

# Rahab the Harlot

Sermon Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2020-12-18

## The feeling of an awkward outsider (Josh 6:22-25)

At my previous church, I remember the extremely awkward feelings that a newly converted couple had when they first started attending our services. This couple had been saved out of a very dark and broken past, and even though the lights had turned on and God had washed them so that they felt clean, the first time they walked through the doors of our church they had cultural disorientation. Nobody dressed like them, had hair like them, had tattoos, or talked like them. They very visibly squirmed and felt out of place. The man told me that they both felt like aliens in another world because everyone at church was perfect and they felt like trash. I gave them a big hug and assured them that no one in the church was perfect - that we were all on a pathway of growth, and I began to show them the ropes - which they appreciated.

But in the course of conversation I asked them if they felt comfortable with their *old* friends. And it suddenly dawned on them that they felt like aliens around their old friends too. It seemed so strange that their friends slept around, took the name of God in vain, did drugs, and did all the things that they used to do. It struck them how overnight their former lifestyle had become utterly repulsive to them - even though they sometimes still cussed and did those things - but *that* was repulsive to them. They felt like they didn't belong anywhere.

But as we pressed them into their new identity in Jesus and that they were indeed part of a new creation, they began to adjust quickly to the fact that it was *God* who had turned their world upside down. They knew they had a lot to learn and were committed to learning. They began to focus less on others and began to focus more on *Jesus* and what *Jesus* thought of them. But if they were to honestly have shared their feelings with you, even months down the road they would have told you that there were still tinges of awkwardness that they sometimes felt. And I'm sure Rahab and her family felt similar for a time. It's hard to live down your past. Even the apostle Paul had a hard time living down his past murders.

Certainly Rahab had taken a decided stand against the culture of Jericho and had embraced the God of Israel. But *wow* were there ever a lot of cultural differences. And it didn't help that God made them stay outside the camp for a time until they were ceremonially cleansed and then had them go through the strange conversion ceremonies over the next month. We'll talk about that later. But let's look at this second half of the story in Joshua 6:22-25.

Josh. 6:22 But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. 24 But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Our series of Biblical biographies is called Women of Faith. And we are starting this series with somebody who began her Christian life as low as it was possible to be, and then quickly became recognized as a transformed woman of faith. She could have easily felt like bailing during those times when she felt like she didn't belong. But her faith focused her eyes on God so strongly that her sense of belonging came from her identity in the future Messiah, not how people perceived her. And I think she is such an important model for people who are coming out of really bad lifestyles. Revoice is not the answer. A radically new identity in Jesus is the answer.

## Her sordid past (Josh 2:1; 6:17,25; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25)

Let's look first of all at her sordid past. She is called a harlot in the five verses listed in your outlines. And no, this simply *cannot* be explained away as a misconception of an innkeeper as some people have tried to do with the Hebrew. The New Testament is quite clear that she was a πόρνη, a Greek word that we get the word pornography from, but which in the Greek always means a prostitute (harlot, whore). Her profession was merchandising various sexual experiences. There is no question about the fact that she was a professional harlot. How old she was and how many men had slept with her, we are not told. But it doesn't take much imagination to know how degraded and worthless she may have felt.

But she had other strikes against her too. As a citizen of Jericho she was an Amorite. The Amorite society was legendary for its iniquity. Already in the time of Abraham God had noted how wicked they were. This is *way* back in Genesis 15:16. But God did not destroy them at that time. And the reason God gave to Abraham for not destroying those wicked people was that their iniquity was not yet full. God said it would be some generations before their iniquity would be so full nothing more could be added and nothing more could be tolerated. Based on that verse (Genesis 15:16) we can be confident that when God sent Israel to judge the land of Canaan, the iniquity of the Amorites was *completely* full. Jericho was a hell hole, and Rahab was a brand plucked from the fire - and plucked with care - as the book of Jude admonishes us to do.

How full of iniquity were the Amorites? Leviticus 18 says that they reveled in every imaginable kind of sexual filth including incest. I wish I had not even read about the culture of Jericho and the Amorites twenty years ago because it made me feel defiled. I do not recommend that you read any original documents. It was a bad idea. But I will give you some very mild hints that do not go beyond the bounds of Biblical propriety.

