

RAHAB

Week 5 | Rascals | Joshua 2 - 6

Deeper Dive

At this time, Israel had been wandering the desert for many years waiting for God to allow them to enter the promised land. Israel's leader, Moses, had just died and the Lord has placed Moses' assistant, Joshua, as their new leader. The Lord gave Joshua instructions to enter into the land of Canaan, therefore, the Israelites are preparing to battle the other nations living in there.

After crossing the Jordan River, the first city they would need to conquer was Jericho. Jericho was a wealthy & highly fortified Canaanite city. The Canaanites were known for their cult-like practices, public temple prostitution, and their brutal practice of child sacrifice.

The fortified walls of Jericho had a double layer. Between the outer and inner walls was a space where travelers and foreigners could easily access. This was the "rough" part of town. It had small inexpensive structures typically used for storage houses, inns, taverns and prostitution. This was the area that Rahab lived against the outer wall.

Day 1 - The God who sees

READ: Joshua 2:1

The very first thing we learn about Rahab is her profession. Even before we know her name, we know what she does for a living. The word used for Rahab's profession is "Zonah". Some scholars have suggested that she might have just been an innkeeper, or maybe one of the temple workers. However, this isn't likely because the word "Zonah" was typically only used for an "ordinary" harlot, prostitute, or sex worker, just like we would think of those words today. Of course, there are many reasons women enter this profession. No different than today, many times we see this in households of abuse, deep poverty, or other socio-economic disparities. She may have been initially sold into this type of work, or she may have needed an income and didn't have many options. Regardless of the "why", we know that this profession would have made her a societal outcast with very little room for future potential or personal transformation.

Despite her low position, sinful profession, and her status as a Canaanite woman, God places Rahab right in the middle of His great rescue plan for His people. God sees past the barriers of her sin, her past, and her status in society. God sees the redeemed Rahab that she WILL be. God sees the good inside her heart, her faithfulness, her courage, and her belief as His follower. Just as Hagar says in Genesis, He is "the God who sees me", or "El Roi". Hagar, like Rahab, was in a similar low position, with a checkered past, and had an unexpected moment of grace from God. She was Abraham's slave, had his illegitimate child, was abused by his wife, ran away, and then experienced God's grace during her time of distress. Just as God saw Rahab and Hagar, God SEES us too. He sees past our barriers of sin, shame, guilt, pain, brokenness, and our messed up past (and even if it's still our present). God sees our potential as redeemed by His grace, and He desires for each of us to be a part of His good purpose & plan.

- What does it mean to you, when you hear He is the "God who sees"? Are there areas where you have doubted His ability to SEE you?
- Have you allowed shameful areas in your past (or present) to hold you back from experiencing God's grace? Have you allowed this to keep you from following God's plans for your life?

Deeper Dive

- **Luke 15: 3-7** ~Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.
- **Psalms 23: 4** ~Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- **Hebrews 12:6** ~It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children.
- **Romans 8:28** ~And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

Day 2 - The God who saves

READ: Joshua 2:2-24

Did God NEED for Joshua to send spies into Jericho? Surely not. God knows everything, so why would He need spies? Often in God's plans, we don't always understand the full picture. God asks us to trust Him BEFORE we know the whole story. What if this 007 secret mission in Jericho wasn't really about scouting out the city, but was really about saving Rahab? What if the God who saw Rahab and knew her heart wanted to extend His grace and offer her the chance to be rescued?

When the two spies entered the city, they stayed at Rahab's home. This was most likely because of where she lived in proximity to the entrance of the city and because this area was known to have many travelers & foreigners staying there. We can also guess that someone in Rahab's occupation probably wouldn't ask too many questions of her guests and would have known how to keep secrets. Even with their covert plan, the spies are somehow reported to the King. It's in this moment that Rahab literally risks her life to thwart the King's plans to protect the spies. The city that viewed her as a mere commodity would have surely killed her for this act of treason. Why would she risk her life for two strangers? Why not seek potential glory from her king, or at the very least a financial reward, or some chance of redemption by handing over these men? Let's remember, at the time she chooses to protect them by committing this treasonous act, she didn't have a "deal" with them for protection yet. She had no logical reason to protect them.

