

Rahab's Journey From Failure To Faith

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[0 : 0 0] 2 verse 4, but the woman, that is Rehob, had taken the two men and hidden them. That's what she did, took the two men and she had hidden them.

People always have their favorites in the Bible. If you've grown up as a young boy or girl and you will read Bible stories from the time you were young, before you probably even reached your teens, you had your favorites.

There were men and women whose lives, they thrilled you or they touched you in some way that you would say, well, my favorite Bible character is so and so, or these are my favorite Bible characters.

And we've been looking at some of the Bible characters over this last while. We've looked at some who are so well known, the likes of Joshua, the book of Joshua.

He is one of the great characters in the Bible, as was David and Elijah and Mary. These are so well known, but some of them are not so well known.

[1 : 0 6] People like us, we looked at Ananias and Lazarus, maybe don't have the same prominence. And now we come to this woman, Rehob. And the amazing thing about Rahab is that she is in many ways the last person that you would expect to find her way into that wonderful hall of faith in Hebrews in chapter 11, where you have the list of the great men and women of faith of Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Isaac, all these great people in the past, and listed among them is this woman, Rahab.

Because Rahab is living in the place that you would least expect to find God's grace and God's mercy at work, this city, the city of Jericho, which was a byword for idolatry and for evil practice.

And not only is it amazing to find that this woman becomes a great woman of faith from the place she lived, but the occupation that she had, because we're told that she was a harlot or a prostitute.

So this is a great display of God's grace and God's mercy. And it's often interesting the way that the Bible moves from big pictures to little pictures.

Joshua chapter 1 begins with Joshua taking over from Moses, and we can see we saw the trepidation that Joshua felt taking over from Moses, who was a living legend in his time.

[2 : 4 2] And obviously he felt just overwhelmed by it, but Joshua chapter 1 is full of God encouraging Joshua and saying, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Don't be afraid, don't be discouraged, and so on. And so there's this big picture of Joshua and Israel getting ready for the great conquest of the land of promise.

Then chapter 2 moves into a particular home and focuses on this one woman, Rahab. And the Bible so often does that, it moves from the big picture and then homes in and focuses on an individual.

And what God is showing us through this is that this is exactly the way he continues to work. God always has a big picture. God always knows what he's doing. God has an interest in everything that is happening, and he knows everything that's happening.

But he's also involved in your life and in mine, in the individual life, the big picture, but also the individual.

[3 : 52] And that's what the Bible is always doing. It always, as it were, just keeps changing from the big picture to the individual. And so we find that this chapter focuses on this particular woman.

And as we say, she's quite a remarkable woman, a woman who displays quite extraordinary courage in the face of grave danger, and yet a woman who has sold her body to make money, and she's living a lifestyle where, in many ways, you wouldn't expect that God's grace would be seen and that you would become a woman of great, great faith.

But this is what God is showing us, that this is the way. And she takes, as we said, her place rightly with all these other great people of faith in the book of Hebrews.

And one of the things that the Bible never allows us to forget is what we have been in the past. Because when Rehob is mentioned later on, like in Hebrews, she is mentioned as Rehob the prostitute.

That label remained with her. It's the same way as the Apostle Paul never forgot what he was. And quite often in his writing, when he's giving a wee bit of testimony, he says, I was a blasphemer and a persecutor.

[5 : 21] Paul never, ever, ever forgot that. And he couldn't get over God's mercy and grace to him, despite what he had been. Matthew, who had been a publican, and no doubt, one of those who was always making a bit extra, he was corrupt in his ways, in the way that he worked, he would refer to himself as Matthew the publican.

He never forgot what he had been before God's grace came into his life. And God doesn't want you or me to forget that either. Because, you know, it'll keep us humble all our days, remembering who we are and what we are and what we've been.

Because if we don't remember these things, we're very liable to become judgmental and proud, beginning to look down on others.

God doesn't want us to do that. God wants us to remember exactly who we are, who we were, all these things, and that we are what we are by his grace alone.

