

Joshua 2:1-11

“The precious from the vile”

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I. Intro

Joshua is a book of conquests and God using Israel to judge a wicked people; part of which was the Amorites one of them was named Rahab. She was certainly deserving of judgment as she was a harlot but God is interesting in the conquest of mercy over wrath. This is the first story in the book of Joshua as they are coming into the land where there are more enemies and obstacles than there is in the wilderness but this story is not of destroying the enemy but rather one transforming the enemy.

Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:15 saying, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”* Did you know that God can’t save “good people”? How fortunate for us all that according to Romans 3:10-12 that *“There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”* We all qualify to be objects of His abounding grace.

II. Vs. 1 Abounding grace

Vs. 1 The Acacia Grove or Abel-shittim is the place where the nation had been encamped during their previous two victories over the kings Sihon and Og. But it was also here that the Moabites under the direction of Balaam seduced the Israelite men to sleep with the Moabite women to incur God's judgment. I mention this because there is something to say about venturing out in faith from the place of victory where we can recall God's faithfulness during a past season of uncertainty as well as remembering what caused you defeat.

God had told Joshua three times to be "*strong and courageous*" then the 2 ½ tribes on the eastern part of the Jordan admonished him to be the same yet when it comes down to it Joshua wants to send out two spies to check things out before the nation goes for it. Apparently Joshua didn't want a repeat of 40 years earlier so he sent out only two guys the same number that said go for it 40 years earlier and some suggest one of them was Caleb who guaranteed a 50% successful response rate. When we get to verse 24 we are told the response of the two spies is "*Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.*" Though we are never told their names tradition says that these two were Caleb and Phineas but we can't be sure. Most of the commentators put the emphasis upon their mission to "*go view the land*" and very little upon their calling which was to be a witness which was first to Rahab and her house but the nation had already become aware according verse 9-10 that the Lord had given them the land and had done great and mighty things on their behalf. All of this takes place after the initial command of verse 11 in "*three days you will cross over this Jordan*". There are two things that this indicates:

1. **Faithfulness**: Joshua's words did not go unheeded as they initiated a plan by which they were ready to act when the order went forth.

2. **Preparation:** Equally impressive to their faithfulness is that Joshua found two unnamed individuals who were prepared ahead of the rest to go into the land and as such they were the first two folks to walk into what God had promised them.

Success is dependent upon God's leading and empowerment and our faithfulness to respond to this as seen in our preparation. These two qualities are best summed up by what Jewish tradition suggest were the two men sent out by Joshua and Caleb whose life is best described as faithful and the High Priest Eliezer whose responsibility it was to daily prepare for the temple sacrifices.

Do you realize that the Lord has called you into the land to testify to its inhabitants that the Lord is strong and powerful on behalf of those who put their trust in Him? These two fellows were the first to walk into the promises and the inhabitants of the land had already heard of God's greatness. I think these two guys needed to hear what Rahab said concerning the testimony of God's greatness as Jericho was surrounded by a massive wall and some recent findings suggest that it had two walls.

There are only two women mentioned in the Hebrews 11 "*Hall of faith*" Sarah and Rahab and there are many great women of the Bible but the Holy Spirit choose these two as illustrations of faith. Sarah was a godly woman who became the mother of the Hebrew people but Rahab was a pagan gentile harlot but both of them exercised saving faith. Even more amazing is that in James 2 Rahab is linked with Abraham is as a person who demonstrates their faith by works. Rahab becomes a living example of Paul's words in Rom. 5:20 "*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*".

As we follow this story we shall see that though Joshua viewed this mission as a military one, God viewed it as a redemptive one. "*Check out Jericho boys*", said Joshua but instead they spent time hiding under the shingles of Rahab's house learning that God had already conquered the hearts of the inhabitants of Jericho. There's a valuable lesson in this and that is that God's mission is always going to involve hearts not just territory. God directs these two to a harlot

named Rahab God wants to take the precious from the vile. There are some who feel very uncomfortable that these two guys as they went to the house of a harlot and make her an innkeeper but the Hebrew is Harlot. Jesus said it best in Mark 2:17 where He said, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”* Paul in writing to the Corinthians said in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* Jesus has come for such a person as Rahab, it isn't important what you WERE it is important what you ARE. Rahab received these two fellows and I'm a man whom like Rahab received my Joshua and He has made His home into my heart. There is only one person that can not be saved and that is the person who doesn't realize that they need to be!!! All the inhabitants of the city had heard of God's work on behalf of His people and clearly the vast majority of the city was afraid but only one in the city, Rahab, allowed her fear to drive her to faith! Never worry about where you are at only where your heart is at because clearly God can always find a heart that seeks Him. We are inclined to judge people as unredeemable or un-useful but God sees the heart and any heart that desires to know Him qualifies. Jesus is the friend of sinners and was proud to have a Canaanite prostitute in His family lineage.

III. Vs. 2-7 From fear to faith

Vs. 2-7 Jericho was one of many “city-states” in Canaan, each one ruled by a king. The city covered about eight or nine acres, and there is archeological evidence that double walls about

fifteen feet apart protected the city and based upon verse 15 Rahab's house was on the outer wall. The city was under a lock down; all strangers into the city were viewed with suspicion because of what God was doing with His chosen people. These fellows went to the one place in Jericho that wouldn't raise any suspicions for new arrivals. Yet that didn't guarantee their anonymity as word leaked out to the king. Flax was what they used to roof houses in those days so she literally hid them under the roof shingles. The question is, how did the king know where to find these two guys? I suspect that he was a regular customer of hers; God sent the two spy's to hide in plain sight the local brothel to reach the Madam of the establishment where as the king came for other reasons.

