

Lesson 47 - A NOTORIOUS SINNER SAVED BY GRACE Joshua 2

The reality of God's grace in the salvation of sinners is truly an astounding thing. It is a matter of amazing grace. God's Word tells us that God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to "save His people from their sins" (*Matt. 1:21*). When He was criticized by the unbelieving, self-righteous Pharisees for eating and drinking "with publicans and sinners," the Lord told them, "they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (*Mark 2:16-17*). Isaiah the prophet spoke of this amazing grace - "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (*Isaiah 1:18*). People naturally view those who are outwardly immoral as sinners who need salvation, but they consider those who are outwardly moral and religious either as having no need of salvation or less in need of salvation than others. But the fact is that we all are sinners who are equally in need of salvation by God's grace through the righteousness of Christ. The Apostle Paul, an outwardly moral and religious man, recognized this - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (*1 Tim. 1:15*). We need to keep this in mind when we read of one of God's sheep, Rahab the harlot. In God's sight, we are all notorious sinners who need salvation by His grace in Christ.

Rahab, the harlot, is one of the most interesting and important persons in the Bible. It may be hard to imagine that a Gentile prostitute who lived in an infamously sinful place like Jericho could have figured into God's purpose and plan of salvation for His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is true. Consider how many times she is mentioned in the Scriptures. Besides the historical event recorded here in the book of *Joshua*, Matthew identifies her as the wife of Salmon (a prince of the tribe of Judah), as the mother of Boaz who married Ruth, and great-great grandmother of King David (*Matt. 1:5-6*). She is among the hall of faith listed in the book of *Hebrews* along with Abraham, Isaac, and Moses (*Heb. 11:31*). James gave two illustrations of God-given true saving faith evidenced by obedience - Abraham and Rahab (*James 2:20-25*).

(Joshua 2) - As we consider her in *Joshua 2*, Israel was camped across Jordan. Joshua sent two men to spy out the land secretly. They would be taking, especially, the city of Jericho. Jericho was a large city - the city nearest to them and first in importance. Jericho had to be conquered and taken if Israel was to take possession of the Promised Land. However, as we know from God's Word, their victory over Jericho was not due to their own power. It was by God's power that this nation of vagabonds would be able to conquer and take possession of the city of Jericho. And it is an amazing demonstration of God's power and wisdom that He would use a lowly prostitute like Rahab in bringing about the fall of Jericho. Rahab's house was upon the wall which circled the city (*Joshua 2:15*). Her house was one where a person could find food and lodging. This was why the spies stopped there (*Joshua 2:1*). It is mentioned several times that she was a harlot.

The king of Jericho heard that the Israelites were seen at Rahab's house, and the king sent word to her to deliver these men to him. She hid the spies on the roof of the house and sent word to the king that, although the Israelites had been to her house, they had fled and might be overtaken if the king would send someone after them, which he did. As soon as the king's men left Jericho to pursue after the spies, the gate of the city was closed. Rahab came up on the roof where the spies were hidden and professed her faith in the living God (*Joshua 2:8-11*). She then sought the mercy of the Lord to be upon her and her household when the people of God took the city (*Joshua 2:12-13*). The men promised her that she would be spared provided that she kept faith in not telling anyone of their business (*Joshua 2:14*), that

she hang the scarlet line outside her window by which she let them down the wall (*Joshua 2:18*), and that she and her family remain inside the house while the battle raged (*Joshua 2:18*). Her house was upon the wall with the front toward the city for the entertainment of persons who came there, and the back was on the outside of the wall. She let the spies down the wall by the scarlet cord, and they fled to the mountains for safety. When Israel took the city, Joshua commanded that Rahab be spared (*Joshua 6:17, 22-25*). There are several spiritual lessons we can learn from Rahab.

1. Rahab is a picture of God's mercy and grace to sinners. She was a sinner by birth and by practice. All of the explaining by moralists and legalists will not make Rahab anything but what she was - a notorious sinner. But the Lord Jesus came to save sinners (*1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 9:10-13; Rom. 5:6-8*). His mercy is to the miserable and His grace is for the guilty. We see so many examples of the Lord showing mercy and grace to what men by nature see as notorious sinners. Think of Zaccheus, who was a publican, along with the publican in *Luke 18*, the Samaritan woman in *John 4*, and the thief on the cross. What we must learn is that we who are moral and religious in the eyes of men and trying to do what we think is right, in God's sight we are just as sinful as any so-called notorious sinner. We are no closer to the perfection of righteousness that can be found only in Christ than Rahab the harlot. There are none righteous, no, not one (*Rom. 3:10-19*). There are none who can attain forgiveness and righteousness by their works (*Rom. 3:20*). If we truly know ourselves, we will admit that if the Lord would mark (impute) iniquities, none of us would stand (*Psalms 130:3*). Our only hope is that God justly does not charge us with sin (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 8:33-34*). Like Rahab, we need salvation by His grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed to us and received by God-given faith (*Rom. 4:6-8*).

2. Rahab is an example of God's electing, distinguishing, and efficacious grace. It was not by accident that the spies stopped at her house. They were led there by the Spirit of God. Her speech to the spies indicates a heart enlightened and taught by God (*Joshua 2:8-11*). Knowledge and faith are not the products of natural thought and logic; they are the gift of God (*Eph. 2:8-9*). Rahab was one of the Lord's own, and her testimony is proof of her knowledge of the true God, her faith in Him, and shows her to be a believer (*John 6:44-45*). James states that Rahab's obedience in helping the Hebrew spies proved her faith in the true and living God and her rejection of the idols of Jericho.

3. The scarlet cord she put out the window is a picture of the blood of Christ, by which salvation is accomplished. That scarlet cord which she, by faith, dropped from her window is as decisive and clear a picture of Christ's blood as Abel's lamb, or the Passover blood on the door, or the sin-offering in the tabernacle. It is by His blood (God's justice satisfied and the sin-debt paid) that sinners are justified. It is by faith in His blood that we have redemption, forgiveness, atonement, safety, and protection from the avenging justice and wrath of God. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." When they saw the scarlet cord in the window of the harlot, they passed by her house and destroyed all others.

4. Rahab and her family were told to come into her house where the scarlet cord was hung, and only there would they be safe. As the Israelites were told to stay in their houses where the Passover blood was sprinkled, Rahab and her family were to remain under the protection and safety of Joshua. To venture outside was to be destroyed (*Joshua 2:18-19*). Our safety and security are to be IN CHRIST, under His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Php. 3:7-10*). Outside of Christ, there is only death.