

Rahab: Fearless Faith

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[0 : 00] Friends, if we could turn now to the New Testament and to the book of Hebrews. You might want to keep your finger in the book of Joshua as well.

Joshua 2 will be returning there. But Hebrews 11. We're going to take our text from verse 31. Hebrews 11 verse 31 and then we'll return to Joshua chapter 2.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

By faith Rahab. Now before I go on, it's so encouraging for me to see so many children out on a Lord's Day evening.

I think next Lord's Day you should all come to Gravar. That would be just lovely. You can bump up our numbers there. It's so, so good to have you. And I know all your little tricks here in Barvis.

[1 : 11] I know that you're minister. Don't think you're going to get off with it tonight. I know that your minister likes to ask you three questions about the service.

I don't know if it's to keep you awake, but it's helpful nonetheless. So, question number one. And I'll give the answers at the end. How many spies does Joshua send out?

How many spies does Joshua send out? We have the answers even in the chapter that we read. So, maybe even before I start the sermon, you'll have all the answers.

Number two. Where does Rahab hide the spies? Where does Rahab hide the spies? Now, maybe for the older kids, I know maybe these questions are quite easy.

This is a more tricky one. The last one. What does the scarlet cord remind us of? What does the scarlet cord remind us of?

[2 : 21] So, we're going to turn back to Joshua chapter 2. Just for a short time this evening.

Friends, I'd like us just to consider really the first half of this chapter together in light of the verse that we have in Hebrews 11.

This account of Rahab. Now, this is a chapter that has, over the centuries, I think, it's fallen victim to a common human error.

Something that we're all guilty of from time to time in various ways. Yes, in relation to the way we read the Bible, but also in other situations, perhaps the way we read providences and so on and so forth.

And as we come to this chapter this evening, we know that this is a chapter whereby when people come to it, they completely miss the point.

Pages and pages and pages of commentaries have been devoted to one issue in this passage.

[3 : 55] And it's as if this is the most important issue. This is the central issue. That this is what we should be focused in on.

That this is the point of this narrative. What is it? The fact that Rahab tells a lie.

Should she have done it?

The reality is that if we focus on this lie, we are completely missing the richness of the message that we have here.

We are completely, essentially, missing the point. It's like we were to prepare a meal for someone. If you were to take all the time to prepare a beautiful meal for someone, you spend hours putting all the ingredients together and you give it to someone on a plate.

[5 : 19] And that person, instead of appreciating the lovely meal on a plate, they then point out to you a tiny little chip on the side of the plate.

That would be entirely wrong. It would be entirely missing the point. But it would be also entirely like human nature.

There's something that's hardwired within us always to focus on the negative. But friends, I don't want us to do that here this evening.

What I'd like us to do, just for a short time, is to focus on what God wants us to take away from this fascinating story that we have here before us.

Let's turn to verse 1 together. I think the answer to the first question may just have been in that verse.

[6 : 35] And what's helpful for us here is a little bit of context for us to set the scene. Because what we see here is we see a narrative that's set against that backdrop of the conquest of the land that had been promised to God's people.

You might remember that some years earlier, Moses, he had sent 12 spies into the land of Canaan. And sending 12 spies, he wanted them to report back.

He wanted them to come and to tell what was happening in this land. Of course, only two of these spies came back with a favorable report.

All the rest were negative. All the rest were saying, there's no way we can ever possibly hope to take this land for ourselves.

But not these two spies. Not Caleb and Joshua. They could see the potential. They could see that this was a place that had been promised to them by God.

[7 : 39] And because of this, it was a place that, no matter come what may, would be theirs. And now fast forward to some years later, we see that Joshua's doing the same thing.

Joshua has, of course, taken the mantle from Moses. He's continuing that leadership of the children of Israel. And now he, the people still haven't inherited the land.

He's sending out spies to the land of Canaan in order to see what's what. He doesn't send out 12 spies.

He sends out two spies. Now, some have criticized him. They've said that he shouldn't have sent out any spies at all. That if Joshua had truly held firm to the promise of God, if he had faith, he wouldn't have needed to have sent out any spies.

He knew that the Israelites were going to inherit this land, and so he should have just believed. Of course, it's so easy for us to pass judgment on the actions of others when we're not in the heat of the moment ourselves.

[8 : 55] But in any case, the sending out of the spies was, of course, in fact, part of God's perfect plan. It was to form the narrative that we have here before us.

And in light of this, what we see here is that God's purposes, friends, are not always what they appear to be. That's the amazing thing about our God. He is anything but predictable.

