

The Hall of Faith: Rahab
Hebrews 11:30-31
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 2, 2023

A few things you could pray for, if you don't mind, would really appreciate that. But one is something that Robert actually mentioned earlier, is just that theme of unity. We're always praying to be one in the body of Christ, one mind, one spirit, one fellowship. And the reason we pray that way is because that's what Jesus prayed for, right? If you want your prayers to match His, that was what was on His heart. I just want to read this to you, but John 17:20, the Lord Jesus prayed, when He was with the disciples, on the night before He was crucified, He said this, He said,

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

And His point there is that in the Trinity, there is a perfect Oneness. And with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is peace. And if we're going to be His people, there needs to be peace among us, right? It even says there “that the world may believe that You sent Me,” and one of the greatest testimonies to the world is the peace of the church. You need to be able to look over there and say, “Why do those people get along so well? I don't get it.” And it's because of what Christ has done, so we can be praying for that. That's the work that the Lord does in the life of His body.

Another one we could pray for is, is just that we would love each other the way 1 Corinthians 13 talks about. In fact, the very first sermon I ever did here, some of you might remember this, but I was candidating at the church, and I was talking about 1 Corinthians 13, where it says, it says these words here, it says, “Love is patient. Love is kind, it's not jealous, it does not brag, it's not arrogant, it's not unbecoming.” And even before that, Paul says, “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but do not have love, I become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” And some of you will remember this because this was my first sermon I did with you; but I took a pot and a pan and started banging them. Someone told me this week, they really didn't like that sermon very much the first time I did it. But I started banging them because without love, everything you do in the church is just noise. It's just a bunch of racket. And the thing that drives the passion and the fuel of the church is our respect and admiration for one another, it all goes back to that. In fact, discipleship is basically truth plus relationship going together, truth and love. And if you get that out of balance, the whole plane comes crashing down. And we always have to have that in our congregation. And I know you guys strive for that. But keep praying for it.

Another one is pray for grace, that we would always be patient with one another in our differences. In a church like ours, I counted it up one time, I think we have 12 countries represented in our church. And I

don't mean your great grandparents came from another country. I mean, either you did, or maybe your parents; there's so much variety in our congregation. Which I love that; I think it's a wonderful thing, but we're going to have to have grace as we work through things together because everybody has a different background. And so that's another thing to pray for.

And finally, one thing, and again, this is all just as I want to shepherd you some, is pray that we would be Doers of the Word, and not just hearers only; we want to be both. We want to hear the Word of God. We want to take it in and listen to sermons and read sound theology and meditate on that; but we want to also put it into practice. We want to do both of those things. It's good to be well fed sheep, but it's not good to be a bloated sheep. Or a sheep that doesn't exercise and put it into practice. And so that's what we're striving for as well as our congregation.

In fact, as we're thinking about this, can I just pray for us? And then after that, we'll dive into our sermon this morning.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we come to You this morning acknowledging that without prayer, the life of the church doesn't work. This is a spiritual task that we're undertaking here at Grace Fellowship. And there's nothing about this that'll ever work by the natural means of man. We can't save sinners. We can't draw the lost to yourself, and we can't help one another grow in our walk with Christ. We can't put off sin on our own. We can't identify areas where we need to change on our own. We can't do these things like show love and unity and in grace by our own power Father. All that is a supernatural work of God and so Lord, we ask that You would help us in these things. Father, even as I come to the preaching of the Word, that's a supernatural thing. There's no way that just the words of a man can penetrate the heart of people. That's all in in Your sovereign strength.

And so Lord, we pray for that this morning. We ask that Your hand would come upon our church, that Your mercy and grace that we sing about will be reflected in our lives and how we interact with one another. Father, thank You for the people You've brought to Grace Fellowship. We think back over the years and just Your mercy in bringing such a wonderful variety of souls together, that is a work of grace, there's nothing else that could do that, but Christ. And Father, we just pray that as we move forward together, that the love that we have would grow, and that You would be glorified in that. Thank you, Father for the opportunity this morning to worship You and sing. And we pray that as we talk about our subject this morning, You would open up our hearts to the compassion and grace You showed this woman, Rahab; and that we could have that for the lost as well. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this morning, we are coming to the next person in the Hall of Faith, as we read about a moment ago, and that is Rahab. You heard about that a little bit from Robert and David. And in order to introduce her to you, I want you to open your Bibles to the book of Joshua. And as you're turning there to Joshua, I just want to give you the setting for this passage because the Bible tells us that after the people of Israel left Egypt under Moses during the Exodus that we talked about last week, the Lord told

them to conquer the Promised Land and they said no. Many of you remember this story. He ordered them to invade it, and they refused because they thought the people of the land were too big for them, too strong and mighty and powerful. And so the Lord made them wander around in the wilderness for 40 years, until an entire generation died off. If you do the math that comes to about 41 people dying once a day, every day for 40 years. Because Numbers 1:46 says there were more than 600,000 fighting men who left Egypt during the time of Exodus, not counting women and children, which means if you put all the women and children and men together, it's somewhere around one to two million people. And all the adults passed away in that period of time. One commentator said it was so bad that everywhere Israel would have stopped in the wilderness, they would have left behind a graveyard because they were constantly burying bodies. Which would have impacted the next generation; because as the next group of Jews rolled around, they would not have forgotten it because it taught them that the next time God speaks, you need to listen. And the next time He tells you to go into the land, you need to obey. And that's what they did, because Joshua 2 tells us that when this next generation of Jews is preparing to invade the land after the previous one died, this is what happens. If you look in Joshua 2, it says,

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." 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.

