

October 26, 2003
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Rahab”
Joshua 2:1-21 (NLT)

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia (ah KAY shuh). He instructed them, "Spy out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

2 But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house. They are spies sent here to discover the best way to attack us."

4 Rahab, who had hidden the two men, replied, "The men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. 5 They left the city at dusk, as the city gates were about to close, and I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath piles of flax.) 7 So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossing places of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the city gate was shut.

8 Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. 9 "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone is living in terror. 10 For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Si-hon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. 11 No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. 12 Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that 13 when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families."

14 "We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety," the men agreed. "If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise when the LORD gives us the land."

15 Then, since Rahab's house was built into the city wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. 16 "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days until the men who are searching for you have returned; then go on your way."

17 Before they left, the men told her, "We can guarantee your safety 18 only if you leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window. And all your family members--your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives--must be here inside the house. 19 If they go out

into the street, they will be killed, and we cannot be held to our oath. But we swear that no one inside this house will be killed--not a hand will be laid on any of them. 20 If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way."

21 "I accept your terms," she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

This chapter of the Bible raises a few questions for me. The first being: Why send spies? Joshua took over the leadership of the Israelites after Moses died. He would have the responsibility to bringing God's people into the land promised to them by God. We read in Josh 1:1-2 (After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, 2 "Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. [NLT]). The fact that God had ordered the advance...Why send spies?

Joshua being a skilled military man thought it a proper military procedure to send spies east of the Jordan River, "especially around Jericho." Jericho would be a key stronghold of the Jordan Valley that must be conquered. Joshua did not see God's command as a reason to stop using his common sense, skills or effort. When we sense that God has made a promise to us that does not mean we should neglect having a plan or using the abilities God has given us. In order to accomplish what God wants it will mean cooperation of our best works along with our faith and trust in God.

But another question I have is: Why did these carefully chosen spies go the house of a prostitute? It may have been the only place they could stay since it was the only hotel in town. I read that the terms for "female innkeeper" and "prostitute" or "harlot" were identical (Even though it is quite clear that Rahab was a prostitute as well as owning a lodging place). Even today there are hotels / motels where there is more going on than being a lodging place. Perhaps the spies went there because they knew it would be a place where they would not likely be detected. They may also have realized that there might be considerable loose talk in such a place, and perhaps important military information would be unintentionally divulged. But based on the way these men were protected, and the information they were able to obtain it seems that God had directed them to this place. Now that may raise some more questions until we realize that Rahab was probably the only person in Jericho who would have detected the identity of the men and still spared their lives. God was not just directing the spies to help Joshua conquer Jericho He was working in Rahab's life. She seemed to believe that the God of Israel would have mercy on anyone who would accept Him and she was convinced that He could defeat anyone who opposed him. Did these spies just happen to find her by accident? No, God was ordering their steps to bless them and to bless Rahab.

This raises yet another question: Would God use a prostitute to accomplish His purposes? The obvious answer is yes because God is not as much interested in what Rahab was as in what she was becoming. Rahab was part of the society around her - A corrupt, over indulgent, empty, decadent society, where every immoral act was practiced

and sanctioned. However, she was becoming a devoted and committed believer in the one true God.

Heb 11:31

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

James 2:25

In the same way, 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?

And in Matt 1:5 her name appears in the ancestry or family tree of the Messiah.

God works His wonders with those who will pay attention to and not ignore the revelation He makes of Himself.

1 Cor 6:9-11 NLT

Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers--none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God. There was a time when some of you were just like that [past tense!], but [thought you were like that] now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.

My final question today is: How did the change come about for Rahab?

[Remember Rahab had hid the spies on the roof under piles of flax. Flax is a plant that grows to a height of three feet, and was used from very early times to make linen. The stalks were dried on the rooftops before the fibers were stripped to use for weaving. Well...] (verses 8 –11) Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Si-hon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

1. Spiritual Insight:

She heard about the God of the Israelites and the great things He had done. And her faith in the one true God began to grow. We read in Rom 10:17 (NKJV) – “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Before I was a follower of Jesus the man who did my dry-cleaning use to talk to me about God and what the Bible taught. I was not reading the Bible / the Word of God on my own but I was hearing the Word of

God through Him. I started to become interested. He gave me a Bible and told me to read about these things on my own. As I did I started to be curious, I started to receive spiritual insight and my faith started to grow. Next came...

2. Spiritual Hunger:

(In v12-13 – Rahab says) “Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.” Rahab is coming to believe in the Living God who is not only powerful but also loving. Not only does He make a dry path through the Red Sea but He does it to protect and deliver His people. He is intimately involved in their lives, He cares for them, provides for them because they are precious in His sight. What would this mean for a prostitute who is used in a selfish way, not really cared for? What would this mean for someone who has a low opinion of themselves? She started to have a Spiritual hunger for this God of love, for herself and for her family.

3. A Spirit of Obedience:

(v14-21a the men say to Rahab) "We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety," the men agreed. "If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise when the LORD gives us the land."

Then, since Rahab's house was built into the city wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days until the men who are searching for you have returned; then go on your way."

Before they left, the men told her, "We can guarantee your safety only if you leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window. And all your family members--your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives--must be here inside the house. If they go out into the street, they will be killed, and we cannot be held to our oath. But we swear that no one inside this house will be killed--not a hand will be laid on any of them. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way."

(Note v21) "I accept your terms," she replied.

She had a desire to obey.

4. Faith:

(v21b) And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

Rahab was saved by her faith and it was a faith that was proven by her obedience. Her faith was demonstrated by leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window. I'm reminded of how the Israelites and their families were saved from death at Passover by applying blood to their doorposts. Rahab and her family were saved from death by a scarlet or red rope hanging from her window. And how we are saved from our sins and the last enemy, death by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus who shed His blood on a Cross.

We hear about Jesus. We become curious. We begin to desire the love, the blessing, the salvation that He offers. We have a desire to turn from our old ways, a desire to turn to God and obey Him. And by faith in Jesus we find Salvation.