

RAHAB

- Joshua 6:1, "Jericho was tightly shut because of the children of Israel: no one went out or entered."



The Faith of Rahab

- The Bible talks about Rahab's faith. How did Rahab show faith? Let's imagine it together. For years, the people of Jericho had existed behind their thick walls. None of their neighboring countries had been able to penetrate their walls and so they felt safe. Then they heard about the Israelites.
- For forty years, the children of Israel had wandered in the wilderness without a home. There were whispers that they had been promised the land of Canaan. Still, the people of Jericho may have felt as if they could hide behind their walls. Then they heard about the kings of Sihon and Og who were obliterated in battle (Numbers 21:21-26, 32-35).
- Miraculous stories trickled into town about the way the Hebrew God had dried up the Red Sea. Years earlier, He had delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. It must have been an interesting time to be alive because though there would have been fear, a lot of persons would have stubbornly stuck to their old ways. But not Rahab.
- *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe when she had received the spies with peace (Hebrews 11:31 NKJV).*
- It took a lot of faith to acknowledge that the Hebrew God was greater than any of the gods of Jericho. When your city has fortified walls, it's easy to believe your city is impenetrable. But Rahab believed in the power of the Hebrew God, all she had heard were stories but she believed He was powerful enough to deliver Jericho into the hands of His people.
- *"I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (Joshua 2:9 NIV)*

Bold Rahab

Rahab knew her only chance for survival was to ask the spies to protect her. She asked for what she wanted knowing the Hebrew spies had no reason to give it to her.

By her own admission, the Hebrew God had already given the Israelites the city of Jericho. Even without her intervention, their victory was sure. Still, she boldly asked them to spare her life. She pleaded for the lives of her family.

Rahab, Creative Problem-Solver

How many persons would have thought to hide someone under stalks of flax (Joshua 2:6)? Rahab was a creative problem solver. The story of Rahab and the spies would have been very different if she hadn't been a quick thinker. Would the king's men have found the spies if they had decided to search the house? Rahab had enough flax to completely cover the two Israelite spies.

How Rahab Pleased God

The story of Rahab is about one woman's courage and her actions that saved her entire family. But more than anything, Rahab's story is about a woman whose ways pleased the Lord. The story of Rahab is one about faith. The Bible tells us that we can't please God without faith:

Rahab displayed all of those characteristics. She chose to believe in the God of the Hebrews over the gods of her own people. She chose an unknown God because she believed He was greater than all that she had known. Rahab chose to have faith that God existed and that He was faithful to deliver the land He had promised to His people.

Finally, Rahab believed that God would reward her for helping the two spies. She trusted that God would see beyond what everyone else saw and choose to save her over all the people in Jericho. Not only that, but this unknown God would save her family as well so she wouldn't live the rest of her life mourning them.

Did she expect that she would one day be the ancestor of Christ? She knew that she needed to trust God at that moment and so she did.

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Salmon and Rahab were the father and mother of Boaz. Boaz and Ruth were the father and mother of Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse... [Matthew 1:5](#)

She is one of five women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Christ; they are Tamar the wife of Judah, Rahab the wife of Salmon, Ruth the wife of Boaz, Bathsheba the wife of King David (after being the wife of Uriah), and Mary the Mother of Jesus. Other than Mary, Rahab is the only one mentioned again in the New Testament.

In James, she is shown as an example of someone justified by God and declared righteous for putting their faith into action.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 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? [James 2:24, 25](#)

You cannot receive a higher compliment from a God Who is only pleased by the action of faith ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). According to Him, having faith without corresponding actions is not pleasing. That kind of faith is inoperative and dead.

So also faith, if it is unaccompanied by obedience, has no life in it – so long as it stands alone. [James 2:17](#) Weymouth New Testament

Within the list of faith champions in Hebrews Chapter Eleven, Rahab is mentioned right after Moses, and instead of Joshua! Let that sink in. The only other woman mentioned on the list is Sarah, Abraham's wife and mother of Isaac. It is a high honor to be included in this group of believers.