Looking at Rahab's actions we can see both positive things as well as fleshly actions. She went out of her way to protect these two spies' but she crossed the line by lying and being deceptive she risked her life but by not trusting in the Lord sought to protect it. **Just because the Bible reports her lie does not mean that it supports her telling a lie.** One can argue from silence saying that had she not done this they would have been caught and all would have been lost but that limits God who is perfectly able to hide those two guys without the help of Rahab's lies. This brings up the issue of "*situational ethics*" specifically is it all right to lie in certain circumstances? Are there times when it would be better to lie than to tell the truth? We have the answer to this in Proverbs 12:22 where we are told that "*Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.*" So she would have been better served to have said nothing rather than to lie. Her lies to the king demonstrate that though a person's faith may be enough to save them such faith doesn't automatically mean that they won't struggle with the old nature. Abraham the father of faith as well struggled with lying as twice we are told that

his fear and lack of trust in God caused him to denying that Sarah was his wife calling her instead his sister.

IV. Vs. 8-11 The gifts of Rahab

Vs. 8-11 Rahab as a harlot was obviously a sinner but based upon verses 9-11 she had a conversion when she had heard what the Lord did for those who followed Him. The proof of her conversion is told us in Hebrews 11:31 we are told that “*By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.*” There is a scarlet thread of redemption where she is trusting the Lord to deliver her as He had the Israelites. The above Hebrew passage is what is commonly called the “*Hall of faith*”. What is interesting to me is she is included where Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah didn’t. In the genealogy recorded in Matthew we are told that in the earthly lineage of Jesus is Rahab who was the mother of Boaz. Her name means the “*proud one*” but in the end she became the humble one. ***In the end what remained of Rahab’s testimony is her trust in God not her failure.*** Jeremiah 15:19 the Lord said to Jeremiah that he was to be a spokesman for Him that “*takes out the precious from the vile*”; what I love about this is how the Lord treats us. In the end, 2 Cor. 5 tells us that the things in our lives like Rahab’s that is hay wood and stubble, those things that were flesh driven, self motivated and insecure laden will burn away before Him and all that will remain and be remembered is that which is precious. God is in the refining business He wasn’t into extracting that which is precious from that which is vile we wouldn’t be here would we?

There are those who suggest that the most important thing is that people believe in something even if it is themselves. They make belief the power instead of the object of belief, friends there is no power in belief, no magic potion in belief. Belief is only as powerful as what it is in and your relationship to it. James said it this way in James 2:19 “*You believe that there is*

one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!" True saving faith involves "the whole personality": **The mind is instructed, the emotions are stirred, and the will then acts in**

obedience to God. We see the example of this is Heb. 11:7 in Noah:

1. **The intellect:** "By faith Noah, **being warned of God** of things not seen as yet"
2. **The emotions:** "**moved with fear**"
3. **The will:** "**prepared an ark**"

Rahab showed more faith in the Lord than the ten spies had exhibited forty years before, when she said, "*I know that the Lord has given you the land*" in verse 9. Look at Rahab's confession in verse 11 and all of this from a woman who had grown up in idolatry and had lived her life in immorality. As wonderful a confession of Rahab as this is if it was not backed but her works her trusting would have been mere words but clearly we see that her words were backed her works. In Acts 26 Paul on trial before King Agrippa said, that he declared to "*those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.*" Rahab had only heard of the redemptive acts of God on behalf of the Israelites but she knew nothing of the promises, praise or protection of those whom He has set His love upon, yet she with limited knowledge still trusted. Where had Rahab heard of these things? No doubt from those from her town who spoke of them to her in her brothel. God doesn't excuse our sin but He is not hindered by it in reaching us either and Rahab serves as an example of extending grace while in the life of sin even before the rope was lowered to pull her out. Rahab an immoral, pagan woman who in the midst of practicing her sin hears about the trusts that He will do so.

- She put her life and the life of her family on the line for those she believed knew the God she had heard of.
- She forsook her past for an uncertain future, her way of living, her familiarity and life style all forsaken by her for what she couldn't imagine as the people she was going with were new in the land.

- She chose to be identified with the people of God rather than her own people thus being dead to the world she once knew. She was no longer fit for the world she had known and didn't yet know the world she had been adopted into.

Though she was a woman, an Amorite and a prostitute she was immediately accepted as a full member of the new nation would marry a man named Salmon have a son named Boaz who would marry a gentile named Ruth who would have a son named Obed who had a son named Jesse who fathered a son named David who became the King. Rahab is no 2nd class citizen, she is royalty as are all who trust in Jesus. There are two things evident about Rahab:

a. **She knew who she was:** A harlot a sinner deserving of judgment

b. **She knew who the Lord was:** One who shows mercy and grace

There for she did what all should do she took who she was and laid it down at the feet of who God is. The secrecy probably had as much to do with the nation of Israel as it did those in the city of Jordan. Rahab gave these two fellows two very needed things:

1. She gave them shelter from their enemies
2. She gave them encouragement for their souls