

## **The Face of Saving Faith**

(Joshua 2)

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### **Introduction**

One thing I love about watching sports on TV is when they do those stories on individual players...

Where the announcers take you behind the scenes and they give you the behind the scenes stories of how athletes have overcome incredible challenges to make it to where they are...

Often times, the stories are not about the top athletes but about the ones who are not the stars of the sport..

It is often a refreshing reminder that real people are behind the uniforms and sports they play...

If you let your mind go to the OT, it is easy to get caught up in just the story of Israel...

To see how they became a nation under Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...

To see how they grew under the leadership of Moses and Joshua and then David...

And to see how God used them for both good and bad in the world...

Yet, sometimes we can let our fascination with Israel in the OT overshadow some of the individual stories of the OT...

And there may be no greater example of this than what we find in Joshua 2 tonight...

This is the story of Rahab...

A story that is often told in Sunday School as teachers try to explain to kids what a harlot is...

And I will save you the suspense...

A harlot is a prostitute...

A woman who makes a living doing sexually immoral things...

That is way the Bible describes her, so it is an accurate description of her before she came to faith in the one true God..

Yet, Rahab went from being a prostitute to being part of the people of God.

And she did that by doing what everyone must do to become a part of the family of God...

She had great faith in the God of the Bible..

And Joshua 2 is the story of Rahab's faith in the Lord..

She is a great example from the OT that God was not just interested in saving Jews but also Gentiles...

Rahab was a Canaanite from Jericho..

She was not Jewish, yet God saved her.

She stands alongside Ruth and the people of Nineveh in the OT as examples of God saving Gentiles in the OT...

So, as we look at the story of the Rahab and the spies tonight in Joshua chapter 2, don't get distracted by everything that happens...

Focus in on the fact that Rahab was saved by God...

And remember she serves as a great example still today of how God can save the Jew and the Gentile...

And he can save the high and mighty and the down and out...

With that in mind, let's look at Joshua 2 tonight through the lens of how true faith changes people....

We will begin in verses 1-7 with...

### **I. Saving Faith Changes Our Priorities (1-7)**

Verse 1...

***2 Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho."***

Remember where we are in the OT..

The year is 1405 BC.

Israel has been a nation for almost 600 years now, but 450 of those 600 years were spent in slavery in Egypt...

Yet, in 1445 BC, Moses led Israel out of Egypt...

And the 2-4 million people who made up the people of Israel walked out of Egypt where God parted the Red Sea to make their escape possible and they set their sights on the Promised Land..

Now the promised land is called the promised land because God had promised Abraham in or around 2000 BC that he would grow his descendants into a great nation and give them their own land..

Therefore, the land that we now know as Israel became known as the Promised Land...

We saw last week that the Promised Land was a massive piece of land bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and bordered on the east by the Euphrates River...

So as Israel left Egypt, they headed northeast to occupy the Promised Land...

On the way, they encountered trouble.

Due to a combination of disobedient actions, God caused Israel to wander in the wilderness south of the Promised Land for 40 years...

And as we got the Joshua 1 last week, the year is 1405 BC...

Moses has died, leaving Joshua in charge, and God has told Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land...

He told Joshua to be strong and courageous and to be assured that God would never leave him or forsake him...

And as we left off last week, Joshua told Israel to get ready because they were about to step into the Promised Land...

The only problem was this...

The land was already occupied by other people groups...

God was going to give Joshua and Israel victories over the people who lived there, but it wasn't going to be easy...

So, Joshua was to be ready for the battles that were coming...

And like any good leader, Joshua doesn't neglect to plan for entry into the land...

Instead, he wants to spy out the land to see what troubles may lie ahead for the nation...

And so when we get to Joshua 2, Joshua sends out spies to gather information on what awaits Israel as they prepare to take the land...

Now, this isn't unusual...

It isn't disobedient on Joshua's part to gather information...

I know he trusts the word of the Lord, but that is not an excuse to not prepare...

So Joshua begins preparation for battle by collecting information...

