

“Rahab’s Faith”

Joshua 2

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Introduction:

Probably all of us here this morning understand the power of influence. According to the dictionary, influence is defined as, “the capacity or power to be a compelling force on the actions, behavior, or opinions of others.” And when we think about it, we understand that even the smallest babies here this morning have a powerful influence. The scream of a 7 pound baby at 3 o’clock in the morning is able to awaken and move a full-grown human being! That little baby is a “compelling force on the actions of others.” There are many other examples that we could consider, but this morning I would like for us to consider a question: Is it possible to be influenced by someone who died before we were ever born? How about a great-great grandmother? Some of us here this morning have been blessed with knowing our great-grandmothers. I can remember one of my great-grandmothers. She was a faithful Christian and stayed faithful for many years, even though my great-grandfather was not baptized until well into his 80’s. But how many of us have been influenced by our great-great grandmothers?

King David in the Old Testament was a hero of the faith. He was a man after God’s own heart and was one of the greatest kings in the history of God’s people. And as we start looking at David’s family tree, we find that a lot of his greatness can be traced back to his great-great grandmother. I doubt that he knew her personally (although it might have been possible), and yet her influence on his life was tremendous.

We remember that Moses led the Israelites through the Sinai Desert for 40 years (from 1445 BC to 1405 BC). Moses died without being allowed to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. His successor was a man named Joshua. Joshua led the people across the Jordan River, and immediately they faced their first challenge—the highly fortified walled city of Jericho.

It was their first test, and we find from the Scriptures that Joshua sent two spies into the city. These two spies found a place to stay at a woman’s home that was actually built into the walls of the city. At the time, their encounter with this woman might have seemed random, but looking back on it, we start to understand that God (through His providence) had apparently directed them to this particular woman for a reason.

If you will, please look with me at all 24 verses of **Joshua 2**, and as we look together at the Scriptures, I would like for us to study the faith of a very special woman by the name of Rahab. **Joshua 2**...

¹ Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. 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." 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. ⁸ Now before they lay down, 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 melted away before you. ¹⁰ 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 utterly destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard it, our hearts melted and no 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 truth, ¹³ and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." ¹⁴ So the men said to her, "Our life 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 faithfully with you." 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 to you which you have made us swear, ¹⁸ 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. 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 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 melted away before us."

As we look back over this chapter, I'd like for us to consider several lessons based on the faith of Rahab.

I. As we look back at Joshua 2, we find first of all, that FAITH CAN BE FOUND IN THE MOST UNLIKELY OF CIRCUMSTANCES. **PPT******

The story starts in **verse 1** as Joshua sent two spies into the city of Jericho. The first question that comes to my mind is, "Why?" Why send spies? You might remember that they had already sent spies 40 years earlier, and it did not go very well! In fact, Joshua himself was one of only two of the 12 spies who brought back a favorable report. So, Joshua has already seen the city of Jericho. Besides, what knowledge would they gain that would help God in claiming a victory?

I think we start to see an answer to this question when we think about James' account, because in **James 2** (the passage that was read a few moments ago by brother Del), you might have noticed that the two men are not referred to as "**spies**," but they are referred to as "**messengers**"! And so now the question becomes, "Why would Joshua send "**messengers**" into the city of Jericho?" Part of the answer might be found in **Deuteronomy 20:10** where God's law says that, "**When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace.**" Jericho was an evil city. On the wall up here, we are looking at a picture of an actual image of Baal. I took this picture a couple of months ago on my trip to the Oriental Institute Museum down at the University of Chicago. This was an actual idol of Baal that was worshiped during the time and in roughly the same place that we are talking about this morning. The residents of Jericho, then, worshiped idols. From history, we know that they practiced self-mutilation. They sacrificed their little children. In Jericho, they buried their dead under their floors. They would cut off the heads of their relatives, cover them in plaster, and worship those heads. They were an evil, idol-worshipping, pagan society.

