

## imPOSSIBLE – Rahab and Saving Faith

7/12/20

Hebrews 11:31 | Joshua 2:1-21

Sunday AM

I read this week about a man walking on the beach who stumbled upon a strange looking lamp. Of course, he picked it up, and when he dusted it off, suddenly a genie appeared granting him a single wish in appreciation of setting him free. Caught off guard, the man said, “Well, I’ve always wanted to go to Tahiti but I’m afraid to fly or go by boat. Could you build me a bridge from CA to Tahiti so I can drive there?” The genie said, “That’s your wish! You know that’s a lot of steel/concrete? There’s nothing else you’d rather wish! The man thought for a moment and said, “You know I’ve never understood women. Can you help me to understand how a woman thinks?” The genie said, “Do you want the bridge to be 2-lane or 4-lane?”

**Speaking of women** – as we continue our series on the *facets of true faith* from **Hebrews 11**, I want us to turn our attention to the faith of a gentile woman from Jericho by the name of Rahab – **Rahab the rehab!**

*By faith the prostitute Rahab, b/c she welcomed the spies, was not killed w/ those who were disobedient.*

Before we delve into Rahab’s faith, let me remind you of the heart of this study. W/out question, ***the key element of the Christian life is faith*** – not only are we saved by faith, but we live each/every day by faith – actively trusting God for every step/breath we take.

**Let me put it another way** – for the Christian, there’s never a time when God says it’s okay for us to walk independently of Him in our own ability/ingenuity. Rather, in every way, every day, we’re to walk trusting God w/ every fiber of our being, not leaning/trusting in our own wisdom/understanding – but in every detail of our lives, we’re to acknowledge, depend, and put Him first – to allow God to author/direct our steps.

We do this by exercising/expressing ***faith*** as we abide in Christ by living under the influence of the H.S. in alignment w/ God’s will found in His Word. *Jesus said*

*I am the vine you are the branches, if anyone abides in me and I in Him, He will bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5

So, when we abide by **FAITH** we’re living in the hope of God’s promise, presence, and provision knowing it is certain even though it’s not always visible/tangible.

Which brings us to Rahab and **Joshua 2**. It’s here we meet a pagan woman living in the oldest city in the world – located at the lowest elevation in the world (below sea level) – who’s engaged in the oldest career of ill-repute in history – prostitution.

If there was ever a picture of lostness this would be it! *She was more lost than a ball in high weeds.* She was a pagan prostitute living in total spiritual depravity – w/out hope... w/out help... facing certain death!

**Then God met her at the point of her need** – and *like the woman at the well at the time of Christ* – God offered her grace/mercy to rescue her from being lost to being found, from darkness to seeing light, from condemnation to finding liberation, and from death to discovering life – yet it’s her faith response to God’s grace that triggered His gift of love/mercy to her.

**The same is true for us.** Either we’ll experience God’s mercy by grace thru faith, or we’ll exact His wrath upon sin. It all depends on how we respond when we’re confronted about our true spiritual reality. We will either by faith ***run to*** God’s grace, or we we’ll ***run from*** it. We’ll ***receive*** it; or we’ll ***reject*** it.

*Joshua son of Nun secretly sent (2) spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land, especially Jericho.” So, they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab. The king of Jericho was told, “Look, the Israelites have come to spy out the land.” So, the king of Jericho sent a message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who entered your house, b/c they’ve come to spy out the land.” But Rahab had hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I didn’t know where they’d come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch them.” But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof. So, the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road leading to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone, the gate was shut. Before the spies laid down for the night, she went up on the roof and said, “I know the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so all who live in this country are melting in fear b/c of you. 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard, our hearts melted in fear and our courage failed b/c of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. “Now then, please swear to me by the Lord you will show kindness to my family, b/c I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign you will spare the lives of my father/mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them – and that you will save us from death.” The men replied, “Our lives for your lives! If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly/faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.” So, she let them down by a rope thru the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide there (3) days until they return, and then go on your way.”*

As we’ve been discussing faith, we’ve done so in light of the necessity of faith day-in/day-out as Christians. But not today. In considering Rahab’s faith, what we discover is the kind of faith that saves. Rahab the rehab helps us to apprehend the crucial tenets of *saving faith*.

I Saving Faith **ADMITS** a Need for God

To appreciate Rahab’s need for God, we need a little background. The story begins w/ Israel encamped 6 miles away at Shittim. But now, after 40 yrs of wandering in the wilderness, the people are ready to crossover over the Jordan back into the Promise land after being away nearly 500 yrs – but they’re first hurdle in returning was the Canaanite city of Jericho.

As Jim Henry notes – **Jericho was a strategic city**. It was what Waterloo was to Napoleon, what Atlanta was to Sherman, and what Dunkirk was for Hitler – an essential stronghold in their quest to succeed.

So, as a part of Joshua’s strategy, he sent (2) spies to gather **recon**. Now, we don’t know why these spies went to Rahab’s inn. Some scholars believe it was b/c in a pagan city, it was the area closest to the gate where they’d be able to blend in and remain incognito. I think it was b/c God was already at work in Rahab’s heart.

**Make no mistake**, Rahab ran a house of ill-repute. In this time, there were (2) kinds of prostitutes. Those who worked the Temple engaging in sensuality for pagan worship and those who worked the streets to make a living – and Rahab didn’t work at the Temple.