The Bible mentions incest. Well, there was probably incest going on here. Since Rahab's father and brothers lived in the brothel with her, some have supposed that they engaged in this sin too. In addition, her father and brothers likely pimped her out to others. This too was so common in Canaan that Leviticus 19:29 had to warn Israel, "Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land ... become full of wickedness." So it wasn't just Rahab that was in sin. Her family was likely a part of this business as well.

The Amorites were also guilty of murder via abortion and infanticide. And they had various chemical and intrusive techniques for abortion. The fact that Rahab did not bring *any* of her

own children with her does not guarantee that she aborted previous pregnancies. She may simply have never gotten pregnant, though that is extremely unlikely. The likelihood is (that in common with all other prostitutes in Canaan), she was also guilty of murder - of either abortion or infanticide. And let's call it what it is; it is murder. So even that was likely weighing on her conscience.

I'll just give you one other hint of how full the iniquity of the Amorites had become. The statuettes and books that have been found connected to the Amorite culture show sadism and masochism mixed in with sexual perversity. I don't dare to describe the dehumanizing nature of that porn-driven, gender-blending, and perverse culture. One Archeology journal has a two sentence summary that I think is good enough. It says,

At the heart of Canaanite religion was sex in all its perversions, polluting the land with indescribable immorality. The Canaanites were hopelessly lost and incurable... the erotic aspect of their cult must have sunk to extremely sordid depths of social degradation.<sup>1</sup>

*That's* why Jericho was being destroyed by God - their cup of iniquity was completely full. It doesn't take much research of Canaan to quickly realize *why* God sentenced the Canaanites to destruction. The men, women, and children were utterly corrupt and demonized.

Yet God not only saved Rahab out of her mess and out of the judgment that she deserved, He saved her whole family as well. If the Amorite culture was the dregs of society, and if this harlot represented the dregs of the Amorites, then she and her family are a spectacular tribute to God's grace reaching to the uttermost - or as Billy Sunday was fond of wording it, "to the guttermost." She was a brand plucked from the fire of a hell hole.

And she is a testimony to the fact that trafficked women *can* be saved - they can. And we need to pray for the unique ministries that right now are focused on saving trafficked boys, girls, and women. I believe those ministries reflect the heart of God Himself. *But what a frustrating ministry it is!* As society goes downhill, the rise of sex-trafficking always increases. It's extremely hard for governments to stamp it out. Many of these women (if not most) are victims. Some are kidnapped girls. There are millions of women enslaved within this grisly industry. In the country I grew up in (Ethiopia), young girls often went to the big cities with the promise of work as house maids or cooks. When they would get off the bus, a pimp would pick them up and through rape, drugs, and manipulation train them to be prostitutes. My parents' missionary agency, SIM International, has a huge work rescuing such women out of their lifestyle, winning them to Christ, and giving them an alternative means of income. It's a fabulous ministry, and there are others like it.

Of course, there is another side of that story. Sadly, many prostitutes turn down the opportunity to be rescued, or if they do try to leave, are so hooked on drugs that the drug addictions lure them back. Others crave love and affirmation so much that they keep going back to the cheap claims of love from their customers. Others find it necessary to go back because of poverty. Others are forced into it by family or pimps. Others are driven back to it by the demons that possess them. It's a tough missionfield, and one that we need to

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<sup>1</sup> David Livingston, "Fall of the Moon City," Bible and Spade 3, no. 2 (1990): 53-54.

regularly pray for. The Bible is not silent about this horrible industry. There are over 140 verses that deal with this subject - warning men about the dangers, condemning pimps, fathers, and brothers who abuse women, and showing the power of God's grace to rescue such out of the clutches of sexual and demonic bondage - women like Mary Magdalene - another incredible trophy of grace.

Now of course, not all are victims. I am not ignorant of the fact that there are also many wicked women who love their evil, love to enslave other women, and love to have power over men. The Scripture talks about them too. But many (if not most) need our compassion. And in the Gospels Jesus showed compassion to prostitutes. He led the way. I am so thankful that our Attorney General has made rescuing women from trafficking to be one of his top priorities.

In any case, God by His providence orchestrated the transformation of a prostitute into a godly woman who actually became one of the ancestors of Jesus in His genealogy. This is a chapter that displays amazing mercy and grace. There is no excuse for people saved out of the LGBTQ lifestyle to say that they can't shake Jericho off their shoulders. God's grace can make you a new citizen of a new creation. Of course, you will need trained people to show you the ropes, and we will get to that in a bit.

