

Rahab: Saved by Faith

Hebrews 11:31

Halifax: 14 January 2024

Introduction:

Today in our study of the letter to the Hebrews we have a very unique example of faith and of what it does in people's lives by God's marvellous grace.

- I say "very unique," because we have now looked at fifteen examples of faith and no two have been alike. They are all unique.
 - But the woman we are looking at today is in a class by herself.
 - She stands out as one who is far from God, yet is brought near to Him by grace through faith!

In this example, we have a powerful medicine that is able to encourage the most desperate sinner, and, at the same time, break the proudest heart.

- It is able give hope to the desperate sinner who says, "I am beyond the hope of salvation!"
- And it can humble the proud heart who says, "Of course God will accept me! I am not depraved like *those* people—like so many people."
 - And in case you think that few people think they are better than others, a survey was done of students who were finishing high school and one of the questions was whether you think you are easy to get along with.
 - 0% of 829,000 students who responded rated themselves below average!
 - At least half of them had a falsely elevated opinion of themselves...
 - 60% rated themselves in the top 10%
 - At least 83% of them had to be wrong.
 - 25% rated themselves in the top 1%.
 - At least 96% of them had a falsely elevated opinion of themselves—likely more, because many if not all of the ones who really were in the top 1% probably did not think they were.

Each one of us is poisoned in our souls, to various degrees, with the sins of both discouragement and pride.

- May the Lord use Rahab's example of faith as we look at it today to help us.

Our scripture reading is Hebrews 11:31.

- Listen carefully as I read it to you:

Hebrews 11:31: By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

There we will end the reading of God's Word

- May He bless it to us.

As with other examples we have looked at in Hebrews 11, the author assumes that his readers know the background story.

- That's the account we read earlier in the service from Joshua 2 and Joshua 6. I will be referring to it as we go.

I. The first thing to learn from Rahab's salvation is this: Never suppose that anyone (including you) is beyond the hope of salvation.

A. It's easy to think that way.

1. Perhaps God has been showing you something of the depth of your sin, and you say, "I am beyond hope! How could the Lord ever accept me when I keep on coming short? There I have lost my temper again, there I have neglected my duties again, there I have fallen into temptation."
 - Perhaps you are a professing Christian, but you are ashamed to come to Him again for mercy. Surely you have gone too far.
 - Maybe there has been serious sin—like adultery, stealing, cursing God's name, bitterness, malice, disrespect to your parents...
 - How can the Lord accept you? How can He deliver you?
2. Perhaps it is not yourself, but another that you despair of.
 - There is that relative who has gone deeper and deeper into sin.
 - They deny the Lord, they are engrossed in all kinds of deviant behaviour—maybe even prison—perhaps a child molester.
 - You have tried to talk to them about the Lord and they have cursed you for doing so and told them to leave them to live their own way.
 - Or maybe you are someone who doesn't even try to talk to people about the Lord, nor do you pray for them, because you see them as too far gone.
 - Maybe if you're honest, you'd have to admit that you can't see how God's grace could ever reach certain people who are so far in their sin.
3. Or maybe your issue is a little different.
 - You hear a preacher declare that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God—that there are none righteous, no not one,
 - That all deserve to go to hell and (if that is true) to suffer also in this world.
 - You hear that the Bible says that man's heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.
 - And your honest thought is, "Not everyone is that bad. I am not that bad. That must be talking about the bad people who hurt others and live wicked lives."
 - "I am okay. I try to be a good person. I help people and am courteous. I am no drunkard or adulterer."
 - You are not beyond the hope of salvation, you simply don't need it—at least not very much.

B. Rahab is certainly one who might be supposed to be beyond the reach of salvation.

1. Our text calls her what she was: "the harlot Rahab."
 - A harlot is a woman who for advantage exposes her person to fornication.
 - She sells her body for sex.
 - Rahab was not forced into this behaviour.
 - She ran an inn that was also a house of sinful pleasures.