That's what we see. Because within this little story here, what we see is a reflection of a far greater story.

A story that stands the test of not only time, but eternity. A story that is relevant to each and every person gathered in here tonight or joining us online.

A story that is, in fact, relevant to the whole of mankind. And it's that greater story that we are pointing to tonight.

[10 : 03] We read that they, the spies, went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

Now, these two men who Joshua had sent out in the name of the Lord to Israel, they come and they stay with this woman, Rahab.

What do we know about her? Well, on the surface, we can see that she is a woman who doesn't have very much going for her.

She's a Gentile. She's out with the covenant people of God. She's out with the religious privileges that accompanied the Jew.

But not only that, she's an Amorite. Now, Canaan was a place where all kinds of people were living. The Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Canaanites, the Gergashites, the Jebusites, the Amorites.

[11 : 07] A whole mix of godless people living together in one land. These were some of the most wicked people that ever lived.

They were ripe, ripe for God's judgment. A people who were so depraved that they thought nothing of sacrificing their own children.

Nothing new under the sun. The depravity of man. It's been there since the fall of man. And it will be until Christ returns.

But not only is Rahab identified with such a people by blood. Her own lifestyle choices make her an outcast.

Rahab was a prostitute. She was, as it were, a lady of the night. This was a woman who had a hard life.

[12:10] A woman who was created in the image of God. A woman who had her own hopes and dreams and aspirations. Her own fears.

Her own joys. She was a human being. It's so easy for us when we see somebody like this who has lifestyle choices that perhaps we don't agree with.

It's so easy for us to write them off and forget that they're created in the image of God. I heard someone saying recently, and it stuck with me, whenever you're walking down the street, remember that every single person you meet, apologies if I said this the last time I was here, but every person you meet, remember they have all been created in the image of God.

And so because of that, every single person is worthy of your time and your respect. They have a soul. They have a soul that can be saved.

So here we have Rahab. She's one who's resorted to selling her own body to strangers. But then that leads us to ask the question, well, what on earth are these men playing at?

[13:26] They've been sent out by Joshua, this man of God. And so why on earth are they lodging in this house of this woman of ill repute? What are they thinking?

Well, I think this is a tactical move. It's a very clever move in some ways. Because this was a place that men would often have frequented. They would have come and gone from this house.

And so for these two men to come into Canaan and to go into her house, it should be a scenario that really didn't raise an eyebrow.

But it did. Because as much as these men wanted to be incognito, very soon, we don't know how the text doesn't tell us, very soon their cover is blown.

So much so that when the king of Jericho gets wind of these intruders, what does he want to do? He wants rid of them. He wants to deal with them. He knows that they're from that people who are seeking to overcome and to take over this land for themselves.

[14:33] Let's look at verse 2. And it was told to the king of Jericho, Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.

Now this is where things begin to get a little bit interesting. This is where we begin to see the main point of the narrative. Verse 3. Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who 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, True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from.

And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.

Now we know that this was nothing short of a blatant lie. The spies hadn't gone out at all. In fact, in listening, her young friends, she had hidden them on the roof under the stalks of flax.

[15:50] That's what she'd done. She'd hidden them under the stalks of flax. But at this point we might not be surprised. Because of the very nature of who this woman is, we might make assumptions that, of course she's going to lie.

That's the kind of woman she is. She doesn't care about what she says. She doesn't care about how she acts. She's just a liar anyway. But not all is as it seems.

It's true that in these situations we can tell the truth. We see that with the story of Corrie ten Boom. I don't know if any of you have her book.

I'm sure you possibly do. And in that story we read of Nazi soldiers bursting into a house. They're looking for men to work in munition factories.

Now, Corrie ten Boom's nephews had been with her. And they'd been hidden under a trap door under the floor. So just imagine there's a hatch on the floor below you, and these men are hidden under this hatch.

[17:06] The hatch is then covered with a rug, and then the rug is then covered with a kitchen table. So that when the soldiers ask where the boys are, Corrie ten Boom's niece, she tells them quite plainly, quite honestly, the boys are under the table.

Now, of course, when the soldiers looked under the table, there was no one under the table. But the boys were under the table, under the rug, under the hatch, under the floor.

She told the truth. The soldiers thought that she was being sarcastic, and so they left. And in that case, telling the truth paid off.

Some would say that Corrie ten Boom's niece was foolish. She lacked wisdom in doing this, but she obviously had faith. But that's a one-off scenario.

And in life, friends, situations like this are never, ever black and white. We must always remember that. We must never impose one scenario on another as if it's instantly translatable.