You may remember that Joshua was once a spy alongside Caleb and 10 others, so he knows the importance of gathering information before battle..

And so in verse 1 of chapter 2, he sends spies into Jericho...

Now let's look at a map of what we are talking about...

Remember, Israel had left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, headed south and then north toward the Promised Land...

They had spent some time in the Wilderness, but now they had come up the eastern side of the Dead Sea and stood ready to cross the Jordan River and head into the Promised Land...

Here's a close up map that shows Shittim and Jericho...

It was about 7 miles from Shittim to the Jordan, and then about 7 more miles from the Jordan to Jericho...

So, Joshua sends the spies into Jericho...

And once they get to Jericho, they find a place to gather information about the city...

Look at the end of verse 1...

***So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and [a]l lodged there.***

It would not be uncommon for visitors in a city to find their way to a prostitute's home, so maybe the spies thought going there made the most sense..

The home would then serve as cover for their intelligence gathering...

However, we know why they ended up at Rahab's home...

God had changed her heart, and she now belonged to the Lord and would serve as cover for them...

So, these men take up residence in a home on the wall of Jericho, but their activity is exposed....

Verse 2...

***2 It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3 And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land."***

Though we aren't told how, someone figures out who these spies are and where they are staying and alerts the king...

The king sent his own men to Rahab's house, and at this point, it ain't looking so good for the spies...

Verse 4...

***4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. 7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.***

Just like the king learned about the spies being at Rahab's home, Rahab learned that the king was sending his men to her house...

And she seeks to outmaneuver him..

So she takes the spies to her roof and hides them under the flax that was sitting on the roof to dry...

And then when the king's men come to her, she lies and send them out of the city on a wild goose chase for the spies...

I mean this is getting good....

WE have spies and lies and treason..

Now, before we leave this scene, let me give you a Rolaid for your aching stomach by addressing Rahab's lie...

First and foremost, this is a clear lie...

She claimed that the spies went outside the city gate before dark and that she had no idea where they were...

So, it is a clear case of bearing false witness...

And Rahab is responsible for that sin and many more in her life...

But that sin was forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ that would come years after this scene and it is still forgiven today because Rahab is in heaven..

Nowhere does the Bible commend her lie...

The Bible never says copy her example of being deceptive..

Nowhere are we told to lie just like Rahab in extreme cases...

A lie is a lie is a lie...

Rahab's faith is the example for us to follow but not her failures...

And this is clearly a failure in her life...

I would like to cut her a little slack here and show her some grace here..

She has a background of living a life filled with lied..

Harlotry required her to lie all the time...

And though God has saved her, he is still working to change her behavior...

And just all of us, she isn't perfect right out of the package of salvation...

And neither were you or me and neither are we today...

I am not defending her lie.

It was wrong and sinful.

But the point of the scene is not to highlight her failure but to see her faith...

And one thing that faith does is change our priorities...

Rahab puts her loyalty to her earthly king second to her loyalty to God...

The king of Jericho came to her, but her love of God trumped her love of Jericho...

It was worth risking her life to save the people of God, and so she made up a story and saved the spies of the people of God..

Faith changes our priorities...

The things that we hold dear because secondary to the things of God and the people of God...

Rahab hid the spies, but faith will make you do things like that...

Faith turns our worlds upside down at times..

But second...

## **II. Saving Faith Changes our Speech (8-14)**

After the king's men leave the scene to chase two ghosts, Rahab goes to the men of God....

Verse 8...

*8 Now before they lay down, [b]she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have [c]melted away before you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the [d]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 [e]utterly destroyed. 11 When we heard it, our hearts melted and no [f]courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of [g]truth, 13 and [h]spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our [i]lives from death." 14 So the men said to her, "Our [j]life [k]for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the*

***Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and [l]faithfully with you.”***

Now, we get to the point of the passage, and that is to highlight the faith of Rahab...

Listen to how faith talks...

First of all, faith talks of confidence in God...

Verse 9...

