

Heb 11:31 The Faith of Rahab

Read Heb 11:31 and then Josh. 2:1-25 for the story of Rahab. I have 4 truths from this story about the faith of Rahab, that will be helpful to us. 1) God saves the greatest of sinners, 2) The plan of God to save the Gentiles, 3) Faith is not alone, and 4) The sovereign grace of God in election.

1. Rahab's faith displays the truth that God saves the greatest of sinners. I think one of the things that catches people with the story of Rahab is this thought: "*If God can save Rahab, then God can save me.*" This is certainly true, but not in the way most people think about sin. God does not compare the depths of sin. God doesn't say, "*Jon is a good-upstanding person who doesn't have far to go. I think I'll save Him.*" Or, "*Isabell is a prostitute, I might have some grace for her, but she is probably too much of a sinner.*" The Bible says, "**ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**" (Rom. 3:23). ALL of us have the same sin nature as our father, Adam. All of us are "**dead in our trespasses and sins**" (Eph. 2:1). God is no respecter of persons. He saves sinners. And He delights to save sinners. And those who come to Him by faith and repentance, will be saved. And this is what we see with Rahab. Her experience is no different than any other saved person in the history of the world; saved by the mercy and grace of God. When the world thinks of someone who might "go to heaven," this isn't the kind of woman that gets there.

In our story Rahab wasn't merely a prostitute. She probably ran some sort of an inn (for entertainment and lodging, or brothel). Her home was a place where the spies were able to lodge and spend the night. Also, she was from Canaan, particularly an Amorite, a very ungodly nation, one of the enemies of Israel. And according to Deut. 20:17, the Amorites were devoted to destruction. Time had come for God to judge this nation. And Israel was just about to enter Canaan as God's hand of judgment. And Rahab had not grown up hearing the Word of God, or being taught the Law of Moses, only a lifetime of sin and rebellion against God. According to Eph. 2:12, she was "*alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world . . .*" And, SURE DESTRUCTION WAS JUST DAYS AWAY! And more than three thousand years later, we find Rahab in the Hall of faith, as the Word of God came to her and she was saved.

Application: Faith is no respecter of persons. When it comes to salvation, we are all the same in this regard. As a "people" we also are Gentiles. But, God in his mercy and grace, did not leave us in this state. The Gospel of Christ came to our "fathers" in Europe even before we came this way. And the Word of God came to the natives in this land as well. And today, the Word of God is accessible to anyone who desires. And, concerning our past lives, I think of Paul's words to the Corinthians. He says: "**Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

2. Rahab's faith displays the plan of God to save the Gentiles. Very rarely in the OT do we see an evangelistic program to reach the Gentiles. I think of Jonah and his preaching to Nineveh. I think of Moses' father-in-law, who was a convert and a man of faith. I think of Ruth as she followed Naomi physically, and in faith. I think of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar (debate here). But

these instances are rare. But in all these cases, and with Rahab, we see a type and a pledge that God will save the Gentiles. God will call the Gentiles into his church. And the gospel will spread to the ends of the earth.

The OT is FULL of prophecies that speak of faith coming to the Gentiles under the New Covenant. Is. 54:2-3: **“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.”** In Eph. 3 Paul speaks of a mystery. He says **“This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”** (Eph. 3:6). In Rom. 11, Paul speaks of a “wild olive tree” that will be grafted into a “cultivated olive tree.” This is a picture of the Gentiles coming by faith. But even before the great influx of Gentiles (which began with the new covenant and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost), we see Rahab and her family . . . Gentiles . . . Amorites . . . idolatrous sinners, coming to Israel by faith. And this time will continue until the Lord Jesus returns!

And our instructions are clear from Matt. 28:18-20: Jesus says, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”**

3. Rahab’s faith displays the truth that faith is not alone. In other words, we know what faith looks like. Works follow faith. Saving faith is alive with good works (we will see this in a moment). But First, I want to speak of another truth. Faith is always accompanied by REPENTANCE. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. True repentance is joined with faith. And true faith is joined with repentance. Out of all the people of Jericho, who I would argue, could have repented, ONLY Rahab does. It is interesting . . . A.W. Pink believes Rahab had already repented before the spies arrived. I tend to agree. If we go back to the Song of Moses that he sang after the parting of the Red Sea, he says in Exod. 15:14 ff. **“The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philstia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab . . . Terror and dread fall upon them because of the greatness of your arm . . .”** This prophecy is clear. Moab will hear and know; they will be afraid of the greatness of God.

With this in mind, in Joshua 2:9-11 we see the account of the spies with Rahab. After she hides them and before she sends them away, she says to them: **“I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”** This is why in Heb. 11:31 says she did not perish with those who DID NOT believe. And she did not continue as a prostitute. For she marries Salmon, the great great grandfather of David, and from whom eventually would come the Lord Jesus. Rahab followed

the God of Israel. For she would have come under the most basic commands of God of repentance and faith. And even as a Gentile at that time, she would have placed herself under the authority of the Law of Moses (God's commands.) In all of this we see FAITH

There are so many places in the Bible that speak of repentance and faith. There is no faith if there is no repentance, if there is no turning from sin. And repentance is not a one-time act.