Sometimes we have this idea that it's easier for some people to be saved than for others. And sometimes we look at people who, we look at them and we say, well, you know, that person is such a fine person.

[6 : 42] That person is so morally upstanding, is so decent in his character and her character. And we look at them and we say to them, you know, it wouldn't take much for that person to become a Christian.

And then we look at other people, and their lives are full of all kinds of issues and problems, and they seem to be never out of bother or trouble, and we might, in our own perverted way of thinking, say to ourselves, oh, well, there's no hope for that person.

And somehow we have this idea that it's a lot easier for the good people, or what we term the good people, to be saved than for people who don't appear to be quite so good.

Well, you know, it costs exactly the same to save the person that we may put on a pedestal and say that's a good person, and the person that we put away down there in the gutter and say, oh, not a chance, takes exactly the same to save the one as the other.

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not the death of the Lord Jesus Christ plus extra things. It's simply the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is repentance and saving faith.

[7 : 53] That's what it takes. And so we've got to get removed from our thinking, once and for all, this idea that there's almost like a pecking order, that somehow it's easier for one than for another.

It is the same salvation, and we are all, every single, every person, doesn't matter how upright they may appear, to us or to others, all have sinned, and all have come short of the glory of God.

Every single one of us. Not one that has any claim upon God and say, well, Lord, I deserve heaven because of who I am, because of my upbringing, because of the position I have in life, because of where I sit in church, because of my parentage.

No, it doesn't come into it. Just come to the Lord and say, Lord, have mercy upon me. That's how we have to come to him. Anyway, we read here in the book of Joshua that the time has come where they're going to have to begin the conquest.

So Joshua sends out two spies to Jericho. Now Joshua, at this moment, has no idea how they're going to take Jericho.

[9 : 07] God didn't send a blueprint down to Joshua and say, right, Joshua, here we are, chapter and verse, this is how it's going to be. At that particular moment, Joshua had no idea. In fact, even as he started marching around Jericho, Joshua still didn't know that God was going to bring the walls down.

He didn't know. All Joshua was doing, and Israel, was following God, going in obedience to what God required. And that's faith.

Faith that doesn't send, we want to know everything beforehand. And you know, if God were to tell us everything beforehand, you know what? We would try and change it. Guaranteed. We would say, no, no, that's not the way I want it.

We would try and change it. God in his mercy has hidden from us all our futures. We have to go forward step by step, looking to him, believing in him, trusting in him, depending on him.

And that's exactly the way that Israel went. They didn't know from day to day what God was going to do, and that is faith. So Joshua, as a military man, he sends out two spies.

[10 : 18] Joshua is a fighter. Joshua himself, if you rewind the clock, had been a spy back in Moses' era. He was one of the 12, remember, that went out to view the promised land 40 years earlier.

Joshua must have had quite a thought when he sent out the two spies. He'd be saying, you know this, I did exactly what you fellows are going to do.

And it's very interesting. Remember when the 12 spies came back? Only two gave a good report. Only Joshua and Caleb. The other 10 said, oh, it's a great land, but we haven't a chance.

We're beaten before we start. There's no point. And Joshua and Caleb said, no, no, no, no. It is a great land. And yes, it's true. There are walled cities and there are giants in there.

But with God, we'll conquer. Isn't it amazing? Same people, in the same situation, looking at exactly the same picture, and yet, totally different reports.

[11 : 30] You know, it's still the same today. People can be looking at the same thing. People can be involved in exactly the same thing. People can be in the same church. You can say to a person, how are things?

Oh, terrible. Say to another person, how are things? Oh, great. It all depends on where we are spiritually. Are we with the Lord? Is the Lord on board? Are we seeing things through the eyes of the Lord?

Or have we lost sight? You know, if we lose sight of the Lord, things are going to be not good. But if the Lord is our focus, and we're fixed on him, and seeing him, then we're seeing things clearly.

We're seeing a future. We're seeing him at the heart of everything. And that's the kind of person Joshua was, and the kind of person that Caleb was. Because as they looked out, yes, they saw all the problems, and the difficulties, and the troubles that were ahead.