***I know the Lord has given you the land...***

Rahab knew that Jericho was in trouble because she knew that Israel's God was the true God...

Faith does not doubt the power of God, but rather faith knows that the work of God will be accomplished...

Rahab knew what unbelievers never understand...

Rahab knew that the plans of God cannot be undone..

But second, faith has a healthy fear of God...

Rahab tells the spies that the people of Jericho have no confidence that they can fight against the Lord...

She said that their courage melted away when they saw the work of God in clearing the way for Israel to leave Egypt...

And how God had led Israel to victory over two kings of the Amorites...

But third, faith not only expresses confidence in God and fear of God...

Faith speaks of the glory due to God...

Look at the end of verse 11..

God is the God of heaven above and earth below..

This was not the view of the Rahab's fellow citizens in Jericho...

The people of Jericho worshipped multiple gods of heaven and multiple gods of the earth...

Yet, Rahab a woman of faith, believer that God alone is the one true God..

But there is one final way that faith affects our speech, and that is found in verses 12-13..

Faith causes us to ask for God's mercy....

Rahab goes to see the spies for one purpose..

It wasn't so that she could prove to them that she had faith in their God, it was to ask them to show mercy to her when Israel attacked Jericho...

Rahab simply asked the spies to spare her and her family when the inevitable happens and Israel marches into the city...

And this a very important part of the speech of faith, but faith asks for mercy from God....

Let me tell you what I mean...

It is one to say that God is real and the only true God...

Many people do that, but faith goes beyond believing there is a God...

The demon believe that God is real, but what do demons refuse to do?

They refuse to submit to His authority...

They refuse to ask him for mercy...

Faith sees the power of God, but it doesn't shake its fist at God, it falls on the mercy of God...

Rahab knew that the God of Israel of real...

Rahab knew that he was going to lead Israel to take their city..

But Rahab believed that God also had the power to save her and her family in the process of destroying everything around them...

Faith sees God as ruler, but faith also sees God as the Savior...

Rahab knew that God was powerful to destroy, but he was also powerful enough to spare her...

Do you know what saving faith says...

I see God.

I know he should destroy me.

I know he has the power to destroy me.

But I also know he has the power to save me.

So I will ask for mercy.

That's the gospel, right?

Rahab's faith didn't cause her to run from God in fear, but to run to him for mercy..

Some people sit in church and see God and try to  
hide from Him..

But the response of faith is to run to Him...

God is a God to be feared, but He is also a God that  
will save....

Amen, church?

Faith changes our priorities....

Faith changes our speech...

Faith also changes our future...

Let's end with verse 15-24...

### **III. Saving Faith Changes Our Future (15-24)**

Verse 15...

*15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." 17 The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath [m]to you which you have made us swear, 18 [n]unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. 19 It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." 21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

Rahab continues to show her wisdom her about the situation as she lowers the spies out of her window and even tells them what to do next...

They were to hide out until the king's men came back from their unsuccessful search...

And then the spies lay out the terms of their agreement with Rahab...

She would be spared when Israel came to take Jericho unless she had a scarlet cord hanging out her window...

That scarlet cord would serve as a reminder to Israel not to destroy the occupants of that home...

And to give you the happy ending, when Israel overthrew Jericho, Rahab and her family were spared..

Now, many people have tied the red scarlet color to the cross and Jesus' blood...

I think that is doing too much with this scarlet cord..

Red just may have been more visible than any other color on the walls of Jericho...

If there is any symbolism in the scarlet cord to Israel at this point in their history, it would remind them of the blood they put over their doorposts in the Passover when they left Egypt..

As God spared the families who had a blood red X over their door posts..

If Israel thought anything other than there's a red cord from that window, so that family lives...

They may have been thinking about the blood over their doors as they left Egypt...

And I also think is a good time to mention this...

Rahab's faith had given her a great concern for others...

I mean she could have just left with the spies as they climbed down the wall...

Or she could have just asked for protection from herself when Israel overthrew Jericho..

But she didn't, she wanted others spared as well...

