



3 | JOSHUA 2

THE SCARLET CORD OF REDEMPTION

The Only Way to Redemption

Outline

From Hall of Shame to Hall of Faith

Genealogy

1. **THE PROVIDENCE THAT CONNECTED RAHAB (2:1-7)**

An Unlikely Providence

An Unrelenting Providence

A Two-Sided Providence

2. **THE EVIDENCE THAT CONVICTED RAHAB (2:8-11)**

Evidence in Israel's Testimony

The Might of the Lord

The Majesty of the Lord

The Mercy of the Lord

Evidence in Our Personal Testimony

3. **THE CONFIDENCE THAT CONVERTED RAHAB (2:14-24)**

Confidence Seen in the Scarlet Cord

The Blood of the Passover

The Blood of Adam's Coat

The Blood of Animal Sacrifices

The Blood of the Revelation Song

Confidence Seen in the Sovereign Lord

Call to Worship

Psalm 46:1-5, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah* ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

Songs

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Cornerstone

Whiter Than Snow

I Will Glory in My Redeemer

How Great Thou Art

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME: Welcome visitors

GIVING: You can still give over Zelle through your bank with no fees. We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center.

FATHER/SON BBQ next Saturday (07/25) at 3 PM at LHBC. This will be in lieu of our father/son campout since the group campsites are still closed. Please bring some meat for the grill, sides, and drinks for your family. Also plan on bringing comfy chairs for the bonfire as well as a water bottle for a hike around Mallard Lake (forest preserve right by the church)

ANNUAL MEETING Sunday, July 26th after the morning service. Will also be broadcasted on Zoom so all can participate. Bring any questions about the budget. We will vote for 2020/21 budget, reaffirmation of Martin Alexander as a deacon, and taking on Ahmed & Stephanie Joktan as missionaries under our care and support.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PADILLAS: Adelina Luz arrived today at 10 pounds 4 ounces and 21.5 inches long! Thank you for all of the prayers, I'm very thankful for God's goodness and another wonderful blessing from Him!

Introduction

We continue in a series in the book of Joshua called “Footsteps of Faith.” We’ve entitled the message: “The Scarlet Cord of Redemption.” In this second chapter of the book of Joshua is the story of a woman who had a wonderful transformation. She started as a harlot, but she became a saint.

By all accounts, she was an important woman in Jericho. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian describes her as the manager of an inn. She likely lived and managed the homes that were built within the walls of Jericho. These were called “casemate” walls.

Jericho was not a particularly large city. But it was strongly fortified. And most important, it was one of the few entryways to the interior of Canaan. Israel had to pass this way to reach the rest of the land.¹ Though it was good for Israel to find a friend in Rahab, the walls of Jericho were fortified in such an amazing way that it would take a miracle to get through this city and enter Canaan.

And a miracle would occur. The walls would soon fall when God’s people would march around the city. I love to say that faith is the evidence of things not seen. God’s given us a conscience, and the divine complexity of creation, but he’s also given us vast amounts of evidence for the events of the Bible. The Bible is based on history: actual events that archeologists are still studying to this very day.

In 1930, when British archeologist John Garstang studied the site of ancient Jericho, he found collapsed walls, not walls broken down from the outside but that had fallen outward, creating a ramp of fallen bricks by which the Israelites “went up into the city” on the ramp of the walls as Joshua 6:20 records. Archeologists found fallen city walls, burned stores of grain and evidence of destruction of the city by fire, all of which he dated to about 1400 BC—right in line with the Biblical chronology of the city’s destruction.

¹ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 167.

Joshua and the priests of Israel are going to march around the walls of Jericho, but this great victory first begins with this somewhat controversial character: Rahab.

Who was Rahab? Remember, she hides the spies of Israel in the flax. Flax is a plant that is used today to make linen fabric. It's stalks, when beaten, have a fine hair-like texture. Many have surmised that Rahab was not only an innkeeper, but she was also a trusted businesswoman in Jericho, who had a clothing business from her flax. She might have been a sort of fashionista.

Certainly, she was high up in the political circle of the city, as she was well acquainted with the king.