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 then if you look down in verse 24, it goes on to say how the men escaped Jericho. And when they went back to the camp, they said to Joshua, “Surely the Lord has given us all the land into our hands. Moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us.”

We'll stop the reading there. But if you notice, this time, the spies had a very different reaction from the previous one, right? They didn't say, “We can't do it, and the people are too strong.” They said, “We can do this. Surely the Lord has given all this land into our hands.” And verse one tells you why they felt that way, and that is because of what they experienced in this place called Jericho.

Jericho was a military town located in the western side of the Jordan River, about 15 miles from where the Jews were staying at Shittim. It was a small town by modern standards, it only covered about six acres in size or so. You could walk around the whole thing in half an hour if you visited the ruins today, or if you go to explore them. But even so it was impressive because it had a system of walls around it that stood several stories high. According to the Answers in Genesis website, archaeologists have studied the area and determined that Jericho had a wall system that had several tiers to it that were stacked on top of each other as you went up a hill. And so the tallest of those would have been 45 feet above the ground, and six feet thick. So it was intimidating. It would strike fear into your hearts if you stood right in front of it. In fact, this passage shows you that the walls were so thick that people could live in them, including this woman named Rahab.

Verse one says that she was a harlot. In other words, she's not a godly woman, or even a moral woman, or a good one. She was a prostitute. She made a living selling herself to the man who came to town. The word harlot here, it's a term that has been debated throughout the years because some don't like it because of all the wicked connotations to it. So they try to translate it as innkeeper or maid or something like that. But the problem is that that's not what it means in Hebrew. It just means prostitute. That's what Rahab was.

Which explains why the spies went to stay with her, not necessarily for immoral reasons, I couldn't find any evidence that they actually were intimate with her, but they went there because no one would ask questions in a place like that. If you're a spy, you could come and go as you please with anonymity, or so they thought; they thought they would be able to hide there. The passage goes on to tell us that they were wrong. Her house didn't help them too much because they were caught as they spent the night.

Verse two says this. It says, “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, and that word “tonight” is important because it means they were probably found out the first night they were there. Because again, Jericho is not a big place. If you looked at it and analyzed the space, you could only hold about a few thousand inhabitants or so. And the city was on a high alert because the Jews were camped nearby, so they were putting everyone under a close watch, and they spotted these guys. At this time, the way it worked in a city like Jericho in war time, is that the king would often place watchmen on top of the walls where they would

look out for signs of trouble. And then he would place guards down below who would shut the gate every night and open it in the morning. And they would stand there and question everyone throughout the day who came through and they would ask him, you know, “Where do you come from? Where are you going?” and “Please state your business.” And that's probably what gave them away because the spies didn't talk like everyone else and maybe look like everyone else. There's something about them that stuck out.

And as they were spotted, this is where the story gets interesting because it tells us, as you just read, that Rahab hid the spies. As soon as she realized they were in danger, she took a risk, put her life on the line, and saved them by stowing them away. Due to the fact that there were soldiers nearby, she didn't do everything all at once. She had to help them in stages, because verse four tells you how she lied to the king. That's not saying she did the right thing there. She just did what came natural to her. Then verse six says she put them on the roof and had them go under some stalks of flax. And then verse 15 says she let them down through a rope in her window because her house was on the wall. However her house was situated, it was put in a place where there was access to a point of escape.

But the whole story backing up for a moment, makes you wonder, “Why?” Why would you do that? Why would a woman like this help a group of strangers she just met? And the answer is found in verse 10 when she tells them that “We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea... for the LORD your God, He's God of heaven and earth.” In other words, Rahab saved these men for one reason and one reason only because of the Lord. She hid them, and spared their lives, and lied to her king, and put them on the roof, and let them down through the rope because someone had told her about Yahweh, and she believed. She didn't know much. All she had was these reports. But she liked what she heard, and she wanted a better life. If you just read between the lines here, you know she must have been sick of the way she was living, tired of the wickedness, tired of the shame, tired of the guilt that came with a life like that, and so the moment she found a way out of it through the Lord, she took it. Even though it would have gotten her in trouble, by the way, because the king could have killed her for doing this. I mean, this was like committing treason. She was helping the invading army in wartime; you're not supposed to do that. Or if she wasn't killed, she would have been ostracized from the community because everyone she knew would have had to shun her. And she would have not been able to work in a town like that again; she would have been blacklisted. But she didn't mind all those risks. She did it anyway because she had faith. The idea is that this woman gave up everything she had, laid it on the line for God because she put her hope in Him.

