
Words of Truth

Hebrews 11:31

By: Brian A. Yeager

In our previous article we looked at, in part, the fall of the walls around Jericho (Hebrews 11:30). In this article we are still going to be considering something that happened in Jericho. We are going to look at the faith of a harlot. Here is what we are going to study in this article: *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace”* (Hebrews 11:31).

If you read the account of the fall of Jericho in the book of Joshua (Joshua 6:1-27), you read about the harlot and her household being saved. The record states this: *“And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel”* (Joshua 6:21-23). So, what did Rahab do to save herself and her household?

Here is the account of Rahab the harlot: *“And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan,*

Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (Joshua 2:1-13).

If you read the above account, you can see that Rahab believed in God and the power of His might. That is the same kind of faith we as Christians have as we are taught of God's wondrous works (Ephesians 1:19-23). She heard about the work of God and believed it. That is more than what Israel did at times (Deuteronomy 9:23, II Kings 17:12-18, and Psalms 106:21-27). What God did in bringing Israel through the Red Sea had an impact on Rahab as it should have (Joshua 4:23-24). That is the kind of fear that brings about obedience (Deuteronomy 4:39-40). Her belief and actions that came about from that belief was then rewarded.

Notice the promise made to Rahab and her continued actions of faith: *“And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window” (Joshua 2:14-21).*

James wrote: *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:24-26).* A harlot is not typically one thought of when people think of faithful obedience. Yet, a harlot is more likely to be saved than the “religious elite” (Matthew 21:23-32). Rahab is an example of one who can be saved by acting upon one's faith. We all need to hear, believe, and do (James 1:21-25).