She is mentioned in the book of James as a prostitute who became a righteous woman with a living, vibrant faith.

James 2:25, In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? (NIV)

Rahab lived down in Jericho, which is near the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth, and she took one of the lowest professions, that of prostitution.

FROM HALL OF SHAME TO HALL OF FAITH

This woman was incredibly transformed. Remember that she was a pagan. She was living in spiritual darkness. She was also a Canaanite, destined for divine destruction, because God had said that he was going to destroy the city that she lived in due to their generations of depravity.

Genealogy

Yet, this woman got so radically and dramatically changed, saved, transformed, that she had a pure life. This pagan, this Canaanite, **marries a man of Israel named Salmon**. Some have imagined that Salmon might have been one of the two spies that Rahab hid. At any rate, this prostitute, this Canaanite, this pagan woman, turns to the Lord in faith and becomes the great, great grandmother of King David, and she also becomes a part of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:21; Mt 1:5-6). What an incredible story!

Also, in the book of Hebrews, when the list of the great heroes of the faith is given, she's one of two women mentioned (**the other is Sarah, Abraham's wife**). As we begin our text in Joshua 2, she's a harlot. She's a Canaanite. She's in a city marked for destruction. And she gets saved! She goes from the house of shame to the Hall of Fame. She's listed in Hebrews 11 the Hall of Faith.

Hebrews 11:31, By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Rahab is radically, dramatically transformed; changed for God, changed for good, changed for eternity. I think that's worthy of study. In our study, we're going to try to understand how this happened. What we see is the two spies in Joshua 2 meeting Rahab

and spying out the city. When they meet, it's like two worlds colliding: pagan Rahab and faithful spies who love the Lord.

1. THE PROVIDENCE THAT CONNECTED RAHAB (2:1-7)

AN UNLIKELY PROVIDENCE

Throughout the story of Rahab, we see that **God is in control**. He's drawing people to himself. Christ said, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself" (Jn 12:32). God is drawing people to himself from every tribe, language, family and nation. He's in control. Do you believe that? And often the people that he draws are the most unlikely candidates. How did it happen?

Joshua 2:1a | And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.

They are getting ready for this battle to take the city of Jericho. You know the story of the incredible fall of the walls of Jericho. Before they go in, they send some men out for reconnaissance, to spy out the city and get the lay of the land. So they went into the land, and it says,

Joshua 2:1b | And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

Rahab was indeed a harlot, but she was also somewhat of a gatekeeper, a trusted person in the city. As I mentioned, she's a **businesswoman**. She's got a clothing business. She's got a flax supply that was used to make linen and clothing.

She's likely **the manager of the inn** that is located within or on top of the walls of Jericho. They lodge there, spending their time there in her house, coming and going.

Who would have thought that this woman would be the mother of Boaz who married Ruth, and the great, great Grandma of King David, as well as an ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ? God chooses the most unlikely people.

1 Cor 1:26-29, "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

Jesus would often praise his Father for hiding himself "from the wise and understanding" and revealing himself to the humble (Lk 10:21; Mt 11:25).

AN UNRELENTING PROVIDENCE

All is well until the King of Jericho gets wind of all this, and he confronts Rahab, and she is willing to lie. When Rahab lies, does God say, "That's it, this is over!" No, his love is unrelenting. We read:

Joshua 2:2-7 | And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.”³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who 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, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.”⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, 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 hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.

Here Rahab already has taken sides. She is already acting in faith by hiding the men. Did she need to lie? Should she have lied. Let’s remember what the theologians teach us. God is not bound by secondary causes. In other words, whether she would lie or not lie, God had already given the victory over Jericho to his people as he promised. God’s primary cause – his providential will – was never in question. Let’s be clear: God did not need for Rahab to lie in order to take the city.

Another query comes as we consider the faith of Rahab. Would a truly converted person still be able to deceive? John tells us that a truly born-again person cannot continue in a life of sin.