It was by faith that Rahab was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. [Hebrews 11:31](#)

She is also the last person mentioned in any detail. After her, the Bible reads: And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets... [Hebrews 11:32](#)

It was not by chance that those spies found their way to her house. God had plans for Rahab from before the beginning of time. God sent them there so that she could help them, and by it, obtain righteousness from God. What was it about her that drew God's attention, that He would single her out for salvation? Perhaps He knew that she would stand up for Him and His people in courageous obedience. Maybe God's not afraid of strong women.

Let's look at her story:

Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." [Joshua 2:1 – 3](#)

The Israelites were still camped on the east side of the Jordan River, approximately 15 miles away from Jericho. But everyone in the area knew they were there and what they were about to do. News of their earlier victories spread quickly, and people from all around would have sought protection within Jericho's mighty walls. Unfortunately for them, this would be the wrong place to hide.

Joshua sent the spies in, and they ended up at Rahab's place. She knew what was about to happen and she wanted to be on the Israelite side. Somehow the king of Jericho knew the spies were there and he sent messengers to ask about it. Why he didn't go in and ransack her place is a mystery. She must have achieved a level of prominence in the city.

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought

them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate. [Joshua 2:4 – 7](#)

Rahab lied to the king and told him that they had left earlier before the gates closed for the night. The king's men believed Rahab, and they went off searching for them. But the spies were safe, for she had hid them on the roof under wet and smelly piles of rotting flax. There is no turning back now.

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 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 utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." [Joshua 2:8 – 14](#)

Undoubtedly, some of her traveling customers had come to her telling of the exploits of the Israelites and their mighty God. She had heard enough to make her put her trust in the living God, and she made a life changing profession of faith when she said, "... the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." She then makes the spies swear to spare her and her whole family because of her protection and kindness.

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." [Joshua 2:15, 16](#)

She wisely tells them to go out and stay toward the west of the city, in the opposite direction of their camp so they can hide in the hill country. In three days they can circle back to the east and safely go home.

The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house

your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window. [Joshua 2:17 – 21](#)

The spies agree to her terms and tell her to leave a red cord hanging from her window to let them know which home to spare. This cord seems reminiscent of the Passover blood that was spread over the doorways of the Israelite homes back in Egypt when the death angel passed over them.

They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road, but had not found them. Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. They said to Joshua, "Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us." [Joshua 2:22 – 24](#)

The spies make it back to camp and relate the whole adventure to Joshua.

Apparently, he agrees to spare Rahab and her family because once the city is destroyed, he commands that Rahab and her family be brought out to safety.

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 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. [Joshua 6:22 – 25](#)

After reading the first five books of the Bible, the last thing you would have expected was for God to go out of His way to save a pagan prostitute in a city that was about to be utterly destroyed because of sin. Every man, woman, child, and animal in Jericho was to be killed and burnt. The only thing God allowed to leave was the gold, silver, bronze, iron (for Him), and, Rahab and her family. There would be nothing else left, and He was adamant about it. One poor soul decided to keep a few things for himself. That proved to be the end of him and his whole family ([Joshua 7:24, 25](#)).

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Rahab was accepted into the nation of Israel to such an extent that she was able to marry into the royal family of Judah. She married Salmon, the son of Nahshon. Nahshon was the leader of the tribe of Judah and commanded their army. He was also a close associate of Moses and Joshua, and his sister, Elisheba, was married to Aaron, the first high priest. Rahab's life is truly a Cinderella story for the ages. And for the Jewish nation, Rahab came to serve as a successful gentile conversion to Judaism. Her ability to change her ways has encouraged countless generations to seek divine mercy and pardon for their actions and lives. God hates sin, but he loves people. He loves all kinds of people, especially prostitutes. He knows how to save those that love Him and desire to serve Him.

Since the Lord did all this, he knows how to rescue godly people when they are tested. He also knows how to hold immoral people for punishment on the day of judgment. [II Peter 2:9](#)

[Wayne Partain, March 18, 2023]