

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-28-16 AM NOTES
"AN AMAZING CONVERSION"
JOSHUA 2:1-24
4 in Series, "A Vision Fulfilled"

Hebrews 11:31 "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."

James 2:21-26 "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God ... 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..."

Matthew 1:5-6, 16 "Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king...Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah."

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Matthew 4:1-6 "Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king."

II. An Amazing Conversion That Involved Simple Faith (vv. 1-24)

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Contextual Absolutism—The view that in each and every ethical situation there is a course of action that is right and free of sin.

1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."

"It could be argued that Rahab, living in the context of war (the invasion of Canaan), and having shifted her allegiance from the king of Jericho to the God of Israel, her true King, had no obligation to make full disclosure to the soldiers. Her higher duty to protect the lives of the servants of God suspended the *prima facie* [at first glance] duty to tell the truth, and her course of action was acceptable to God. In the New Testament, Rahab is cited as an example of faith for receiving the spies and sending them out another way (James 2:25). Nowhere in Scripture is Rahab condemned for her action. On this construction, Rahab fulfilled the moral absolute that applied in this war time context, namely, to save the lives of God's people; and her actions, rather than being the lesser of two evils, were actually good."
—Dr. John Davis

B. Rahab's Confident Faith (vv. 8-11)

"Faith shows itself in the entire personality."

—Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"We have no right to be believed as long as we can be explained."

—Adrian Rogers

"Rahab's knowledge of the true God was meager, but she acted on what she knew; and the Lord saved her."

—Warren Weirsbe

C. Rahab's Concerned Faith (vv. 12-14)

D. Rahab's Covenant Faith (vv. 15-24)

Joshua 6:21-25 "They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 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." 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. 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. 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."

First Baptist Church Powell 8 28 2016 AM

Sermon 4: An Amazing Conversion

Joshua 2:1-24

Series: A Vision Fulfilled

Hebrews 11 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. It begins by defining and emphasizing the importance of faith. In verse 4 it begins listing the heroes of faith in the Bible. The "faith hall of fame" includes people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and a host of unnamed heroes who manifested great faith. There are two women named in this "heroes of the faith" chapter. One of the women is Sarah, the wife of Abraham, the mother of Isaac and thus an ancestor of Christ. The other name is quite surprising. We read in Hebrews 11:31 "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."

On the surface, Rahab and Sarah had nothing in common. Sarah was the godly wife of Abraham, the father of the chosen people called the Israelites, the Jews, or the Hebrews. Rahab was a shady lady of the Gentiles who sold her body for money. While it seems that Sarah and Rahab had nothing in common, there was one thing they did have in common, and it explains why they are listed in this chapter that focuses on the heroes of faith. Both women had a saving faith in the one true God.

Sarah is not the only hero of the faith who was associated with Rahab in the New Testament. Rahab is associated with Abraham in the book of James. James is making the point that while salvation is by faith,

and not works, saving faith always results in works. He uses both Abraham and Rahab as examples of how faith that saves results in works which justifies us before man as having a genuine faith.

We read in James 2:21-26:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God ... 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...

Not only was Rahab associated with Sarah and Abraham, she was also associated with the Lord Jesus! In the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:5-6, 16: “Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king...Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.” Rahab was Ruth’s mother in law, David’s great, great grandmother and an ancestor of Joseph the legal Father of Jesus and Mary the mother of the Lord.

In this message, we will examine Rahab’s amazing conversion. In examining her life, before she savingly believed in the one true God, we will see the amazing grace of God. In examining Joshua 2, we will see the amazing faith of Rahab.

I. An Amazing Conversion That Began with Scandalous Grace

I am convinced that our view of God’s grace is not radical enough. Someone called God’s grace “scandalous.” I like that phrase, “scandalous grace.” From man’s perspective, God’s grace is scandalous! Webster’s dictionary defines scandalous as “causing scandal... shocking to the moral feelings of the community...”

When a church turns inward, and stops reaching out to sinners where they are, that church loses the sense of scandalous grace. We very subtly begin to think that God’s grace goes out to sweet little children that need to be saved and morally good adults who just need to trust Jesus to top off their already great life. We certainly don’t want to neglect the little children – Jesus certainly didn’t. However, Jesus doesn’t save good people; He saves spiritually dead sinners! The moral, caring wife and mother certainly needs Jesus, but it doesn’t take much to save her does it? That is a warped, non-biblical way of thinking. It took no more of God’s grace to save Rahab than it took to save the moral caring person who is living a *good* life apart from Christ. Even though it took amazing grace to save every hell bound, spiritually dead sinner, from a human standpoint, the grace that saved this harlot was indeed scandalous. To add to the scandal, God not only saved her, He put her in the genealogy of Christ.

Let’s look at some more details of that scandalous grace.