But into all of this, Joshua sent "**messengers.**" Sometimes we talk of spies going undercover, but here we have messengers going undercover as spies—because their real mission was to bring a message of salvation! I am reminded of the situation in

John 4:4, where the Bible says that Jesus, *"...had to pass through Samaria."* Well, that's a little strange! Why did Jesus have to pass through Samaria? We find the answer to that question as Jesus meets the woman at the well. Apparently, Jesus knew that there was a woman who would be at the well who needed to hear the message of salvation—and so He had to go there! And so in perhaps a similar way, through the providence of God, Joshua sends these messengers into the city of Jericho.

Not only was Jericho itself an unlikely place to find faith, but we find almost right away that the two messengers go directly to the house of a prostitute. And so not only was this woman surrounded by a pagan society, but she was part of it—she was selling herself—destroying families, breaking hearts, ruining lives. The Law of Moses was incredibly clear on this subject. In **Deuteronomy 23:17-18**, we find that prostitution was expressly forbidden and that a prostitute's offering was to be rejected in the house of God. In other words, if a prostitute brought an offering to God, it was to be given back immediately.

But this woman did not have the book of **Deuteronomy**. As far as we know, this woman did not have the Ten Commandments. She did not have the Law of Moses, and yet she feared the Lord God Almighty! She did not have any real detailed information about the only true and living God. But in spite of her limited information, Rahab's faith is absolutely amazing! It is surprising! Rahab is one of those Gentiles written about by Paul in Romans 2—she was not subject to the Ten Commandments, but she was subject to the Law of the Heart. She was doing the best she could with the limited information she had.

In **Joshua 2:9**, we have the first words she ever speaks to the messengers, and she says, *"I know that the Lord has given you the land."* This was not a guess, or an assumption, or something she was pretty sure of, but it was something she knew without a doubt. She knew that the Lord was on the Israelites' side. We may not know exactly where she got this information, but it was something she knew. And what we may not realize in most English translations is that she uses the word Yahweh to refer to God (as indicated in the NASB by the word LORD in all capital letters). And in the next few verses, this prostitute starts referring back to some things that had happened more than 40 years in the past.

And what we notice all through this chapter is that this woman fears the one true and living God. In **verse 11**, she says, *"...for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."* And so in spite of being from Jericho, and in spite of being a prostitute, Rahab wants to be saved from God's judgment on the land of Canaan. And we remind ourselves this morning that faith can be found in the most unlikely of circumstances.

We remember the ministry of Jesus, and we remember that Jesus spent time with the tax collectors, and sinners, and even those who were sexually immoral. We remember what happened in **Luke 5:30-32**, where the Pharisees and the scribes began grumbling at the disciples. They were upset that Jesus was eating and drinking with evil people, and Jesus answered and said to them, *"It is not those*

who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

It seems that we can apply this to Rahab, because this woman knew there was something wrong. Based on the limited evidence she had, she knew that she was on the wrong side. She knew that there was one true and living God, and she knew she had to do something to come closer to God.

And into this situation, God sends two messengers—two young men who are not interested in using her body, and Rahab's only request is, ***"Please spare my life!"*** Rahab, then, is a demonstration of what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:7**, ***"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you,"*** and of what the prophet said in **2 Chronicles 16:9**, ***"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."***

And so we remind ourselves this morning that faith can be found in the most unlikely of circumstances. We can apply this to our lives today when we realize that most of us may already know women like Rahab. Like Jesus with the woman at the well in **John 4**, like Philip with the Ethiopian Officer in **Acts 8**, and like Peter with the Roman Centurion in **Acts 10**, we may have an opportunity to share our faith with someone who is eagerly looking for the one true and living God. We may have friends and neighbors right now who are looking for the Lord.