Which brings it to the book of Hebrews. So if you want to turn there in your Bibles, this just connects it to what we've been talking about in previous weeks here, at Grace Fellowship. Because Hebrews 11:30 mentions Rahab this way, this is what it says about her. It says,

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

Now, if you notice, as you read through the chapter as a whole, it says Rahab was saved the same way everybody else was. This woman came to the Lord just like Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses. And that is through grace and not by works; through trusting in God and not by merit. Which is interesting, because I don't know about you, but when I read the Hall of Faith, a lot of these names make sense to me. I mean, when I read about Abel, I understand why he's here because Abel was a godly man. I mean, he was a good example of what it means to follow the Lord. He died after making a sacrifice with good motives. And then it says, "By faith Enoch," and I get that too because Enoch walked with God; he had a close relationship. The two of them were very, very intimate with one another. Then it says, "By faith Noah." I say, "yes," again. He built the ark. But when you get down to Rahab, you got to raise an eyebrow. And say to yourself, "Why is she in here?" I mean, in fact, if you look back in the verse, it even tells you that "By faith Rahab, the harlot." It doesn't say "By faith, Rahab, the woman of Jericho." It doesn't say, "By faith Rahab" with no title. It puts the word harlot in here to remind you that she did nothing on her own. She didn't deserve this. But the point is that she did have faith and that's what saved her. See, she trusted in God and that's what put her in this passage along with everybody else.

One commentator said this, he said, "As far as the record of Rahab's life is concerned, there was no redeeming quality whatsoever about her when you first meet her. On the contrary, she lived in a culture that was one of the worst in human history, and she was at the bottom of it. She made her living off of her city's insatiable appetite for sin, which makes it hard to imagine a more unlikely candidate for redemption. But the Lord gave it to her because this is what God does." Psalm 103:8 says, "He is merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness." Because He's not like us. God doesn't look at the world and only save those who deserve it. He saves those who don't! Amen? And He doesn't look into a room and say, "That one's worthy," Nobody's worthy!

I think this is something we need to remember today as Christians because our world is full of people like this. You see Rahabs all over the place. You go to downtown Chilliwack you see them sleeping in the streets. Go to the city of Vancouver, you'll see them passed out in the alleyways. And if you're not careful, there can be a tendency to look at them and say they're useless. And there can be a very easy to fall into the trap of telling ourselves they're just a waste of time. But the truth is that when you do that, you couldn't be any farther from the heart of God; they are not a waste of time to Him. One of them was put in the Hall of Faith. And besides, what did Christ do with people like this? He helped them. I mean, He was constantly preaching the gospel to the prostitutes and tax collectors of this world, so much so that His enemies taunted Him, and they called him a friend of sinners. Jesus says, "I am. Because it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And this is what's happening right here. This is a sinner being called to repentance.

Rahab's story is placed in the Bible to remind you that the mercy of God is not just a New Testament thing. You find it in the Old Testament as well, because it shows us that God has always had a passion to save people like this, and we should too. And this should be a motivation for us to change the way we look at things today. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning with two examples of faith that we see in Rahab's story. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. But in Hebrews 11, and these verses, and even in some other verses, we're going to look at two examples of faith from Rahab story.

And the first one is the example of Israel. So the first example of faith we see in her story is the example of Israel. Because before we talk about her, the passage actually talks about them because that's where the story begins. And as you look in Hebrews 11, if you look in the verses we just read, there is this familiar phrase that we see that's repeated all throughout the chapter. And that is that phrase "by faith." It's the one thing that kind of joins all these stories together is that expression, except that in verse 30, it's used in a special way to say that "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days." In other words, here, the author doesn't say "by faith," and talk about someone like Abraham, or Moses, or Isaac, or Jacob. He says, "by faith," and then he talks about this event, sort of setting it in a different way. Because if anybody needed faith, it was the Jews when they conquered Jericho because it was done in such an unusual way. I think if you study the history of military, I don't think you'll ever find a battle that was fought like this. And so they had to trust in God because there's no other choice here.

And if you want to see some of this for yourself, you can look back to the book of Joshua, and see that Israel's conquest of Jericho came in two stages. The first one was their entrance into the land. So before they were able to conquer Jericho, they had to march into it, which took faith. Because the previous generation of Jews didn't want to do that. If you remember the story, they didn't want to set foot in the land for fear of the inhabitants. But this group of Jews were different. And Joshua 1 tells you how the Lord prepares them to go into the land when it says this. It says,

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you

may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

If you notice, backing up here in this passage, it starts off by saying to Joshua that Moses My servant is dead. In other words, the man who has been leading Israel for 40 years through the wilderness has passed away. And there's going to be a changing of the guard now from Moses to Joshua. The reason this happens is because the passage tells you Joshua was a servant to Moses during all their travels in the wilderness. So a lot of the things Moses did, Joshua did. And where Moses would go, Joshua would follow. So he was the perfect man for the job. Numbers. 13 also tells us that Joshua was one of the original 12 spies that went to spy out the land. And except that when they came back, only Joshua and Caleb said, "We can do this. We need to attack." And so the Lord spared their lives during those 40 years of the wilderness. And after sparing his life, the Lord is allowing him to go back and fight them.