A. Rahab Was a Gentile in Spiritual Darkness

Rahab had no copy of the Bible, no access to the Law of Moses that was passed on orally from the parents to the children. There was nothing but spiritual darkness that surrounded her.

B. Rahab Was a Harlot in Sinful Depravity

Some Bible commentators point out that the Hebrew word for “harlot” can mean a person who sells their body or it can mean an innkeeper. That’s true, but in the New Testament in Hebrews 11:31 Rahab is referred to as “Rahab the harlot” (NASB) or “Rahab the prostitute” (ESV). The Greek word chosen by the inspired writer of Hebrews has no alternate meaning of “innkeeper.” No, Rahab was a harlot. She had left her shady profession by the time the two spies came, but still she was known as Rahab the prostitute.

What scandalous grace – that God would draw this woman to Himself to save. She came from the house of shame to God’s hall of fame in Hebrews 11!

C. Rahab Was a Canaanite Headed for Sure Destruction

The Canaanites were under the curse of God’s judgment. Yet Rahab received grace. As we saw last week, the Lord put over two million Israelites on hold so that this Gentile, this Canaanite woman who responded to Him in faith could be saved from physical destruction. When she came to faith, she was no second level child of God; she actually later married the son of a leader of Israel. We read in Matthew 1:4-6 “Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king.” Who was this Nahshon? We read in Numbers 7:10-12 that he was a leader (“prince” KJV) in Israel. What grace; what scandalous grace that Rahab went from harlot to marrying the son of a prince of the Jews.

At the risk of repeating too much, let me remind you that the grace of God brought Rahab from spiritual darkness, from sinful depravity, from sure destruction to marrying a prince from Israel, being the mother of Boaz, and the mother in law to Ruth, to being in the direct human lineage of Jesus Christ, to being listed in faith’s hall of fame in Hebrews 11:31.

II. An Amazing Conversion That Involved Simple Faith (v 1-24)

Jericho was, humanly speaking, an impregnable city. It was one of the many city states in Canaan that was ruled by its own King. Jericho wasn’t all that large, but its location was strategic. The path to the promised land went through Jericho. Jericho was protected by double walls about fifteen feet apart. Rahab’s house was on the wall (Joshua 2:15). As Israel waited to go over to Jericho, Joshua sent two spies to check out the area around Jericho. About forty years earlier, Moses had sent twelve spies into Canaan and all but Joshua and Caleb came back with a negative, fearful, and faithless reaction to the challenges involved. The purpose of these spies was not to determine whether the Israelites should go into the promised land; that was already settled; they were going in! A general likes to know what he is facing, so he sends spies to learn all they can about the enemy before the attack. It is probable that God’s plan is that the people could see how impregnable the city was so that when it fell, all glory would go to God.

A. Rahab’s Courageous Faith (v 1-7)

When the two spies went into the city, they were providentially led to Rahab’s house. Both Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 indicate that Rahab had come to faith in the one true God before these spies came to her home. What happened to Rahab is described in the New Testament in 1 Thessalonians 1:9b Rahab had “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” When Rahab took the spies into her house, she was evidencing her faith by her works. A true faith cannot be hidden very long. God usually puts new believers in a place where they must take a stand. That is one of the functions of believer’s baptism in the New Testament. It calls for a public stand so a person’s new relationship with Christ is publicly proclaimed.

We see in verses 4-6 that Rahab said something untrue when asked about the Hebrew spies. Was this a case where not giving all the facts to mislead is acceptable? This is a really hard issue. I don’t want to spend a lot of time here, but we can’t just skip over this issue. A similar situation closer to our day is when during WWII the family of Christian author Corrie Ten Boom hid Jews from the Nazis that sought to arrest them and execute many. When asked by the Nazi soldiers if they were harboring Jews, to tell the truth would have insured the captivity and torture or death of the hidden Jews. This is a hard issue that would require a whole message to deal with it in detail. I will settle for a short summary. We should quickly reject “situational ethics” which basically says that committing sins such as lying is OK if love is the motive. The problem with that is that it is up to each individual to determine what constitutes a “loving” course of action.

I believe that the correct view is the view Christian ethicists call “contextual absolutism.” This view holds that in each and every ethical situation there is a course of action that is right and free of sin. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that in every situation of temptation or testing, there will be a way of escape so that the believer is able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” In some cases, the way of escape may be martyrdom. There are millions of Christians who have refused to lie about the fact that they are followers of Christ, refused to deny Christ and have been killed. The cases concerning conflicts between telling the truth and saving the lives of others are among the most difficult. Was Rahab justified in not giving the literally correct truths to the authorities of Jericho about the whereabouts of the spies? I tend to think that she was.

