

A FAITH TO FOLLOW

Sunday, June 9, 2024

TEXT: Joshua 2:1-24

OPENER

When we moved to Zambia in 1993, the city cemetery was a solemn reminder of the reality of life and death, with an average of 200 funerals taking place each week. Little did I know that in October 1994, I would preach my first funeral in Zambia for a dear friend named Chuck.

One Sunday evening in late 1993, Chuck slipped into our church, Faith Baptist Church Riverside (FBC), and listened intently to the preaching of the Word. He continued to attend regularly, and one particular Sunday, after hearing a clear explanation of the gospel, Chuck went home deeply convicted. He repented of his sins and placed his faith in Jesus Christ.

Chuck's life had been a tumultuous journey. Born into a family of means, he received a college education and secured a job at an international bank. He married a beautiful young lady, and they had two children together. However, Chuck's fondness for the fast life and his struggle with alcohol led to his downfall. He lost his job, and his wife left him. He became a traveling salesman, selling things to finance his lifestyle, but his health began to deteriorate.

Desperate for a solution, Chuck sought the help of a local witch doctor. The doctor instructed him to bring money and a live chicken. The doctor killed the chicken, sprinkled its blood on roots and bones, and gave Chuck a charm to wear under his clothes, assuring him that it would take away his problems. But life only grew worse, forcing Chuck to move in with his elderly mother.

One day, while walking down the street with an open wine bottle, some friends stopped Chuck and suggested that he attend Faith Baptist Church. That was the evening I met him, and that was a turning point in his life.

Chuck later shared a testimony with the church family, ***"The witch doctor said the blood of the chicken he sacrificed would take away my problems, but my problems only got worse. The blood of that chicken did nothing for me, but the blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross has set me free from my sins."***

As the months passed, Chuck grew weaker, and the disease ravaging his body took its toll. However, his faith and joy only grew stronger. This is the power of the gospel—the ability to radically transform lives. No one is beyond the reach of God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

Sadly, one October morning in 1994, two ladies arrived at my gate at 6 am to inform me that Chuck had passed away. They requested my help in dressing his body and transporting it to the Kitwe City Council mortuary. Chuck's story is a testament to the transforming power of the gospel and God's amazing grace.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

This Book is about redemption. It is a story about God's plan for the salvation of His people through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This story begins in Genesis with the

creation and the fall, followed by the unfolding plan of God's redemption. It ends with Revelation in the ultimate restoration of sinners into His eternal kingdom. Covenants, prophecies, and teachings unfold the beautiful tapestry of God's unchanging love, mercy, and grace, offering hope for redemption and eternal life to all who believe and receive Jesus Christ.

- Created in perfection for fellowship with God.
- Separated from fellowship with God by willful sin.
- Redeemed by God and reconciled in our relationship with Him.
- Restored by God to perfection and eternal fellowship

Today, in this grand story of redemption, we come to the Book of Joshua. This is the story of the Israelites after the death of Moses, under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' successor. Though the book is named after Joshua, it is important to note that the main character in this story is not Joshua. The main character is God.

God is fulfilling His promises to Israel. This book covers the Israelites' conquest and settlement of Canaan, the Land God promised them. In obedience to God's call, Joshua leads the people in a series of military campaigns against the various Canaanite kingdoms, thus carrying out God's plan to claim the land and execute God's judgment on their wickedness and unbelief.

The book is divided into two main sections: the conquest of the land (chapters 1–12) and the division of the land among the tribes (chapters 13–24). It concludes with Joshua's farewell speeches and exhortations to the Israelites to remain faithful to their covenant with God. The Book of Joshua points to the life of victory through the recurring themes of conflict, obedience, faith, God's sovereignty, and His faithfulness to His promises.

God had a purpose and plan for his people, Israel, to give them the "Promised Land" where they would make His name great among the nations. (Josh. 1) God has a purpose for your life as well. Whatever the specific details, that purpose is ultimately to bring glory and praise to God. Where does the discovery of God's purpose begin? That is what we will learn in Joshua chapter 2.

Let me ask you a question. Do you possess genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ?

Rahab was a woman with a misplaced faith, a Canaanite idol worshiper. The Old Testament (OT) contains approximately 89 references to the god Baal. The OT also makes references to other Canaanite deities, including the goddess Asherah (40 times) and the goddess Ashtoreth (10 times). In total, the OT appears to contain about 139 clear references to major Canaanite deities.¹

Rehab could not trust her gods to provide for her and her family, so she believed in herself and decided that money could be made from men willing to pay for her body. Scripture confirms that she was a prostitute, yet she is only one of two women mentioned in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11:31, Rehab and Sarah. More amazingly, she was blessed to be an ancestor of the

¹ <https://bible.org/article/baalism-canaanite-religion-and-its-relation-selected-old-testament-texts>

Messiah! (Mt. 1:5) How is this possible? How does a sinful woman, a former Gentile prostitute, become a great-great-grandmother to Jesus Christ?

Look at Joshua 2:1-24 in your Bibles and follow along as I read,

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. ² And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 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." ⁴ 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 were from. ⁵ 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." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ 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 two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, 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. ¹² Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." ¹⁴ And the men said to her, "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."

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. ¹⁶ And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way." ¹⁷ The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. ²⁰ But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." ²¹ And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

²² They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. ²³ Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. ²⁴ And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."

In this text, we will see four characteristics of genuine saving faith evidenced in the life of a former Canaanite prostitute named Rehab. Warren Wiersbe used four words to describe the character of Rahab's faith in his commentary *Be Strong: Courageous, Confident, Concerned, and Covenant*. We will use them to guide us through our text today.