When it says in verse two, "to cross over the Jordan so that I will give you every place on which your foot treads from the wilderness and this Lebanon even as far as the great river toward the setting of the sun." That's another way of referring to the land of Israel. We would call it Palestine. It's currently about 8,000 square miles, making it roughly the size of the state of New Jersey in the United States. By comparison, the nation of Canada is about 4 million square miles. So it's quite a bit larger than that here. But the one thing that made Israel so special was its location. It was a land bridge between three continents, Europe, Africa, and Asia. So everyone who wanted to cross from one place to another in that part of the world by land had to go through there, which made it very prime real estate. The Bible says that during Joshua's day, it was inhabited by the Canaanites, Hittite, and Hivite peoples, along with the Perizzite, Girgashite, and Amorites, and Jebusites, which was a very diverse group. It's a lot of people living in one small strip of land. And the idea here is that the Lord is sending Israel to take the land from them and wipe them out. He's telling them to conquer this territory and kill all those who are in it.

The theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that a lot of men speak of a holy war. But there's only a few times in human history when you see the Lord ordaining a holy war, and this is one of them. If you want to write this verse down Deuteronomy 20:16-19 says,

Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods.

That's a pretty sobering passage, right? Because this was supposed to be a war of annihilation. The Jews were supposed to destroy everything that had breath in it, so they wouldn't repeat those abominable practices of these people. Now, some have wondered why the Lord would do this because surely some of these people weren't all that bad. But the answer is that apparently, they were. If you want a taste of that, you can just read the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. And you can understand what this land was like, because they lived in that region, and the Lord rained down fire and brimstone on them in order to demonstrate what He thought of this behavior. And now He's sending the Jews back to finish the judgment.

And as He does this here in Joshua 1, it gives him some very unusual instructions, I think, for a military campaign. Because in verse seven, if you look, he says, "Be careful to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn aside from the right or to the left." Now, why does He say that when they're going into battle? If you think about it, the Lord should be giving military strategy here, right? And He should be telling them how to set up the army and distribute it effectively and put the infantry here and the artillery there and the chain of command there, but He doesn't because He tells them that this is the most important thing: you need to obey. Before we talk about any of that other stuff, that's all secondary, you need to do according to all the law; not some of it, but all of it. Don't just obey a few things that you like, Joshua, obey every single syllable. Verse eight says, "Do not let it depart from your mouth." In other words, don't ever stop speaking about it to each other. You need to be talking about this from the moment you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night. And it also says, "You shall meditate on it," which gives the act of mentally regurgitating something like a cow chews its cud and swallows it, and then spits it back up again; and then chews its cud and swallows it and spits it back up again; and chews its cud and swallows it and spits it back up again. You need to do that with the Bible. because that's what it's going to get you victory in the land. It's not going to come with your strength, it's not going to come with your numbers, it's not going to come with your military brilliance, Joshua. The only thing that's gonna give you success is Me.

I think so many times we make the spiritual life harder than this because when we attempt to do great things for God, we want to know about so many other things, right? And I was putting a list together as I was reflecting on this, because if I was in Joshua's shoes, I would have had a long conversation with God. I would want to know, "Well, okay, Lord, how many spears does the enemy have?" Right? And "How big are their fortifications? And how tall are their walls? And how good is their army? And how many battles have they fought? And how are we supposed to beat them specifically? And what will we do if they shoot back at us? And how do we respond if they charge? And what if they have horses? And what if they have chariots? And what if they have catapults? And what if they have archers? And what if they have shields? And what if they have friends who will show up the moment we fight them." And to be fair, the spies got some of that information when they went into Jericho, but the Lord doesn't talk about that here. He says the most important thing for them is to hear the Word of God and obey it. They need to read the law and do what it says. This is how you win your spiritual battles today, friends; the

methods haven't changed. If you're fighting a struggle with your parenting or your marriage, you go to the Bible, right? It's all about the Word of God. That's something that goes all the way back to this time.

I remember the time when I was watching a documentary several months ago, about the early settlers in Canada. And they were telling the story of an old Scottish woman who settled in Manitoba during the winter. And her children asked her, "How did you make it through it?" And she said, "Because we had porridge, and we had the Bible." That's all Israel had here, minus the porridge. They had their weapon in one hand, and they had a Bible in the other, figuratively speaking; and they were going to war. It takes faith to do that. You have to trust.

Which brings you to the next stage of their faith, and that's the conquest of Jericho. So a second phase to Israel's faith. The first one is going into the land, which took faith. It was a dangerous thing. In fact, if you want to see their faith, you look in verse 16 of chapter one.

They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.

And that's kind of an ironic statement because they didn't actually obey Moses in all things. But you can see their heart; they wanted to. And so they go. And as they go, the first place they come across to fight is this city of Jericho. You see this in chapter six, if you want to turn there. And as you're looking there, you know, Jericho was important. It was the first military outpost they came across when they entered the land. So if they wanted to get a foothold in the territory, they had to start there because Jericho was located several miles from the Jordan River. The Jordan River is a body of water that's 200 miles long; it stretches from Syria on the north, all the way down to the Dead Sea in the south. And the significance of the river is that it marked a boundary line between the wilderness and Canaan. So that once you crossed the river, you're in enemy territory now, and if you're going to move forward, you going to have to fight. And as they did that, they crossed the river in chapter three. And then in chapter five, they're circumcised because apparently this generation of Jews had forgotten to do that. And then in chapter six, it says this, it says,

Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. The Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king *and* the valiant warriors. You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

Now I showed you in chapter one, how the Lord gave them these commands to intervene, how He talked to them about entering into the land. This is how they're supposed to fight Jericho. And just to say some words about this, verse one says, "Now Jericho was tightly shut." That means that the people of Jericho were ready for war because they knew the Jews were coming, so they were hidden behind their fortifications. You remember that I told you the walls of Jericho were very tall, and they were wide enough to put a house inside of them. They were not like walls you have here in this room. They were military installations built by the army in such a way that soldiers could patrol the top of them. Watchmen could watch from the towers; archers could fire arrows from behind the barriers. Some historians have told us that the walls of Babylon were big enough to drive two chariots across side by side without running into each other. And that probably wasn't the case here; they probably weren't that big, but they still would have seemed intimidating. And the reason the people were shut up behind them is because there were one to two million Jews at this time, so it's hard to hide them. If they're camped 50 miles away at Shittim, the inhabitants of Jericho would know about it. But even despite this, if you look in verse two, the Lord tells them not to be discouraged. Because He says, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand with its king and valiant warriors." And what that means is that you shouldn't be intimidated by the fact that they're hidden behind the walls. I've done that for you. They're there because I'm giving them to you; so you don't have to go around the countryside trying to round them up.

Remember, this is a war of annihilation; they're supposed to kill every person in the land. And if the Jews had to go from place to place to place and gather all the people, it would be very, very difficult. So 8,000 square miles, a lot of the parts of Israel are caves and mountains and that type of thing. So oftentimes, the Lord would put the people in cities for them. They slaughtered them that way. The same thing happened with the people of Ai in chapter eight. Same thing happened with the people of Lachish in chapter 10. Same thing happened with the people of Eglon in chapter 10, and the people of Hebron.

And not only that, but verse three tells us, He would take care of the walls for them. If they would do this, they needed to march around the city once a day for six days. And then on the seventh day, they were to march around it seven times, and had the priests blow their trumpets, and the people would shout, and the walls would come crashing down. And some of you've heard that story before. It's a wonderful story. But it does make you wonder, what's going on here? And the answer is the Lord tells them to do this to remind them that the victory over Jericho was going to come from one thing and one thing only; and that was His power. Because nowhere does He tell them to touch the walls. Do you see that? And nowhere does He tell them to push them down or charge them or hit them with anything or bring a battering ram or siege ramps or something like that, because He wants to make it crystal clear that this was a miracle, and it was not done by the work of man. Because this was the first battle in the Promised Land. And He's sending them the message that I will take care of this for you.

The way it works, is verse four says the priests were to march in the procession because they were the spiritual leaders of Israel. They were the ones who would represent the people before the Lord. And so that's why they're part of this. As they did that, they were supposed to carry the ark of the covenant

which represents the Lord before the people. The ark was a small wooden chest that was used in the worship services of the tabernacle to remind the people of God's dwelling place.

And as they marched, verse three says the people were to march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. And as I was studying that there, there are kind of two views on what that meant. One is that the people of Israel marched around the city with the men of war; they all did it together. And another view was that the men of war marched around the city by themselves. The army did it alone, marching. Because the book of Numbers says that there were over 600,000 men of war who left Egypt and the city of Jericho was only six acres; and so they would have swallowed the whole thing up. But either way, whichever one it was, as they did that it says the wall of the city would fall flat. And if you notice verse five puts the term "wall" in the singular here. But the book of Hebrews in chapter 11:30 puts it in the plural, because it says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled." And the reason they both say it that way is because the city of Jericho had a wall system; it was several tiers that were stacked on top of each other, they went up a hill. And the idea here is that the Lord knocked them down so the people of Israel could get in. The Hebrew word for the walls fell flat is a word that means that they fell underneath themselves, so they wouldn't look like someone battered them down with a siege engine. On the other hand, they would have gone down like this, with the bottom dropping out. As if some unforeseen force was at work on them.

And to be honest, you have to be careful when you study a passage like the walls of Jericho coming down because there is a tendency in churches to spiritualize this. And say that if you have faith, the Lord will tear down your walls like He did Israel's wall. Or if you believe, He'll defeat your enemies, just like He defeated their enemies. The problem with that is that the Lord never told you to go into a city and kill the inhabitants, amen? It doesn't exactly correlate in every regard. I heard the story once of a young man who marched around a lady seven times that he was attracted to. And then he proposed to her so the walls of her heart would come falling down. And, and it worked because she accepted. Until several years later, they had to go into counseling because they couldn't get along. That's not what this is saying here. One simple lesson from the walls of Jericho is that God just keeps His promises. He always does what He says. Because He told the people of Israel, the walls would fall if they did this, and they fell. He told them that if they marched around the city like He commanded them, they would have victory, and they had victory. Because God always keeps His word.

In fact, if you want to write this verse down, many centuries ago, the Lord had promised this land to the descendants of Abraham. And in Genesis 15:18, it says,

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

"To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”

And then when you read that passage, some of those names should be familiar to you, because that's the place that's being described here because this is where the Lord is bringing that promise to fulfillment. He told Abraham, He was going to give him this land, and He hadn't forgotten after all these centuries. Because this is what our God does. He's a faithful, covenant keeping God. He made promises to the Jews, and He kept them. He makes promises to us today, and He does the same thing.