But they saw the Lord, and they said, we can do it with the Lord. But the others, they completely lost their focus on the Lord. So that's a, it's kind of a warning, an example to us.

[12 : 39] So Joshua sends out these two men. And these two men, they go into Jericho, and of course, they need to try and find out, their aim is, no doubt, as they get into the city, what's the city like?

Where's the, where are the weak points in the city? Where can we attack? Where, what's the best strategy? And anyway, they go to this house, to the house of Rahab.

Now, obviously, God's providence led them there. But there's more than that in it, because the actual Hebrew word, translated for harlot, can also mean one who keeps an inn.

And in every likelihood, Rahab did both. That she was, her house there, was probably an inn as well.

So that it would be like a, a wee hotel, a wee place for people to stay. But she also sold herself. That was, because, because, if all that we had about Rahab, was what we have here, then it could be argued, and, we could absolve her, from her, immoral lifestyle.

[13 : 51] But, elsewhere in the Bible, it tells us, that she was a prostitute. So, in all probability, she was, she was both, an innkeeper, and a prostitute. So, that's why, the, the men went there, and although, the Lord was leading them there, because here is a soul, and here is a family, that is to become, an integral part, of, the church.

We'll see that, and just in a little bit. This woman, Rahab, becomes an integral part, of even where we are today. Quite extraordinary. This woman, living in this heathen city, ripe for destruction, and yet, here we see, the way that God, works.

So, the men are in, are in there, they were, as we say, from their own human point of view, they would go to somewhere, where, there would be, least suspicion, because, people would be used to strangers, seeing strangers, going in and out of, of Rahab's place.

But, they weren't long there, of course, when, the king, sent word, and said, bring out the men. And, you see, Jericho was on high alert, because the word was out, Israel were crossed, crossed over Israel, or now, are just about to cross the Jordan, we're probably first in line, so they were all on high alert, and the word had gone to the king, two strangers have come in, and they've gone to Rahab's house, so the king said, bring out the men.

But, we find that Rahab, hid the men. And, this is where, we see the change, that has taken place, in Rahab's life. Because, we've got to remember, that, Rahab, belonged to Jericho, the people of Jericho, were her people.

[15 : 37] That's who, she was born, bred, she was, she belonged to Jericho, this was her city, her people. But, all of a sudden, there's a change, because, no longer, are the people of Jericho, her people.

But, God's people, are her people. And, we're told, that it was by faith, that she hid the spies. It was by faith, we're told that in the New Testament, it was by faith, that she gave them, a warm welcome.

And, you know, there's, at that moment, we see what's happened, in Rahab's life. Because, it's just like another woman, another heathen woman, in Moab.

And, we put, just a little further along, in the time of the judges, remember how Naomi and Elkanah, Naomi and Elimelech, went to Moab, to escape the famine. Remember how, the Elimelech, and the two sons died, but they had taken wives, Ruth and Orpah.

And, remember how Ruth, threw in her lot, with Naomi. When Naomi said, I'm going back home, Orpah, remember, we looked at Orpah, she went back, to Moab.

[16 : 49] But, Ruth stuck, with Naomi. Remember what she said, your people, Naomi, are my people. And, your God, is my God.

And, that really is exactly, what Rahab is doing, at this particular point, as well. Although, these words, aren't spoken. That is why, she has identified, she has thrown in her lot, with the people of Israel.

You know, there comes a time, when, in our lives, and sometimes, this is very difficult, for people. When people, when the Lord begins, to start working, in a person's life.

You know, we, we've all been there. We go through, all kinds of, mini traumas, within our life. Sometimes, we don't know, what's happening. And, we maybe struggle, to, throw in our lot, as it were, in with the people of God.

To throw in our lot, by coming out, on the Lord's side. To throw in our lot, by making a stance, and saying, right, I'm going to start, I'm coming to church, I'm going to start, going to the prayer meeting. I'm now a Christian.