## How Rahab came in contact with the Gospel and was saved

But first of all I want to examine *how* Rahab come to Christ. Joshua 2 tells us this dramatic story. Let's go over it again beginning at verse 1.

Josh. 2:1 Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.

We know that Rahab had four streams of income. Prostitution was obviously one. But she was also an innkeeper who put travelers up for food and lodging. In fact, in that ancient world, the two often went hand in hand. They still do in many of the hotels in Asia. But what better place for spies to get information about the land of Canaan than over the dinner tables at an inn where travelers gather for meals and lodging. And they would need a place to stay anyway. Since prostitutes met a wide segment of society, Rahab may have been considered to be a good source of intel. In hindsight we know that the Lord led them there.

I do want you to notice however, that for integrity sake, these two men went together and stayed together. There was accountability and safety in doing so. It could end up being a horrible testimony to go into that place alone. And there are at least four hints that they kept themselves pure.

So prostitution was one source of income. Keeping an inn was another. Two other sources of income that this family may have had can be deduced from verse 6, which mentions lots of stalks of flax (enough to hide the men) and the rope dyed red. This suggests to many commentators that she was involved in the manufacture of linen (the only reason you

would keep stalks of flax) and dyed cloth. So she appears to be a business woman of sorts. Prostitutes rarely get enough money to live on. So these were ways for her to supplement her income. Continuing the story in verse 2:

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country."

It seems that whoever they had asked for directions to an inn must have noticed that they were Israelites, and immediately reported them. Or perhaps one of the king's men had just come from the brothel (it does appear to be an upscale brothel to be on the wall like it was), so it may have been that one of the king's men had seen them entering. In any case, verse 3 continues the story:

Josh. 2:3 So the king of Jericho sent 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 country."

And now comes the moment of truth. If she wanted to continue to survive and make money in Jericho, it would have been an easy thing to have her brothers bring the two men out. But at great risk to herself, she strangely takes sides with them. It appears that God had somehow regenerated her. The book of Hebrews makes it crystal clear that she had faith at this point and James makes it crystal clear that her faith produced the works of sanctification - her act of hiding them and sending them out another way. Though some people doubt it, I think it is clear from the inspired commentary of the New Testament that she was saved by the time the king's men arrived at her house - and probably earlier. Did they arrive within minutes? Or was it hours? We are not told.

We could postulate what means the Lord had used for her conversion. Maybe the spies were led by the Lord to share the Gospel with her. Maybe she had heard the Gospel from other travelers. Maybe God simply revealed Himself to her. But in whatever way it happened, *she has had a change of heart by this time in the story.*

The king's men are beating at the door asking her to bring the two spies out. She instantly springs into action, taking a minute or two to quickly hide them. Even though we will see that her parents and brothers are also saved, it seems that Rahab is the initiator. It's one of a number of things that make her far more remarkable than her family. Verse 4 says,

Josh. 2:4 Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." 6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) 7 Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.

It was a close call, but in these next verses she reveals that the preparatory work of God upon her heart (preparing her for salvation) had probably started a long time earlier. Beginning at verse 8:

Josh. 2:8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD ...

Let's stop there. Notice that the word "LORD" is in all capital letters. This is the covenant name, Yehowah, that had *not* been revealed outside the covenant. How did she know the name of Israel's God? To me it is one of three or four hints that either these men had already told her about their God or she had found it out by other means. But notice the strong confidence that she already has in Yehowah:

I know that Yehowah has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for Yehowah your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by Yehowah, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

This is an astounding statement of faith that we will return to in a bit. But it is also an astounding example of grace-given-love. It would have been easy to leave her parents and brothers behind if they indeed had been the cause of her sexual slavery. But she shows love for them and wants them saved as well. And it does appear that God had sovereignly been at work in their lives too. God saves prostitutes and sometimes pimps. And He is always in the business of saving families. Continuing at verse 14:

Josh. 2:14 So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. [The plural "yours" and "none of you" indicates that the rest of the family was in on this secret. They were there.] And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."

Josh. 2:15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall.

