

# The Friend of God's People

Faith & Love Part 07  
James 2:25-26 5-10-2015

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Summary: Trust in God will make you His friend, and the result of that will be love for His people. Rahab is the perfect example. She wanted to be on God's side, so she was a refuge to God's people. (We should be a refuge for one another). If you are on their side because they are on God's side, God will be on your side. God honored Rahab. He orchestrated history just to save her. And the enemies who came to destroy her and her people ended up being, to her, angels from God to bring her salvation.

Introduction.....	1
Rahab's Story.....	2
Rahab's Lie.....	3
Friend of God.....	4
Anyone Can Be Justified.....	4
Friend of God's People.....	4
Especially for believers.....	4
The Results of Faith.....	5
Choosing Sides (Confidence and Fear).....	5
Love.....	5
Refuge.....	5
Rewarded for Saving Your Own Skin?.....	6
Abraham and Rahab.....	6
Your Past is No Problem.....	6
God Will Be on Your Side.....	7
God Honored Rahab.....	7
Failures after Conversion.....	7
God Will Move History to Reach You.....	8
Messengers.....	8
Conclusion: Faith Comes from Hearing.....	9
Application Questions (James 1:25).....	10

**James 2:20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. 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? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.**

## Introduction

Have you ever seen faith?

**Luke 5:20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."**

Jesus forgave all of his sins because He saw their faith. When Jesus saw their faith, what was it exactly that He was seeing? What does faith look like? That's a very important question to answer because there is a kind of faith that won't save you. James calls it dead faith. You will spend eternity in either heaven or hell based on whether you have saving faith or dead faith. And so it is vitally important for us to have a crystal clear understanding of what saving faith looks like. So to help us with that, in this

chapter James sets up the canvas and gets out his brushes and paints four striking portraits. The first two are ugly. They are portraits of dead faith. One is a hideous picture of so-called faith that does not result in loving people. The second one is an even more hideous picture of belief in true doctrine that does not result in loving and trusting God.

Those are the ugly portraits of dead faith - the other two portraits are beautiful. They are both pictures of saving faith. The first one we looked at last week - the portrait of Abraham's faith. That is a picture of faith that loves and trusts God so much that it would willingly give up its most precious earthly treasure if God gives the word. A person with that kind of faith is called God's friend. And we devoted our whole study last week to that concept of friendship with God through faith.

And when we talk about friendship with God, we are not talking about that kind of shallow, over-familiarity where people think of God as a peer, or their buddy in the sky, and they don't have reverence or fear or awe of Him. A biblical understanding of friendship with God does not in any way minimize or diminish God's greatness, because God is both our friend and our King. And for that reason, the most fundamental expression of our friendship with Him is obeying Him.

### **John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.**

The main way we express our friendship with Jesus is by doing what He commands. And what does He command? What did James say is the royal, supreme law of Scripture? Love your neighbor as yourself (James 2:8). So James has one final portrait he needs to paint for us to fill out our understanding of what true, saving faith looks like. Now that he gave us the picture of the vertical aspect (which results in preferring God above every earthly treasure), now he is going to show us the horizontal aspect - the effect trusting God has on the way you treat God's people. (And that order is crucial, by the way. First faith, then love - always. First you trust God, only then you can truly love people.) And James wants us to take a look at a woman whose life is the ideal portrait of that aspect of saving faith. Her name was Rahab.

## **Rahab's Story**

Just to give you a little historical background, when God rescued His people from their slavery in Egypt, they went directly to the Promised Land. And they could have occupied the Promised Land right then. The reason they didn't was when they saw the Canaanites they were so scared that they didn't feel like they could trust God to give them victory. The Canaanite warriors were huge people, and their cities were fortified with massive walls. And so when the 12 scouts came back from scoping out the land, 10 of them said, "If we go to war against those people they will squash us like bugs." The other two scouts were Joshua and Caleb, and they trusted God. But the 10 cowards spread their bad report all through the ranks of Israel, and everyone went along with them. It is a lot easier to spread fear than faith. It is a lot easier to pull people in the direction of cowardice than in the direction of courage. And so the people reverted to their favorite pastime.