Which brings us to another example of faith in this story, and that is the story of Rahab herself. A second example of faith in this story is the story of Rahab herself, which refers to the woman that we spoke about earlier because she was an eyewitness to what I just described to you. She saw the conquest of Jericho. She saw the walls come down, and she lived to tell about. In fact, if you want to keep your finger in the book of Joshua, and turn back to Hebrews 11. It tells us this about Rahab.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

If you notice, the author of Hebrews here is connecting these two events in the passage, the walls of Jericho falling down and Rahab because they're intertwined. They happen at the same time. The only difference is the first one relates to the Jews as a nation, and the second verse relates to this one individual person, and that's Rahab, the harlot. And we've already talked about how she hid the spies when they came into her city and kept them from death. So I don't want to repeat much of that here other than to say when you look at her faith, it comes in two phases as well.

And the first one is that she tied a scarlet thread and her window. The first stage of her faith is that she tied a scarlet cord on the outside of her house, so the Jews would see it and identify her when they came to attack. And if you want to look back in Joshua 2, this is where it tells us about that. Now we're backing up a little bit in the story because this passage, if you remember, tells us that when the spies came to visit her, she rescued them by hiding them in some stocks of flax on the rooftop. But I didn't get a chance to tell you what she said to them right after she did that, because if you look in chapter 2:12, this is the conversation Rahab has with them. We said a little bit about this earlier, but here's some more discussion. She says in verse 12, actually I'll back up to verse 11,

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.”

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.” 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.

Now, as with some of these other passages, there's some observations we can make here.

The whole passage here gives you the idea that they were in peril. These spies are in quite a bit of danger, which is why verse 15 says she let them down by a rope through a window, because she had a house on the wall. Because the gates were tightly closed; that's what happened when places like this were on high alert, the gates of the city would be shut up at night, opened in the morning, there would be the guard 24/7. But the idea here is that the spies had to get out of there quickly because it was only a matter of time before they were found out. When it says that she hid them on the rooftop, I could point out that rooftops in that part of the world are not like they are here in Canada because it didn't rain much there. In fact, when you go to the city of Jericho, we visited there one time, I forgot my sunglasses, and I was blown away by how bright it was, and hot and dusty. But because of that, the roofs are all flat. So they're an ideal place to hide someone, especially in a house of prostitution, because there's people coming and going all the time. And that would have gotten them a high chance of being spotted. The problem though, is that you couldn't hide them there for long because if the guards didn't find the spies somewhere else, they would start looking on rooftops, which would eventually lead these men to be found. And so Rahab lets them down through the rope, so they could get out of there quickly.

Right before they do that, in verse 12, as she tells them these words, she says, basically, “I want you to remember me.” In other words, “I'm going to do that for you, but I want you to do something for me. And that is to spare my life when you come back.” Because she knew the Jews were returning, it's not the last time she's gonna see them. The only difference is that when they return, they're going to bring their army with them. And it's going to be terrible because they're going to wipe everybody out. So she asked them to keep her from the destruction. I find was very touching here, because Rahab actually

asked him to remember her family. Because it shows you the kind of person she was, even though she was a prostitute, she still had a heart. And even though she was wicked, she still had a family she loved very much, and she wants them to help them too.

And these men said that we'll do it only if you do this, put them in the house when we come to attack, in verse 17 and 18, and tie a scarlet thread in the window. The word for thread here it's a Hebrew term, that means string or cord. It's different from the word that was used for rope in verse 15 because it's smaller than that. Because the spies aren't asking Rahab to place something noticeable in the window. They're just asking her to hang something that will be hidden in a sense, it'll just blend in with the surrounding environment. A lot of houses in the ancient world were decorated with things like this, especially houses like she lived in, houses of prostitution. Because the people would take pieces of bright material and they would spruce it up, kind of like we do with our lights today and things like that. So the request was very simple. Not much to it. Just go out in the window and do this.

But the strange thing about it, I think, is how quickly Rahab did it. If you look in verse 21 It says this, "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." In other words, they left, and she put the cord there. They departed and she hung it up immediately. She didn't wait. She didn't hesitate. She didn't say, "Let me get to it later when I have time," she says, "I'm going to do it now, I'm going to obey instantly because judgment's about to come." She believed the Lord would swoop down in any moment with His army to wipe them off the face of the earth, and she took it seriously.

To be honest, this whole story has always fascinated me because remember, the spies are talking to a sinful woman here. And you can tell that they don't really trust her because they tell her a couple of times "Our lives for yours if you do not tell this business of ours." In other words, they're afraid she's gonna gossip. She's just lied to the king. They're worried she's lying to them. Maybe. This is not a moral person. This is not somebody who's good. But the story is placed in here to remind you that even so, this is what God does with a sinful woman like this. He offers her forgiveness. He offers her mercy, and she took it.

