

LEADING LADIES

"RAHAB: STANDING IN A CRUMBLING CULTURE"

JOSHUA 2:1-24

When it comes to the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" you're likely to hear innumerable answers from "the best you can" on the one hand to "nothing at all" on the other. The best answer—the only correct one—is the answer given by the apostles: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Ac 16:31). People nowadays may not like the sound of the word "sinner," but all would surely agree nobody's perfect. That's what we all say when excusing our bad behavior—"after all, nobody's perfect." In other words, all have sinned (Ro 3:23). Unfortunately, too many drop the matter, leaving it unresolved, choosing rather to live in denial. The good news is God has given Jesus the authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:10), and to give eternal life to all who believe in him (Jn 6:39; 17:1-3).

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is by grace through faith based on the death of Jesus. This has always been the case. Put differently, *justification* is by grace through faith based on the death of Jesus. No one has ever or will ever be *declared righteous* any other way. Paul makes it clear that no one has ever or will ever be justified by good works, even the works of the law. He builds his case on the experience of

To the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

– Paul

Abraham. The apostle writes:

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'

Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

'Blessed are those

whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one

whose sin the Lord will never count
against them.'

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (Ro 4:1-12).

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While salvation has always been by grace through faith based on the death of Jesus, the *content* of saving faith has changed with the progress of revelation. The content of saving faith today is more comprehensive than prior to the coming of Jesus. In Genesis 3:15 God revealed that one who was "the offspring of the woman" would one day bring salvation. To the serpent God said, "He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Later we learn that the "offspring of the woman" will be a descendant of Abraham to whom God said: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Ge 12:3). Commenting on the promise made to Abraham, Paul writes: "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Gal 3:8). Paul's understanding of the gospel, as well as ours, is more comprehensive. Abraham did not know that this descendant would be an anointed one or that his name would be Jesus, which becomes evident in subsequent revelation, especially that found in the New Testament. Did Abraham know the basics of the Apostles' Creed? That his descendant would be conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffer under Pontius Pilate, be crucified, die, and be buried? And on the third day be raised from the dead to ascend into heaven where he would sit on the right hand of God the Father Almighty and from thence would come to judge the quick and the dead? We do. So salvation comes by grace through faith in what God has revealed in that regard. For us it means faith in the promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Joshua 2:1-24

1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from." 5 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 up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 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. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them-and that you will save us from death."

14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land."

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

17 Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."

21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say."
So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23

Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "spies" in v. 1.
- * Circle "prostitute" in v. 1.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 4.
- * Bracket Rahab's deception in v. 5.
- * Circle "city gate" in v. 5.
- * Circle "roof" in v. 6.
- * Highlight what Rahab said in vv. 9-13.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose/result* in v. 9.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 11.
- * Circle "kindness" in v. 12.
- * Highlight in another color what the spies said in vv. 17-20.
- * Circle "scarlet cord" in v. 21.

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. List the major characters mentioned in the story and describe its setting.
2. Doesn't the spies' choice of accommodations seem odd to you? Explain.
3. How do you account for the fact that the king sent messengers to Rahab demanding that she bring the spies out and turn them over so soon after they arrived?
4. Rahab lied to the king's messengers and still wound up in the hall of faith (Heb 11:31). How can that be?
5. Rahab told the spies what she knew in verses 8, 9. List the three things that she knew.
6. According to what she said in verses 10, 11 everyone had heard about the crossing of the Red Sea as well as the destruction of Sihon and Og, and everyone feared the Israelites and their God. So what made Rahab different from everyone else?

7. Rahab is deemed righteous in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. When and how did she get that way?

8. What was the point of the scarlet cord?

9. Why did the spies conclude that the LORD had delivered the land into their hands?

10. **Discussion:** Rahab and her kin were "spared" (v. 13). Talk about what makes you think they were "saved."

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Joshua 2 continues the story of the conquest and allocation of the land to the Israelites begun in chapter 1—one chapter in the *upper* story, the story about what God is doing to fulfill the promise he made to Abraham to give his descendants the land (Ge 12:7; 15:18-21) and to bless the entire human race (12:3; cf., 3:15). The story about Rahab is easily summarized. God is about to give the land to his people as he promised. But before going in to possess it (cf. 1:11), Joshua sends spies in to view it, which comes as no surprise, since Joshua himself was once a spy (see Nu 13:8; 14:6). When his spies arrive in Jericho, they meet Rahab who tells them that everyone has heard how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Ex 24:21-31) and how they destroyed Sihon and Og (Nu 21:21-35), and how the bad news has left everyone in the land terrified. As one writer puts it, "The basis for Jericho's fear lies in common gossip. The grapevine has brought news of God's mighty deeds for Israel to Jericho. No prophet or preacher has been there. God has simply used that mysterious manner of human beings in which they learn the important events of the day from sources they can no longer identify. The source is not important. The message and the response are" (Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 7, *Joshua*, 35). The spies then return to Joshua undetected, thanks to Rahab, and confident with these words on their lips. "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us" (v. 24). And so the *upper* story continues.

