

## ***“Interlude: The Faith of Rahab” – Joshua 2:1-22; 6:22-25***

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com).]*

Take a Bible and meet me in Joshua 2...

Today’s sermon is something of an interlude and bridge between our study of what Paul teaches on justification in Romans and what James teaches on justification in his epistle. Let’s review where we have been in recent months...

In the course of our series on the New Testament letter of James, we paused in the second half of James 2 for a little mini-series. This current mini-series has been on the doctrine of justification, a subject that some have suggested James and Paul do not agree on. So for the last several weeks we have been studying what the Apostle Paul taught on justification in Romans 3 and 4, which has afforded us the opportunity to refresh our memories on the “five solas” of the Reformation. So far we have considered the following:

**Rom. 3:21-24—The Source of Our Justification: God and His Grace (*Sola Gratia*)**

**Rom. 3:24-26—The Grounds of Our Justification: Christ and His Cross (*Solus Christus*)**

**Rom. 3:26—The Means of Our Justification: Faith and Not Works (*Sola Fide*)**

**Rom. 3:27-31—The Glory for Our Justification: God’s and Not Ours (*Soli Deo Gloria*)**

**Rom. 4:1-25—The Example of Our Justification: Abraham and His Faith (*Sola Scriptura*)**

With this in mind we are just about ready to pivot back into James and compare his teaching with Paul’s. As I said at the outset of this study, I believe the teaching of each man is not contradictory but complementary. The key is to understand the questions that each author is addressing. Paul is addressing more of the root of our justification (the basis of its onset) and the other is considering the fruit that flows from justification (the outworking that proves its existence). The series slide was meant to communicate this.

[Show Series Slide]

So why, you may be wondering, are we dipping into Joshua 2 at this stage? Well, there is a simple explanation—because James does. As we transition back to James and what he teaches on justification, we discover that he, like Paul, uses Old Testament figures to illustrate his points. One of those figures is Abraham. Both James and Paul quote Genesis 15:6—which states that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness—to reinforce the lessons they are highlighting about the doctrine of justification. We considered how Paul uses Abraham last week. Soon we will compare that to what James says.

But James also brings up a woman by the name of Rahab, who we are first introduced to in Joshua 2. He assumes that we know the story and can infer how it supports what he says. I’m not going to assume that we have the same knowledge base of the Old Testament, so I want us to look at Rahab’s story in context this morning. This will provide the background we will need next week when we transition back to James. It also will provide us another illustration of what Paul taught us last week, which I’ll explain later.

Truth be told, we considered Rahab a little over a year ago in our study on Hebrews 11. You might remember that the author of Hebrews said the following in his chapter on faith:

*“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.”* (Hebrews 11:30-31)

Both of these verses consider events that took place at the city of Jericho, the first city Israel was to capture during the conquest of Canaan. This conquest is one of most difficult sections of the Old Testament for the sheer fact that it is so bloody and without mercy. The people of Israel had been delivered from their slavery in Egypt. They had wandered in the wilderness for forty years, a generation all but dying off, because of unbelief. But God had promised that He would lead his people into a land flowing with milk and honey. We call it the Promised Land, but on the map it was known as the land of Canaan.

For the people of God to inherit the land the people of Canaan would be disinherited. Of course, this process was much more violent than I have made it sound. Within the story the concept of *harem* (or “ban”) was applied, which “meant the total dedication of all that was being attacked—human, animal, or material—to God himself.”<sup>1</sup> Nothing was to survive when the Israelites came upon the various Canaanite peoples. It was brutal. It was bloody. It was terrifying. And it was commanded by the Lord.

Understandably, this conquest raises many theological challenges, questions we will not solve today. If this is a subject that you are interested in, I would recommend a book by Christopher J. H. Wright, titled, *The God I Don't Understand*, where he dedicates a couple chapters to the conquest of Canaan and the questions it raises. He labors to show that we must understand “the conquest narratives in the framework of the Old Testament story, in the framework of God’s sovereign justice, and in the framework of God’s whole plan of salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

Wright makes a number of relevant points. He reminds us that the conquest was a unique event that “was never meant to become a model for how all future generations were to behave toward their contemporary enemies (whether future generations of Israelites or, still less, of Christians).”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the conquest is *not* rightly labeled as human genocide, but divine judgment. This is a point I’ll make toward the end of the sermon. It’s also a point that was hinted at in Hebrews 11, where the author refers to the Canaanites as “*those who were disobedient*” (Heb. 11:31).