Rahab might not have known these men, but she knew their God. As she tells them in verse 11 "for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below", Rahab believed in the Lord. She believed in the what the Lord had done, knew of His great power over all things, and saw His great love for His people. Rahab had faith in this God who saves and was courageous enough to ask Him to save her family too. The agreement to tie a crimson cord from her window as a sign of protection would have been a familiar visual picture of the lamb's blood over the door frame during the passover. The God who saves passed over the homes of His people and spared their lives, just as He does with Rahab and her household.

No matter how far you feel from God, how messy your past, or how scared you are about the future, we can have the same courageous faith as Rahab. We can trust that God is who He says He is. We can move from seeing God, to having faith in Him, to following Him as He leads us to His saving Grace! He is ALWAYS the God who saves!

- What has God already shown you about Himself in your life? How have you responded to that truth?
- Is there a step of courageous faith that God is calling you to take? What is keeping you from following the God who saves?

Deeper Dive

- **James 2: 14-26**~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.
- **Ephesians 2: 8**~For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God
- **Romans 8: 1-4**~Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.[c] And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
- **Romans 5: 8**~But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **Hebrews 11: 31**~By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient

Day 3 - The God who justifies

READ: James 2:14-26 & Hebrews 11

A simple definition of “justify” is to *declare* someone as righteous. When God *declares* a sinner righteous because of their faith they don’t literally become instantly “Holy”. Justification doesn’t make our sin ok, or even take away the earthly consequences. However, it cancels our debt, and our guilty verdict is taken away. Justification by grace, through faith, makes us righteous before the ultimate Holy judge: The Lord. Let’s take a deeper look at what it means to receive this gift from the God who justifies.

- **Free & unearned gift** - Ephesians 2:8 - Justification is a free gift. It is available for anyone to receive by grace through faith. Human effort could never ever place us in right standing with God. There is nothing good enough we could ever do to earn it, and there is nothing bad enough we could ever do to make us loose the chance to receive it.
- **Restores us fully** - Romans 8:1-4 - When we are justified by grace through faith in the Lord we are fully restored in our relationship with Him. This is more than just being “acquitted” of our sins. This is receiving full acceptance, favor, and peace associated with being in relationship with the Lord.
- **Debt paid** - Romans 5:8 - Being justified doesn’t erase our sin, or make it ok. It also doesn’t always take away the consequences we may experience here on earth from our brokenness. However, justification pays the ultimate price for our sin. Our debt is paid fully by Jesus on the cross. His life is the only sacrifice needed for our sin to be justified before a Holy God. Our debt has been fully paid.

These verses in James mention Rahab as being made righteous by her putting their faith into action. Of course this doesn’t mean that her actions somehow justified her righteousness, or that she earned her own righteousness. James is speaking of having a faith that is shown and proven through her actions. Ultimately it was her faith that lead her to God’s gracious gift of righteousness. We see this again in Hebrews 11. This entire chapter is dedicated to a list of those that received His righteousness through their courageous acts of faith. Rahab is again mentioned among them in verse 31. Her life continued to be a powerful testimony of God’s saving grace throughout scripture, just as it is today. He is the God who justifies, by His grace, through our faith.

- Are there areas in your life that you feel the urge to earn God’s approval, or somehow earn your own self-righteousness? Are you doing “good things”, but lacking the faith or heart behind them?
- What would it look like to have faith in the Lord verses faith in your own self-righteousness? What would having a faith like Rahab change in your life?

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Hebrews 12:1-2**

~Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- **Ruth 4:14** ~Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!

- **Isaiah 43:1** ~But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

- **Psalm 107: 2** ~Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

- **Luke 1:68** ~Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

Day 4 - The God who sanctifies

READ: Joshua 6:17-25; Matthew 1: 1-6

When the battle of Jericho began, Joshua and his men were careful to rescue Rahab and her family. We are told that her household was the ONLY one saved that day. She was even given a place to live peacefully among the Israelites. Of course we don't know as many details about her life after this point. However, because of her inclusion in later texts, we can see that her life of faith didn't end with being rescued, saved, and justified by her faith.

Rahab moved from seeing God, to receiving God's saving grace, to being justified as righteous by her faith, and ultimately to being allowed to live among God's people to a future life & journey of sanctification. Sanctification is different than justification. This is the life-long journey of becoming more and more like the God that we serve. Sanctification is the process and journey of our spiritual growth and maturity. We know that Rahab chose to live this life of sanctification because of her testimony mentioned in the future scriptures. Those mentioned in the Hebrews 11 verses are often nicknamed as the "Hall of Fame" of believers in that time. They are the ones referenced in Hebrews 12 as the "great cloud of witnesses" whose testimonies should encourage us all, even today, in our journey to follow the Lord through our sanctification.

As we read these verses in Matthew, we see God's grace and redemption on full display. In most ancient texts it was highly uncommon to list the maternal names of those in a lineage, especially the lineage of a King. However, God often breaks the societal norms and uplifts those we wouldn't ordinarily uplift. Reading this list of names in the lineage of Christ, we see several unexpected names. In verse 5 we see Rahab!! That's right...RAHAB "the prostitute" is in the lineage of Christ. She went from being a Canaanite prostitute, to the wife of Salmon, to the mother of Boaz. If Boaz's name sounds familiar, it's because he becomes Ruth's kinsman redeemer. Ruth was a Moabite widow in desperate need. Boaz, Rahab's son, came to her rescue. Boaz had his mother's heart of faith, and with Ruth brought yet another "outsider" into the lineage of Christ.

God in His great rescue plan for Israel included a prostitute because He SAW her heart, He extended His grace and justified her through her faith, and then He drew her into the Israelite community and lovingly sanctified her with a life of serving Him. She was redeemed and transformed by a loving Father. A life that was once without hope or promise of a future, was forever placed in the lineage of King David, and ultimately of Jesus Himself.

- How does this story of redemption, sanctification, and grace encourage you in your faith journey? Does knowing the past of those in the lineage of Christ change your view on how God can use your life, your past, and your unlikeliness in His Kingdom plans?

Deeper Dive

- **2 Corinthians 5:17**
~Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
- **2 Corinthians 12:9** ~But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me
- **Titus 3: 5-7** ~he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life
- **Matthew 5:16** ~ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- **Ephesians 2:10** ~For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Day 5 - The God who transforms

We all have a story, we all have a past, we all have brokenness and messed up places in our lives. No matter how good we think we are, no matter how hard we try to distance ourselves from those skeletons in our closets, when we compare ourselves to a Holy God we all fall short. None of us are any better than Rahab. We all need to be seen, to be rescued, to be justified by grace through faith, to go on the journey of sanctification, and to be transformed by God. How do we get there? How do we live out this transformed life of grace and faith as we continue to grow closer to the Lord?

Here are some simple truths we can learn from Rahab's testimony, as she cheers us on in the "great cloud of witnesses". Let's take some time to pray over these this week.

1. **My identity is in who God says I am** - 2 Corinthians 5:17; 12:9 - My past is not my identity, God's grace is. His power and grace are made perfect in my weakness. *Prayer ~ God, thank you that you meet me with grace and not condemnation. Help me to release the labels I've carried in shame, and believe what you say about me. Teach me to live as someone made new, instead of being defined by my past.*
2. **I am saved by grace** - Titus 3:5-7 - There is nothing I can do to earn God's approval, or my own righteousness. I will trust in God's provision for salvation instead of my own efforts to be "good enough". *Prayer ~ God, help me to remember that I am only good enough because of you. Strengthen my faith so it is rooted in who you are, and not who I am striving to be. Help me not to become so busy "doing" for you, that I loose site of "being" with you.*
3. **My faith is meant to be seen** - Matthew 5:16 - My faith is meant to be lived out. My life should point other's to Christ and not to anything else, including myself. Faith lived out and seen takes courage! *Prayer ~ God, help my faith to be seen in how I live, and not just in what I say. Give me the courage to reflect your goodness in everyday moments. Let my life point others to you, and not to myself.*
4. **I can trust God to re-write my story** - Ephesians 2:10 - We are not just saved FROM something, we have been saved FOR something. *Prayer ~ God, thank you for your redeeming love. Help me to see and trust that you are re-writing my story with purpose. Give me the strength to live beyond survival through your saving grace and step into the calling that you have for my life.*