

Place: Lurgan Baptist 16:11:2010

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

Reading: Joshua 2:1-24

4. FROM A HOUSE OF SHAME TO A HALL OF FAME

The year was 1725 when godly mother give birth to an only child a boy. Like Hannah in the Old Testament that mother dedicated here child to the Lord praying that one day he would occupy a pulpit in his native land of England. As the boy grew that faithful mother instructed him in the Bible, the Westminster Catechism and hymns of Issac Watts. *Tragically the mother died when the boy was six years old.* Soon the father who lacked any spiritual zeal married a woman with no spiritual concerns at all. The life of the child was all downhill. He was sent away to boarding school but he dropped out to become a sailor like his father. “*I went to Africa,*” he said, “*that I might be free to sin to my hearts content.*” And that he did. Drinking, profanity, and sensuality, gripped him choking out all desire to serve God. He even repudiated the God of his mother. During the next few years his soul was seared by the most revolting of all human experiences. He fell into the pitiless clutches of the press gang. Later as a deserter from the navy he was flogged until the blood streamed down his back. He became involved in the unspeakable atrocities of the African slave trade. And then going from bad to worse, he actually

became a slave himself. He was sold to a woman slave who glorying in her power over him, made him depend for his food on the crusts she tossed under her table. In the epitaph that he composed for himself, he said that he was “*the slave of slaves.*” And then it happened. In 1748 he found himself sailing homeward on a ship called “*The Greyhound.*” While returning home a fierce storm arose and so violent was the storm the crew was certain that the ship would sink. In that hour of desperation that wayward man cried out for mercy. But then in despair he reasoned that there could be no mercy for such a wretch as he. He began to read the Bible and found that there was hope for the worst of sinners. His own words startled him, “*mercy,*” he said to himself him astonishment. “*Mercy, mercy.*” On the 10th March 1748, John Newton sought mercy and found it. His reflections are recorded in one of our beloved hymns, “*Amazing grace.*”

Now what take a wretched infidel like John Newton and transform him into an influential servant of God ? Only God’s amazing grace. Isn’t Gods grace amazing ? I mean such is the amazing grace of God that it can reach to the lowest and take up the least and give them an inheritance. (6:25) Here is Rahab who is brought “*From a House of Shame to a Hall of Fame.*” Now it’s interesting that only two women are personally named in (Heb Ch 11) which has been called “*The Hall of Fame of Faith.*” Sarah, the wife of Abraham (Heb 11:11) and Rahab the harlot of Jericho (Heb 11:31) Sarah was a godly woman, the wife of the founder of the Hebrew race and God used here dedicated body to bring Isaac into the world. But Rahab was an ungodly Gentile who worshipped pagan gods and

sold her body for money. Humanly speaking, Sarah and Rahab had nothing in common. But from the divine viewpoint, Sarah and Rahab shared the most important thing in life, they both exercised saving faith in the living God. *But not only does the Bible associate Rahab with Sarah, but in (James 2:21-26) it also associates Rahab with Abraham.* You see, James used both Abraham and Rahab to illustrate the fact that saving faith always proves itself by good works. ***But there's more. The Bible associates Rahab with Sarah, the Bible associates Rahab with Abraham, but the Bible associates Rahab with the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.*** For when you read the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in (Matt Ch 1) you find Rahab's name listed there (Matt 1:5) along with Jacob, David and the other famous people in the Messianic line. She has certainly come a long way from being a pagan prostitute to being in the line of the Messiah. But isn't God's grace amazing ? Now we're going to look at Rahab this evening. In order to put a handle on our study I want to look at Rahab from 3 angles. Notice that Rahab was a woman who,