- One does not sell one's body to such things without also selling one soul.
 - They trample upon their own conscience as if stomping on a fire to smother it.
- For this reason, it is one of the most difficult sins to escape—it drowns the soul.
 - Hosea 4:11 says: **“Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.”**
 - Proverbs 7:25 speaks of the young man who goes off with the seductress when it says: **“He did not know it would cost his life.”**
 - It is as sure way to dry up your very soul—to make you numb to the voice of God, immune to the conviction of sin.
 - It is one of the most common exit doors from the kingdom of God.
- But that is not all that made Rahab an unlikely convert.
- 2. She is also an Amorite.
 - The Amorites were a people that God had devoted to entire destruction because of centuries of sin and idolatry.
 - He wanted no trace of them to remain.
 - They and the city at Jericho were devoted to destruction—as we saw last week.
 - She was a wicked woman living in a wicked nation that God had utterly rejected.
 - What hope was there for her?
- 3. Besides her harlotry and her nation, she was also one who seems to have had a comfortable living.
 - She owned this place. She lacked nothing. She seems to have been in good health. She lived in a place with climate like California. She lived in a city that was surrounded by strong walls.
 - What need did she have of the Lord?

TRANS> Does she not appear to be beyond the hope of renovation?

- Her harlotry and her people are mentioned for that very reason.
- Can the Lord's grace save her?

II. See how our gracious God works to save those one who are out of reach.

A. First, He causes them to hear the report of His saving work among His people.

- They hear the gospel, they hear of His mercy to save His people.
- 1. In Joshua 2:10, Rahab tells the spies about what she and all her people had heard.
 - **For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.**
 - They know that God had chosen these people and they knew that He was going to bless them and establish them as a people for Himself.

- They heard the glorious report.
2. The Lord graciously does this in those outsiders upon whom He wishes to have mercy—those He has appointed to salvation.
 - They come to see what He has done to save us from our sin and to establish us as His people forever.
 - Now that Christ has come into the world, they hear of how God sent Him to die for the sins of His people that they might be pardoned through faith.
 - They hear of how He has promised to give them eternal life and how their hearts have been transformed to be allegiant to Him—so that nothing can shake them.
 - They hear as well that He is going to judge all those who reject Him that He may at last establish His people in His kingdom of peace.
 3. Those who have the privilege of hearing of His saving work among His people are most privileged.
 - They see that God is merciful and that He goes out of His way to bless sinners.
 - When this is true of you, you have a natural obligation to be grateful and to respond by pleading for His mercy.
 - It is a remarkable that often those who grow up among God’s people will harden themselves to the message—they who ought to be most grateful! □ and outsiders will hear only a bit and come praising God for His grace and seeking His mercy.
 - When Jesus was on earth, He deliberately limited His ministry to the Jews, but time after time there are Gentiles who see His mercy and came seeking that mercy for themselves.
 - Jesus comments on this repeatedly—marvelling and rejoicing in their great faith that seeks Him out.
 - All who hear have a natural duty, an obligation, to come to Him to plead for His mercy, for He is the God who made heaven and earth.
- B. The second thing He does for those desperate sinners who are appointed to salvation is bring His people to them or them to His people.
1. Rahab was the one person in Jericho that the Lord had chosen to save.
 - In His providence, Joshua sent out these two men to spy out the land and where did they end up?
 - In the house of Rahab the harlot! The one appointed to salvation!
 2. In the New Testament, we see how Philip is carried into the dessert to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch, a man God appointed to salvation.
 - We see how He calls Paul to Philippi and how he finds Lydia and her ladies’ prayer meeting on the Sabbath day down by the river. Lydia was appointed to salvation.