[18 : 24] Because this happened here, it must happen there. People are different. People's psychology is different. People think differently. We know that even in this congregation, and every congregation, there are so many different personalities with so many outlooks and so many ways of dealing with things.

not everyone has the courage to take such risks. But yet, we mustn't think that Rahab doesn't have courage.

Because even in telling this lie, Rahab, in what she does, she is so full of courage.

And not only that, it would appear that the Lord, in His mercy, He accommodates such an action.

Just getting this point of the lie out of the way, He accommodates such an action.

Not that He condones sin, but He can take good out of evil. Why? Well, we're reminded in Hebrews, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses.

[19 : 47] He is the one who knows exactly what we're doing and why we're doing it. These situations are never black and white. You know, the reality is, when we think about it, the lie that Rahab told was told, and this is what we begin to see something, of the true identity of Rahab.

Yes, she has been forced to earn a living in this unsavory way, but that's not her identity. There's something deeper within this woman.

We see that what she does is done with the best of possible intents. Because what she's doing, friends, in telling this lie, this worthless woman in the eyes of society, what she's doing is protecting the people of God.

And that is the crux of the matter. She's protecting the people of God. She had a choice to make.

On one hand, she could easily expose God's people.

She could land them in it. She could have them dealt with by the king, and she herself might be then free to carry on living her life. Or she could tell this lie and protect them.

[21 : 10] What would you do? What would I do? What did Rahab do? Well, she chose to protect God's people.

And this is where the courage comes in. Because in protecting God's people, this has huge implications, not only for her, but for her whole family.

Because if they had searched the house and found these two spies, she and her family would likely be tortured and killed. And so before we go branding this woman a liar, let's just consider her courage.

Sometimes in life there are principles, and there are greater principles. And sometimes the greater principles override the lesser principles.

I believe that's the case here. the greater principle here was to protect God's people. That's what she does.

[22 : 18] But we might ask the question, why? Why does Rahab choose to do such a thing? Why is she happy to risk her own life?

The reason for her actions are brought to light in her words. Just notice what she says to the spies as she is in the middle of hiding them in verse 9.

Verses 9 and 10. Here we begin to get more of a window into this woman Rahab. chapter 1. I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt 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 kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.

Particularly those words in verse 10. For we have heard. She had heard of the mighty works of the God of Israel. She had heard that he had parted the Red Sea and had brought his people to safety.

[23 : 43] She had heard that this God had destroyed two of the most wicked Amorite kings that had ever lived. She had heard. How she heard, we don't know.

But she heard. Perhaps she heard it in the streets, the people talking as they do. But she heard. She might not have known anything of the Word of God.

She may never have had any godly influence in her life, yet she heard. She heard of the power of God.

What did she do with this tiny fragment of knowledge of the God of Israel? She believed. She believed.

What did she say in verse 11? Wonderful words. And as soon as we, that's her and her family, as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted.

[24 : 53] And there was no spirit left in any man because of you. For the Lord, your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

Let's just remember, let's just recalibrate to the society we're in here. This is a polytheist society where anything went.

You could worship any god, it didn't matter, everyone could do what was right in their own eyes.

And they did. They worshipped varied and numerous gods and this was perfectly acceptable.

Not dissimilar really to the day we live in today in some ways. But here she is, this woman with no background of faith, casting her lot in with the God of Israel.

That, my friend, is the point of the passage, not the lie. Perhaps it's the devil that seeks us to concentrate on the lie and miss the point of the mercy and the grace and love of the Lord.

[26 : 07] The love of the God of Israel. The love of the God of heaven and earth. A love that tonight is not restricted to who we are or what we have done.

Our identity tonight is not in what we have done. People are looking for identity everywhere. Maybe you're looking for identity, your place in this world.

People look for identity in all kinds of places. And they lay hold of one aspect of their life, they apply this to their life, and this then becomes their identity.

This woman, Rahab, everybody knows her as this prostitute, that that's her identity. it's not. She's made in the image of God.

And that's the way God sees us all. He sees us as those who can have an identity in Him.

[27 : 16] It doesn't matter what your past is. It doesn't even matter what your present is. What is it that we need to forsake?

I said this this morning in Gravar. The greatest thing that we need to forsake in this life is not all the things that we think, that we have to brush up our act by getting rid of X, Y, and Z, and then we'll be right with God.

These things will follow. The only thing that you and I need to forsake is this, our unbelief. Our unbelief.

You might wonder why I say that tonight in a church building, but I've been where you are, friend, if you're not a Christian. I've been in the same place, and I believed, I believed every jot and tittle of the Bible in my head, but not in my heart.