1 John 3:9-10a, No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God.

A true child of God cannot live comfortably in sin. This is absolute truth. Jesus dismisses professing lawless Christians to hell on the day of judgment (Mt 7:21-23). A true believer cannot continue in sin. So what do we say about Rahab? She’s listed in the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith. **Though she lied, she did not continue in sin, but she did continue in faith.** In this situation, God (in Heb 11; Jas 2) praised Rahab, not for her lying, but for her faith and doing the best she could in such a terrible situation. She marries a Hebrews – Salmon (possibly one of the spies), gives birth to Boaz who marries Ruth, and of course you know the rest of the story as she is listed in Jesus’ genealogy (Mt 1:5).

The great emphasis of Rahab is not how she began, but how great her faith was! It’s very messy at first, but it is strong! Naturally, the New Testament does not fall into the trap of focusing on the lie she told, but on her life of steadfast and living faith (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25).²

A TWO-SIDED PROVIDENCE

Now, this is very interesting. We see that God works on both sides of the equation here. God works in the heart of the sinner, and he works in the heart of the soul-winner.

² Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 26.

You know this to be true, but we see it to be true here in Joshua 2. God works in the faithful spies and in the heart of the pagan prostitute.

Think of all of the people in the city of Jericho. Here is this city, great in iniquity, great in antiquity, great in importance, and in all of the city two men go to one house. Do you think that was an accident? Do you think that it just happened by chance? No! They were divinely directed. We're going to see that this woman was already under deep spiritual conviction. We're going to come to that. It was not by mere chance that they went there. They were sent, guided by the Holy Spirit of God. It was the providence of God that confronted her.

The way the Holy Spirit of God works is this: he begins by many, many ways to **work in the hearts and minds of sinful people**, softening them up, getting them ready for a work of God, getting them ready to be saved. He works the heart of the sinner, softening that sinner's heart up and bringing that sinner under conviction. Then **God works in the heart of the soul winner**, the messenger, and he begins to get that person in the center of his will. Then by divine providence he brings them together. Here's someone under conviction, and here's a servant ready to be used, and God the Holy Spirit gets them together.

God has placed you where you are to reach out and shine the light. You may meet a few Rahabs. You have no idea how God is going to use you. The best ability is availability. God uses those who are available, like these two spies.

If God is not bringing you face to face with people who need the gospel, maybe you ought to ask yourself why. Why? Why am I not having these opportunities? May it be that you're not steerable, usable, and guidable? I heard someone say, "If you get right with God, you'll have to backslide to keep from winning souls."

2. THE EVIDENCE THAT CONVICTED RAHAB (2:8-11)

God had already been working in Rahab's heart before the two spies ever got there to Jericho. Now how, how would a prostitute, a harlot, living in a Canaanite city, how would she be under the Holy Spirit's conviction? How, how did this happen? Well, let's continue to read.

Joshua 2:8-9 | Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.

EVIDENCE IN ISRAEL'S TESTIMONY

She's already being drawn by the Lord. She says she heard of the victories of Israel and the Red Sea crossing. Her heart melted. Everyone's heart in Jericho melted. Some turned to fear, but Rahab turned to faith.

Why is it that she lined up with these men? Why is it that she hides these men? Where did a pagan get such conviction? I'll tell you. She had seen what God was doing for his

people, and it brought conviction upon her. What was the evidence that convicted her? It was the moving of God in the hearts and lives and victory of his people.

The Might of the Lord

The content of Rahab's confession justifies its central place in the story. She rehearses the might of Yahweh:

Joshua 2:10 | 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 devoted to destruction.

This was the basis of her faith; she had heard about the mighty acts of God. This is the normal way of coming to faith. Biblical faith is based on at least some knowledge, data, and evidence. Faith is not just a warm, cozy feeling about God. Faith grows, if at all, out of hearing what God has done for his people.³

The Majesty of the Lord

Then Rahab confesses the majesty of Yahweh when she says:

Joshua 2:11 | 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 above and on the earth beneath.

That is the conviction of faith. This was to be the conclusion Israel was to reach about her God (Deut 4:39). But here is a pagan, Canaanite harlot with an 'Israelite' confession on her lips. She holds to the utter supremacy of Yahweh. She comes in full trust and surrender, believing that he is the only God functioning in heaven and upon earth.⁴

The Mercy of the Lord

All of this leads Rahab to seek God in his mercy and grace.

