

Rahab and the Spies (Joshua 2:1-24 and Ephesians 2:8-10) 19-Apr-2026

Joshua 2:1-24

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

² The king of Jericho was told, “Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” ³ So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.”

⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. ⁵ At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.” ⁶ (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) ⁷ So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

⁸ Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof ⁹ and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ¹⁰ We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

¹² “Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.”

¹⁴ “Our lives for your lives!” the men assured her. “If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.”

¹⁵ So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. ¹⁶ She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.”

¹⁷ Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us ¹⁸ unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. ¹⁹ If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. ²⁰ But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.”

²¹ “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.”

So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

²² When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. ²³ Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. ²⁴ They said to Joshua, “The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up firstly at **Joshua 2**.

Let me pray first...

Context (Joshua 2:1)

[Slide-Context]

Before we begin – let's get the **context**

Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and headed for the Promised Land

With God's help in parting the Red Sea – Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness to journey to the Promised Land.

The Israelites grizzled and complained against God and Moses.

God gave Moses the 10 commandments for the people to obey.

The Israelites rebelled and disobeyed God so much – their journey lasted 40 years instead of a few weeks.

Moses brought them to the River Jordan east of the Promised Land and then Moses died – and his leadership transferred to Joshua.

Last week we left Joshua and the Israelites on the East side of the River Jordan – on the brink of crossing the river and entering the Promised Land.

If we look at chapter 1 – verses 10-11

Joshua ordered the officers of the people

“Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.’”

Joshua chapter 2 tells us what happened in those **three days** (see Joshua 2:22) as they prepared to cross the Jordan – and why they had to wait...

And the reason is there was someone in Jericho who needed to be saved!

We pick up the story in v1 of chapter 2

Joshua sent two spies to “*look over the land – especially Jericho*”

And the spies entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and they stayed there!

And straight away we see that God’s ways are not our ways – and God’s ways are higher and better than our ways – and God can use the most unlikely people to achieve His purposes – even a prostitute like Rahab

Our first point this morning – **Rahab (a prostitute) courageously protects the spies** – that verses 2 to 7

[Slide-1st point]

Rahab Courageously Protects the Spies (Joshua 2:2-7)

We’re not told what led the spies to Rahab’s house – but God knew the heart of Rahab – and that she would protect the spies.

V2 – The King of Jericho discovers that there are some Israelite spies in his land – and v3 – he sends messengers to Rahab’s house to tell her to bring out the spies

But v4 – Rahab had hidden the spies – and she lies to the messengers saying that the Israelite men were at her house but they have now left – and v5 - if the messengers hurry they might catch them.

Meanwhile – v6 – the spies are hiding on the roof of Rahab’s house – whilst the messengers - v7 - set off on a wild goose chase to find the spies!

Now if we like we can go down the rabbit hole of why Rahab lied to the Jericho Police.

But remember Hunters use traps to catch animals – fishermen use lures and baits to catch fish. In sport – cricketers use spin on a ball to deceive the batter. In chess a player deceives their opponent in to taking their weaker piece in order to capture their opponent’s stronger piece.

In Exodus 1 – God was kind to the midwives when they deceived Pharaoh. In 2 Samuel 15 – King David used a fellow called Hushai as a mole and also used a network of spies.

The Old Testament also recognises that in war there is intelligence and counter-intelligence and decoys – it’s all part of the “game”.

Besides Rahab hasn’t necessarily heard of the 10 commandments just yet!

If we go down that rabbit hole of focusing on Rahab’s lie – it’s a bit like the wife who proudly opens the fridge door to show her husband the scrumptious salad and dessert she’s prepared for their dinner party – only for her husband to scarcely look at the food and instead run his fingers across the top of the fridge and comment on the dust. He’s totally missed the whole point.

The whole point of this chapter is that **God saves by grace through faith—even saving the most unlikely people—and that true faith shows itself in action.**

My **second point** this morning – **Rahab makes a surprising confession of faith** – that’s verses 8 to 14

Why would Rahab risk everything to help the spies?

These verses give us the answer!

[Slide-2nd point]

Rahab Makes a Surprising Confession of Faith (Joshua 2:8-14)

Rahab had heard what God had done (v9)

She knew about the miraculous Red Sea crossing (v10)

She knew – v10 - about the defeat of the Amorite Kings, Sihon and Og (Numbers 21)

And those events led her to replace her fear of God's people with faith in God!