And, indeed, we are given this impression all the way back in the book of Genesis when God told Abraham, in the same chapter we examined last week, that the time was not right for him to possess the land in question because “*the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*” (Gen. 15:16). The Amorites would have been the occupants of the city of Jericho, in Canaan. It would take several centuries before God would bring judgment upon the people of Canaan, but this was what He was doing in the conquest and He was doing it through the nation of Israel. The conquest was an act of divine judgment on wicked people, who for centuries had chosen not to repent. And this does not imply that Israel was perfect. They were not. And when their own sin accumulated, God would use other nations as His instrument to bring judgment on Israel. The famous examples would be centuries after the conquest (i.e., Assyria and Babylon), but, as we shall see, we need look no further than the conquest itself to see this point made unmistakably.

Even still, the conquest of Canaan leaves a sour taste in our mouths and a flurry of mysteries clouding our minds. But I appreciate Wright’s reflections at the end of his very helpful discussion. He confesses,

“I may not understand why it had to be this way. I certainly do not like it. I may deplore the violence and suffering involved, even when I accept the Bible’s verdict that it was an act of warranted judgment. I may wish there had been some other way. But at some point I have to stand back from my questions, criticism, or complaint and receive the Bible’s own word on the matter. What the Bible unequivocally tells me is that this was an act of God that took place with the overarching narrative through which the only hope for the world’s salvation was constituted.

Within the overall biblical perspective, the road to Canaan was one small stretch along the road to Calvary. From that point of view, I cannot do other than include it among the mighty acts of God for which all his people are called to praise him. I have to read the conquest in light of the cross.

And when I do set it in light of the cross, I see one more perspective. For the cross too involved the most horrific and evil human violence, which, at the same time, also constituted the outpouring of God's judgment on human sin. The crucial difference, of course, is that, whereas *at the conquest, God poured out his judgment on a wicked society who deserved it, at the cross, God bore on himself the judgment of God on human wickedness, through the person of his own sinless Son—who deserved it not one bit.*"<sup>4</sup>

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

The focus of the text in Hebrews and James, however, is not theodicy, trying to exonerate God's destruction of the Canaanites, but the faith of the Israelites during the siege of Jericho and, in particular, the faith of this woman named Rahab. So let's consider...

### **The Faith of Israel at Jericho**

It is interesting that writer of Hebrews would highlight the faith of the Israelites when the story of the conquest of Jericho never mentions their faith. Nevertheless, their faith shines in the narrative through their obedience to God's instruction. And they were strange instructions to say the least.

The city of Jericho was a walled city and by all accounts these walls were impregnable. They were a picture of the alleged "invincible might" of Canaan.<sup>5</sup> So what would Israel have to do to penetrate the city and gain a victory? Not what they expected. The strategy the Lord gives their troops is marching around the city and playing instruments for seven days (Josh. 6). Then at the end of the march they were to "*make a loud blast of with the ram's horn*" and join together in a "*loud shout*" and they are assured that the walls would come crashing down (6:5, 20).

Imagine if Joshua came to you, a soldier in Israel, and said that instead of constructing battering rams to breach the gate or ladders to scale the walls,<sup>6</sup> you are sending in the marching band. It doesn't exactly sound like a winning strategy, does it?<sup>7</sup> I'm sure the people of Jericho were lulled into false assurance when they witnessed Israel on the march. The whole things just seemed silly and doomed to fail.

But that's the point. God wanted Israel to trust Him to gain the victory and to demonstrate their faith in Him by obeying a set of instructions that seemed absurd. The fact that they followed "such an unorthodox battle plan evidenced the faith of Israel, for no one conquers enemies with such a 'military strategy.'"<sup>8</sup> No one, that is, unless God supernaturally brings the victory. And that is what happens. The Israelites believe the Lord. They obey His instructions. They persist in their obedience for seven days. The walls come tumbling down at the sound of their voices and the city is delivered over into their hands. And we learn, yet again, "that the faith that pleases God takes action in response to God's word, even when visible circumstances make his commands seem foolish and his promises impossible."<sup>9</sup>

But the faith expressed on that day was not just outside the city. And that brings us to one of my favorite characters in the Bible—Rahab...