(1) EXPERIENCED A RADICAL CHANGE

Is this not one of the side effects of salvation ? It's a transformed life. Paul says, "*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things become new.*" I heard of the man who was preaching on a street corner while an agnostic repeatedly heckled him saying, "*You're just dreaming.*" Finally a little boy in the reached up, tapped the heckler on the shoulder and said, "*That's my Daddy preaching. He used*

to come home drunk and beat my Mommy and me. We used to go hungry and my Daddy would not come for days. But now he loves us and takes cares of us. He's a good Daddy now. Sir, if he's dreaming, please don't wake him up." Is Rahab not a great example of how salvation changes a person's life ? Here we see that God's grace knows no bounds. Now Joshua, as a good military leader, wanted the latest information on the enemy before he began the invasion of the land. He especially wanted the spies to check out Jericho, the first city Israel would encounter in their campaign to conquer the land of Canaan. So the spies are sent in. Unlike the previous spy mission in Moses' time, the spies would not report to the people but only to Joshua. This would minimize any chance of a mutiny occurring like it did after the earlier spy mission when some of the spies gave a bad report. Moreover, Joshua sent only "*two,*" spies. Twelve were sent in the previous spy mission. But now only two.

Some are critical of Joshua for sending the spies. *The critics say it was not an act of faith.* But God's promise of victory for Israel did not eliminate Israel from going to battle. And if they must go to battle, they will have to study the enemies' situation. You see, there are two mistakes that people can make about the enemy when get ready to go to battle. One of them is you can ***underestimate the enemy.*** It's always dangerous when people underestimate the enemy. My do you realise the formidable forces that array themselves against you ? The world, the flesh and the devil ! Never underestimate the enemy. On the other hand, you can ***overestimate the enemy.*** Though we ought to understand who our enemies

are and we ought to know what the Bible has to teach about Satan and all his methods. Let's not forget that there is victory in Christ. Now the question arises. Of all the people who lived in Jericho, how and why did the two spies come to lodge in Rahab's house? The answer is clear. ***God is reaching out to someone who had reached out to Him.*** This spiritual truth is set forth time and again in the New Testament. Think of the Syrophenician woman, (Matt 15:21-28) the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts 8:26-39) and Cornelius the Roman centurion. (Acts 10:1) My everyone of these were Gentiles, including Rahab. Now some people have trouble with the fact that God guided those two men to the home of a harlot. *But when you stop and think about it, was that not the safest place for these men to be?* Nobody would think twice about two foreigners going to the house of a prostitute.

You see, Rahab was the only person in Jericho who had trusted the God of Israel, and God brought the spies to her. Now it is to be noted that Rahab was converted before the spies came to her house. Their visit simply afforded her with an opportunity to confess her faith. Her language to them was that of a believer. Look if you will at (2:9) Also both (Heb 11:31) and (James 2:25) indicate that Rahab had put her faith in Jehovah before the spies ever arrived in Jericho. Like the people in Thessalonica, she had " *turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*" (1 Thes 1:9) (1) Lets notice for a moment some of the stages in her transformation. Look at,

(a) ***HER LIFESTYLE:***

Look if you will at (2:1) Rahab was a prostitute. She was a lady of the night. Of course, in our day we have to come to the point that we make heroines out of prostitutes. In movies and films they are now glamorized. On television they seem to be constantly glamorizing the role of a prostitute. *The things that in the United Kingdom we ought to be ashamed of we seem to be proud of.* We have become a nation that knows no shame. We have become a nation that doesn't how to blush. Now historians from the time of Josephus to the present have attempted to soften the situation by arguing that Rahab was only an innkeeper. But the word " *harlot,*" here is the Hebrew word " *zonah.*" It's the usual term for a harlot or prostitute. Indeed both Hebrews and James use the Greek word that definitely means " *a prostitute.*" Probably Rahab was a temple prostitute, a practitioner of the vile Canaanite religion, which raised immorality to an act of worship.

Doesn't the grace of God work in unusual places and in unexpected people? Is it not remarkable how God in His grace uses people we think could never become His servants? Do you recall Paul's words? " *For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*" (1 Cor 1:27-29) I mean Jericho was the last place on earth that one would have expected to have found faith.

