

## Lesson 6 - 4 December 2011

### Rahab—Faith in Action

**Lesson Scope:** Joshua 2 and 6:22-25

#### Lesson Focus

As Israel's new leader, Joshua had received encouragement directly from the Lord. His troops who were perhaps most likely to drag had pledged firm support. Now the time had come to take action and implement a strategy for conquering the land.

Nearly forty years earlier, Joshua himself had explored the land as one of the twelve spies. Now he needed updated information on the land, its military forces, and the morale of its people. So he sent two spies to reconnoiter the heavily fortified city of Jericho, a gateway city that controlled the passes into the central highlands.

Within the doomed city lived a woman named Rahab. Although all her neighbors had a form of faith in that they believed the stories about the Israelites' God, only Rahab's faith produced action. She reached out to Israel's God and devoted the rest of her life to God's nation, Israel. Eventually she married Salmon and became the ancestress of Boaz, David, and Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:31 records her as a heroine of faith.

Rahab's story shows how anyone, regardless of race or past sin, can experience God's forgiveness by responding to Him.

Everyday life shows the folly of "faith only" teaching. We might sincerely believe that we tend to be forgetful, but unless that belief moves us to write important appointments down, we will still forget them. If we know the brakes on the car should be checked but do nothing about it, they will likely fail and cause an accident. We may be convinced that we should avoid writing bad checks, but if that conviction does not motivate us to balance the checkbook, we will probably write checks that bounce. Many other common events illustrate that faith without works is dead (useless).

Mention is made of Rahab's companions in the faith chapter of Hebrews 11. In every case, their faith moved them to take action. Without that action, their faith would not have been a saving faith; it would have died with them. God's work among His people manifests His greatness to the ungodly. Those who by faith renounce past loyalties and identify with truth gain a place among God's people.

**Lesson Aim:** To see characteristics of saving faith.

**Theme Verse:** [Hebrews 11:31](#). By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

**Lesson Text:**

### **Rahab Hid the Spies**

*Joshua 2:1* <sup>1</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

*Joshua 2:4* <sup>4</sup> And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they *were*:

*Joshua 2:9-15* <sup>9</sup> And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup> And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: <sup>13</sup> And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. <sup>14</sup> And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. <sup>15</sup> Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

### **Rahab Bound the Scarlet Line**

*Joshua 2:17-21* <sup>17</sup> And the men said unto her, We *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. <sup>18</sup> Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and

whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him. <sup>20</sup> And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. <sup>21</sup> And she said, According unto your words, so *be* it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

### **Rahab's House Was Saved**

*Joshua 6:22-25* <sup>22</sup> But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. <sup>23</sup> And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And they burnt the city with fire, and all that *was* therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Rahab Hid the Spies**

1. Why did Rahab choose the extreme risk of hiding the spies?
2. If all the inhabitants of Jericho believed and feared, why was only Rahab's household saved?
3. What is the relationship between fear and saving faith?

#### **Rahab Bound the Scarlet Line**

4. What did Rahab's obedience to the spies' detailed instructions reveal about her faith?
5. Explain why saving faith must produce action.

#### **Rahab's House Was Saved**

6. How was Rahab rewarded for her faith?
7. How can we develop a faith that will save us and our households?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The two spies "came into an harlot's house" (Joshua 2:1). Some have attempted to dismiss Rahab's disreputable character, but the New Testament references (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25) clearly confirm it. God could use even such a person to demonstrate His great love and mercy. Rahab's personal testimony of faith (Joshua 2:11) was based on the reports

the Canaanites had heard of God's great power on behalf of His people. She believed and reached out in faith. Rahab had shown kindness by sparing the lives of the spies; now she asked that they return the favor (Joshua 2:12-13).

The scarlet thread (Joshua 2:18) was a type of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's provision. Rahab was saved only as she "bound the scarlet line in the window" (Joshua 2:21). She showed her faith by carefully and promptly meeting the condition for deliverance.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Rahab Hid the Spies**

1. God superintends the nurture of developing faith (Joshua 2:1, 4). God's heart of deep love desires salvation for all. The spies did not come to Rahab's house by chance. God saw Rahab's budding faith and sent two of His people to lead her further in her quest for truth.

God still rewards the sincere seeker today. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." As our feeble faith gropes blindly toward Him, He reaches out to us eagerly. He nurtures our faith by giving us more truth through the reading of His Word, by Biblical preaching, or through the example of His people. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

2. Faith comes by hearing (Joshua 2:9-11). Rahab told the spies, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land ... for we have heard." Her faith in God was based on what she had heard about Him.

Romans 10:14, 17, clearly show the growth of faith. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

For God's people today, leading a holy life is not enough. We need to be preachers of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), not only with our lives but also with our mouths whenever God gives us opportunity.

3. Saving faith springs from a fear of God (Joshua 2:9-11). As people learn of God's power and holiness and realize their own sinfulness, their fear of God grows. This feeling of condemnation increases until they take action to meet God's conditions for salvation.