### **The Faith of Rahab in Jericho**

Rahab is a curious addition to the "Hall of Faith" chapter of the Bible. She was, after all, a prostitute, a Canaanite, and a citizen of a condemned city. Does it surprise you that she was found on the list? Yet she too

possessed a faith worth emulating. “In a time of danger, she identified herself with the people of Yahweh and believed his promises, even though she was not an Israelite.”<sup>10</sup> It is fitting that she made the list. She is included to make a point. As Raymond Brown, the former principal of Spurgeon’s College in London, once wrote,

“In case the letter’s first readers had thoughtlessly imagined that exemplary faith is peculiar to specially virtuous believers, the author now demonstrates how even the most unlikely people can receive God’s word and prove his power. Although she lacked the religious identity and moral integrity of so many of the heroes of this chapter, Rahab put her faith in their God and was delivered....She knew that humanly speaking she had no right to claim salvation, but she did not wish to *perish with those who were disobedient*, so she cast herself boldly and directly upon the mercy of the spies...”<sup>11</sup>

What is being referred to are her actions on behalf of Israel in the days before the fall of Jericho. Let’s take a look at that story. Look with me at Joshua 2...

To set the scene, Joshua, Moses’ successor, is preparing the people of Israel for battle as they head into the land of Canaan, the Promised Land that God had prepared for them. The first city in their crosshairs, as we’ve seen, is the city of Jericho. But before all the marching and trumpeting around the city, he needs to do some reconnaissance. That brings us to Joshua 2. Look at the beginning of the chapter...

*“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. <sup>2</sup> And it was told to the king of Jericho, ‘Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.’ <sup>3</sup> 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.’ <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.’ <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.” (Joshua 2:1-7)*

This is the “*friendly welcome*” that the writer of Hebrews says that Rahab extended to the spies of Israel (Heb. 11:31). “God’s agents were saved by a madame, the proprietress of a bordello, a woman who sold her body” and while some in history (like Josephus)<sup>12</sup> have tried to explain away her occupation as something less scandalous the “the New Testament is clear—she was a *pornee*, a prostitute (see James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31).”<sup>13</sup> This is who saved the Israelites. She took them in, provided them shelter, and protected them from their pursuers at great risk to her own life.

Of course, the story raises interesting ethical discussions because she did this through deception. Multiple deceptions. Does this suggest that there are certain circumstances where it is permissible to lie? This is an interesting question and theologians and ethicists have of often come out on different sides of the issue.<sup>14</sup> This text doesn’t solve the matter for us and I don’t think the best use of our time this morning is conjuring up hypothetical situations in which lying may or may not be permissible. That’s not the point of our text. Furthermore, I think Kent Hughes is correct,

“We must consider Rahab’s lie against the backdrop of her pagan culture and lowly profession. She had no knowledge of the revelation given to Israel at Sinai. We can be sure that godly morality and its radical truth ethic had not penetrated her pagan mind. True, she possessed a moral conscience, but it was not informed by God’s Word. Hence it very likely did not occur to her that she was doing wrong. I am not saying that her lie was OK or that people are better off not knowing what is right and what is not. But I am saying that God recognized the motive behind the act—and that motive was faith!”<sup>15</sup>

He is right. And we do well to keep Rahab's example in mind so that we can be more...

“sympathetic and patient with the character of recent converts....Often real faith is salted with sin, and God finds faith where we do not (and often cannot) see it. We should be slow to judge sin and quick to perceive faith.”<sup>16</sup>

But, as with the Israelites marching around Jericho's walls, the faith we perceive in Rahab is not explicitly mentioned in the text of Joshua. But it is discerned through her actions and her obedience. Faith alone saves a person, but the faith that saves is never alone. This is the point that James, the half-brother of Jesus, makes in the New Testament, when he uses Rahab as one of his examples to prove the point that “*faith apart from works is dead*” (James 2:25-26). Faith always proves itself through action. Her actions were radical, costly, and risky because they proceeded from a true faith in God. This is what we consider in greater detail next week, Lord willing.

But how did she come to faith in Israel's God? No doubt this was a question in the mind of the spies, but Rahab eventually enlightens them. Verse 8...