### **Numbers 14:2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron**

As a result God said:

**Numbers 14:22 not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— 23 not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.**

From that day on the Hebrews wandered around in the desert for the next 40 years until that whole generation died (except for Caleb and Joshua). Fast forward to the end of those 40 years, all those people are now dead, and so it's time to try again. Once again they send in spies to scope it out, and those spies see the exact same thing the other spies saw - mighty armies and fortified cities. And this time the spies



almost get captured. Here is what happened: Joshua sets up camp at Shittim, east of the Jordan River. If you think of the Jordan as I-25, Shittim is seven miles east – so think Henderson or Commerce City. Jericho is five miles west and a little north, which is Broomfield. The spies set out and after a few hours make it to the Jordan. They somehow swim across with whatever gear they had with them, and they make it to the other side. Now they've got to be careful. They are in enemy territory. They make their way to Jericho, and sure enough – it's a fortified city. Huge, thick walls. There is not a weapon in existence that is capable of penetrating those walls.

"Well, what do you think?"

"I want to see the inside of that city. We need to get in there and take a look around."

"You realize if we get caught, were dead – right?"

"Well then, let's not get caught."

So they cover up their faces the best they can, wait for a moment when there is kind of a crowd moving through the gate, and they jump into the middle of the crowd and keep their heads down. They make it through the gate, and as soon as they get a chance, they duck down an alley where there are no people. And as carefully as possible they start casing the place. But it's a busy city with a lot of people, and no matter how careful they are, people keep noticing them. It was obvious they were foreigners. They didn't look like Canaanites at all. They looked like... desert people.

"We're starting to attract attention. We need to get off the street. Let's go in there."

"In there? Do you realize we are on East Colfax here? We're going to go into a prostitute's house?"

"Where else can we go? We go in there or we get captured."

It didn't take Rahab the prostitute long to figure out – these men were not customers. And that they were hiding from the law.

"OK, guys – obviously you're not from around here. Who are you? And why are you in trouble?"

"...No way – you guys are Hebrews?"

"You've heard of us?"

"Your God commands the wind – the God of both heaven and earth. Yahweh, right? He's the one that dried up the water of the Red Sea so you could escape Egypt, and He decimated the Amorite kings Sihon and Og? And I've heard that He has promised to give you this whole land."

"What's that noise out there? Hold on, let me take a look out the..."

"Oh no – here come the police!"

"Let's go – we've got to get out of here!"

"No, no, no - they're too close. If you try to go out the door they will see you for sure. Quick! Let's go up onto the roof. Lay down over here. I'll cover you up with a bunch of the stalks of flax that I have drying up here. Just be as quiet as you can."

BAM BAM BAM!

"Open up – police!"

"Officers. What can I do for you?"

"Bring out those men who are staying in your house. They're spies."

"Spies? Really? They were here, but I didn't know they were spies. They took off just a little while ago toward the river. If you hurry you might catch up to them."

She watched out the window until the police were out of sight. Then she went back up on the roof and talked with the spies about Yahweh.

"When your God gives you this city, please spare my household."

They agreed. Then she helped them escape the city and told them where to hide for the next few days until the police search party gave up.

## Rahab's Lie

Some people get hung up on the fact that Rahab lied, but this is a wartime situation. And warfare always involves deception. What she did was really no different than what you do when you leave a light on in your house when you're not home. You are trying to deceive the burglars into thinking you are home so they don't break in. If a murderer breaks into your house with a gun you're not going to say,

“Hey, I’ve got to be totally honest with you. My wife and daughter are hiding in that closet right there.” There is nothing wrong with deceiving a murderer to prevent him from committing murder.<sup>1</sup>

## Friend of God

But all of that is a side issue. James is not mainly concerned about the ethics of deception in warfare or crime prevention. His focus here is to show us the results of Rahab’s faith in two areas:

- 1) her status with God, and
- 2) the way she treated God’s people.

First, her status with God.

**James 2:25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous...**

## Anyone Can Be Justified

How can a former prostitute be considered righteous in God’s sight? If you have engaged in that kind of gross immorality and sexual perversion, how could you ever be seen as righteous in God’s sight? Answer – the same way Abraham was. And the same way any human being can be seen as righteous in God’s sight – through faith.

**Galatians 2:16 a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.**

No one is so bad that they cannot be justified by faith. And no one is so good that they don’t need to be justified by faith. No one can be justified apart from faith, but if you do have faith, no matter who you are or what you have done, every last one of your sins is credited to Jesus account – which is why he had to die on the cross. And, in exchange, all of His perfect righteousness is credited to your account. So you get credit, in God’s sight, for living an absolutely perfect life, even though you still sin, because Jesus’ record is credited to your account. God is willing to do that for anybody and He only requires one condition – true, saving faith.