Verse 11 is the turning point – Rahab tells the spies:

“For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”

This is not fear of God's power—

this is faith in the One True God and recognition of God's rule over everything.

This is a remarkable confession of faith!

Rahab is a Canaanite woman

She's an outsider to God's people

She's living in the city of Jericho – which is about to be judged by God!

And yet she sees what even some Israelites failed to see – that the Lord God YHWH alone is the One True God!

This surprising outburst of faith shows that God had a plan – and was already working in Rahab's heart – before the spies even arrived. God had a plan to bring Rahab and the spies together.

It is the same kind of thing we see when God supernaturally leads us to people who are fellow believers or when God leads us to people who are unbelievers but are open to hearing the gospel!

Rahab's declaration was proof of her faith. It was not strong faith and it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable, nonetheless.

Rahab's faith is so significant that she is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31 – which says - *By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient*

Rahab was preserved from death because of her faith!

Likewise – **we are saved from sin and death because of our faith in Jesus!**

Just as Rahab was saved by trusting in God's deliverance, we are saved by trusting in a greater deliverance—through Jesus.

And James helps us see what Rahab's faith looks like in James 2:24-26 - he says: *You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. 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? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

Rahab's faith acted

Rahab's faith took risks

Faith that saves is never alone – it produces action!

Likewise our faith must be accompanied by action to show it is genuine faith!

Application

Rahab didn't keep her faith private – she confessed it!

So the question for us is:

Have we confessed our faith?

To our family?

To our friends?

To our church family?

Rahab risked everything to identify with God's people.

Are we willing to be known as people who belong to Jesus?

Our testimony—telling others what Jesus has done for us—is powerful.

God can use our testimony to draw others to Himself and bring glory to His name.

(pause)

All of this leads Rahab to seek mercy from God – vv12-14 – she pleads with the spies: *“Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.”*

Here is the **evidence** of Rahab's faith. Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the reality of God but presses on to take refuge in God.

Rahab must not only know the clear truth about God but also must escape the coming wrath of God. It isn't just about a correct belief but a desperate need.

Saving faith is always like this. Saving faith runs to take refuge under God's wings. Nothing but the touch of the Lord God's hand could have created such faith in this shady lady from Jericho!

And of course – God rewards such faith

V14 – the spies assure Rahab that it is their lives for her life – if she keeps quiet about them, they will treat her kindly!

(pause)

God hasn't finished yet – our third point is “**God has a Plan of Escape**” – that's verses 15-21

[Slide-3rd point]

God's has a Plan of Escape (Joshua 2:15-21)

In fact there is plan of escape for the **spies** and for **Rahab**

Vv15-16 – Rahab lowers the spies by a rope through the window of her house which happens to be part of the city wall.

God knew from the beginning that Rahab would help the spies.

And Rahab tells the spies to hide for three days before returning to Joshua.

Then vv17-21 – The spies give Rahab a means to escape from being killed when the Israelites enter Jericho. Rahab is to put a **scarlet cord** in that same window the spies escaped from. Anyone who stays in the house will be saved – anyone outside the house will find their blood will be on their own heads!

Does this **scarlet cord** remind us of anything?

It should remind us of the **Passover** when the Israelites left Egypt. They had to smear blood on the doorposts and lintel of their homes – and if they did – the angel of death passed over their house – and they were not killed! In the same way the **scarlet cord** would mean death would pass over Rahab's house!

Early Christian writers such as **Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen** and others **saw this scarlet cord as a symbol of the blood of Jesus.**

The **scarlet cord** should remind us of the **scarlet blood that Jesus shed** on the cross – so that He could fulfil God’s escape plan for US!

His **blood** shed – gives us the escape from the punishment of our sins – which is death. And His resurrection – gives us the escape from death – and offers us eternal life in Heaven. BUT only if we have genuine faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection!

(pause)

Eventually when Joshua and his army enter Jericho

Joshua would be a Saviour for Rahab, but a judge over the rest of Jericho.

In the same way, Jesus is a Saviour for those who believe in Him, but a judge for those who reject Him.