Even after we are on God's side, a healthy fear of His power helps us to walk carefully. The modern emphasis on cheap grace from a loving God of

unconditional forgiveness leads to casual Christians who do not fear God enough to obey Him. Jesus said, "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

4. Faith in God grows into a trust of His people (Joshua 2:12-13). As social beings, we seek for people with similar interests and goals. So as a seeker's faith in God grows, he learns to trust God's family. Here, in the church, he finds a group of people knit together by God's love, united in pursuit of holiness and heaven, and concerned enough to hold each other accountable. Within God's family he finds the family connections he may never have experienced before. They rejoice in his joys and weep when he weeps. He finds a sense of belonging in a common cause worth living and dying for.

When a Christian drifts away from God's people, he is drifting away from God. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Like Rahab, we need the support of God's people to "deliver our lives from death."

#### **Rahab Bound the Scarlet Line**

5. Faith without works is dead (Joshua 2:17-20). Belief is essential, but a head acknowledgement of truth alone is not enough. "The devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). A saving faith always produces action. Jesus healed those whose faith moved them to reach out to Him for help.

Rahab's words to the spies prove that her fellow Canaanites believed to the point of terror, fainting, and melting hearts. But only Rahab responded in faith by reaching out to God and His people, and so only her household was saved.

6. Saving faith produces prompt and careful obedience (Joshua 2:21). Rahab obeyed the spies' instructions immediately and completely because she firmly believed her life depended on it.

Today we are serving a God who demands holiness. Our spiritual lives depend on our prompt and careful obedience to His commands. A halfhearted, just-enough-to-get-by approach will be as disastrous for us as it would have been for Rahab.

#### **Rahab's House Was Saved**

7. Those who possess saving faith are spared from judgment (Joshua 6:22-23). The judgment of Jericho was devastating. Joshua and the Israelites utterly destroyed all that was in the city and burnt the city with fire. But "Joshua saved Rahab ... because she hid the messengers." Her faith, as well

as that of her family, spared her household from certain annihilation.

This world is headed for devastating judgment as well. All those who lack saving faith will be cast into the lake of fire. How much better to confess and forsake our sins before that day!

8. Faith moves one to identify with God's people (Joshua 6:25). The customs and religious practices of the Israelites must have seemed strange to Rahab. But because of her faith in Israel's God, she spent the rest of her days among them and likely learned to love her new life.

As servants of the King, we are glad to identify with His people. If we dread being "different" and dress to blend in with sinful society, our allegiance to God is in question.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God superintends the nurture of developing faith (Joshua 2:1, 4).
2. Faith comes by hearing (Joshua 2:9-11).
3. Saving faith springs from a fear of God (Joshua 2:9-11).
4. Faith in God grows into a trust of His people (Joshua 2:12-13).
5. Faith without works is dead (Joshua 2:17-20).
6. Saving faith produces prompt and careful obedience (Joshua 2:21).
7. Those who possess saving faith are spared from judgment (Joshua 6:22-23).
8. Faith moves one to identify with God's people (Joshua 6:25).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Why did Rahab choose the extreme risk of hiding the spies?

She was sure that she would be annihilated if she did nothing. But the extreme risk of hiding the spies had at least a chance of success. Perhaps she was trying to please the God of Israel by sheltering His people.

2. If all the inhabitants of Jericho believed and feared, why was only Rahab's household saved?

Rahab's faith moved her to take action "to the saving of [her] house." Apparently she was willing to give up her sinful life and accept God's commands.

3. What is the relationship between fear and saving faith?

As people learn of God's power and holiness and realize their own sinfulness, their fear of God grows. This feeling of condemnation increases until they take action to meet God's conditions for salvation.

Even after we are on God's side, a healthy fear of His power motivates us

to walk carefully. The modern emphasis on cheap grace from a loving God of unconditional forgiveness leads to casual Christians who do not fear God enough to obey Him.

4. What did Rahab's obedience to the spies' detailed instructions reveal about her faith?

She understood the consequences of failure and was very concerned about fulfilling every detail. She was completely committed to the way of escape God was offering her.

5. Explain why saving faith must produce action.

Faith alone is as powerless as thoughts alone. Our thoughts and theories remain lifeless until we express them in action. In the same way, faith without works is dead. God desires obedience, not lip service (Matthew 21:28-31).

6. How was Rahab rewarded for her faith?

She and her household were saved from destruction. She became part of God's nation and an ancestor of the Messiah. She lives today in heaven as a heroine of faith.

7. How can we develop a faith that will save us and our households?

We must make obedience to God's Word our top priority. We must remember the terrible consequences of failure and remain humble and open to the direction of the Holy Spirit and the brotherhood.

Great faith is developed in the same way as great strength or great skill—by exercise and practice. As we apply our faith to the details of everyday life, it will be strengthened to withstand the great storms of life.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:24-26).

### **Research Guide**

1. In *Doctrines of the Bible*, read the sections titled, "Dead Faith" and "Living Faith" on pages 263, 264.

2. In *Halley's Bible Handbook*, read the comments on Joshua 2.