I. GENUINE FAITH IS COURAGEOUS (1-7)

A. She believed in the God of Israel

Look at the Scripture beginning in verse 1:

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

1. She believed that the LORD was the one true God. She had heard about this God of Israel, and what God had done for the nation of Israel, and she believed that he was the one true God. She believed before the spies arrived at her door (1 Thes 1:9)
2. She believed that God is the LORD - the master king of the universe
3. She believed that God is Sovereign over all creation
4. Redemption is available to all who believe, regardless of how many sins they have committed or how much or little they know about the Scripture.

B. She demonstrated her faith through courageous action

Look at verses 2-7

² And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 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." ⁴ 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 were from." ⁵ 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." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

1. She did not simply give mental assent to the realities of this God of the Hebrews, but she demonstrated that her faith was genuine by taking courageous action; she

wished her own life to hide the spies and protect them from the officers sent by the king to arrest them.

1. Lying is wrong. **Prov. 12.22** [Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.](#)
 2. Ethical Problem - Rehab lied to the soldiers when they came to her house.
 3. This is a historical narrative, not a doctrinal section - the story does not comment on her lies, nor does it try to explain them, just like the story does not comment on her profession as a prostitute. It simply tells what happened.
 4. Many people were honored for lying and killing in wartime
2. She had a faith that could be seen - Hiding the Hebrew spies was evidence of her genuine faith in God.
 3. The most important thing about any person is faith! (). What you believe determines what you do! What you truly believe determines the actions that you take and the decisions that you make!

Heb. 11:6 [And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.](#)

4. God uses people who we would never choose to do His will and accomplish His purposes. If God can use Rahab the harlot of Jericho, He can use me, and He can use you!

1 Cor. 1:27-29 [²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.](#)

II. GENUINE FAITH IS CONFIDENT (8-11)

A. She knew the object of her faith

1. Faith is only as good as the object of faith. Many people have faith, but it is in themselves. Some are encouraged to have “faith in their faith” as though faith itself is some magic charm that brings home whatever your heart desires. “Name it, claim it.” Others have faith in a pastor or prophet - in fact, in one study in a large Zionist church in South Africa, 80% of the people who were members of the church were there because of the healing they felt was available through the leader of that church. Many felt if they were to leave the church, the disease might reoccur.
2. Genuine faith permeates the whole of a person. What you believe determines what you do.

B. Confident faith because it is genuine faith

1. Confident faith is not wishful thinking, it is a confident assurance that God is real and that he will do and is able to do all that he says.
2. Genuine faith: Intellect, Emotion, Will
 1. She acknowledged that they had all heard about this God and his work for His people.
 2. She acknowledged that they were all filled with fear of this God and what He would do for His people when they entered the land.
 3. But... only Rahab exercised volitional faith; her will was also affected, and this moved her to confident action. "When you come into the land"

III. GENUINE FAITH IS CONCERNED (12-14)

A. She was concerned for others (12-13)

¹² Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

1. She pleaded for the lives of her family members
2. When we have genuine faith, we will long for others to come to Christ.
 1. Andrew was concerned for his brother Peter. (Jn. 1:35-42)
 2. Leper was concerned for his community (Mk 1:40-45)
3. They warned her not to tell anyone else, or the agreement was canceled, but we have been commanded to preach the gospel to every creature! If we don't tell them, they will perish in their sins! (Mk 16:15)

B. She received a surety - a pledge. (14)

¹⁴ And the men said to her, "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."

1. The spies gave her their word and pledged their lives that she would be spared when judgment fell on the city.

ILL: I once provided surety for my brother so he could get a loan to buy a truck. The bank called me when he was late on his payments. You become accountable and responsible for the outcome!

2. Jesus became our surety

Heb. 7:22-25 ²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who

draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

3. Our eternal salvation is certain because Jesus stands as the pledge of guarantee. For God the Father to reject a repentant sinner who has believed in Jesus means that God the Father would have to reject His own Son!

IV. GENUINE FAITH IS COVENANT FAITH (15-24)

A. The Scarlet Cord is a symbol of their covenant (15-20)

Look at verse 17-18: ¹⁷ The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household.

1. Covenant - agreement between two persons or parties.
2. A sign of the covenant that the spies made with her for her life and the life of her family.

B. Scarlet Cord was a symbol of her faith.

²¹ And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

1. There is a new covenant in Jesus's blood (Mt. 26:28, Heb 12:24). The token or sign of that covenant is bread and wine, symbols of Jesus's broken body and shed blood.

Matthew 26:²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Heb 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

2. The rope was a symbol of her deliverance. For Rahab, it was a scarlet rope—red reminds us of blood. In Egypt, the Israelites were to put blood on the doorposts. For Rahab, the scarlet rope in the window meant that judgment would pass her by.
3. The rope symbolized her faith. She already had faith, and placing the rope symbolized that faith. Her faith was not in the rope; her faith was in God, who told her (through the spies) to put the rope out the window.

SO WHAT IS THE POINT?

No matter how sinful your past is, turn to Jesus Christ! Rahab’s faith is a faith to follow. Her story teaches us that true faith is active, confident, others-focused, and covenant-based. It calls for a response that goes beyond mere mental acknowledgment of God’s existence to a life transformed by God and lived in line with His will.

SO HOW MUST YOU RESPOND?

1. Ask God to search your heart and reveal to you if you have genuine saving faith. Evaluate your heart desires and your daily actions to determine if they have been transformed by genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ. Are you among the redeemed?
2. Proclaim the glories of God's grace through Jesus Christ to all people!