I wouldn't submit. I wouldn't cast myself on God fully. Head knowledge, friend, it's good, but it's not enough.

[28 : 36] It's not enough. We need to know this God of mercy and of grace in our hearts. We need to know him in a way that leads us to want to serve him and to give our lives to him, to know his matchless love and mercy, a matchless love and mercy that you hear about, I know, faithfully, week in, week out from this pulpit, as your minister in love labours to share this good news with you.

I wonder, friend, tonight, do you have Rahab's testimony? Those watching online, do you have Rahab's testimony? That after hearing these things, that your heart melts?

Has your heart melted? Or is it so that you leave here tonight unchanged, unmoved, completely indifferent to the wonderful news of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Christ, and it is wonderful. Isn't it wonderful? What else have we got to hold on to in this world? If the last two years haven't shown us that, I don't know what else will.

There's nothing. It doesn't matter what our aspirations, hopes, and dreams are. If Christ isn't at the center of them, friend, they are empty.

[30 : 09] Rahab's heart is far from unmoved. We see that, that she's willing to go to any length, absolutely any length, not only to protect, but to identify with the people of God.

That's faith. That's faith. Stepping out. Stepping out beyond her own comfort zone. Letting go of that which she knew so well.

That's what faith is, friend. And maybe there's someone in here tonight who just needs to let go. Let go of that unbelief.

Let go of holding on to your own self-righteousness in terms of being right with God. in terms of leading your own life in the direction that you think it should go.

Maybe it's time you let go. Let go. Let go and know what it is to have the love of Christ fill your heart and your life.

[31 : 24] life. You might say, well, I don't know enough.

I want to be a Christian, but I don't know my Bible. I've heard that many times. And I think I probably thought it myself. I don't know my Bible enough. I don't understand. It doesn't matter.

other. But I've got a long way to go yet, but maybe one day. One day isn't promised. Just look at Rahab.

Look at the tiny fragment of knowledge that she has. Bible knowledge will come. Ministers are still learning. We will be learning for all eternity.

But in the meantime, friend, what we need to do, what you need to do, what I need to do is this. We need to work with what we've got, and we have got more than enough to work with.

[32 : 26] As I quoted in my prayer, if only we had John 3 16, that would be enough knowledge for us to believe. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son so that whosoever, whosoever, open to everyone, the whosoever, whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

And so you can see how it's our unbelief that we hold on to more than anything else. You might be thinking that what you need to do is to get rid of X, Y, and Z sins in your life.

The Lord will deal with that. Your duty is to believe. Believe. Rahab didn't know much.

But isn't it astonishing, friends, that we see this in the New Testament, that in Hebrews 11, she is commended for her faith. By faith, Rahab the prostitute did not perish.

By faith, the lion all, by faith, she did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies, the greater principle overriding the lesser.

[33 : 49] A faith that led her to be terrified of being under the judgment of God. Let's turn to verse 12. She says, Is that not a sure sign of someone who is saved?

You know, unconverted friend, as your own minister often calls you, your family, your family friends, if they are Christians, there is absolutely nothing in the world they want more for you and for you to be saved.

The very thought of you going to a lost eternity, you can't imagine the horror that fills them with, the horror it fills your minister with, your congregation with, all those who know you and love you and are praying for you.

They want you to come and to see, to taste and to see that God is good. That's what we see with Rahab here pleading, pleading for deliverance.

She's aware of the judgment of God. And you know, friends, we're only ever aware of the judgment of God when we're aware of ourselves. We don't ever know we need a Savior until we acknowledge that we are a sinner.

[35 : 45] And that's sadly the problem of unbelief. We don't believe because we don't see ourselves as sinners. But when God reveals to us the nature of who we are, the root of who we are, we cannot but say, Lord have mercy on me, the sinner.

Paul himself saw himself as the chiefest of sinners. He wasn't afraid to say that to the greatest congregation ever who would read that in Scripture.

He called himself that, this holy man. We are all sinners. But yet tonight, there is a Savior. Verse 14, and the men said to it, our life for yours, even to death.

If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land, we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.

where there is life, there is hope. Isn't that wonderful? Perhaps most of us gathered here tonight are Christians and we understand the free offer of the gospel and it's good to hear, but perhaps we don't feel there's meat on the bones for us.