*“Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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 <sup>13</sup> 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.’ <sup>14</sup> 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.’ <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.’ <sup>17</sup> The men said to her, ‘We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.’ <sup>21</sup> 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.” (Joshua 2:8-22)<sup>17</sup>*

Several point out that there is some evidence to suggest that...

“the scarlet rope may have been the mark of a prostitute and that Rahab lived, so to speak, in the ‘red rope’ district. It is also noted that since the Hebrew word for ‘rope’ is the same word for ‘hope’—and most often means ‘hope’—there may be an intentional pun here: the ‘rope’ is the prostitute's ‘hope’ for customers! But now that Rahab has confessed [Yahweh] as God, her scarlet ‘rope’ signified a new kind of ‘hope’—that of deliverance by God.”<sup>18</sup>

It was the cord of faith. And many in church history, dating at least back to Clement of Rome, have seen this scarlet cord as foreshadowing the blood of Christ. Clement, writing in the first century, suggested that the cord

pictured “that through the blood of the Lord all who trust and hope in God shall have redemption” (1 Clem. 12:7).

This kind of allegorization may be more imagined than inspired, but I do think that there is a connection between this cord and the Passover, which, you will remember, took place forty years prior. During the first Passover the Israelites were commanded to gather their entire families into their home (just like Rahab was) and to paint red blood upon the door so that the angel of death would see it, pass over their house, sparing them the destruction of God’s judgment. While Rahab likely was ignorant of this story, the spies may very well have had it in mind when they gave her instructions for her deliverance. “In both cases the red upon the door or the window evidence the faith of those inside.”<sup>19</sup> The red symbolized their deliverance, the grace of God upon them. And, not surprisingly, this symbolism has been picked up in church history as many church buildings over the centuries have painted their door red to call their congregants attention to these same realities. Those doors behind you in our sanctuary were painted with this in mind. They are about old-fashioned theology, not an attempt to be modern and trendy.

I hope when you enter or leave this place you too will be reminded of God’s gracious welcome to you through the blood of Christ. Israel painted her doors red in Egypt to confess that they were sinners in need of a Savior. Rahab hung her red rope to confess her need for deliverance. In both cases, the sign was seen as a picture of their faith and inclusion into the people of God. Even if our past would have made Rahab blush, we too have been shown mercy through faith in Christ. We enter in through the blood of Christ and now in Christ there is no longer condemnation. May that thought cross our minds every time we come in those doors to prepare our hearts for worship and every time we exit those doors to prepare us for missions.

I imagine Rahab could never look at a red door or a red rope without a flood of emotions welling up inside of her. She was touched by God’s grace and she would never be the same. And isn’t it good news that “a sordid past does not preclude one from enjoying forgiveness and a future reward”?<sup>20</sup> I for one am glad this is the case, for what hope would I have apart from such grace? “Rahab’s example tells us there is hope for people where we would never dream of it.”<sup>21</sup> God is no respecter of persons. He will save souls from among every variety of sinner. May we never be like the religious people of Jesus’ day who looked down on sinners whom God deems to save. Jesus said to the Pharisees,

*“Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him.” (Matthew 21:31-32)*

Don’t be a Pharisee. Don’t look down on those God is saving. Receive them with joy, for that is the reception they have among the angels of heaven.<sup>22</sup> Jesus said, “*there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance*” (Luke 15:7). Don’t be a party pooper. You deserved grace no more than the Rahabs of this world. But “Rahab’s story means there is hope for all us sinners with our incipient, imperfect, stumbling, selfish faith.”<sup>23</sup> Could there be a greater cause for joy among us this morning?

And this brings us to Rahab’s deliverance. Look at Joshua 6. Jump down to verse 22 and following.

*“But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, ‘Go into the prostitute’s house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.’ <sup>23</sup> So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> But Rahab the prostitute and her father’s household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.” (Joshua 6:22-25)*

From that day forward this lady of the night from the shady streets of Jericho was accepted into the people of God. And more than that she would be highly esteemed among Israel. She married an Israelite and is part of Israel's most important line, the line that leads to Jesus Christ. In the book of Matthew we find the genealogy of Jesus and within this genealogy we read...