Literally, her house was *in* the city wall and she dwelt *in* the wall. Yet the top window that she let them out of is on top of the wall. That's been a puzzle to many people until archeology gave us some clues about casement walls. How could she live *in* the wall? David Howard explains the unique Hebrew here. He says,

Two different words for "wall" are used here as well; the phrase here might be rendered as "in the double walls. This would call to mind the defensive fortifications found in many cities in biblical times, called "casemate" walls, in which a double wall was erected, with cross-walls built to create chambers that were then filled with rubble for strengthening, or else made into storage areas or living quarters. Rahab's family may have lived in one of these residences, although her window must have been rather high, since she let the spies down using a rope. Perhaps the house was indeed atop the wall, but built "into" the wall in such a way that it was considered an integral part of it. The NRSV renders v. 15b as "her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself," while the NJPSV's translation is essentially the same. The NIV's "the house she lived in was part of the wall" would allow for any of the above possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 113–114.

So it appears that her house was multi-storied, going from the ground level of the wall and probably reaching to a height somewhat above the wall. That would seem to indicate that she was flourishing better than some prostitutes in the city would have been. She probably sold herself to better paying customers. Well, this would have been the perfect place for these two spies to do their spy work. From the height of this wall they could make calculations, size up the population, see the strength of the fortifications, and to gather other intel on the city. Picking up at verse 16.

16 And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way."

So while the pursuers are going East to the Jordan where the spies had come from, this shrewd woman has them go West, which is much further into Amorite territory and which would *not* have been expected. This is one of several hints that she is an incredibly shrewd woman. It's probably why she survived and prospered in such a dangerous industry. So she has them hide out in the mountains until people stopped looking. Verse 17:

Josh. 2:17 So the men said to her: "We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. 19 So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear."

Josh. 2:21 Then she said, "According to your words, so be it." And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

This scarlet cord has for all time been treated as a symbol of redemption by blood. Just as the Passover blood on the lintels of the houses spared the Israelites during the Passover, the scarlet cord being hung publicly in the window spared her and any in her relatives who believed and joined her. It's a marvelous story of redemption from sin.

And by the way, going back thousands of years, red was also a symbol of *this* particular sin. Our sin and Christ's blood go hand in hand. There are red light districts in cities all over the world, but in the ancient world a red cloth was the symbol of prostitution. But Jesus took all our sins upon Himself - including prostitution, when He died for the sins of His elect. Christ's blood has made similar stories to be multiplied all over the world. In fact one of the ministries to prostitutes in Amsterdam is called "The Scarlet Cord." What a great name.

And another "by the way," Hebrews 11:31 doesn't describe the rest of the citizens of Jericho as poor people who weren't given a chance to believe. It says, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe..." They were condemned for their unbelief. Their unbelief was a willful unbelief. Romans 1 and 3 teach us that no one in hell will be able to claim that they wanted to believe since there is none who seeks after God (Rom. 3:11). Apart from sovereign grace, no one *would* believe; no one would *want* to believe. Rahab would not have believed unless God had given the gift of faith to her and to her family. This is a story of sovereign grace.

## The evidences of her salvation

### Eight evidences that she had genuine faith in Yehowah (Josh 2:9-11,21; Heb. 11:31)

So what were the evidences of her salvation? There must have been some evidences because Hebrews 11:31 sets her up as a *model* of faith to everyone. To be a *model*, there must be *visible manifestations of her faith that we can imitate*. And there were. Let me list eight of them.

#### She received the spies with p\_\_\_\_\_ (Heb. 11:31)

The first evidence of faith is given in Hebrews 11:31, which says, “By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, *when she had received the spies with peace.*” The first evidence of her faith is that she received the spies with peace. She must have known that they were spies from Israel when she received them into her home. She welcomed them for reasons totally different from the previous people whom she had welcomed. As a prostitute she was able to quickly size up company. That’s how prostitutes survive. Now I will say that getting recognized so easily means they were probably not very good spies. But she knows when they came to her door that they were the enemy coming to conquer Jericho, yet she receives them in peace rather than declaring war upon them by turning them away or reporting them. This is aiding and abetting the enemy.

#### She h\_\_\_\_\_ the spies (Josh 2:4-6)

The second evidence of faith is that she *hid* the spies even when the authorities were demanding that they be turned over. This is going one step further and *taking action against the leaders of Jericho*. This is an act of war against Jericho. Faith always takes sides. Faith always declares war against the devil and against our old lifestyle. (So in one sense these points also show repentance, don’t they?)