[17 : 54] You know, it's, it's sometimes, very difficult. And, sometimes people, go through, all kinds of struggles, and torments, before they can actually, come to this place, where they, where they come out, on the Lord's side.

But, it's important, it's essential. God wants us, to make that stance. Well, that's exactly, what, Rhea was doing. She's made this stance, and she's identifying, with the Lord's people.

And, we have to ask ourselves, how did she come, to this point? Well, again, we've, we've looked at this, at another occasion, but, very briefly, what it tells us is, there, that, there were, there's a process in it.

And, the first thing she tells is, that they had heard, you see that in verse 9, she said to them, I know that the Lord, has given you the land, and that the fear, has fallen upon us.

Verse 10, for we have heard, what the Lord has done, how he dried up the Red Sea, and so on. That was the first thing. And, that, is at the very heartbeat, of coming to faith.

[18 : 58] People have to hear. How, this is what the Bible says, how can you, how can a person believe, in what they have not heard? And, that puts a huge responsibility, upon us, in a day, when people don't go to church.

It puts a huge responsibility, upon us, to be able, when we get the opportunity, to tell people, the way of salvation. Because, lots of people don't know.

And, we don't do it, in a bigoted way. We don't do it, in a menacing way. We don't do it, we have to do it lovingly. When we have the opportunity. And, to tell people, the good news.

Because, it's the most wonderful news, any people could ever hear. That Jesus Christ, has come to save us. And so, it's important, people hear. So, that's the first thing, they heard.

Then, the second thing, was that they feared. The fear of the Lord, had come upon them. Now, I think the solemn thing, here is that, everybody feared. That's what, what it, what she tells us.

[20 : 01] I know that the Lord, has given you the land, and that the fear of you, has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants, of the land. Verse 11, and as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted.

So, there was fear. And, you know, when God begins to work, within our heart, and begins to reveal, a little of who he is, and who we are, before him, a fear begins to develop.

There are two fears. There's a fear of God's wrath, which is an awful thing, when a person is convicted, of their sin. But, there's also, when a person comes to faith, there's a new fear, a fear of reverence, a fear of awe, a fear of respect, a fear that's born out of love.

And so, there are these, there are the two fears, that are involved in salvation. But, the solemn thing is, that only Rahab, came to faith, as far as we know.

The others heard, the others feared, but Rahab went further. And you know, that's the solemn thing, that people can sit under the gospel, and people can shake under the gospel, and people can shake under the providence of God.

[21 : 19] You know, I've heard people say, ah, do you know what we need? We need a, we need a sermon, where that people will be shaking in their boots. Oh, that might be true. But a person shaking in their boots, will never save somebody.

The law cannot save. The law is the schoolmaster. Yes, that leads us to Christ. It's Christ that saves. And yes, there is a place for preaching the law.

An absolutely important, and vital part. And so it is important that we, as we so often use the illustration, Moses, who represented the law, took Israel to the borders of the promised land.

He didn't take them in. He couldn't. He was the law. It was Joshua. Salvation. Joshua, that took them in. He is, he was the salvation.

And that's how it is, it's Jesus that saves. So, she heard, she feared, and then we find that she makes this great confession.

[22 : 22] And it really is quite an extraordinary confession that she makes. She says this in verse 11, For the Lord your God is God in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath. Now, if you go through the Bible, up to this point, I don't know if there's a greater confession made by anybody.

This woman has come to understand the greatness, the glory, the majesty, the power, the rule, the authority of God. And so she makes this great confession.

And you know, confession, to confess that Jesus Christ is our Savior, is important with regard to our salvation. Some people don't think it.

Bible tells us it is. It is. That we believe within our heart, and we confess with our mouth. You know, that's one of the beautiful things that happens when a person goes forward to the Lord's table here.

When they go before the session, some people say, Oh, that's a big deal. I know it is. It is a big deal. But the thing is, do you know what you're doing? You're doing a very biblical thing.

[23 : 32] When you go before, because that's the main thing you're doing. That's what we need to hear as a session. Is the person making that confession? Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior.