## Friend of God’s People

“But how do I know for sure if I have true faith? How do I know if my faith is dead faith or living faith?”

That is where the second factor comes in.

I told you that Rahab’s faith had results in two areas – first in her standing with God (it made her a friend of God just like Abraham), and the other one was in her dealings with God’s people. True faith will makes you a friend of God, which will, in turn, make you a friend of God’s people. You will love them because He loves them and you love Him.

## Especially for believers

Notice back in verse 15 that it wasn’t just anybody in need, but specifically a **brother or sister** – believers.

**Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

Once in a while you run into someone who has been hurt in the church and they say things like, “I would rather hang around non-Christians than Christians.” That is a sign of dead faith. And you can’t be a friend of God without having a special affection for His bride. You can’t love Jesus without loving His brothers.

**Matthew 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to**

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed study of the ethics involved here, see the lesson titled *Truth-telling* in the *Christian Ethics* class on FoodForYourSoul.net

eat ... 44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these [brothers of mine] you did not do for me.’

The emphasis is on loving brothers and sisters in the faith, because the greater your faith in God, the more camaraderie you are going to have with anyone who is on God’s side. If you are on God’s side then I’m on your side because I’m on God’s side.

## The Results of Faith

That is the connection James wants us to get. He wants us to see the connection between trusting God and loving His people. That has to be the order - first faith, then love. The issue with love is not mainly about everybody getting along and making the world a better place and “let’s all just coexist in peace.” It is about saying, “I’m on God’s side, you’re on God’s side, so we’re on the same side.” And Rahab is a perfect example of that. Why did she risk her life to help out those spies? Was it because they were good looking? No. Because they were really friendly and she wanted to get to know them better? No. She only knew one thing about these men – they were on Yahweh’s side. Their personalities were irrelevant, their background was irrelevant. She helped them for one reason - she had more confidence in the power of their God than in the strength of those city walls.

## Choosing Sides (Confidence and Fear)

She understood - when the police came to her door, she had to choose a side. The moment they knocked on her door, she was forced to either become an enemy of her own people, or become an enemy of Yahweh. She had to decide which one could protect her from the other. Who did she trust the most to be able to protect her well-being – the king of Jericho, or the people of God? Which one does she fear most as an enemy, and which one does she trust most to protect her? The answer to both questions, for Rahab, was Yahweh God. She would rather have the king of Jericho be her enemy than God be her enemy. And she would rather have God to be her protector than the king as her protector. Why? Very simple – she had more confidence in God’s power than in the king’s power.

One reason – when this war happened between this powerful, fortified city and a bunch of ragtag desert dwellers, there was no doubt in her mind who would win. That walled city would be no match for the God who parted the Red Sea.

## Love

So it is imperative that she be on Yahweh’s side when that happens. And there is one thing she can do to show she’s on Yahweh’s side – show kindness and give shelter to Yahweh’s people. And that is the part James really wants us to get. James is writing to churches where there is fighting, quarreling, selfish ambition, gossip, slander, favoritism, indifference to the poor, boasting, name-calling – so many different problems that all came from a lack of love for one another. So when he teaches us about how faith always produces works, he wants to give us an example of works of love.

James wants us to follow Rahab’s example. If you are on God’s side then I am on your side. Turn to someone near you right now and say it out loud – “I’m on your side.” Now say it to someone else – “I’m on your side, too.” What does that mean? What did you just communicate to that person?

## Refuge

For Rahab it meant she **gave lodging** to the spies. That word translated **gave lodging** (or your Bible might say **received**) – she took them in when they were in trouble. There are lots of different ways to show love. James has already talked about caring for orphans and widows, not showing favoritism, meeting physical needs; and now he gives us one more - offering refuge to someone in trouble. That is part of what it means to be on their side.

Now, you might be thinking, “I’d love to do that, but I just don’t get a lot of Hebrew spies knocking on my door needing refuge.” Maybe not spies, but think for a minute about the concept of refuge. Have you ever thought about whether you are a refuge for people who are in trouble? When people have trouble raining down on them, would it be a good idea for them to come to you?

Think of those people who have been a refuge in your life. When you were a little kid, it was your mom. What about as an adult? Some people are a refuge and other people aren’t. When you are being bombarded with trials and you’re getting discouraged, there are some people, when you get around them, it just makes it worse. For example, if you get around a grumbler or a complainer and tell them about your troubles, they try to top it with the story of their own. Or they just commiserate so that your focus stays on your troubles. So when you are done talking to them, you’re twice as discouraged as you were to begin with.