Some people have taken this story to be representative of the Passover, where the Jews put the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of their houses. And maybe that's the case, but I see it more of a representation of the gospel because God is going to kill everyone around her, and here's this one person crying out for mercy. He's going to destroy every man, woman, and child in a grand act of judgment; and here's this one soul begging for grace. And the Lord provides it by telling her to hang a thread in the window. That's it. I mean, salvation happens when you realize that judgment is coming for you. Amen? And it occurs when you realize that God is going to destroy this entire world someday, every person in it, so what do you do? You cry out for mercy too. Just as Rahab looked at that scarlet cord for her salvation, you look to the cross, and you see the blood that He shed and the price that He paid, and the wrath that He bore to pay for your sins; and you're converted. It doesn't happen as you hold back the

walls of judgment yourself because you can't. And it doesn't occur as you clean up your life any more than Rahab cleaned up hers. That's not possible. It happens as you trust in God. I think one reason people don't come to Christ today, as much as we would like to see is because a lot of churches have lost this message. In an attempt to sound nice, we've stopped preaching on certain things like the doctrine of hell and judgment. But the problem is that is when you do that, the question is, what did Jesus die for? And if there is no element of judgment, what's the point of the cross? The cross was there because God is angry. And it happened because He was furious with our sin, but out of His loving kindness, He chose to punish Jesus for it instead, for all those who would repent. And this is just a small taste of that grace in this woman's life.

Which brings you to another stage of her faith; and that is that through faith Rahab was accepted by the people of Israel. And this is the most beautiful part of the story in my opinion. Which means that after they destroy the city of Jericho, the spies kept their word, she was saved, and they embraced her as one of their own. If you look in chapter 6 again, it tells you that after Rahab saved the spies, and the spies go back to the camp of Israel, the Jews cross over the Jordan, they come to the city of Jericho, they marched around it, like we just talked about. In verse 20, it says this, of chapter 6. It says,

So the people shouted, and *priests* blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

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 the harlot 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.

As you can tell by reading that, the Lord tells us that after the city fell, Rahab and her family were spared because she hid the spies and hung the scarlet thread in her window. But the way this is worded is interesting because verse 22 says Joshua says to the two men to go into the harlot's house and bring the woman out. In other words, the house was still there. After the walls had fallen in verse 20, the Lord allowed her part of it to stand intact, so that afterwards the Jews could come in and rescue her. Which is another miracle, right? That's another act of the Lord's grace. Here is this catastrophic act of judgment where an entire city's fortifications are knocked down, and there's one part of the wall standing. If you go to the ancient archeological site of Jericho today, you'll see an old brown wall that's still standing

they call Rahab's wall because they believe it dates back to this time. Now, whether it was this wall or not, I don't think we can know; but it is interesting.

And as a result of this, verse 25, says that she lived in the midst of Israel to this day, which means that her inclusion with the people of God was complete. Because they didn't make her stand at a distance, and they didn't hold her at arm's length; they brought her in. The phrase "to this day" refers to the fact that Rahab stayed with the Jews all the way up until the time when the book of Joshua was finished. So the whatever the Jews did, Rahab did. And wherever they went, she went because she became a full-fledged member of the community.

And another thing to mention here that's not talked about in the book of Joshua, but it's mentioned later on, is that as she was spared and allowed to live with the Jews, Rahab became an ancestor of the Messiah. Can you believe that? Because while her name isn't mentioned too often in the Old Testament after that, it is mentioned in the New Testament. You see it mentioned in the book of Hebrews with the Hall of Faith. You see it mentioned the book of James, where it says, "Faith without works is dead." And then it describes Rahab's faith because her faith was anything but dead. And then she's mentioned again in the Gospel of Matthew. And let me just read you Matthew 1:5. which is talking about Jesus' genealogy. And it says,

Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king.

In other words, Rahab was an ancestor of David who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ. The Lord put her in His genealogy in order to show you how marvelous His grace is. Because He found her in a place like Jericho, and He gave her one of the blessings known to man, and that was to connect her to Him.

I just told you, some people really struggle with this issue today because they want to say that Rahab really wasn't a prostitute. She was just an innkeeper or something like that, because they don't know how to reconcile certain things like the fact that God would take a woman like that and put her in a passage like Matthew 1. But the problem is that when you do that, you miss the whole point of the story; and that is that she is in there for the reason that she is a sinner. Because her life is a testimony to God's mercy. God did this in order to demonstrate His heart to restore fallen people.

I mention this because we all have a tendency to draw a halo around people in the Bible and say, "You know, I'm not as godly as that person. I can't identify with them. I'm so sinful." Well, look at Rahab; there's no halo here. But her life changed by the power of God in order to demonstrate that if He could do that for her, He could do it for anybody today. He's a God of great mercy.

I was talking to a pastor friend of mine some time ago, who said that he was witnessing to a lost man in his neighborhood, who said, "I can't believe in Jesus, preacher because I'm not as strong as you." And

the man said, “Well, my friend, I don't believe in Jesus because I'm strong. I do it because I'm weak, and I can't do anything without Him. I can't be saved without His kindness because my salvation is all of God.” Same way for Rahab. Same way for you and me.

And it brings us to one more thing to talk about this morning, and that is just a summary of all this. You know, I don't know about you, but when I study the lives of these people, I can't go through it quickly. It takes me a moment to digest all this because you're talking about someone's life. And when you do that, you can't cover everything. So at the end of some of these passages, I always want to go back for a moment and just reflect on it with you. Let me give you a couple things you learned from a life of Rahab.