“...and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup> and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of David the king.” (Matthew 1:4-6)

And if you keep following the line down through history, you discover that it leads to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. And if you dig still further into this genealogy, you can unearth that Rahab's father-in-law, Nahshon, was one of the twelve chiefs of Israel who made the famous offering at the raising of the Tabernacle (Num. 7:12). He was one of the most prestigious men of Israel in his day, as was his son, who married Rahab, whose descendants would lead to Christ. What a beautiful picture of just how thorough God's acceptance of us is when our faith rests in Him alone.

And that's really what it comes down to—faith. Remember, as I stated at the outset, the conquest of Canaan was not the genocide of a people, it was the righteous judgment of God falling upon people because of their persistence in unbelief. Rahab shows us that a Canaanite could be spared this judgment through faith and incorporated into the people of God. The next story in Joshua shows us that just because you were born among the people of God doesn't mean your unbelief is any less a serious offense before God.

You see, in Joshua 7, we are introduced to another character named Achan. He was an Israelite, who instead of obeying the Lord's instruction to devote all the plunder of the conquered cities of Canaan to the Lord in destruction decides to steal some of the loot for himself. Because of this act of unbelief, God does not give the people of Israel victory in their next battle. They lose badly. In their confusion, Joshua seeks the Lord and eventually finds out that Achan had defied the Lord and stolen the plunder. The consequence is severe. Achan is killed, along with his family, and all their livestock.

At that point alarms should be going off in the mind of the reader. Doesn't that sound familiar? That's what was supposed to happen to the Canaanites. And when you start looking a little closer, you begin to see other parallels, or contrasts, between the story of Achan and the story of Rahab. As I learned from a couple former professors of mine back in college,

“As you read Joshua 7 we realize that Achan is the *exact opposite* of Rahab. Indeed, Rahab and Achan are the only two major characters who are introduced into the story in the first seven chapters of Joshua. Their stories form *bookends* around the chapters dealing with the fall of Jericho...It seems as though the narrator is intentionally contrasting the two, with Jericho as the background.”<sup>24</sup>

If we had time, we could compare Joshua 2 (Rahab) with Joshua 7 (Achan) and notice contrasts like these:<sup>25</sup>

<b>RAHAB</b>	<b>ACHAN</b>
Woman	Man
Canaanite	Hebrew (Tribe of Judah, the best)
Prostitute (disrespectable)	Respectable
Should have died, but survived and prospered	Should have prospered, but died
Her family and all she owned survived	His family and all he owned perished
Nation perishes	Nation prospers
<i>Hides the spies</i> from the king	<i>Hides the loot</i> from God and Joshua
Hides the spies <i>on the roof</i>	Hides the loot <i>under his tent</i>
Fears the God of Israel	Does not fear the God of Israel
Has only <i>heard</i> of God, yet believes	Has <i>seen</i> the acts of God, but disobeys
Her house survives, while the city is burned	His tent is burned
Cattle, sheep, and donkeys of Jericho perish	Cattle, sheep, and donkeys of Achan perish
She becomes like an Israelite and lives	He becomes like a Canaanite and dies

What a contrast between the two! As Danny Hays and Scott Duvall summarize,

“In essence, Rahab and Achan trade places. She becomes like an Israelite and lives among God’s people...Achan, by contrast, a member of Israel, dies like a Canaanite....Note the irony. As we begin reading the story of the annihilation of the Canaanites by the Israelites (the conquest), the first two people we meet in the story are exceptions to the rule! The Canaanite Rahab lives and the Israelite Achan dies. The narrator is letting us know that there is more to the conquest than just the destruction of the Canaanites. There are critical issues of individual faith and obedience involved. Likewise, there is more to faith in God than just nationality or respectability. A Canaanite harlot can find it and a respectable Israelite can miss it.”<sup>26</sup>

In matters of salvation, it comes down to faith. Faith in God as Savior. Not ethnicity or heritage or track records of obedience. Faith. And wasn’t this one of the very lessons Paul taught us back in Romans 3?

“*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,* <sup>30</sup> *since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.*” (Romans 3:29-30)

Rahab, the Gentile, proves the point (even if Paul doesn’t mention her). It all comes down to faith. But how does she factor into James’ argument? Well, come next week and find out.