#### She believes that God had given Israel the land (vv. 8-9)

The third evidence of faith is seen in verses 8-9. “Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: ‘I know that Yehowah has given you the land...’” As far as she is concerned, Yehowah has already won the battle. Canaan has no hope against Yehowah. It takes faith to believe that. This means that she had been a spy herself, doing some information gathering about these Jews and she had already come to believe that God would win - and she believed it more than some of the Israelites believed that.

Now, let’s contrast that with the attitudes of the others in Jericho. The other Canaanites, though scared to death, still resisted God, which means that they thought they had a chance of winning. That means that they didn’t 100% believe that God would win. But if God says He will win, Rahab believes He will win. She has more faith than many Christians who are selective in what they are willing to believe in the Bible. They fail to believe the Bible’s statements about the age of the universe, the world being created in six days, no death and suffering before Adam, male headship of the home, the Bible’s opposition to socialism,



statism, etc. That is not faith. Hebrews 11 says that true faith takes God at His Word. Against all odds, she believes that God will win.

### She didn't just fear; she came to God (Josh 6:9-11)

The next hint of her faith can be seen in the rest of verses 9-11, where her approach to God is quite different from the rest of the Canaanites. All the Canaanites were fainthearted, but only Rahab *ran directly to the God of judgment*. Later, God also saved the Gibeonites for much the same reason and eventually incorporated them into Israel. They ran toward the God of judgment. You see, faith is not necessarily present simply because your heart is melting with fear of hell or melting because of God's other judgments. Pagans sometimes believe that God is a God of judgment, but they hate Him for that fact rather than running to Him. When God changes our hearts, God's holiness suddenly becomes attractive to us, and we come into agreement with His judgments. *Faith runs to the God of judgment*. Counterfeit faith does not like the God of judgment.

### She had unconditional s\_\_\_\_\_ (Josh 2:1-21)

The next evidence is that she had unconditional surrender to God. Faith capitulates to God; surrenders to God; submits to God. This is the difference between Rahab and some modern so-called prostitutes for Christ (who stay prostitutes), and swingers for Christ (who continue in their swinging lifestyle), or Gays for Christ (who never leave their lifestyle and never bow before Jesus in unconditional surrender). Unconditional surrender is an evidence of genuine faith. Faith trusts that it is OK to surrender to God - no matter what God does. That's what makes it *unconditional* surrender.

### She did not d\_\_\_\_\_ like the Canaanites did (Josh 2:11)

The next evidence of faith was that she had *hope* whereas the Canaanites are said in verse 11 to have *despair*. There is always hope where faith is present. Despair is the opposite of faith. Too many Christians despair of victory over sin; they despair of whether they can find forgiveness. Perhaps they think they are too bad to be forgiven. But a person with true faith will not despair. Faith believes that (as Paul worded it in Romans 5:20), "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." And if you think you cannot be forgiven and changed by God's grace, look at Rahab the harlot. If you think that somebody *else* cannot be forgiven, look to Rahab the harlot. Do not despair. Have faith.

### She did not compartmentalize life (Josh 2:11)

The seventh evidence of her faith was that she did not compartmentalize life. I've seen too many Christians who keep Christ out of certain areas of their lives, or they think of Christ as relevant to church and personal devotions, but as not being relevant to their job, or their politics, or their bedroom. But she speaks in verse 11 of Yehowah as being the God in heaven above *and on earth beneath*. Unlike the Canaanite gods who each had their own small sphere or territory in which they worked, she knew that God has no limitations, and she acknowledges Him to be Lord over everything. Faith does not compartmentalize life.

## She hung a s\_\_\_\_\_ cord in her window (Josh 2:21)

The eighth evidence of her faith is that she put the scarlet cord in the window to let down the spies and left it there as a testimony to her trust in God's redemption. That scarlet cord could perhaps have given her away. As far as it hung down, it might have made the king of Jericho upset - if he had noticed it. But it was the obedience of faith.

Here's my question to you this morning: "Do *you* have saving faith, or only a counterfeit?" Measured against the genuine faith of Rahab, it has nothing to do with how good you are and has everything to do with your focus upon God's adequacies. Faith trusts God completely. May we do so.

## Repentance - five evidences that Rahab and her family made a radical break with her past (Josh 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25) by rejecting her old world (Josh 2:3) and identifying with God's people (Heb. 11:31)

### She left her prostitution behind (Josh 6:22-25)

But since there can be no genuine faith without repentance and the fruits of repentance, James 2:25 says that Rahab demonstrated her faith by her good works. We would have legitimately questioned the genuineness of her faith if she stayed in her prostitution. But Joshua 6 says that she made a break with her lifestyle and Matthew 1:5 says that she became a wife of Salmon who faithfully raised children to God's glory.