One is this: listen, friends, you can't judge a book by its cover. I mean, if the story of Rahab tells you anything, it's that you can't tell where someone is at with God spiritually and what's going on in their heart, just by the way they look on the outside. Nobody would have thought a woman like Rahab could be saved. I mean, look at her, she comes from the wrong race, the wrong place in the wrong culture. She came from the wrong town, the wrong city, the wrong side of the tracks. Everything about her is wrong. In fact, her country was so bad God was about to wipe it all off the face of the Earth, with an act of judgment, wipe the people off the face of the earth. Yet, what does He do for her? He extends her the hand of mercy. First Samuel 16:7 says, “For God does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” Which means God doesn't look at your race first, when He saves a person or the town you live in, He looks at the deeper issues of the soul. We all need to remember that today. We're all guilty of judging things by their covers a little too much. Which is why we look at people sleeping on the sidewalks and say they're useless, that we can't help them. But the truth is that you can't do that if you're a Christian because God doesn't look at things like that when he saves a person. You know, when I was reading this, I was reminded of the church in my hometown. They used to go visiting people in the neighborhood. And the pastors would not stop at a house unless they had a nice car in the driveway. And they wouldn't go to certain parts of the town because the people weren't wealthy enough. And when you hear that, you have to ask a question, what does that have to do with salvation? Nothing. God saves people in the wealthy parts of town and the poor parts of town.

Which brings me to another lesson here in her life, and that is that you never know who God is working on. You don't know who He is going to save. The Jews are told to kill everyone in the land, and the last thing you would expect to see is one of them doing this. It's a shocking story. But it happens to remind you that even in the worst of places, God is saving a remnant. We have to approach our work that way. We shouldn't be so cynical every time we witness to people. We shouldn't be so pessimistic. If I could describe the church in the 21st century, in any word, I would probably call it a cynical church. Because we look at the world and say it's all so bad. And we look at the culture and we tell ourselves it's wicked. And yes, it is bad, and it is wicked, and it's heading for judgment. That's all true. But the problem is, that's only half of the story. The other half is that God is still saving people in the midst of this wicked world. He's not done reaching out to them.

Charles Spurgeon used to say that “When I evangelize, I don't know who the elect are because they don't have an E stamped across their forehead. So I'm going to preach the gospel to everybody and see what God will do. I don't walk into a room and say, ‘I'm going to preach it to this one, and this one, and this one, because I like them.’ And I don't say, ‘I'm going to share the good news with this soul, and that soul and that soul because they're dressed nicely, and they carry themselves well, and they don't frighten me when I am around them.’” You have to preach the gospel to the people that frighten you too.

It bring it one more practical lesson from this woman's life, and that is that if you can't judge a book by its cover, then how do you know who saved? And the answer is, you'll know them by their fruit. Even though Rahab lived this terrible lifestyle, she had the fruit of salvation, there came a time when she changed. There came a moment when she reached a decision, and she said, “I don't want to do those things anymore. I'm sick of the sin, I'm sick of the wickedness. I'm sick of this shame that came from what I did.” And so I'm going to turn away from them now. That's how you know someone is coming to Christ. They were going this way; now they're going that way. They were heading in the direction towards sin and toward evil. Now God has saved them and turned their life around because there's been repentance in their life. Some people are confused about this. They get the impression that since we're saved by grace, we can do whatever we want, and we'll still go to heaven, and none of it matters. And that's not the case. In order to be a Christian, you have to make a break from the former way of life. You have to see your sin and you see the Lord, and you make a choice. You say, “I want Him. You see your wickedness and you see the cross, and you make a decision that the cross is better. And I'm going to turn to that now.

Next week, it's the Easter Sunday. And we're going to be doing a special message on the resurrection. And I know people often like to bring guests at a time like that so they can hear the gospel and learn about what Jesus did for us at the cross and the empty tomb. So I'm going to be gearing it toward that kind of audience. So please, if you're bringing friends, that's a good time to do it. It should be really good. But for this week, let's pray that the Lord would soften our hearts to things we've heard today that we would have a special compassion toward people like this woman, Rahab. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we've studied this this morning, thank you for putting this story, this woman in the Bible. I don't think any of us probably would have done that. I think we would have left her out. Yet, in Your mercy, You stuck her in here to remind us that of the grace that You show toward people like her. Toward people like all of us, Father, all of us were fallen sinners, whether we grew up in a moral place or an immoral place. Whether we grew up in church or grew up out on the street, it doesn't really matter. At the end of the day, the heart of a sinner is still the same. Father, we all have a tendency to want to judge a little too much. Some of us have been in church for so long, we forget that there's a world out there that needs Christ. Help us to remember that Lord in the ministries of our church. Thank You for putting us here in Chilliwack, in a place where there is a need for this message. There's a lot of people hurting here. And Lord, may we be a church that reaches out to them in grace and kindness.

Father, as we do come to Easter next week, we pray that the Lord's resurrection would have a special meaning for us. And we thank You Father, that we don't serve a dead Saviour, we serve a living one that we can have life in His name. Give us boldness as we preach that day in and day out. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.