II. Secondly, not only can faith be found in some rather unusual places, but we also find in Joshua 2 that FAITH IS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH OBEDIENCE. **PPT******

We've already noticed that Rahab believed in God, but we also need to understand that true faith is always demonstrated. Rahab's faith is referred to in the New Testament in **Hebrews 11:31**, where the Bible says that, ***"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."*** And as brother Del read from the book of **James 2:25**, ***"In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?"***

In other words, Rahab believed in God, but then she did something about it. After all, as we look carefully at what Rahab said in **Joshua 2:9-11**, we find that all of the people of Jericho were scared of God, and so at least in a sense, they all had faith—they knew that they would be destroyed (just like the trembling demons in **James 2**). But Rahab is the only one who moved beyond fear down the road to obedience.

She believed in God, and then she hid the spies, she gave them some inside information, she made sure they were safe, and she sent them out by a different way. At this point, some people have accused God of praising a lie. First of all, we need to understand that lying is always wrong. In fact, the Bible condemns lying from the book of Genesis all the way through to the book of Revelation. Secondly,

we must admit that Rahab did lie. She told the soldiers that she did not know where the men had come from (that was a lie—she knew they were from the children of Israel). And she also said that she did not know where they had gone (this was also a lie—she was hiding them under the flax on her roof). But at the same time, we also need to realize that the messengers never told her to lie. And in those passages from the New Testament, when we look at them very carefully, we realize that God never praised her for lying, but she was praised for her faith and she was praised for receiving the messengers and sending them out by another way.

I think we can safely say that (like many of us) Rahab was saved not because of her lying, but in spite of her lying. Just as Noah sinned by getting drunk after the flood, and just as David sinned with Bathsheba, Rahab also sinned but was ultimately pleasing to God.

Beyond what she did for the spies, if we look back at **Joshua 2**, we find that the messengers gave Rahab a plan to follow. They told her to not to tell anyone, they told her to hang a scarlet rope out the window, and they told her to stay in her house. Here is a woman who was willing to risk everything to be on God's side.

And here we are close to 3500 years later. We know so much more about God than she did, and the question is whether we will have the courage to follow her example. When the Bible tells us what to do, will we do it? Like Rahab, our faith must be demonstrated through obedience.

III. There is a third lesson for us to learn from Rahab's faith, and it comes in the fact that FAITH IS ALWAYS REWARDED. **PPT******

If we skip ahead a few chapters, we come to **Joshua 6** and the destruction of Jericho, but in the middle of the destruction, we find a few verses near the end of the chapter—**Joshua 6:22-25**. The Bible says,

²² Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." ²³ So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

And so we find that in the middle of all of the destruction, God saved this pagan woman and her family. She became a great example to all future generations. She later married an Israelite man. Jewish tradition tells us that she married one of the messengers. Whether that is true, we do not know, but we do know that her

husband's name was Salmon. He was a leader from the tribe of Judah. Salmon and Rahab became the father of Boaz, who married Ruth. Boaz and Ruth became the parents of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David. And then, in **Matthew 1:5**, Rahab is listed in the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph. And so, not only was Rahab the great-great grandmother of King David, but she entered into the family tree of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION:

This morning, I would suggest that it is possible to be influenced by a great-great grandmother. In fact, it is even possible to be influenced by the life of a woman who lived almost 3500 years ago. This morning, we can be influenced by the faith of Rahab.

- We learn from Rahab that faith can be found in some rather unusual and unexpected places.
- We learn from Rahab that faith is demonstrated through obedience.
- We learn from Rahab that faith is always rewarded in the long run.

The Bible teaches that we can be saved from our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus if we will respond to God's offer in faithful obedience. The Bible teaches that God will accept all people who are willing to repent of their sins and follow Him by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Whether it is hanging a scarlet rope out the window or allowing ourselves to be dipped in water, God will reward those people who do whatever it takes to be obedient.

As Christians, we can apply this morning's passage by going out and looking for men and women like Rahab, who are out there looking for God. But if you are not a Christian, the Bible commands that you be immersed in water immediately. If you have any questions, please talk to us, but if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org

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