Dr. John Davis is a professor of Christian ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He gives us a good summary of this issue. “It could be argued that Rahab, living in the context of war (the invasion of Canaan), and having shifted her allegiance from the king of Jericho to the God of Israel her true King, had no obligation to make full disclosure to the soldiers. Her higher duty to protect the lives of the servants of God suspended the *prima facie* [at first glance] duty to tell the truth, and her course of action was acceptable to God. In the New Testament, Rahab is cited as an example of faith for receiving the spies and sending them out another way (James 2:25). Nowhere in Scripture is Rahab condemned for her action. On this construction Rahab fulfilled the moral absolute that applied in this war time context, namely, to save the lives of God’s people; and her actions, rather than being the lesser of two evils, were actually good.” [Dr. John Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, page 22]

B. Rahab’s Confident Faith (v 8-11)

From Rahab we learn so much about genuine faith. True faith, mountain moving faith, God honoring faith is so much more than just giving mental assent to that which is true. One of my favorite Bible scholars is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He said, “Faith shows itself in the entire personality.” [Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, quoted in *Be Strong* by Warren Weirsbe, page 38]

Notice how Rahab’s faith involved her entire personality – mind, emotions, and will. In verse 9 we see two of the three elements of faith. She says “I know that the LORD has given you the land...” That is the “mind” part of faith – “I know.” True faith, saving faith starts by knowing the truth about the Lord, His power, His promises. Rahab then says in verse 9, “... the terror of you has fallen on us.” She feared for herself and her family. That is the emotional aspect of faith. The “will” or “choosing” part of faith is seen in the fact that she risked her life to hide and protect these spies who were of the people of God. Let me put those together. Rahab knew and confessed that Jehovah was the true God (mind). She was moved with fear for herself and her family (the emotions), and she received and hid the spies because they were a part of God’s people (the will). Rahab’s knowledge was limited, but she responded in faith to the light, the knowledge she had, and God honored her amazing simple faith and saved her.

Rahab believed in one God, not the multitude of gods of the Canaanite religions. She believed that he was not a detached God as were the god’s of the Canaanites, but that He was a God that could be known and would work on behalf of those who trusted Him. She knew that He was not a local tribal god limited to one nation. She said in Joshua 2:11b “for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” What a grasp this Canaanite woman had of the true God in whom she trusted. She had a greater faith than ten of the twelve spies Moses had sent out almost forty years earlier. They didn’t believe God was powerful enough to take the land. Rahab says in verse 9, “...I know that the LORD has given you the land.”

We know that saving faith is a gift of God, but what was it that got Rahab’s attention? What was the means that God used to build this strong faith in Rahab? It was her observing what God had done in the lives of His people. Rahab wasn’t convicted and drawn to the LORD by a sermon Joshua preached; she was convicted and drawn to God by means of seeing what God was doing in the lives of His people. Allow me to give you a quote I have used so many times before – “We have no right to be believed as long as we can be explained.” [Adrian Rogers]

Let me get personal. In the vision that came out of the fifty days of prayer and fasting, we are believing God to do such a work in, and through us, that those around us – schools, neighborhoods, and work places – will see the love of the Lord, the power of the Lord, and a people who love each other unconditionally, minister to one another, and allow that love to spill out on the people of Powell, Halls, and all the communities around us. The focus of the vision is going to involve a renewed emphasis on loving our community and while we will not neglect the unreached across the ocean, we will remember that the light that shines the farthest shines brightest close to home.

Warren Weirsbe sums it up well. “Rahab’s knowledge of the true God was meager, but she acted on what she knew; and the Lord saved her.” [Warren Weirsbe, *Be Strong*, page 38]

C. Rahab’s Concerned Faith (v 12-14)

Here was Rahab’s opportunity to escape with the spies and save herself. She refused to run because of her concern for her loved ones. She wasn’t satisfied to just save herself; she wanted her loved ones to be spared and to come to know this one true God. A genuine conversion to Christ will manifest itself by the concern to have our loved ones know this God that we know. That is the pattern of Scripture. A part of the vision we will share in two weeks will emphasize a different focus on making disciples that we are praying will shake up what most people think making disciples looks like.

D. Rahab’s Covenant Faith (v 15-24)

A covenant is simply an agreement between two or more people that is based on love and truth and trust. At this point in time, the spies did not know God’s plan for taking Jericho so they could not give detailed instructions. They simply instructed Rahab to hang a scarlet rope out of the window of her house. This scarlet rope is a type, a picture of the blood of Christ. When Jericho was destroyed by God’s people who were the instruments of his wrath, when they saw the scarlet cord, they did not pour out the judgment upon this house as with the rest of the houses. Because of the scarlet blood of Christ that has been applied to our lives, we are saved from sin’s penalty which is eternal death.

Conclusion

We can see how this all turned out in Joshua 6:21-25:

They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 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” 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. 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. 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.

What a picture of God’s scandalous grace and Rahab’s simple faith. Are you under the blood?

Unless otherwise stated all Scripture quotations taken from the NASB.
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