Because we have to believe in our heart and confess with our mouth. In fact, we're told in the Bible to confess Christ before men. And that, in a sense, is what we're doing.

But then the final thing was, her faith, she confessed, but she acted. Immediately, that's why she hid the spies. And we see then the devotion of her heart, her love.

She wanted all her family to be saved. And she says, Listen, Oh, hey, just, this is what she's saying. Look, I've saved you. Will you please save me when you come in?

I know God's given you the city. But will you save me? And please save my father, my mother, my, my, all my brothers, my sisters, all my family, all my relatives. And the spy said, Yep.

[24 : 34] They made an oath. They were made, as it were, like a covenant. And they said, Our life for you. Just like Jesus did. That's what Jesus is saying. My life for you.

And they're saying, Look, if you bring all your family into the house here, and you put this scarlet rope that you're going to let us down by in the window, then we promise that everybody in here will be safe.

And you know, when you see that scarlet rope in the window, you think of the scarlet above the door and the lintels and the doorposts in Egypt. The night of the Passover.

That was, remember, how the blood was put there and it was told that when the angels saw the blood passed over, they were spared. And we are the same. We are sheltering, hiding under the blood of Christ.

And if the blood of Christ is over you, if Christ has died for you, then you're safe. But you're not if his blood is not covering you.

[25 : 42] You have to shelter under the blood. There are so many other things that we could say here. But we read, if we go to Joshua chapter 6 and verse 23, it tells us, it says how Rehob and the family were taken out safe.

Rehob and the family were taken out safe. But you know, when we follow, if we go to Matthew's gospel and we read the genealogy, the human genealogy of Jesus, the line that Jesus came down, you know what's remarkable?

I know you know this, but we have to say it again. Because when you look at the line of Jesus, remember Ruth?

Ruth married Boaz. It was in the time of the judges, just following on from Joshua. Ruth married Boaz. Well, Boaz's father was a man called Salmon.

And Salmon, who was our prince in the tribe of Judah, in fact, married Ruth, married Rebecca. No, getting mixed up with it.

[26 : 59] Rahab. This man married Rahab. They had a son, Boaz. Boaz married Ruth. Ruth and Boaz had a son, Obed.

Obed had a son, Jesse. And Jesse had a son, David. So that Ruth was David's great-granny and Rahab was David's great-great-granny.

Isn't that extraordinary? Two women that you would never, ever, ever, ever expect to see or appear in the genealogy in the line, the human line of Jesus being born into this world.

And this is where God is displaying his amazing grace. Nobody in this world is outside the reach of Jesus' love.

You make sure today that you are safe in Jesus. Let us pray. Lord our God, we pray to bless us. We give thanks for the marvel of your grace, for the wonderful way that you display your grace and your love and your mercy.

[28 : 15] And we pray that you will do us good. We give thanks for your word and the encouragement that it is, the challenge as it is. And we pray that we may submit under its rule and its authority.

We pray, Lord, to bless us. We pray for Donald McLeod tonight as he will be leading the service. We ask, Lord, that you will grant him your strength and your grace. And we pray for Donald Martin who will be speaking at the fellowship.

And we commit all the work that goes on throughout the week in all the different aspects of it. We pray for Carol Ann at the WFM on Tuesday. And we pray for the Christianity, basic Christianity starting up again.

We ask your blessing upon that, upon all the different activities. Lord, do us good, we pray, and take away your sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We conclude singing from Psalm 116, verses 4 to 8, on page 396.

This is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 116, and the tune is Bethesda, verses 4 to 8.
Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

[29 : 38] God merciful and righteous is, yea, gracious is our Lord. God saves the meek, I was brought low, he did me help afford. So on 4 to 8, the tune is Bethesda, Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

God merciful and righteous is, yea, gracious is our Lord.

God saves the meek, I was brought low, he did me tell, God merciful and righteous is, O Lord, O thou my soul, O thou my soul, do thou return, unto thy quiet rest, for I should be whole, O Lord, the Lord, O thou thy influence for my dispersive soul of death,

Thank you.