### She received the messengers at great risk (James 2:25)

James gives two more evidences from the story. It says that she showcased her good works "when she received the messengers and sent them out another way." Receiving the messengers is at the beginning of the story and sending them out another way is near the end of the Joshua 2 story. And it illustrates that faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. Wherever you have one, you will always have the other.

### She sent the spies out another route (James 2:25)

Both of those things showcase an entire turnaround of her life. Repentance means to turn around and go the opposite direction of your former lifestyle.

### She tried to save her family (Josh 2:13; 6:22-25)

A fourth evidence of her genuine repentance is seen in verse 13 where she tried to save her family for Christ and see them leave the Canaanite culture behind. We've already looked at that, and chapter 6 indicates that her entire family became Israelites. They were incorporated by conversion into the tribe of Judah. Without full-fledged conversion and discipleship they could not have become full citizens of the state of Judah.

**She went through the conversion process required of all captives (Deut. 21:10-14) and spent time outside the camp (Josh 6:23) until this discipleship process was finished (Josh 6:25)**

And the next point shows how. The fifth evidence of genuine repentance is that she willingly embraced the Biblical process that always happened at conversion - a period of time when they renounce and put off the old world and begin learning the ropes of Christianity - putting on new habits. New Christians who refuse to be disciplined and refuse to learn the ropes give no evidence of genuine faith and repentance. They are not saved yet. Matthew 1:21 says that Christ's whole purpose for coming into the world was to save His people *from* their sins; not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins. This is not simply salvation from hell, but salvation from sin.

Well, this involves an abandonment of the old lifestyle and learning the ropes of the new. And that will be a process. Initially it might be very difficult, as Romans 7 testifies. Romans 7 says that new Christians keep finding themselves doing the old things that they now hate, and they wonder why. Any habit is difficult to put off. It requires persistent effort. And that's why Joshua 6:23 said that Rahab and her family had to stay outside the camp for a time. It's not mentioned here, but it was to give time for an Old Testament conversion process. Let's put the pieces together.

Matthew 1:5 tells us that Rahab eventually married Salmon. According to Jewish tradition, he was one of the two spies that were in her house earlier. He knew the genuineness of her faith. But she still had to go through the process of conversion laid out in God's law before he could marry her. That is specified in Deuteronomy 21:10-14. It may seem strange to our New Covenant ears, but it was a very meaningful transition for them. It gave them hope and support. Let me read Deuteronomy 21:10-13. It says,

Deut. 21:10 "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, 11 and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, 12 then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. 13 She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

And the next verse deals with some of her marriage rights. This passage is *not* contradicting earlier passages that absolutely prohibited marrying an unbeliever. They were *never* allowed to marry unbelievers. It is assumed here that this woman has become a believer. And for a marriage to occur, both have to agree to the marriage or it would not be a marriage covenant. So we are not talking about a forced marriage. Covenants require both to agree. So obviously the woman wants to be married to him as well.

But laying aside those issues, I just want to comment on the unusual symbolism God put in place during the Old Covenant. Belief alone was not enough for this woman to marry the man. She had to trim her nails, shave her hair off, burn her old clothes as a symbol that she was completely leaving behind all the lifestyle, customs, culture, religion, habits, and everything else about her former pagan life. Nothing of the past was to be imported, and

according to Deuteronomy 6, she would now start learning how to do all of life from the Bible. Ian Cairns says,

The shaving of hair and paring of nails (21:13) mark a definitive break with the old way of life and a preparation for entering the new.<sup>3</sup>

This is something that is missing in modern evangelicalism. There is no public ceremony where there is a renouncing of the past and breaking off of demonic strongholds. Out in Ethiopia, our people did it all the time. They publicly raised their hands and renounced Satan and all of his works. They broke off any legal ground that Satan may have claimed in their lives by confessing their sins. There was a definitive break with the old lifestyle and a commitment to live like a Christian should. And if you have never done that, you can still do it, even though your conversion is long past.

