

AN UNEXPECTED EXAMPLE

(Hebrews 11:31)

Intro.

1. In the history of the Lord's church, there have always been those converts who had led extremely immoral lives.
2. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
3. We see Saul, a persecutor of the church and self-proclaimed blasphemer.
4. It has always been the case that the worst of sinners often turn to God for salvation.
5. Such is the case with Rahab the harlot.
6. Hopefully, we know the account of Joshua 2.
7. I've always wondered how the two spies ended up in a harlot's house.
 - a. James Coffman wrote, "The basic truth is that, as soon as these men hit town, they made a bee-line to the most popular whorehouse (known to the king) in town not to do anything wrong? In favor of that view is the observation made by Philbeck that, such a place, "Was the least likely to arouse suspicion."
 - b. Barnes wrote, "The spies would of course betake themselves to such a house in Jericho as they could visit without exciting suspicion, and the situation of Rahab's, upon the wall, rendered it especially suitable.
 - c. Br. Cates gave those reasons and one more: God's providence enabled them to find the very person whose faith would cause her to hazard her life to protect the two spies.
 - d. We can only hope it was with noble intentions that the spies landed there on their mission into Jericho.
8. Before we get into the text, we do need to address a topic that is often brought up in connection with Rahab.
 - a. Often people will point out that she lied to the king's men about the spies and that God saved her, so there must be some discrepancy when it comes to lying.
 - b. The Old and New Testaments are clear that lying is sinful, and that entails all lying (Exodus 20:16; Revelation 21:8).
9. There is absolutely never a time when lying is justified.
 - a. This is something we need to be teaching our children and grandchildren.
 - b. Not to one another, to someone intent on hurting someone else, or on our taxes.
10. Why then, the question is asked, is Rahab commended in the New Testament and even has it stated of her that she was justified?
 - a. Notice Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25.
 - b. Neither of these passages commend the lie, only the acts of faith in God.
 - c. Just because the Bible commends someone for something does not mean all that the person ever did is commended.

- i. David is called a man after God's own heart but sinned with Bathsheba.
 - ii. Abraham is called the father of the faithful but lied on at least two occasions.
 - iii. She was commended in spite of her sin, not because of her sin.
 - d. Also, keep in mind her situation.
 - i. She was a prostitute in a pagan land.
 - ii. The Canaanites, which made up the population of Jericho, were widely condemned by God.
 - iii. The practiced abominable customs (Leviticus 18:30; committed abominations (Deuteronomy 18:9), which included witchcraft and offering their children to idolatrous gods (Deuteronomy 18:10-11).
 - iv. It was so bad that God said that the land would vomit out its inhabitants (Leviticus 18:25).
 - v. We don't know if Rahab fully participated in every aspect of the culture or was more a victim of circumstance.
 - vi. However, she was a harlot who lied
 - e. Most importantly, her dishonesty is never condoned in scripture.
 - i. Rahab was commended and spared because of her faith in God, despite her sinful act.
 - ii. One writer said that her faith was still a work in progress.
 - iii. In reality, this is another mark of inspiration in that the actions, both good and bad, of a person of faith are shown.
 - f. As we look at the unexpected example of faith that is Rahab, we want to notice the characteristics of her faith.
- I. It was a saving faith.**
 - a. Notice the words of the verse: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not."
 - b. Rahab did not die the way all the others of Jericho, except those of her family.
 - c. The reason she did not die is that she had a faith in God.
 - i. Notice Joshua 2:9-11 – she said "I know...".
 - ii. She had heard of God and what He had done for Israel and believed in Him.
 - iii. Her belief caused her to faithfully do everything she was told to do.
 - iv. Notice Joshua 2:12ff.
 - d. When you come to chapter 6, you read that she had done all that they had told her to do, which resulted in the salvation of herself and her family.
 - e. She heard the message, believed it, and was saved.
 - f. She lived under a different law than us, but it is the same type faith that saves today.
 - i. It is a faith that moves one to trust and obey.