(pause)

We’re not quite done yet

There’s one final point – **God Saves by Grace for a Purpose** – which is in verses 22-24 and our NT reading on Ephesians 2:8-10

[Slide-final point]

God Saves by Grace for a Purpose (Joshua 2:22-24 and Ephesians 2:8-10)

By God’s grace the spies return to Joshua safely

But they are saved for a purpose

See v24 they report “*The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people [of Jericho] are melting in fear because of us*”

The spying mission might not have been quite what Joshua and the spies expected – but their safe return and report – would increase the faith and

courage of Joshua and the Israelites immensely – knowing that God was with them!

There was another purpose at work in sending the spies and that is this: to save Rahab. In this, we see the extent God goes to in order to bring one woman and her father’s household to salvation — someone seemingly “impossible” to save.

We may know some people that seem “impossible” to save, but God’s hand is not too short or too weak to save people like Rahab, and He can work in amazing ways to bring salvation.

Are we praying for the “impossible” to happen? Nothing is impossible for God!

If He saved a wretch like me – He can save anyone!

And by including Rahab in His Word – Rahab is an example of faith and action working together. Her inclusion is a great encouragement to us today – and to many in the past – and I expect many in the future!

God’s grace is something that the Apostle Paul tells us about in our NT reading from Ephesians 2:8-10 [[Please turn there now](#)]

Paul tells us we are saved **by** God’s **grace** (God’s underserved favour) - **through** our **faith** (and even our faith is a gift from God) - and we are **not saved by works** in case we boast about how good we are! Paul also says **we are God’s**

handiwork, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God has prepared in advance for us to do!

A neat way to summarize this is: We are saved BY grace, THROUGH faith, FOR good works, which God has already planned for us to do.

Applying this to Rahab, she was saved BY God's grace (God's undeserved favour in sending the spies to specifically save her), saved THROUGH her faith (which was also a gift from God and God knew she would believe), and saved FOR the good works of hiding the spies, and this good work, God had already planned in advance for her to do – and yet she had free will to choose – but God knew she would choose to do His will!

Likewise – we are saved BY God's grace – THROUGH our faith (also a gift from God) – FOR good works that God has prepared for us!

The question is: are we being obedient to God in doing the good works He has prepared for us to do – or are we ignoring His calling – are we failing to use the gifts He has given us – are we cruise-control Christians – is there some way we could serve at Church – but we're holding back?

One finally point, I'd like to make is **the beauty of God's grace.**

Joshua chapter 2 is not essential for telling the story of the Israelites occupying the Promised Land. Chapter 3 where the Israelites cross the River Jordan would flow quite naturally from chapter 1 – and we could simply skip chapter 2 altogether!

But God included chapter 2 – because...

Rahab is a prostitute and a pagan – who needs to be saved!

Now that can be offensive to some!

We might say – we can't have that – our church is for respectable, clean, decent folks.

But that is like saying hospitals are only for doctors and nurses and x-ray machines – and not for sick people!

Or it's like saying only morticians and coroners belong in morgues – not dead people!

But who else should be in church but sinners?

Our church is not a social club or community group – but a refuge for sinners – a hospital for the broken, sick and needy – a refuge for sinners who have been touched by God's grace – just like Rahab!

The Apostle Matthew seemed to see in Rahab – **a trophy of the beauty of God's grace**. Rahab this shady lady from Jericho is included in our Lord Jesus' genealogy!

In Matthew 1:5-6 – **Rahab is the great great grandmother of King David – and the Earthly great great (many greats) grandmother of King Jesus!**

That's amazing grace – isn't it.

Are we not thankful that *“As the heavens are higher than the Earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways and God's thoughts higher than our thoughts”*

If God's ways were not higher than our ways – none of us would be saved either!

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Rahab, who believed in You and trusted You for salvation. Help us to have faith like hers — to believe Your Word and to act on it. Thank You that You are a God who saves not because we deserve it, but because You are gracious and merciful. Thank You that we can be saved from judgment and brought into Your family. Help us to trust You, to live by faith, and to show kindness and courage like Rahab did. Please help us to remember that salvation comes from You alone. We thank You most of all for Jesus, whose blood saves us and brings us safely into Your kingdom. We pray this in His name. Amen.

Benediction (Hebrews 13:20-21)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.