The story's plot can be analyzed using Freytag's pyramid, which divides all plots into their seven elements: 1) *exposition*; 2) *inciting incident*; 3) *rising action*; 4) *climax*; 5) *falling action*; 6) *resolution*; 7) *denouement*.

The *exposition* in verse 1 introduces the characters, namely the two spies and Rahab, and the setting, namely Rahab's house in Jericho.

The *inciting incident* in verses 2-3 triggers the action that follows. Having been told that Israelite spies recently entered the city to reconnoiter the land, the king demands that Rahab turn over the infiltrators lodging in her hostel.

Rising action follows in verses 4-13. *First*, Rahab lies to the king's messengers, telling them, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went" (4b-5a). Then, she sends the messengers on a wild goose chase. "Go after them quickly" she tells them. "You may catch up with them" (v. 5b-7)—knowing all along the spies were hidden under stalks of flax on her roof (v. 6). Assuming the spies were returning to the fords of the Jordan, the king's men head in that direction. *Second*, she prepares the spies for the request she is about to make (vv. 8-11). She says, "I know that the LORD has given you this land" (v. 9a) because "the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt," and because of "what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed" (v. 10). Then she confesses, "the LORD your God is God

in heaven above and on the earth below" (v. 11b). Consider what one commentator writes about her statement of faith: "When we read these words coming from Rahab's mouth, we cannot escape the implications: she was doing far more than merely trying to save her skin or that of her family. She was acknowledging that this God she had heard about was the one and only true God, the only one—out of dozens that she as a good Canaanite knew about—who was worthy of worship and allegiance. This constitutes her statement of faith in words. This is surely what gave impetus to her actions in vv. 4-8" (David M. Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, NAC, 104). On the one hand, her faith accounts for her actions, and on the other hand, her actions testify to her faith. James writes: "Was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?" (2:25). *Third*, she makes her request. "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you" (v. 12).

The story's *climax*—its turning point, not its end—is found in verse 14. "Our lives for your lives!" the men assure her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land." The effect of that assurance is palpable. It relieves the pent-up tension in the story in anticipation of a favorable ending.

Falling action follows in verses 15-21. Since the city gate is now locked, Rahab lowers a rope from her window, enabling the spies to make their escape, and shrewdly sends them off in the opposite direction of their pursuers (vv. 15-17). But before they depart, she agrees to specific conditions

the spies give her: she must tie a scarlet cord in her window (v. 18), and all her relatives must gather inside her house. Otherwise, the spies will not be responsible for what happens when the Israelites enter the city (v. 19). Rahab agrees. "Let it be as you say," she says (v. 21).

The *resolution* of the story is found in verses 22-23a. The spies hide out in the hills for three days until their pursuers abandon their search before starting back.

The final element in the plot, the *denouement*, is found in verses 23-24. It brings the story to a close by wrapping up loose ends. The spies return to Joshua and report their findings. "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us," they tell him.

The *upper story* isn't the whole story. The rest of the story, the *lower story*, is about Rahab, its unlikely heroine, who obtains righteousness and finds grace in the eyes of the LORD through faith. She believes in the one true God. What's more, she believes in the promise he made to Abraham. He's going to give Canaan to the Israelites, so she asks the spies to show her and her father's house kindness when they invade the land. It sounds like all she is asking is for her life to be spared, but her request implies much more. Belief in the promise entails belief in the promised one, who would be a blessing to the world. Like Ruth later, Rahab wants the spies' God to be her God and the spies people to be her people. Simple belief takes her into the hall of faith (Heb 11:31) and like Ruth, into the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:5). The strength of her faith is evident in the strength of her courage.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Rahab's example demonstrates that righteousness by faith is available to all who believe.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Compare and contrast your faith confession with Rahab's.

Compare the courage of her convictions to your own.

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **spies** "In addition to gaining strategic information about an enemy, [the word] spies could also describe individuals who conveyed information secretly. In the case of the spies of Joshua 2, both functions seem applicable" (Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, TOTC, 82).

v. 1 **prostitute** Cf. Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25. "Why then do the spies choose the house of a prostitute? This house was more likely a tavern, hostel or way station, which could be used by visitors, than a brothel. There is evidence for such overnight places of accommodation and their use by traveling caravans and royal messengers in Canaan of the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC. There is no reason to doubt that something like this existed in ancient Jericho. It may be attested later in New Testament times (Lk. 10:30-35). Such a place would naturally draw the vices of the region, as has been the case throughout history. The local 'hostel' would be an appropriate place for the spies to visit if they were going to learn about the area. It would also be the obvious spot for any attempt to discover a fifth column in the region and would provide an opportunity to communicate to interested parties a means of allying with the approaching Israelites. Finally, it would be a place to rest overnight, free from the danger of the wilderness or those of the town (Gn. 19)" (84, 85).

v. 2 **king** This unnamed ruler was "king" with a little "k" in that he was more like a mayor than a monarch. Let's call him a "kinglet." "During most of its history, local rule in Canaan was by petty kings whose sovereignty was limited to small kingdoms dominated by one city; they were in effect, city-states" (David M. Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, NAC, 99).

v. 2 **was told** Word traveled fast in a small town like Jericho (ruins of the ancient site are spread over 8-10 acres). Rahab's inn "was a public place that allowed agents of the local ruler to learn who the two men were and what their mission was" (Hess, 84).

v. 4 **did not know** The moral question surrounding Rahab's lie has often been discussed (see Howard, 106-12). "It is best not to excuse Rahab's actions, but neither to be troubled by them. The ethical issue is not the concern of the narrative. It stresses the deception, not in order to condemn Rahab but to magnify her personal risk in hiding the spies. After all, she could have said nothing and allowed the agents to search her house. By pointing in another direction, she risked being caught, but in the end she delivered her new-found friends" (86, 87).

v. 5 **gate** At dusk the gate to the city was closed for security purposes. Once it was closed the spies would have to find another way out to avoid being trapped. "A comical note is sounded, not only in these agents being sent off by Rahab on a futile chase, but also in the statement that the city gate was shut behind them as soon as they left! Since Rahab reported that the spies had just escaped before the gates were to close (v. 5a), the pursuers must have thought that they were hot on their trail" (Howard, 101).

v. 10 **we have heard** The Canaanites had heard about the exodus and about the defeat of Sihon and Og, i.e., they had heard about what happened first and what happened last, implying that they had heard about all that happened in between. In other words, they knew all about God's marvelous doings for the Israelites in the wilderness.

v. 11 **is God** This verse contains Rahab's confession of faith (cf. Jas 2:25). "She was doing far more than merely trying to save her skin or that of her family. She was acknowledging that this God she had heard about was the one and only true God, the only one—out of dozens that she as a good Canaanite knew about—who was worthy of worship and allegiance" (104).

v. 12 **family** Rahab's request had broad implications for her family who would evidence their faith in the God of Israel by taking refuge in her house. "As an oath of fealty, this covenant would bring Rahab's family into Israelite society. As would happen with the Gibeonites, so Rahab and her family here ceased to be Canaanite and became part of Israel's family" (Hess, 91, 92).

v. 16 **three days** If they headed for the Jordan, they ran the risk of being discovered so they headed for the hills in the other direction. Three days in hiding would be enough time for their pursuers to give up and return to Jericho.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

When my fourth child was about finished with his kindergarten year, I begged his teacher to reprimand him and sign his binder. I didn't care if it was talking, not standing in line, or sitting there looking cute - just sign the binder. I wanted him to learn the important life lesson of how to handle mistakes and ultimately how to deal with sin in his life. I don't want perfect children. I want my kids to make mistakes, especially while they are at home where the consequence is time out rather than time behind bars. I want them to know home is a safe and soft landing place filled with grace and redemption and forgiveness. I want my kids to feel like they can bring their mistakes to their parents without fear. More than that, I want them to know Jesus is the One to turn to, and though He sees our sin and allows us to deal with the consequences, He loves deeply and always forgives. The story of Rahab is one of many displaying God's beautiful redemption. It's a story of a woman deeply steeped in sin. Not only does God forgive Rahab, He uses her to accomplish His task and even gives her a mention in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1. Rahab's story is the story of all of us. He uses the unexpected to accomplish His task. I'm praying you allow God to use you and your kids for His good purpose this week.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Joshua 2

1. How did Rahab trick the king and hide the spies?
2. What did Rahab request from the spies?
3. What did Rahab tie in the window and why?

What Do You Think

(Skim over Matthew 1:1-17.)
Is Rahab the kind of person you would expect to be listed in the genealogy of Jesus? Why or why not?

What R U Going To Do

Rahab offered help without being asked. Be on the lookout this week. Do some spontaneous things to help others without being asked.

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace – I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Micah 6:8 – *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

KIDPIX COUPON

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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