Faith looks to a future upward, but faith also causes us to look outward for the future of others...

So the spies tell her as they leave, put the cord out and don't breath a word to anyone what happened here today...

And if you fail to do either of those, you will perish in the destruction that is coming to city...

Rahab simply responds in verse 21, So be it...

Don't love the response of people of faith?

If that is what I need to do, Ill do it..

No arguing on Rahab's part...

No attempt to bargain with the spies...

The spies simply say, "here's what you need to do to be saved..."

And Rahab simply responds, "You got it."

Faith doesn't argue.

Faith is just happy that there is a way to be saved...

So many people argue about salvation..

Do I really need to repent in order to be saved?

Do I really need to trust only in Christ to be saved?

And the answer is answer is yes and yes..

And the ones of saving faith simply respond, “Ok, I repent and trust only in Christ.”

Rahab is shrewd woman, but her faith is simple...

If this is what I need to do, Ill do it...

So be it..

And notice that she immediately puts the scarlet cord out the window..

She has no idea when Israel will be back to attack the city; she just knows that red cord needs to be out of the window...

So she doesn't take any chances and out it goes...

Rahab's faith has changed her present and her future...

But her faith has also changed the future of Israel...

Let's finish up the chapter in verses 22-24...

***22 They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them [o]all***

*along the road, but had not found them. 23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have [p]melted away before us."*

So the spies follow Rahab's instructions and wait in hiding for 3 days..

Then they make their way back over the Jordan to Israel's camp in Shittim....

And they have a very simple report to offer Joshua...

WE are taking this land for the Lord...

The people there already lack the courage to stand up to us...

Now, you may argue...

Shouldn't God telling Joshua that he would be successful be enough confidence for him to proceed with the report of the spies...

And maybe that is a valid point, but let me remind us all of an important truth...

Look, I know the Lord is with me, but my heart and flesh fail at times to remind me of this truth...

And as much as I know that God is with me, God also knows that I fail to remember that in my fallen flesh..

So sometimes, do you know what He does?

He sends me encouragement through the words of others...

Joshua knew that Jericho would fall to him...

God had assured him of that last week...

But God also knew that Joshua needed to be reminded of that often...

So, the spies bring back a word of encouragement...

May we be as faithful to encourage one another as we battle this world every day...

## **Conclusion**

Let me end with an important reminder that is often overlooked and forgotten in Joshua 2 and in the church and it is this...

God doesn't save people just like us....

One of the most heartbreaking sins that I see most often in churches today is the thought that God only saves good people who work hard and provide for their families and look just like us....

IF you see that attitude in your life, repent of it...

The Pharisees thought like, and I promise you that you dont want to be like them...

But the great truth about God is that he saves the prostitute, the murderer, the rich man, the poor man, and everybody in between...

Jesus came and ate with tax collectors and sinners because the sick need a doctor, right?

And God has saved said many drug addicts, harlots, poor people, murderers and worse that that...

God saves people who are unsavable in our mind..

And it sickens me when Christians look down on people or put them in a category where God wouldn't save them...

Many people are probably offended that God would save Rahab...

But he did, and not only did he save her, he put her in his hall of faith in Hebrews 11...

But more than that, listen to how much God honored her...

Matthew 1 is the genealogy of Jesus...

It is his family tree...

And guess who is a great great grandmother of the Lord Jesus?

Rahab...

In God's plan to bring Jesus into the world, he put a saved prostitute in the branches of Jesus' family tree..

So the next time to talk about the sins of someone's mother or father, remember that that your Lord had a former harlot in his family tree...

Yet, guess why Rahab is there?

To prove that God can save anyone and then use them to bring about his plan in the world..

And not just any plan...

But he saved Rahab and made her a part of Israel so that she could have a direct tie to bringing a Savior into the world...

The next time we are tempted to slander someone, let us be reminded that no one is beyond the reach of the Lord to be saved...

And that our primary concern about others is not how bad they are, but how good and capable God is of saving them...

Amen?

Let us pray.