Anyway, Daniel Block says much the same in his commentary. He says,

While having her shave her hair, trim her nails, and remove her native clothing appear to be insulting demands, these actions symbolize her change of status. When her hair and nails grow and she puts on new clothes, she emerges as a new person, with a new identity and new status; she hereby declares nonverbally what Ruth declared verbally to Naomi (Ruth 1:16). [“Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.”] The actions also remind her new husband that he is not to treat her as an alien or a slave.<sup>4</sup>

Deuteronomy says that this month also allowed her time to mourn her previous losses and to find some adjustment. But other hints in Scripture indicate that there was also intense Biblical discipleship that happened during that month. From Ezekiel and other prophetic writings we learn that there was baptism, renunciation, and affirmations of faith. We call that baptism proselyte baptism. If she had had children, they too would have been baptized. So there was a put off and there was a put on. She had to be disciplined into the Biblical religion with all its strange ways and customs. She was now the citizen of a new world - a new creation.

### **And only then did she marry Salmon (Matt. 1:5; Ruth 4:21)**

All of that had to happen before Salmon would be allowed by the law of God to marry Rahab. Outside the camp she was in a no-man's land. She wasn't in Canaan, but she wasn't yet fully in the church. It was the awkward stage of learning the ropes. But Rahab did learn and began a line that includes the beautiful story of Ruth. The book of Ruth ends with these words in chapter 4:18-22.

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<sup>3</sup> Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Edinburgh: W.B. Eerdmans; Handsel Press, 1992), 189.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 496.

Ruth 4:18 Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; 19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; 20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; 21 Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; 22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

This means that Rahab was in the line of King David - and ultimately in the line of Jesus. This is an awesome story of transformation! Awesome!

## Other lessons we can learn

### Treat prostitutes as humans made in God's image

Before I close, let me go through a few more lessons that we can learn from this wonderful convert, Rahab. First, we should treat prostitutes as humans made in God's image. The two spies did not treat Rahab as dirt. She had obviously mucked around in the dirt and was plenty dirty, but they could see that she was a human made in God's image. And they dialogued with her in a non-demeaning way - as equals. We must never look down on sinners. Instead, may the Pharisees bring the same accusation against us that they brought against Him - that He was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). Jesus did not ignore the sins of tax collectors and sinners. He rebuked them, called them to change, and restored them by grace. But, He saw them as being in God's image and did not treat like dirt as the Pharisees did.

Down through history there have been many immoral women and even prostitutes who have married and become very respectable citizens in God's kingdom. I have been friends with some of these women. They are not to be shunned. Even though many of these women in our churches have committed murder through abortion, they are redeemed and clean through the blood of Christ.

And even before they were saved it was obvious that they still possessed the image of God, however shattered and tattered that image may have become. By God's grace, that image can be restored into the image of Jesus. And really, *all* of us have a shattered and tattered image of God, and Colossians 3:10 says that every Christian is progressively being renewed into His image.

### Don't see any human as being beyond God's grace.

Second, we should not see any human being as beyond God's grace and forgiveness - unless they have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. And how do you know that? Well, Hebrews says that if there is genuine repentance, it is proof positive that they have *not* committed the unpardonable sin. So call them to repentance.

But the point is that some churches don't welcome certain people because of their past. Now, if those certain people are insisting upon staying in their past, of course they are not welcome. But rejecting people because of their past is a blasphemy against God's grace. 1 Corinthians 6 points out that many of the Corinthians had been saved out of a lifestyle similar to the Amorites. They had been saved out of incest (and yes, the incestuous man was forgiven and restored to the church in 2 Corinthians). I'm sure there were precautions

and safety measures taken for his sake and for the sake of others. They were real - but he was restored. Other Corinthians were saved out of prostitution, fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, stealing, murder, and other sins. Yet 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such *were* some of you." Praise God for that past tense "were." "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." Don't buy into the Revoice Movement that gives no hope of such transformation. Your new identity is in Jesus, not in your past lifestyle. In fact, you will shamelessly use your label of what you *once* were to give others in that lifestyle hope that they too can be changed. That's the only legitimate use for the past label. There is no such thing as a harlot Christian, a gay Christian, a thief Christian. But there is such a thing as former murderers preaching the Gospel. Praise God.