[37 : 09] We want to be fed. friends, there's no greater food than this. To remind you, and me with you, to remind you of the mercy of God as together as a congregation you seek to serve him in this

community, in every village that we have around us, Arnall, Brew, and Barvis, Heatherhill, Shader, Borv, and every other village in this district, there are souls there tonight who society condemn, who perhaps if we're being honest ourselves we condemn, that we've placed their identity in what they do.

They're no different from you or Rahab. No one is beyond the hand of God's mercy.

That's why I'm standing here tonight. That is the best news you will ever, ever hear. But do you know it for yourself?

Do you believe it? Does it excite you? Time is going, friends. We're not going to pay much attention to this, but the young folk might want to pay attention to what I'm about to say for the answer to the final question.

We read of Rahab letting the men out of the window by a rope. In verse 15, then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. [38 : 57] And she said to them, go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days. She has a care and a concern for them until the pursuers have returned.

That's what happens when grace enters our lives. We care for God's people. We look out for them. We desire their well-being. We want to build them up, not tear them down.

That's what the true family of God is like, or ought to be like. Then afterward, you may go your way. Before the men go, Rahab, they ask Rahab to do one last thing.

And it's worth us just noting and paying attention to this one last thing that they ask her to do to secure her safety and that of her family. What is it? To tie a scarlet cord to the window of their house.

Why? So that when they would return to conquer the land, they would know that out of all of the wickedness of the people, as they looked at all the houses and they saw the scarlet cords hanging in various windows, they would know that they were to pass by these houses, that these were the houses of Rahab and her family, that they were to be saved by God's much less mercy.

[40 : 21] What does this remind us of? What does this remind us of? What does this scarlet cord remind us of? does it not highlight that which had happened previously when the Lord in his mercy passed over the houses whose lintels had blood on them?

Does this scarlet cord not remind us of the Passover? Is it not the same idea? Here we don't have blood, but here we have that which is in the color of blood, a scarlet cord to identify the saved people of God.

Friend, if Jesus was to come tonight, and he could, do you have a scarlet cord on your window? Of course you don't.

Do you have blood on your lintels? Absolutely not. You don't need a scarlet cord. You don't need blood on your lintels.

But you do need something else. And it's related to blood and to scarlet. You need your sins covered by the precious blood of Christ.

[41 : 53] that although your sins may be a scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. That's how God sees the redeemed.

Tonight are your sins covered if Christ was to return? Are you safe in Jesus? Is your identity in him? Not in anyone or anything else. is your identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what you know. You know enough. You know enough.

You know far more than Rahab. But what are you doing with it? Who are you identifying with? The Amorites of this world? Or the people of God? Who are your people? friends, seek him.

[42 : 56] Seek him and just like Rahab, your heart will melt with his love and you will honestly be able to say he is God.

More than that, he is my God and I am safe in him. Amen. Let us pray.

we give thanks, O Lord, for your word, for the very fact that a God who inhabits eternity would condescend to reveal himself to us in a way that we understand through words.

you are a God of love and mercy and we have seen that this evening. But yet you are also a God of judgment for those who refuse to believe.

O Lord, we pray for all who are gathered round your word this evening, that they would come and that they would believe. For today is the day of salvation and once again, Jesus of Nazareth has passed by in the gospel.

[44 : 08] Apply your word to our hearts and our lives, we pray. Forgive us now for all our many sins. All we ask, we ask in the precious name of Christ.

Amen. Before we come to our final singing, we might want to answer our questions. How many spies did Joshua send out?

Two spies, absolutely. Where did Rahab hide the spies? Underneath. It was underneath something. Good lad. Underneath the stalks of flax. Now, this was trickier. What does the scarlet cord remind us of? The idea?

The Passover. Absolutely. You are good listeners. Well done. Really proud of you all. And more than the Passover, it reminds us of the finished work of Christ.

[45 : 13] Well, let's sing to God's praise and conclusion from Psalm 34. Psalm 34. This is the Scottish Psalter version. reading at verse 5 of the psalm.

Psalm They look to him and lighten were, not shame it were their faces. This poor man cried God hard and saved him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear, him them delivereth. We'll sing down to the end of the verse, Mark 10, to the praise of God, standing to sing, they look to him and lighten were.

They look to him and lighten were, not shame it were their faces.

This poor man cried God there has saved him from all his distresses.

[46 : 44] The angel of the Lord encamp the ground encamp was said, all those that do in fear and then delivereth.

God is ■■altung of just Fear God, his sins, and that in fear shall be with what all rest.

The lion's young may hungry be, and they may not bear fruit, but they must rue.

They seek the Lord, shall not like any good.

Close with a benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, rest on and abide with you now and always.

[48 : 46] Amen.