Joshua 2:12-13 | Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

Here is the evidence of faith. Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the reality of God but presses on to take refuge in God. Rahab not only must know the clear truth about God but also must escape the coming wrath of God. It isn't just a matter of correct belief but of desperate need. Saving faith is always like this. It never stops with brooding over the nature or activity of God but always runs to take refuge under his wings. Amazingly, Rahab not only trembles before the terror of the Lord but also senses that

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

there might be mercy in this fearful God. What but the touch of Yahweh's hand could have created such faith in the heart of this pagan harlot?⁵

EVIDENCE IN OUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Not only are we to be witnesses, we ought to be part of the evidence. What is there about your life that is unexplainable? Are you opening your mouth and sharing your faith? Jesus spoke clearly and gave his marching orders to us before he ascended: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt 28:19). "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). Can people see Jesus in you? Are you filled with the Spirit? Living a holy life?

If the Israelites, coming across the desert, had just been like everybody else, there would have been no conviction in the heart of this pagan. But, you see, you could not deny God had opened the Red Sea for them. God had given them victory over mighty armies. God had marched before them. And Rahab said, "When we heard what your God was doing for you, our hearts did melt" (cf 3:11).

Is there enough evidence in the working of God in our lives to truly convict that person who lives next door, that person who works in the next office, that person who plays alongside you on that team? Can they see a difference? Do they see the hand of God?

Brothers and sisters, the greatest argument for Christianity and the greatest argument against Christianity is **the life of a Christian**. You may be the only evidence of Christianity that some of your friends, loved ones and co-workers ever see. If you name the name of Jesus Christ and you're not living, walking, and talking victory, you need to stop living in your flesh and surrender. Be a vessel that God can use.

If you name the name of Jesus Christ and you are surrendered, humble, then God will use you. What's your testimony of faith in Christ? Are you sharing it with others?

3. THE CONFIDENCE THAT CONVERTED RAHAB (2:14-24)

CONFIDENCE SEEN IN THE SCARLET CORD

It doesn't take long for Rahab to express her faith. She claims the LORD as her God. And now she's pleading for her loved ones. She says to the two spies:

Joshua 2:14-21 | And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." ¹⁵ Then she let them down by **a rope through the window**, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. ¹⁶ And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way." ¹⁷ The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, **you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down**, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your

⁵ Ibid.

father's household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. ²⁰ But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." ²¹ And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

I love this scarlet cord that Rahab left in the window. It may not have meant anything to her, but indeed, her faith was pointing to another scarlet cord that runs through the Bible: the scarlet cord of redemption.

The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews that Rahab was justified by faith. Now, we're not just talking about somebody coming out of danger, not just that her physical life was spared from the invasion of Israel, but she was saved from eternal punishment by faith. She placed the scarlet rope in the window. What does that remind you of? We see a scarlet cord that runs throughout the whole Bible. Her scarlet cord would have spoken of her great wealth and affluence by a very illicit trade: prostitution. But God turned that scarlet cord into a thread of redemption that we see throughout the Bible.

The Blood of the Passover

Remember that these spies had come out of the land of Egypt before they entered into the land of Jericho. And when they came out of Egypt, God said, "I want you to take a lamb. I want you to slay that lamb. And I want you to put the blood of that lamb upon the doorposts and the lintel of the house. And when I see that scarlet blood, "... when I see the blood," God said, "I will pass over you." You can read that in **Exodus 12:13**: "....when I see the blood, I will pass over you." These men said, "Hey, it's the blood that delivers. Put the scarlet thread in the window." Scarlet is the color of blood. "Let it stand for the blood of the lamb. You will come into covenant with those people who are under the blood."

The Blood of Adam's Coat

You see, from Genesis to Revelation, there's a scarlet thread through the Bible. I mean, you see it in Adam's coat when God covered Adam with a coat in the Garden of Eden. It was a fur coat, by the way, if you don't believe in war, wearing fur. You can take it up with God. It's a fur coat. Adam wore a garment from an animal that had been slain to cover his nakedness and blood was shed.

