

SINFUL PAGAN WOMAN TRUSTS JOSHUA'S GOD

Joshua 2

We've all heard the old story about **The Grinch who Stole Christmas**.

I doubt that many are familiar with an even older story about **a Prostitute who Saved Christmas**.

June is not exactly the time of year when our minds are normally drawn to thoughts of Christmas!

Nor is Christmas the time of year when our hearts are drawn to thoughts of prostitutes! And yet, without one of the most famous prostitutes in history, Christmas would never have happened.

Walking with the Saints:

Study of Joshua's life and ministry.

In the midst of his story, one of the significant people identified with his ministry is Rahab.

We could wait and deal with her story separately,

or we could just include her story, as a side bar, along with Joshua's life and ministry.

Rahab: A pagan woman trusts the God of Israel, even when God's people doubted,

She becomes a symbol of God's blessing to sinful pagans who trust Him.

In Hebrews 11, the great godly people of faith are lined up:

Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, etc.

All these are commended for their faith.

Heb 11:31 *By faith, Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed together with the unconvinced (disobedient), having received (welcomed) the spies in peace.*

How does this pagan prostitute end up among the heroes of faith?

Joshua 2 gives a clear answer: Rahab lived in the idolatrous and immoral Canaanite city of Jericho.

In the midst of this den of iniquity, Rahab came to trust the One True God.

Rahab provides one of the great object lessons dealing with spiritual pride.

Israel was always characterized by spiritual pride.

Yet, its *greatest hero* has a blemished genealogy.

David, the great king, was the descendant of a pagan prostitute!

The great great grandmother of the great king was a pagan prostitute.

Nobody liked that! Yet it's a perpetual reminder of the grace of God.

God saved a pagan prostitute and made her the great great grandmother of the great king.

Though she lived in a totally pagan, idolatrous culture, she decides to trust the God of Israel, when she hears what He has done.

Joshua joins others who trace Israel's history to demonstrate that:

In spite of God's provision of a homeland and all that His people need, they are unfaithful to Him and He will have to correct them.

A sub-theme of the book is the faith of a select group of *pagans* who recognize God's authority and trust Him, even when "God's people" fail to do so.

Such individuals are examples of faith.

They put Israel to shame.

They experience God's grace.

Rahab is one of these pagans who trusts God and experiences His grace.

Compared to Israel, her faith puts them to shame.

She has only *heard* about what they experienced *personally*!

While they tremble and shake, she risks her life to identify with them,

because she's convinced of whose God is going to win this conflict.

RAHAB'S TEST OF FAITH 2:1-7

Spies sent to Jericho 2:1-3

After Moses' death, God establishes a new leader and begins to give His people the land He promised to them.

Joshua sends **two** spies to look over the situation and report back to him.

Joshua was one of **12** spies.

This time he only sends 2!

Why do you suppose Joshua only sends 2?

Last time only 2 tried to get the people to trust God and move ahead.

What kind of men would Joshua choose for this mission?

We tend to think of these as military CIA agents—the "Green Berets" of their day.

I don't think so!

Joshua would be more concerned that those chosen for the mission be godly men, than that they be astute military strategists.

They were probably both.

Their presence is discovered, including the fact they're at Rahab's house.

Why did they pick *her* house?

No answer is given.

The safest assumption is that God led them there.

The text doesn't tell us whether they knew she was a prostitute or not.

It's clear that God had another purpose that wasn't just military.

God led these two godly men, filled with the Spirit, to Rahab's house, because she had an appointment with God!

He planned for her to meet Him.

The Lord brings together 2 secret agents from Israel's army and a harlot from Canaan to whom He wishes to show His grace and that He wants to spare from judgment.

God's grace is seen in bold relief.

He doesn't save any perfect people.

He takes people from dysfunctional situations, in the midst of their pain, and sends godly people to show them the way to Himself.

When the spies got back to camp, undoubtedly more than a few eyebrows were raised as they told how God led them to a prostitute's house.

They took a risk, and God saved **a prostitute**,
who became **David's great great grandmother!**

The king's elaborate spy system discovers what's happening.

Even knowing that, Rahab takes a risk to protect God's messengers.

Spies hidden by Rahab 2:4-7

Rahab, a prostitute, convinced that Yahweh is going to give Israel victory
over her people, helps the spies escape.

Scripture never commends her for the lie.

To argue that the spies would have perished if she had been truthful
is to ignore that God could have protected the spies some other way.

To excuse Rahab for lying because everyone was sinning in the pagan culture
supports the concept that the end justifies the means.

Rahab is commended for her faith,

for protecting spies representing the people of God, *NOT for lying!*

She dares to believe that this God she's heard about will protect her too.

The king's search party believes her story.

Why would a *prostitute* protect spies from a religious people like Israel?

RAHAB'S STATEMENT OF FAITH 2:8-13

Her comments reveal that the people of Jericho know Israel's history

They heard about the things God has done for them.

The Canaanites are afraid of the power of Israel and her God.

They are demoralized and frightened.

Her personal profession of faith in Yahweh:

2:8-11

Yahweh has given this land to you

Our people are afraid of you

We've heard what Yahweh did for you

Your God is the true God of the universe!

Her question: "Where have you been?!!!"

When we heard about all that's happened we feared.

=> *Why didn't you come years ago? What happened?*

Her petition: Promise to protect me and my family.

2:12-13

She trusted them and requested a personal covenant with them.

Don't miss contrast between Rahab's faith and that of the other pagans!

They **all heard** about Israel's triumphs.

They **all feared** Israel and her God.

Others resist Him.

Rahab decides to throw herself upon His mercy.

She **trusts Yahweh** and identifies with Him and His people.

Therefore she didn't die with those who were unconvinced (Heb. 11:31)

RAHAB'S WORK OF FAITH 2:14-21

She protects them 2:14-16

They agree to her request, if she will give them accurate information and maintain secrecy regarding their mission.

They promise to protect her 2:17-21

The significance of the symbol—"this scarlet cord . . ."

It was the instrument of their salvation

It would be the instrument of hers too.

It was bright and noticeable—it couldn't be hidden!

What would people say about this bright red cord hanging out her window?!!

(Cf. "the banana in your ear!")

How would she respond?

Some people probably thought this was pretty strange!

Why would anyone hang a bright red cord out their window?! *That's a dumb thing to do!*

THE SPIES DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH 2:22-24

The spies return to Joshua with the encouraging report that God has planted fear in the hearts of the people of the land.

How different their report was from that of the spies 40 years before!

Previous report: "We can't go up against the people; they are too strong for us!"

Their report: "Surely the Lord has given us the land!"

What changed? Their focus is the only thing that's different.

The earlier spies looked at the size of the people.

These spies looked at the God who gave them the land.

Nothing else has changed!

With this positive confirmation, the people are encouraged to go.

RAHAB'S DELIVERANCE BY FAITH 6:22-25

Imagine the alarm for the spies when they hear the battle plan.

They told Rahab to stay in her house and hang the cord out the window.

Her house is on the wall.

Now they find out that the wall is to be destroyed.

Typical "people of faith" have a hard time believing that God can destroy the wall that stands between us and doing God's will.

About the time God convinces us He can handle that, we find it hard to believe he can protect a person living in that wall!

When are we going to learn that God can handle the wall also?!!

The wall is destroyed, but her house left.

She is protected just as they promised.

The wall stands as a perpetual testimony, in the midst of the rubble, to the grace of God and to the fact that God protected Rahab's house from judgment.

While God's instructions for victory are unusual, the people trust Him and follow His orders.

God honors their faith and gives them victory over the city.

Rahab and her family are spared because she trusts God.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE PROSTITUTE'S STORY:

1. If God can save a Rahab, He can save anyone.

I deal with people who don't believe God could ever save them because of their sin. Rahab's story is a testimony to God's mercy for sinful people—people who don't deserve it!

—even in a condemned society standing under the judgment of God.

The song goes on. The story of people like Rahab who don't deserve God's mercy, but who come face to face with *the God who loves prostitutes*:

John Newton's story was like that:

"Losing his mother when he was eleven.

He went to Africa so he might be "free to sin to my heart's content!"

During the next few years, Newton's heart was seared by the most revolting human experiences.

He joined a degenerate group of laborers who slaved away at their work by day and partied by night.

Later, as a deserter from the navy, he was flogged until blood streamed down his back.

He became involved in the unspeakable atrocities of the slave trade.

Then he became a slave himself, finally being sold to a woman slave who literally made him eat crumbs that she tossed to him under the table.

"But in 1748, on board a sinking ship in the midst of a violent storm, he called out to God.

As he made a last-ditch effort to save the ship, he said to the captain,

"If this will not do, the Lord have mercy on us!"

His own words startled him. "Mercy! Mercy!"

That night, Newton discovered the mercy of God."

Years later Newton penned: "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me!"

Rahab could echo that—perhaps beat it—: ". . . that saved a whore like me!"

God cared about the lost prostitute who needed His grace.

Do we care enough about lost people to risk—being seen with a sinner?!!

Whatever our life story may look like, whatever the condition of society around us, we can trust the God of grace to seek and to save the lost who turn to Him.

When people do trust Christ, they don't believe they could ever have real value in His sight, or be useful to Him.

Their past is too scarred. That's Satan's lie!

2. If God can use a Rahab to bring the spotless Son of God into the world, He can use anybody to accomplish His purposes—even us.

God delights in using wounded people.

That way *He gets all the credit*.

Did you notice how complete her acceptance was?

She was taken into the family of God.

She became a member of the royal family, a progenitor of the Savior!

Rahab's life was transformed by her faith.

Jas. 2:25 demonstrates that her faith was authenticated by her works.

*"Was not even Rahab **the prostitute** considered **righteous** for what she did . . ."*

She trusted the God of Israel.

Her life was changed!

She turned her back on a pagan, immoral society and identified with the people of God.

She cared enough for her family that she convinced them to come with her.

It's significant that **her story is believable**.

Her family saw the transformation—they were convinced.

We don't know how many came along,

but we do know that all those who stayed in her house that day were saved.

The influence of the transformation of her life and character

was enough to bring other pagan Canaanites to Yahweh!

3. Because God changed Rahab's life, she trusts Him,

she takes a stand for what she believes in

and she identifies with God's people.

Are we willing to take a stand for the things we believe in, even though it separates us from our friends and neighbors and makes us look different?

Are we willing to urge others to come along with us and follow our Lord?

Francis Shaeffer: "Rahab stood alone in faith against the culture which surrounded her—something none of us today in the Western world has ever had to do.

For a period of time she stood for the unseen against the seen, standing in acute danger until Jericho fell. If the king had ever found out what she had done, he would have become her chief enemy and would have executed her. . . .

This is how the Christian lives, and Rahab is a tremendous example for us.

Though we have stepped from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, we're still surrounded by a culture controlled by God's enemy, Satan.

We live in it from the moment we accept Christ as Savior until judgment falls.

We are encompassed by one who was once our king but is now our enemy.

It is just plain stupid of a Christian not to expect spiritual warfare while he lives in enemy territory."

Living in enemy territory is dangerous

and demands a living faith in the living God.

Rahab possessed that kind of faith. Do we?

*Rahab was saved, not because she deserved it, but because she believed God.
It was by faith that Rahab the harlot was not killed with the unconvinced of her pagan culture.*

She trusted God and identified with the people of God, as different from her culture.

How about us?

It isn't those who walk by faith that mess up their lives!

It's people who walk by sight!

Rahab chose to walk by faith. How about us?

What's the basis for OUR life?

What are WE trusting in?