- ii. She trusted that God was going to be victorious and she obeyed the commands given.
 - g. Today, we must trust that God is going to be victorious over Satan and obey the commands given.
 - h. She had heard of all that God had done and we have as well.
 - i. She believed what she heard and we must as well.
 - j. She then obeyed the commands given and we must as well.
- II. **It was a solitary faith.**
 - a. Remember that all that God had done for the Israelites was known by the people of Jericho.
 - i. Joshua 2:10 records her words as “for we have heard.”
 - ii. All that God did was known and it caused them to fear because she then said that their hearts had melted.
 - b. With all this knowledge of God’s acts for Israel, only Rahab believed in God.
 - c. She stood alone from all the other citizens of the city.
 - d. You think she felt alone?
 - e. She was going against the tide of belief in her city.
 - i. She was already looked down upon for her profession.
 - ii. Now she was going against the entire belief system of the city.
 - f. Many times we preach about Elijah and discuss how he felt alone.
 - i. He wasn’t and we know that.
 - ii. However, it must have been hard on him to do what he did while feeling alone, but he did it anyway.
 - g. It may be that at work, or in your home, you are the only faithful person.
 - h. Yours is a solitary faith in that environment.
 - i. Have the faith of Rahab and express that faith anyway.
- III. **It was a stable faith.**
 - a. Rahab’s faith blossomed in the midst of trial.
 - b. The end of her city was near and she realized it.
 - c. The king was interested in what she knew about the spies and she knew it.
 - d. These things didn’t matter to her.
 - e. I read of a preacher who was in an area being struck by drought.
 - i. One day, one of the members came by and asked the preacher to pray for rain.
 - ii. The preacher answered, “Well, brother, I’ll offer it, but it’s not of use while the wind is in the east I’m sure”.
 - iii. This is the faith of man, they believe just as long as it is probable.
 - iv. They say, the thing is likely so I’ll believe it.
 - f. Rahab looked across the Jordan and believed.
 - g. She was not going to be moved from her belief that the true God was going to do for the Jews as He had done in the past.

- h. Remember that some of the things she had heard about happened 40 years earlier, yet she still believed.
- i. O for a faith that will not move like Rahab's.

IV. It was a self-denying faith.

- a. Rahab risked her life because of her belief.
 - i. The king himself mentioned that he knew those men had been there.
 - ii. The risk of death abounded because of her lies.
- b. Again, she did lie and really twice.
 - i. She said she didn't know where they were from.
 - ii. She said they had left the city.
- c. She was weak enough to sin but strong enough to risk death.
- d. Here was a woman of ill repute willing to die for her belief in God.
- e. Sadly, there are probably many who have known God for years but wouldn't sacrifice much of anything for Him.
- f. True faith in God leads to self-denial.
- g. Everything for God and nothing for ourselves ought to be the desire of us all.

V. It was a sympathizing faith.

- a. She sympathized for her family who was going to die along with everyone else.
- b. Her faith caused her to reach out for her family to obtain salvation for them as well.
- c. Our faith should cause us to strive to obtain salvation for those we love.
 - i. Faith in God can't be kept to oneself.
 - ii. It has to be shared.
- d. Think of a father or mother, wife or husband, who is a Christian but doesn't tell his or her loved ones about the gospel.
- e. Where is the love and sympathy of that person for the ones they profess to love the most in this world?
- f. Faith in God is coupled with a knowledge of what awaits a soul who hasn't been saved.
 - i. That knowledge cannot let someone go on without a knowledge of what will save them.
 - ii. Faith leads to evangelism.

VI. It was a sanctifying faith.

- a. Do you believe that Rahab continued her harlotry after the destruction of Jericho and her salvation from it?
- b. Absolutely not.
- c. We read in Matthew that Rahab married Salmon and they had a child named Boaz.
 - i. Rahab ended up in the lineage of David.
 - ii. This means she was in the lineage of the Christ.
- d. Her faith set her apart from her old way of life.

- e.** This is what faith does.
- f.** Faith moves a person to be obedient and to be different than before obedience.
- g.** Someone who says I have obeyed God and have faith yet continues to live unchanged from their old ways is a liar.
- h.** To have faith, true saving faith, is to be holy.
- i.** Faith is trust and obedience combined.
- j.** This is what Rahab had and it must be found in our lives.
 - i.** If we say we have faith but still talk the same as before, we are faithless.
 - ii.** If we say we have faith but still act the same as before, we are faithless.
- k.** True faith brings about a change in life.

The main points came from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon.