

## Rehashing Rahab's Rehabilitation



By Ben Godwin

Rahab's Rehabilitation is one of the most remarkable stories of redemption in all of Scripture. It's the story of how God turned a harlot into a heroine of faith. A heroine is defined as "A woman noted for her courage or ability and admired for her brave deeds and noble qualities." It all took place in ancient Jericho, the first city Israel defeated during its conquest of Canaan.

Joshua was one of the original twelve spies Moses sent out forty years earlier. Twelve spies, but only two (Joshua and Caleb) were wise. It has been said, "Ten brought back gripes, but only two brought back grapes." The ten returned with an evil report of unbelief that swept like a virus through the camp. Instead of conquering Canaan land within a year of their exodus from Egypt, Israel spent forty years on a spiritual treadmill wandering in the wilderness. Joshua learned a valuable lesson and only sent two spies to scout out Jericho (it's much easier to get two people to agree than twelve). The spies providentially landed on the doorstep of a helpful prostitute named Rahab.

The fact that Rahab had stalks of flax on her roof and scarlet colored thread in her house leads some scholars to believe she was a fabric maker and a cloth dyer. Flax was used to spin linen. Some say the word "harlot" can be translated "innkeeper," so some speculate that Rahab ran a motel of sorts where she "entertained" her guests. Bible commentator Herbert Lockyer, in his book *All the Women of the Bible*, wrote, "The Bible makes no attempt to smooth over the unpleasant fact that Rahab had been a harlot. Three times over Rahab is referred to as 'the harlot', and the Hebrew term *zoonah* and the Greek word *porne* have at no time meant anything else but 'harlot'—a woman who yields herself indiscriminately to every man approaching her."

As a prostitute, Rahab was enslaved by sexual sin. Her life was a moral train wreck before God rescued her. Illicit sex is one of many vices Satan uses to keep people in bondage. No, God is not anti-sex. After all, He invented it! But He is against sexual behavior that is destructive to us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. God designed and intended for sex to be a beautiful gift for married couples to share and use to express their mutual love. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). God established boundaries in His Word to protect us from the harmful consequences that result from promiscuity. God is not an overbearing killjoy in heaven who wants to deprive us of fun. Rather, He is a

loving Father who wants to protect us from disease, broken relationships, premature pregnancy, and other negative factors. Which would you prefer, a fence at the top of a cliff or an ambulance at the bottom? The fence is God's boundary for sexual behavior. The ambulance is His grace that will rescue us if we fall, but it cannot erase all the heartache caused by our poor choices. The old adage is still true—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The problem is we live in a sex saturated society. Temptation lurks everywhere. You can't even watch a football game or the news without being bombarded by lewd commercials and previews for trashy shows and movies. Magazines and music videos scream sensuality. Pornography floods the internet like an open sewer. Technology has made sin more accessible than ever. Remember, however, that it is not a sin to be tempted—it just means you're human. Martin Luther said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head; but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." Likewise we can't prevent every impure thought from crossing our mind, but we can choose not to dwell on, act on, or allow them to take root in our heart. We must remain ever vigilant to avoid Satan's sinful snares and shun the very appearance of evil.

Rahab agreed to tie a scarlet rope in her window after helping the spies escape. That red rope is a reminder to us to keep our eyes upon the blood of Jesus. Our victory begins and continues by looking to and believing in Christ's atoning work on the cross. Notice only one family was saved from Jericho. Only one family will survive the judgment that will come upon this prodigal planet—the blood-washed, born again family of God.

After Jericho fell, Rahab left the cursed city, renounced her harlotry, and joined up with Israel (Joshua 6:25). She later married one of the spies she had hidden, Salmon. Together they had a son named Boaz, who married Ruth. They, in turn, had a son named Obed, whose son, Jesse, had a son named—you guessed it—David. Wow! What a miracle of grace! Rahab, the former harlot turned housewife, became the great, great grandmother of King David. It gets better too. Rahab was also one of only four Gentile women included in the lineage of Jesus along with Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba, all of whom had checkered pasts (Matthew 1:1-6).

Rahab was also one of only two women (Sara being the other) listed among the heroes of faith. "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace" (Hebrews 11:31). Furthermore, she was cited as an example of how works compliment faith in justification. "Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?" (James 2:25) God turned a harlot into a heroine of faith and an ancestor of Christ. That's what His grace can do. And, if God rehabilitated Rahab, there's no telling how He'll transform your life if you let Him. So, how's your rehab coming along?

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