Another non-refuge is people who lack compassion. Those people are oblivious to the fact that you are even hurting, and they carry on with business as usual without even noticing you are dying in a pile.

But there are other people who, when you spend time with them, it’s like stepping into a sanctuary of rest. They have so much trust in God’s goodness and kindness and faithfulness that their faith just kind of rubs off on you. They have a way of turning your attention away from your troubles toward God. When you are around them, you just get the sense that you’re going to be okay. Their trust in God has a calming effect on your anxieties, and a strengthening effect on your heart.

I want to be one of those people. So people who are in trouble can come to me and I can say, “Let me be a refuge for you, because I’m on your side. I want to impart to you strong, unwavering, contagious trust in our God.”

Another way to be a refuge is to be a protector of people’s reputations. If I am on your side, when gossip about you starts up, I’ll shut it down. If your reputation is being degraded, I will not only refuse to participate, but I will rebuke the one gossiping. And then I will speak up in ways that build up your reputation. When you are being talked about, I’ll have your back, because I’m on your side.

## **Rewarded for Saving Your Own Skin?**

That’s what Rahab did.

“What’s so noble in what she did? She was just trying to save her own skin.”

That’s true. That is all she was trying to do. But that’s fine. It is actually a beautiful thing that glorified God. Why? Because her idea of how to be rescued and come out on top was to be on God’s side – even if it meant forsaking her king and her entire culture and everything she had ever known.

The issue is not whether you’re seeking your own wellbeing. Everyone does that. The issue is, “What is your idea of wellbeing?” If your idea of being safe and secure is being on God’s side even if it costs you everything – that is trust, and it is thoroughly pleasing to God. If you seek your own wellbeing by preferring something in this world above God, that’s like siding with Jericho – it is not in your best interests at all.

## **Abraham and Rahab**

I love it that James picks these two illustrations for faith – Abraham and Rahab. At first these two examples seem as far apart as can be. Abraham was a man; Rahab was a woman. Abraham came from a respectable lineage; Rahab was a Canaanite. Abraham was the patriarch of the Jewish race; Rahab was a pagan prostitute. I love it that James picks those two for his illustrations of faith, because every one of us fall somewhere in between those two extremes.

Trying to measure up to Abraham is intimidating. He stands as this towering, amazing man of faith. How could a regular, ordinary person like me aspire to something like that? A man who would sacrifice his own son for God? James says, “Abraham is out of your reach? How about Rahab?”

## **Your Past is No Problem**

Maybe you can identify with Rahab – you have a sordid past. Even aside from the prostitution – she was a Canaanite. The Canaanites were such a wicked, vile, depraved culture that God had commanded

Israel to exterminate every last one of them. So even if Rahab would have just been an average Canaanite, she would have probably had a much more sordid past than anyone in this room. But you add to that the fact that she sold her body and engaged in all kinds of sexual perversions with who knows how many hundreds or thousands of men. If there were ever an example of someone who had become so defiled and perverse and ruined that they were beyond recovery, she would be the prime candidate.

## **God Will Be on Your Side**

### **God Honored Rahab**

But what happened with Rahab? What did God do for her? We know what God did for Abraham. We sing about his great faith. But do you remember the “Rahab the Prostitute” song? No, because there isn’t one. Why not? Because no matter how many times the Bible tells us that Abraham and Rahab are the same, we still want to look at things from a human point of view instead of God’s point of view. Was Rahab relegated to some kind of second-class status in God’s eyes because of her past? No, God honored Rahab. What happened to her after Jericho was destroyed? She stayed with the Israelites and was changed. She stopped being a prostitute and got married. And she got pregnant and had a baby, and she named him Boaz. She must have been a pretty good mom because Boaz grew up and became quite the gentleman. He married Ruth, and their great-grandson was King David, and from David’s line came Jesus. Is it an embarrassment to God for Rahab the prostitute to be an ancestor of Jesus? Not at all – God advertises that fact in Matthew 1:5. Usually in a genealogy the wives are never mentioned, but in this case God went out of His way to mention the fact that she was in the Messianic line. God wasn’t embarrassed about that – why? Because in God’s eyes it is not Rahab the prostitute, it is Rahab the righteous. In God’s eyes it’s not the former harlot Rahab; it’s saint Rahab. God even included her in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 – the list of all the great heroes of faith. When God makes you something new, what you used to be is irrelevant. A woman is what she is, not what she was. The only significance to what you used to be is for showing the magnificent mercy of God.