In **Hebrews 11:31** – we discover – *By faith the prostitute Rahab, b/c she welcomed the spies, was not killed w/ those who were disobedient.*

**IOW** – Something so amazing occurred in Rahab’s life that she isn’t remembered for her **profession** as much as she’s remembered for her **confession**. She’s not remembered for her **behavior** as much as she’s remembered for her faith in God as her **Savior**. Yet b/c of her faith in God’s transforming power, she was rescued from God’s wrath on Jericho, and she was saved from her past and given a brand-new life.

Did you know that ultimately, after being saved from death when Israel conquered Jericho, Rahab would be blessed w/ a godly husband named **Salmon**, who was a prince of Israel and that she'd give birth to a son named Boaz – as in Ruth/Boaz. And would ultimately become the great, grandmother of King David.

It reminds me of **2 Corinthians 5:17** – *If anyone be in Christ, they will become a new creation; the old is gone behold all things have become new.*

**What happened?** Rahab, a pagan prostitute in Jericho recognized she was sinner in need of being saved. So, she admitted to God her need for His mercy and turned to Him in faith seeking His favor/grace.

**This is where it begins for everyone** – until we truly recognize we're sinful, condemned to separation from God b/c of our sin – deserving of death/condemnation – and incapable of saving ourselves from the power, penalty, and punishment of sin – we'll never be open to hearing from God and desiring His forgiveness.

II Saving Faith **ASKS** God for Grace/Mercy

**It's one thing to recognize your need for God**, it quite another to trust that God actually has the ability and favor to do something about your need for forgiveness. Yet as Rahab understood Jericho was about to fall and that her life was about to end, she asked for God to show mercy upon her life and her family.

*I know the Lord has given you this land... 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard, our hearts melted in fear and our courage failed b/c of you, **for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.** "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord you will show kindness to my family, b/c I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign you will spare the lives of my father/mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them – and that you will save us from death."*

She not only admitted/renounced her sin and declared her need for God, she recognized/acknowledged that Jehovah was the one true God and the only means of salvation. So, she asked for grace/mercy.

**What is mercy?** Mercy is when you don't receive the punishment you actually do deserve.

**What is grace?** Grace is when you receive the gift of forgiveness you actually do not deserve.

In many ways they are two different sides of the same coin. I think **Titus 3:5-6** give clarity to this truth:

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not b/c of righteous things we had done, but b/c of His **mercy**. He saved us thru the washing of rebirth/renewal by the H.S. whom poured out on us generously thru Jesus our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-6*

**How do we ask?** Listen to **Romans 10:9-13** – *If you confess w/ your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is w/ your heart you believe and are justified, and it is w/ your mouth you profess and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame." For there's no difference b/w Jew/Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and blesses all who call on Him – for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

**Notice** the (2) words – **confess** and **believe**. This is our response/responsibility in the transaction of salvation

**confess** (*homologeo*) together w/ say – **judicial term** – to make an outward profession based upon a profound inward conviction; to give legal testimony under oath.

**believe** (*pisteuo*) to be persuaded to trust or to place one's confidence – to acknowledge and receive.

To confess/believe means to be so certain of your belief/conviction that you place your entire trust.

In Rahab, we see a woman, who despite her past, trusted in the Lord and was saved. **This is the true message of grace** b/c *all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* – or as Isaiah said – *All of us are like sheep who've gone astray, and each has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.*  
Rahab confessed/believed

III Saving Faith is **AUTHENTICATED** by Action

**We discussed last week** – genuine faith always results in active service that honors God. Faith acts/moves. As James says, faith always results in good works.

For Rahab – the evidence of her commitment and allegiance to God was seen in (3) ways:

- 1 She hid the spies from being captured/killed
- 2 She had concern for the salvation of others
- 3 She tied a scarlet thread to identify her allegiance

**Bottomline** – Her faith moved her into motion. She put feet to her faith verifying her dependence on God.

**I wonder** – what do your actions say about your faith?

Here is what I do know about saving faith whether we're talking Rahab, Paul, you or me:

- Saving faith realizes and admits our need for God
- Saving faith repents of sin and asks God for mercy
- Saving faith is verified by a life on mission for God

**Have you heard of Iris Blue?** Ms. Iris was a prostitute in Houston, TX whose body was so worn out by sin by the time she was 35 she gave up prostitution to become a pimp. If you've heard her story, she was known for saying it wasn't the yrs, but the mileage that took its toll on her life. One night, while on the streets, a member of 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Houston was there witnessing and shared w/ Iris that she could have a brand-new life and that her past could be forgiven by God's grace. For the first time, the message of God's love for her broke thru her hard-exterior piercing the resistance that had built up in her heart – and she gave her life to Christ. In her powerful testimony of God's love, she says, "I knelt down a tramp, and stood up a lady!"

I think in a similar way, that's Rahab's story. This woman of the night came face-to-face w/ the reality of the love/grace of the God of Israel – and she gave her life to God by trusting Him to be her Savior and Lord.

**See** – what we learn thru Rahab is that we're all sinners in need of the mercy/grace of God and that unless we by faith receive this amazing gift of grace, we will face the wrath of God that was never intended for us.