Repentance is found at the heart of every person of faith. And this is the work of God. He is the One who grants repentance (Acts 11:18). And the result of repentance and faith is good works. This is exactly what we see with Rahab. In James 2:24-26, James says, **"You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."** So for us, we must ask, *"Do we have works of repentance?"* (application) Let's move on.

4. Rahab's faith displays the sovereign grace of God in election. Question: Why did God save Rahab and her family and not the rest of the inhabitants of Jericho? Why did God save you/me? Now, we know salvation does not come without faith. Rahab believed. She heard the word of God and believed God's promise to save. And those of us who are saved do the same. **"Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God"** (Rom. 10:17). But why? As we've seen, we know the inhabitants of Jericho were deeply stirred by the reports of God's judgments. The Bible says they **"feared and their hearts melted"** (Josh. 2:11). And, I believe every day the Israelites marched around the city was another day the people could have repented. But they did not! Only Rahab (and her family) was saved. And this was according to the sovereign grace of God in election.

Think about it. The spies had no idea that one of God's elect lived in the city. Even if they had known, how could they have located her? But, they were directed to the very house in which she lived. Why? Because she was chosen by God . . . before the foundations of the world (Eph. 1:4). I think of the time Jesus left the Jewish area with some of his disciples and went to preach in a more Gentile area (Tyre and Sidon). And he came to a Canaanite woman from whose daughter was possessed by a demon. And the disciples said, **"Send this woman away."** But he does not. He says something interesting. As she begs him to have mercy on her, he says, **"I have only been sent to the lost sheep of Israel."** And she continues to ask for mercy. And then he says, **"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."** Do you remember what she says? She says, **"Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."** Then Jesus answers her, **"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly** (Matt. 15). Why did Jesus go to this woman? Because she too was a child of Abraham! (Gal. 3:7).

In the Book of Acts, do you remember the vision of Paul . . . of a man from Macedonia saying, **"come over here and help us."** So Paul went. And who did he find first? It was Lydia who was meeting to worship God outside the city of Philippi, but the gospel had not yet come. And when Paul started to preach, Acts 16:14 says, **"The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."** Why? She too was a daughter of Abraham! In Thessalonica the same thing happened. Look with me to 1 Thess. 1:4-5: **"For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has**

chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”

With Rahab, we have the most unlikely of converts. She had no Scriptures. She was separated from Israel and the Law of Moses. She was a Canaanite, Amorite, prostitute, living among a people “devoted to destruction.” Yet, there was NO CHANCE the word of God would NOT come to her! By his own good pleasure, God saved Rahab! For she was a child of Abraham! I think of Rom. 9 (turn with me there). As Paul speaks of God choosing Jacob and not Esau. He says in 14 ff. **“What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved” (Rom. 9:14-25).**

By her own choice, Rahab was a great sinner, but by divine grace, divine choice, she was predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son. For God knows his own! There was nothing inside this woman that deserved any such treatment. And such is the case for us. I think of the Apostle Paul who says, *“I am the chief of sinners,”* greater than Rahab, etc. And so are we! The standard is the grace and mercy of God, by his own good pleasure to save any of us! Therefore, we must Praise God for his mercy and grace to us! Where sin abounds, grace abounds so much more! And what a beautiful picture we have with Rahab. By faith she was also saved, just like us. She looked forward to the work of God in Christ. We look back. And all of us are chosen “in Christ Jesus.” And we are saved because of his person and work.

Concluding Application: Our works are mixed, both containing good and bad (in a manner of speaking). Yet, it is not our works upon which we are counted righteous. We are counted righteous because of Christ and his righteousness, his good works, which were only good. Never were they bad! And our FAITH is in Christ. We are saved by Christ. At the same time, we can say that we are saved by “faith.” Why? Because our faith is in Christ, and in Christ alone. And if our works, which are mixed (like Rahab’s), they are still covered by the blood of Christ. And this by FAITH! When I think of my own works, I often think, *“Jon you could have worked harder. You could have been more diligent this week in sermon prep, or in evangelism, or in doing good to my wife, or in helping my neighbor.”* And in all these works, even if they are good, my heart is engaged in different “degrees” of commitment. And at times, I do just go through the motions (as all of us here can understand). But, if my faith is in Christ, what does this mean? It means that

ALL my sins are covered, including all my good “works” which are often mixed with what we might call “bad” or at least “indifferent.”

This is why God can accept me and my works. It is by faith. Rahab lied! Yet, she is commended by her faith. God approves! And the NT doesn't try to explain her lie. Some say she should not have lied. Other say her lie was justified. (I will not get into this debate this morning.) (The ends do not always justify the means!) But what is important is her FAITH. Look back at 11:1-3 **“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”** This is EXACTLY what we see with Rahab! She was assured, convinced, that God would judge the Amorites (including herself). And she was assured, convinced, that God existed and that He rewards those who seek Him. And James says, *“we know she had faith because of her works.”* Yet, it wasn't the works themselves that saved her. It was faith . . . faith in the promise of God to save. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. And behind it all was the sovereign pleasure of God to save this woman and commend her faith! **“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen”** (Rom. 11:33-36).