on in the chapter and when they came Cornelius spoke to Peter and said I sent for you at once and you have been kind enough to come now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord what a wonderful text what a wonderful verse here is Cornelius this believer actually saying to

Peter I've actually gathered all of these people they're my family they're my relatives and I am concerned that they would hear what you have been given from God to say to us there's a man who's converted there's a man where you can see his heart at work his heart is going out to these people that are connected with him that are around him and he's saying I want them to know what I now know the best thing you can be as a father as a mother as parents is to be converted the best thing you can be as a child as a young person if your parents aren't converted is to be converted because friends conversion in many respects is really what sets our lives in order individually and conversion is really what changes even homes to be a place of nurture of worship of adoration of

God of training as the Bible puts it in righteousness for our children conversion is so critically important because in it you take action for God's sake even to the extent of concern for your own folks acceptance of the truth action for God's sake just to close with an assurance of safety and we didn't read through the whole of the passage but if you go on you can see how the men gave her instructions as to what to do to put this scarlet thread in her window her window was actually obviously on the walls of Jericho so that she was able to let the men down from her window down the wall so that they could escape when we come into the land they said you will tie the scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down and then when they would come back into the land to conquer Jericho the scarlet thread would be seen and that would be the sign this is

Rahab's house nobody in this house gets killed now I want you to do it's an exercise just later on for yourselves go to Exodus chapter 12 I think I've given you the passage in your notes there and compare this passage here in Joshua 2 from verse 18 especially with that passage in Exodus about the Passover and you'll see there's very close similarities there's the scarlet thread in the window there's an emphasis everybody in that house is safe but nobody in that house must go out when we come to conquer the land go to Exodus there's the takes you to the death of

Jesus to the blood that was shed to his death as our security that's our assurance of safety and that Jesus is for everyone we have not left out Ruth is not left out you're not left out that Jesus is for everyone he's presented for everyone he presents himself for everyone he's there in his death if you will have him are you converted are you safe are you sheltering in Jesus are you calling others by your life to the security that you found yourself as a Christian conversion acceptance of the truth action for

[36 : 30] God assurance that we're safe when Jesus is mine let's pray lord our god our heavenly father bless to us your word we pray and help us as we have been thinking of receiving and accepting your truth help us to do it obediently and help us to do it in a way that will take action for ourselves lord and for others that we too might share in the blessings of life here as we pray for Jesus sake amen amen you