### **Pray for American and International ministries to prostitutes and support them.**

Third, I would encourage us to pray for ministries to prostitutes and other down-and-outers and try to support them as we are able. It is a brutally hard ministry to be involved in, and these people need our appreciation, love, financial support, and prayers. When you start effectively winning women to Christ and rescuing them from their pimps, the mafia start coming after you, whether you are in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, or North America. And the reason is that trafficking of women and children is a multi-billion dollar industry - and when that much money is being made, people will not take kindly to your rescuing the boys, girls, and women being trafficked. You are cutting into their profits. Conservative estimates are that somewhere between 175,000-250,000 women disappear into trafficking every single year just from the former Soviet Union states. For example, the Moldovan Security Service calculates that 600,000 of its citizens are working as sex-slaves in other countries - and that's just a tiny country. 600,000 of their citizens have disappeared. The Russian mafia controls much of Israel's sex trade with up to 90% of the trafficked women coming from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. And much as governments fight against it, it doesn't appear to be going away when there are upwards of 19 billion dollars a year of profits after all expenses have been paid.

It is sickening. And I would urge you to get as sickened as God is by this trade. If you get as sickened as God is, you will totally understand the Conquest of Canaan, and you will be motivated to pray the imprecatory prayers against the leaders of the industry. But in the process, don't forget to pray for ministries like Joy International, Operation Underground Railroad, Tim Tebow Foundation, Prison Fellowship, Concerned Women for America, Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking, European Baptist Federation, Church Commission for Migrants in Europe, Christian Action and Networking Against Trafficking in Women, International Justice Mission, the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Mission to the World, SIM International, The Scarlet Cord (out of Amsterdam), Christian Aid and Resources Foundation (also out of Amsterdam), Door of Hope (out of London), One25 Limited (out of Bristol), Alabare Christian Care Centers (Bristol), and hundreds of other missions groups. Progress is being made, but much more needs to happen. As many of these organizations have pointed out, many of the children and women being trafficked are baptized Christians who were kidnapped. God still has the same anger

and wrath against these people as He did against the Canaanites. But God uses means, and one of the means is the imprecatory prayers. Another means is evangelism. And since God's heart is in this, we probably ought to start figuring out which missions groups are the best to support in this venture. I would like to see at least one of these getting regularly on our budget.

## Be extremely careful (they went two-by-two) when ministering to prostitutes

Fourth, if you decide to get *personally* involved in rescuing trafficked children and women, be extremely careful in what you do and how you do it. This is not only because of the dangers you may face from pimps (which are very real), but also because of the dangers you may face from sexual temptation. Prostitutes have been trained from youth on how to lure men into temptation, and there are demons who help them.

These two spies were a team. False accusations could not happen. They could have each others backs with prayer and protection. When you invade this darkness in Omaha and Council Bluffs (and believe me, it is rife in these two cities), you are bound to get demons striking back, so you will need a solid prayer cover. You are bound to occasionally get pimps attacking you. You are occasionally bound to get robbed, falsely accused, and slandered by the very people you are trying to help. So go into that ministry with your eyes open and your hands to heaven. This is not a ministry for the naive or the careless. And most who are *already* involved in this ministry will tell you the same thing, and will *strongly* recommend that you get a lot of training before you get involved on the street. But at a minimum, we can at *least* support them with prayer and money.

## Realize that Jesus identified with sinners and prostitutes (Matt 1 genealogy) and came to save them (Matt. 21:31-32)

Last, realize that Jesus identified with sinners in his genealogy as a symbol of the fact that He came to die and save just such people. And if you have secret sins that you have been afraid to go to Jesus over, please see His heart. He has a heart for rescuing you. Jesus said,

Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you [and the "you" is referring to the priests and leaders of Israel]. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him. (Matthew 21:31-32)

Your past sin is not the hindrance to your being forgiven or getting in the kingdom; your pride and self-sufficiency are the hindrance. Christ's grace can transform anyone. In His genealogy Jesus had ancestors who were Gentile converts, thieves, cheats, guilty of incest, adultery, and murder. Those names beautifully demonstrate that Christ identifies with sinners and took them to Himself, purifying them, and changing them into totally new people.

So if you are a sinner who has felt hopelessly bound to your sin, look to Jesus. Renounce your past. Take whatever legal hits you need to take. Sometimes people do have to take

legal hits. And by faith begin receiving the new life that Jesus purchased for you. Talk to the elders or deacons and start to go through intense discipleship and counseling and find the joy of victory and wholeness that can come from Jesus and Jesus alone. And may He receive all the glory. Amen.