

The Spies Make a Promise to Rahab

Joshua 2:8-24

Joshua 2:8-24 - *"Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men: "I know that the LORD 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 the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. ¹² Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, 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."*

¹⁴ So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."

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. 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."

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."

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.

²² They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them. ²³ So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. ²⁴ And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

Background Notes

Verse 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.”* Recent excavations of Jericho have confirmed this biblical statement. There were indeed houses on the walls that surrounded ancient Jericho. Archeology has shown that there were two walls surrounding Jericho at the time of the conquest: an outer and lower stone revetment wall topped with mud bricks, and an inner and upper mud brick wall. Between these two walls there were buildings -- in fact, some of these buildings used one of the city walls as part of their structure.

Apparently Rahab had a house that used the outside wall as one of its sides, and so she was able to help the spies escape from the walled city by letting them down on a rope from her window. Go to the website www.GrowingChristians.org to view an artist’s rendition of how the walls of Jericho may have looked. You’ll find it in the course, “Christian Evidences 1,” handout #32 (biblical archeology).

Verse 22 tells us that the spies went to the mountain: *“They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them.”* The mountain mentioned here is west of Jericho, in the rugged hills of the Judean wilderness. We don’t know exactly which mountain it was, but the whole area is honeycombed with caves and other good hiding places. This is the same area where our Lord faced the temptations more than 1400 years later. This is also the same general area where the Dead Sea Scrolls were hidden -- including a manuscript of the book of Joshua!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The works of God are known by the unbeliever.

Look at what Rahab said to the spies in verses 10-11: *“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 the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”*

Unbelievers know about the works of God. The unbelievers in Jericho knew about the works of God, and as a result they were scared!

The espionage mission was a success! When the spies returned, they said to Joshua (v24): *“Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.”* Notice that the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, which had happened forty years before this time, were well remembered by the unbelieving inhabitants of Jericho. The unbelievers of Jericho knew all about the works of God in the past, and they also knew about the recent victories over Sihon and Og, king of the Amorites.

By the way -- the fact that the people of Jericho knew about the crossing of the Red Sea shows that the crossing was a **major miracle!** *“We have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you...”* Clearly, the Israelites did **not** cross through a “marshy area” (or some other watered-down version), as critics of the Bible like to say, or the inhabitants of Canaan would never have heard of it.

The same is true of unbelievers today. Even though they don’t believe, they do recognize the works of God. Romans 1 says that unbelievers have no excuse for not responding to the one true God, because the works of God are obvious in His creation.

When I was working as a research engineer back in the early 1970s, a non-Christian colleague of mine came to my office during the 1973 Yom Kippur War in Israel. He was usually a skeptic of the Bible, but this time he wanted to know who was going to win the war! He wanted to know what the Bible had to say about the future of the modern state of Israel. It was obvious to this unbeliever that God was at work in the nation of Israel.

The works of God are known by the unbeliever, including the “Rahabs.” Who would have thought that a prostitute, living in pagan Jericho, would not only know the works of God, but be open for salvation as well? Notice that she didn’t just refer to God as “your God,” but also as *“the Lord, the true God of heaven and earth”!* She used the pronoun “we” – we know what the Lord has done for you. The unbelievers of Jericho knew of the works of God.

What a lesson for us! Don’t write off unbelievers like Rahab. Unbelievers know about the works of God, and many of them are open to going further and coming to the Lord for salvation. The works of God are known by the unbeliever.

2. The grace of God is extended to the unbeliever.

God doesn’t just show His works to the unbeliever, He extends His **grace** to the unbeliever. When Rahab asked for mercy, she received it. Listen to what we read about Rahab in Hebrews 11:31 - *“By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

Notice what this verse is saying. All the inhabitants of Jericho had a chance to escape the judgment. They all knew of the works of God. But Hebrews 11:31 says that they didn’t believe. Rahab believed, and she became a trophy of the grace of God!

Every unbeliever is a potential trophy of the grace of God, but each one must personally respond in faith and believe. Think of the grace of God extended to Rahab, a Gentile prostitute who was outside the covenant community of God's people, Israel. She was part of the Canaanite culture that was under the judgment of God for gross idolatry and immorality. But in His grace, God reached down and saved Rahab! How wonderful!

Not only did God save Rahab -- He gave her a significant role in Israel's history. Rahab became the great-great-grandmother of King David -- and thus, she was in the lineage of Christ, the Redeemer of the world! How marvelous is the grace of God! Not only does the justice of God extend to the unbeliever, but the grace of God is extended to the unbeliever as well.

Practical Application

Let's have a "Rahab-like" faith and concern for our families!

Notice the great concern Rahab had for her family. Verses 12-13: *"Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, 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."*

Rahab had a great concern for her family. God honored Rahab's faith and saved her entire family. It's clear that her family believed Rahab's message, because they joined her in the house that was under God's protection.

Verses 18 and 21 tell us that the sign of protection for Rahab's household was the scarlet cord hung in the window. The main purpose of the scarlet cord, of course, was so that the Israelite army could see which house was to be protected when the conquest began.

Is the scarlet cord a picture of the blood of Christ? Many Christians down through Church history have seen it as a spiritual picture. In any case, we can certainly say that just as the blood of the Passover Lamb protected the believing household in Exodus 12, and the scarlet cord protected the believing household here in Joshua 2, so it is the blood of Christ that protects the believing household today.

Let me ask you: Is your family under the blood? Is your home a household of faith? Remember what the apostle Paul told the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31 - *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."* Of course every individual in the jailer's household (and in any household) must personally respond to God in faith and become a believer, but as God honored the faith of Rahab and her concern for the salvation of her family, so God honors the faith and concern for the salvation of our families. Let's have a "Rahab-like" faith and concern for our families!