- And then how while there, he and Silas encounter a demon-possessed girl and cast out the demon. Then they are put in prison for this only to find that the jailer is one who is appointed to salvation with his household.
3. In many cases, this contact with God's people is what enables them to hear of salvation, but sometimes, they hear and believe first and then find the people of God.
 - The Lord does this that they might be joined to the church. He gathers His people to Himself in the community of faith.
 - They engage in the worship that He has appointed and serve one another with their gifts.
 - We are not called to isolation, but to community.
- C. The third thing that the Lord does for those appointed to salvation is to save them.
1. This is dramatically displayed in the case of Rahab.
 - We are told that she and her household did not perish with the rest of her nation.
 - God had appointed them to destruction, but she is spared along with her household.
 - a. And indeed, it was much more than not perishing.
 - She was fully established with God's people. They became her people by grace.
 - This is summed up in Joshua 6:25: **And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day.**
 - We are told that she married one of the princes of Judah, whose name was Salmon... do you know who that is?
 - Salmon and Rahab—Rahab the Amorite who was once a harlot—are the great-grandparents of King David!
 - And of course it was through King David's line that Jesus Christ came!
 - Rahab was as fully incorporated into the family of God as ever anyone could be...
 - b. There is no half acceptance with God.
 - No matter how great your sin or how wicked your nation, when He saves sinners, they become full members of His household forever.
 2. We must be ready and willing to welcome sinners.
 - No matter what they may have done—indeed, no matter what they may have done to us—we are to receive them.
 - It was interesting in studying this passage.
 - John Brown is one of the commentaries I read. He lived in the early to mid-1800s when there were many people who were weak in accepting those with a sinful past.

- This is what Rahab did.
- B. Look at Rahab’s beautiful profession of faith in Joshua 2.
1. First, she testifies of God’s grace to His people:
 - **Josh 2:9: “I know that the LORD has given you the land.”**
 - She saw that their establishment in His kingdom was by the hand of the LORD.
 - Those who have saving faith see what God has done to save His people.
 - They see it as His gift of grace and they rejoice to see such mercy!
 2. And look at what she says about Him!
 - She was a pagan idol worshipper, but she had come to believe, from hearing the gospel of God’s grace to Israel, that the LORD was the only true God.
 - **Josh 2:11: For the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath.**
- C. See how Rahab pleads for God’s mercy to her and her household.
- In verse 12, she says: **“Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, ¹³ and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”**
1. This reminds me of the thief on the cross who said, “Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom.”
 - Rahab sees that the kingdom of God is coming to Canaan and she says to those who represent the LORD, “Remember me when you come in your kingdom!”
 - That is what every sinner ought to say when they see the kingdom of God.
 - It is so foolish to resist Him.
 - What, do you think you will stop His kingdom from coming?
 2. Notice how she refers to the kindness she has shown in protecting the spies.
 - And notice that that is also spoke of in Hebrews—that Rahab “did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”
 - That is the way our faith is demonstrated.
 - We love and accept the people that God has blessed.
 - Instead of envying them, we receive them and we bless them.
 - We want to associate with them and be counted as one of them.
 - Think about what a great thing this was for Rahab.
 - By receiving these spies in the Lord’s name, she was forsaking her people and their idols and casting in her lot with them.
 - Nothing but faith could cause her to do such a thing.
 - The Hebrew Christians to whom Hebrews is written were required to do the same thing.
 - John Brown says, “They, like Rahab, were called on to do violence to their patriotic feelings, to separate themselves from their unbelieving kindred

and country, and to follow a course which exposed them not only to the spoiling of their goods, but to imminent hazard of their lives.”

- To put it simply, they must leave their people to be with God’s people.

3. What else but faith could induce Rahab to do this!

- She did it because she believed the world was not about man’s kingdom, but God’s kingdom.
- What else can you do when you believe that God is graciously establishing a kingdom of righteousness but come to Him that you might be in that kingdom?
 - When you come, He washes you with baptism which testifies to the cleansing that Jesus provides for His church through His sacrifice on the cross and the cleansing and renewing of the Holy Spirit which He gives to all who call on Him!
 - He does not reject a single one who comes to Him.
 - It doesn’t matter what great sins you may have done—He is glorified in saving sinners.
 - But if you are proud and think you don’t need His cleansing, you will perish like Rahab’s countrymen who did not believe.