The Blood of Animal Sacrifices

And then, Abel offered a lamb upon an altar, the firstlings of the flock. When Noah came out of the ark, he offered a blood sacrifice. Abraham saw a ram there that took the place of Isaac there upon Mount Moriah. God instituted the Levitical priesthood in order to bring sacrifices that would point to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That all began before the Jews came out of Egypt, there was the Passover lamb. All of the temple sacrifices were sacrifices of blood, some many of them that pointed to Calvary's cross.

The Blood of the Revelation Song

And when you get to the book of Revelation, you see the redeemed singing, "You have redeemed us with Your blood." From Genesis to Revelation there is this scarlet thread. Why? Because **Hebrews 9:22** says, "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness..." And every page of the divine book is stained with the scarlet blood of Jesus!

What was the confidence that converted Rahab? It was confidence in the blood. Hebrews 11:31 says, "By faith, this harlot, Rahab, perished not with them that believed not." There's a fountain drawn, filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Now, she was made pure. She's no longer a harlot. She's a princess in Israel. She's the great, great grandmother of King David. She's in the house and lineage of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She has been changed. Remember—nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, society reforms us, but Christ transforms us.

It's always been salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone!

CONFIDENCE SEEN IN THE SOVEREIGN LORD

Joshua 2:22-24 | They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. ²³ Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. ²⁴ And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."

Ultimately, it is the Lord where we place our confidence. He is a God of grace and mercy and unrelenting love. This is the spies' hope. This is Rahab's hope. He is our shield and fortress! He will favor us as he did the people of Joshua's day when they testified, "all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us" (2:24). Hallelujah!

Who is it you are praying for? God can melt the hearts of anyone. It's Christ that saves. The scarlet cord of redemption goes through the whole Bible and points us to Christ. Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me" (Jn 14:6).

Conclusion

God is in the saving business. There's the gospel of Jesus Christ and it saves. The transforming power of the gospel. Praise God for the day you were saved. But are you seeing others saved? Are you, by God's providence, coming into contact with those Rahabs in your life? Are there those God has led you to, in order that you might share your faith?

Think about it. Here was Rahab: a harlot, a Canaanite, a pagan, and becomes a great, great grandmother to King David and in the lineage of Jesus Christ. What a mighty God we serve.

Celebration

You know I can't help but see that scarlet cord through the whole Bible.

The Hebrews in Egypt put the **blood of the Lamb** on the doorposts. But let me tell you that Jesus is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:19). Has he taken away your sins?

The **garments of the high priest** and the curtains of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament included scarlets threads. But I want you to know, my High Priest is Jesus.

Jesus is that **slain shepherd** described in Zechariah 13:7. He’s that good Shepherd that gets struck down, and lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). Do you know him?

They laid a little baby in a manger on that first Christmas day. He was born to die. That baby would not escape death. By his blood every tribe, language, family, and nation would be redeemed.

I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! I have no other way to God! I’m redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

I tried **works**. They don’t work. Works never justified a sinner. All my works never took away one stain of sin. Works and the law just made me tired and condemned me more. It takes the blood of Jesus to take away my sins.

I tried to **forget my sin**. I turned to the foolishness of the world when I was lost. The world left me empty. But Jesus, Jesus – he makes me full and overflowing. He cleanses my heart and my conscience. He alone satisfies.

I tried to run away, like the prodigal. I wrote a note when I was 14 years old. “I’m running away.” But I couldn’t run from God. He pursued me! He overtook me by his love.

He brought me to Mount Calvary. It was there that I saw the most beautiful Being in the universe dying for my sins. He bound me to himself. “When I die, you die too.” “When I raise from the dead, you are raised.”

And just like that, my sins were taken away. Just like that I was given new life. Have you experienced that? That scarlet cord of redemption binds me to my Savior!

He’s so great, he can bring anyone to redemption through his blood!

Closing Hymn: *How Great Thou Art*