But if it all comes down to faith, then I would be remiss if I didn’t exhort you to trust in Christ today. He is our only hope in life and in death. So believe on Christ today and you can find full deliverance from sin and full welcome into the people of God. Trust in Christ and live. It’s not the strength of your faith that matters in the end or the purity of it from the start. It’s the object of your faith that matters—God looks for faith in Christ. Will He find it in your life today?

“God does not expect perfection from us. He knows how weak we are. He forbears with us. But he does expect us to act on our faith—even if it is one step at a time—even if it is a stumbling faith. He expects us to hang the scarlet cord in our windows, announcing our faith in this dark world, and to trust him alone for our salvation. He expects a faith that works.”<sup>27</sup>

Let’s pray...

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 90. "One way that the Old Testament resists the temptation to 'apply' the conquest as a model for dealing with enemies forever after is that it is much more frequently referred to simply as an *act of God* rather than as the military achievements of the Israelites [e.g., Deut. 26:3; Josh. 23:3; Psalm 44:2-3]." Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews* (BST; Downers Grove; InterVarsity Press, 1982), 219.

<sup>6</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, "Hebrews" in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 176

<sup>7</sup> "It appeared to be a work childish and ridiculous; and yet they obeyed the divine command; nor did they do so in vain, for success according to the promise followed. It is evident, that the walls did not fall through the shouts of men, or the sound of trumpets; but because the people believed that the Lord would do what he had promised. We may also apply this event to our benefit and instruction: for it is not otherwise, than by faith, that we can be freed from the tyranny of the Devil, and be brought to liberty; and by the same faith, it is that we can put to flight our enemies, and that all the strongholds of hell can be demolished." John Calvin, "Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews", trans. John Owen, in *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 22:300. Similarly, John Chrysostom wrote, "Assuredly the sound of trumpets is unable to cast down stones, though one blow for ten thousand years, but faith can do all things." Cited in Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 502.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (BTCF; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 365-366.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, 176.

<sup>10</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (CCE; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 191.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, 220; Similarly, Calvin asserts, "It hence follows, that those who are most exalted, are of no account before God, unless they have faith; and that, on the other hand, those who are hardly allowed a place among the profane and the reprobate, are by faith introduced into the company of angels." Calvin, 22:301.

<sup>12</sup> Ant. V. 1:2, 7.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (PW; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), 137.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning this, Calvin wrote, "As to the falsehood, we must admit that though it was done for a good purpose, it was not free from fault. For those who hold what is called a "dutiful lie" to be altogether excusable, do not sufficiently consider how precious truth is in the sight of God. Therefore, although our purpose be to assist our brethren, to consult for their safety and relieve them, it never can be lawful to lie, because that cannot be right which is contrary to the nature of God. And God is truth.... On the whole, it was the will of God that the spies should be delivered, but He did not approve of saving their lives by falsehood." John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 47. Contra Norman L. Geisler, *The Christian Love Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 78-80.

<sup>15</sup> K. Hughes, 139.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "No doubt, fear contributed to the formation of her faith. Fear is an inevitable and natural consequence of sensing that God's justice leaves us in the wrong. Rahab knew she was a sinner. She was ready for faith. The testimony of the spies opened her to faith. Rahab would immediately have sensed the difference between the Israelite visitors and the clients who normally frequented her house. The spies were not sensualists but holy men of impeccable morals. She had never seen this before. They were sure of their God. Their ethos confirmed the reality of what she had been hearing from the merchants. She was spiritually enticed." Ibid., 141.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 139-140, drawing on Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 140. Francis Schaeffer made the same point: "When the children of Israel were about to leave Egypt, they were given the blood of the Passover Lamb under which to be safe. When the people were about to enter the land, they were met by a different, but parallel sign—a red cord hanging from the window of a believer." Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 78.

<sup>20</sup> Schreiner, 366.

<sup>21</sup> K. Hughes, 142.

<sup>22</sup> "Anyone who looks down on Rahab had better beware, for it is obvious that such a person has a defective doctrine of sin and does not understand the depth of human iniquity or heights of the grace of God. All of us stand in Rahab's place in front of a holy God. And many of us are worse, because she had such little knowledge. We must at least be as wise as Rahab, who though she understood little did understand that she was under God's judgment and sought redemption." Ibid., 144.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>24</sup> J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, third edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012),

<sup>25</sup> The following chart is taken from Ibid., 338.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> K. Hughes, 144.