### **Failures after Conversion**

“My problem isn’t a sordid past before I got saved. My problem is a terrible track record after I got saved. I’ve really blown it – as a Christian. I’ve failed in horrible ways.”

Let me ask you this – have you ever denied that you were married to your wife since you were a believer? Some of you may have done that. How about this – have you ever lied to a king? Or have you ever offered to give your wife to another man to join his harem? Abraham did all of those things – twice.

“Was that before he was a believer?”

No – after. What about when God promised he would have a baby? He saw that his wife was infertile so he went and slept with the maid and got her pregnant. The supreme example of faith throughout the Bible is a man who had some major, major lapses in his faith.

James is so big on works as the only valid evidence of faith – why would he choose a prostitute and a lying, cowardly adulterer as his examples? Why wouldn’t James pick examples of some people who didn’t have any major failures that we know of – like Daniel or Joseph? It is because of what James is just about to write at the beginning of chapter 3. We all stumble in many ways. The evidence of faith is not a life with no major sins. The evidence of faith is not how many hours or weeks or years you go in between major stumbles. The evidence of saving faith is simply this – are there things in your life that you do because of faith? Are there things that you do that, the only explanation for why you do them is because you really do trust God? If so, then you are like Abraham – and Rahab.

And I hope you don’t hear that and think, “I would rather you just say that I’m like Abraham. I want to be like Abraham, not like Rahab.” If that’s the way you are thinking, you don’t understand faith or righteousness or sin or justification at all. Because all those differences between Abraham and Rahab –are just cosmetic. None of them are substantial differences. Yes, Rahab had been a prostitute. She did all kinds of disgusting, immoral, scandalous, vile things before she became a believer. But what about Abraham? He was a pagan who worshiped the moon. Is that any better? Abraham and Rahab were exactly

the same – two sinful people who deserved to go to hell, but both of them put their faith in God and so both were considered righteous in God’s sight. From an external, surface point of view, it is a shock to see Abraham and Rahab side-by-side as examples. But if you understand the principles James is teaching, there is nothing strange at all in these two examples. If you understand the nature of sin and how faith and justification work, you will look at Abraham and Rahab and see two pretty much identical examples.

Both Abraham and Rahab were friends of God, not because of a great track record of avoiding failures, but because God saw their faith and credited it to their account as if it were a perfect life. If you spend most of your time discouraged about your past – that is a sign that your confidence is in yourself rather than Christ.

## God Will Move History to Reach You

So, what is the point of all that? The point is, if you have an attitude toward all believers that says, “If you’re on God’s side then I’m on your side,” what will happen? Answer – God will be on your side.

Just look at what He did for Rahab. Have you ever wondered why God allowed the spies to be discovered? He could have prevented that. No doubt they prayed and asked God to let them sneak in and out undetected. God didn’t answer that prayer. Someone spotted them and reported to the king – why did God let that happen? Because he wanted to save Rahab. God looks at that whole wicked city, and sees one heart that He knows is willing to believe. And so He orchestrates this entire ordeal - allows the spies’ worst fear to come true - they get discovered, and God lets them spend who knows how long hiding under some stalks of flax just waiting to be captured, makes them have to escape out of a window on a rope, makes them hide out in the mountains for three days, then the journey past Jericho and five miles to the Jordan trying not to get caught. All of that whole ordeal – why? Two reasons.

- 1) Because God wanted to save this one woman.
- 2) He wanted her faith to be put on display.

Why isn’t God answering your prayers? The very thing you prayed wouldn’t happen – why is God letting it happen? Could it be because God sees faith in your heart or someone else’s heart, and putting that faith on display for His glory is more important than whatever your plans were? God will take care of winning the war. We just need to make sure we are on the right side.

## Messengers

And if you are on His side, so that you become a refuge that protects and shelters His people from trouble, then God will be a refuge for you, to protect you from trouble. You take care of God’s people; He will take care of you. And very often He will do it through the very people you sheltered. When the spies first show up at Rahab’s door, from a human perspective it seems like nothing but trouble just walked in. Before they showed up, she was just fine – no trouble with the government. Now she is suddenly in a position where her life is at risk, and she didn’t even do anything wrong. That is the human point of view. But when we back up and see the bigger picture we can see that these two men that seemed like nothing but trouble for her, actually ended up being her salvation. If they didn’t knock on her door that day, she would end up dying with everyone else in the city. What seemed like trouble ended up being for her salvation.

That is the way God works. So often, the biggest troubles and hardships and hassles in our lives end up being the very thing God is using to rescue us from a much bigger calamity.

In the NIV, verse 25 says that Rahab **gave lodging to the spies**. But that is not what it says in the Greek. The Greek word for spy is *kataskopos* (people who scope out the situation). But that is not the word James uses here. Instead he uses the word *aggelos*, which means either angel or messenger. So the correct translation is that Rahab **gave lodging to the messengers**. Why does James call them **messengers**? Everywhere else in the Bible they are always called spies. James is making a point. Those men were not sent into Jericho with a message. They were spies sent in there to do their spying and then to get out undetected. They were spies, not messengers, but to this woman, they became messengers from God, didn’t they?

By switching out the normal word for spies and calling them messengers instead, James is showing us that sometimes the people who are coming to you as your enemies are actually sent by God as His



messengers to your life. They may not even know it. As far as they are concerned, all they want to do is hurt you, defeat you, humiliate you, cause you pain- that is their goal. But if you zoom the camera lens out to see the big picture, God is using those people into your life as His messengers. Even when they mean it for evil, God means it for good and what God means it for is going to trump what they mean it for.

## **Conclusion: Faith Comes from Hearing**

Rahab was so sure that God would enable His people to defeat all the Canaanites, including Jericho, that she actually staked her life on it. What was it that gave her that much confidence and certainty? She tells us in Joshua 2:10.

**Joshua 2:10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt**

That was 40 years ago – before she or those spies were even born. That entire generation of Hebrews who walked through the Red Sea on dry ground died in the wilderness. So how does Rahab know all about it? What does she say in verse 10? **We have heard...** She heard about it from someone. She didn't see it happen. The person who told her about it probably didn't see it happen. But somehow that person was a reliable enough source that Rahab knew for a fact that it was true. And she was so sure that it was true, and so certain that that same God would deliver the entire land of Canaan to this Hebrew people, that she was ready to stake her life on it.

Think about that for a second. That entire generation of Hebrews coming out of Egypt saw those miracles with their own eyes. They witnessed all those plagues, they walked through the Red Sea on dry land, they saw the pillar of fire that led them, they were there when God came down on Sinai and shook the mountain, they ate manna from heaven every day, they drank the water that God miraculously provided, they saw that their shoes didn't wear out in 40 years of wandering in the desert. They witnessed all of that firsthand, and yet when they arrived at the promised land, none of them believed that God would follow through on His promise and give it to them. Sometimes people say, "If I could see a miracle with my own eyes, then I would believe." But that is not how it works out in reality. The people who saw all the amazing miracles of the Exodus with their own eyes died in the desert in unbelief. But Rahab, who didn't see any of it and just heard a reliable report about it, became one of the great heroes of faith. The people who saw Jesus' miracles with their own eyes crucified Him. But millions who have read reliable reports have believed to the point where they will lay down their lives for that belief. Why is that? It is because the Word of God is more powerful than your personal experiences.

**Luke 16:3 If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.**

We have been talking the past few weeks about how everything you need in the Christian life comes from faith. The solution to every problem in your walk with the Lord is stronger faith. And so the most natural question is, "How do I increase my faith?" It all goes back to Romans 10:17 - **faith comes from hearing the word**. The more you expose yourself to the truths of God's Word with an open, receptive, eager heart, the stronger your faith will become.

I love Rahab because everything about her just screams, "Great things are accessible to ordinary people." She did not see the power of God with her own eyes. She wasn't born into any privileged position or godly family. Her life seemed to be an unsalvageable disaster. (No little girl dreams of growing up and becoming a prostitute. No doubt there were some horrific, unthinkable things that happened to her growing up in that wicked, depraved culture. If we knew all the things that happened to her and all the things she suffered at the hands of evil men, no doubt it would make us all nauseous.) And yet God made her one of the great names in all of human history. Why? Just because she heard, and believed.

**Philippians 1:9-11 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God**

## **Application Questions (James 1:25)**

1. What changes would have to happen in your life for you to become more of a refuge to people who are in trouble?
2. God orchestrated history just to save Rahab. Briefly tell part of the story of how God orchestrated history to save you.
3. What would you say is the next step for you in your effort to increase your exposure to God's Word so you can strengthen your faith? (Be as specific as possible.)