(6:26 Deut 20:16) There were no Bibles in Jericho, no prophets in Jericho. Jericho was a city under the curse, yet here his one soul who has faith in the living God. Do you know something ? We can never limit the grace of God. ***Is this not a great encouragement to us ?*** You see, there are no human situations, however unpromising, however unlikely, in which the grace of God cannot operate. This needs to be underlined. Do you recall when Paul came to Corinth ? Look if you will at (Acts 18:9-10) As yet not one of them was saved, but Paul preached in obedience to Gods command, and God brought men out of darkness into light. It does not matter how hard, difficult, unresponsive the sphere of our witness may be, the hearts of our loved ones may be, God says, “ *work on, witness on, pray on and preach on,* ” because His purposes will come to fruition. My things may be hard and uncompromising, but God can change a situation in a moment, and where the grace of God is operating, you just never know what is going to happen next. Isn't that what the two spies discovered ? Rahab's lifestyle had changed. For notice,

(b) HER LANGUAGE:

(2:8-11) Now this was her personal testimony. What a tremendous statement for a woman from a pagan city who had never any special revelation. In the book of Hebrews we read “ *by faith Rahab perished not when the walls of Jericho fell, because she received the spies with peace.* ” “ *By faith Rahab.* ” But where did that faith come from ? Well, faith cometh by hearing and in (2:9) we see what that meant in her case. “ *I know,* ” she says, and the reason

she knew and had come to conviction was that she had heard what great things the Lord God of Israel had done. But how could Rahab, living in Jericho have heard of all these things ? James Montgomery Boice, in his commentary on the book of Joshua imagines it happened this way.

Her home would have been a place of great gossip, as strangers from far and near reported their wandering. “ Have you heard what happened in Egypt ? ” one of them might have asked. He would have told how God had sent plagues on the Egyptians, plagues that turned the Nile River to blood, brought flies and frogs upon the land, destroyed the cattle, blotted out the sun and last of all He killed the firstborn males. And another would come in after and say “ Do you hear what happened at the Red Sea ? The Jewish God parted the water so the people crossed over on dry land, and then He allowed the water to come back and drown the Egyptians soldiers who were following them.” And another would come in and say, “ And these people are still around, and I hear they are moving toward the east bank of the Jordan, and will soon be crossing into the land of Canaan. We will also be in their way.”

Would that kind of conversation not get someone's attention if they heard it enough ? My word had got around. The news of the mighty exploits of the living God had spread before the children of Israel on their forward march, and had struck terror into the hearts of the people of Jericho, and likewise into the heart of Rahab, but as far as she was concerned terror led to penitence and faith.

1. She heard about the Person of God:

Look at (2:9, 11) Is that not something ? Rahab had showed more faith in the Lord than the ten spies had exhibited forty years before. (2:9) Her faith was based on facts not just feelings, for she had heard of the miracles God had performed. “ *So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.* ” (Rom 10:17) In this respect Rahab was far ahead of many of the children of Israel. They enjoyed far greater light. They literally had seen miracle after miracle, whereas Rahab had only heard about them. And God gives greater attention to her faith. Why ? Because she was more faithful to the light she had. Compared to Israel her faith was greater, and she proved it by risking her life for the people of God. 1.

2. She heard about the Power of God:

Look at (2:10) The word “ *faint,* ” means to soften, the word “ *melt,* ” speaks of being afraid. The old Nazarene preacher Buddy Robinson said, “ *I went to a Methodist preacher and heard him preach on heaven till I wanted to go there. I went to a Baptist preacher and heard him preach on hell till I thought I was going there. And when I got up from the altar I couldn't read my name, but I could read my title clear to a mansion in the sky.* ” Thank God for the day when someone told us about the power of the Lord.

3. She heard about the People of God:

For she says (2:9) She says, “ *We have heard how God has led you people from victory to victory.* ” Isn't it interesting to notice that the thing that impressed her was the evidence of the work of God in the lives of the people of God ? *In other words she saw that the Lord was for His people and with His people.* This poor prostitute came to have faith in Jehovah because of the supernatural evidences she saw in the life of His people. I mean when the people of Jericho saw the invading army prepare to cross the River Jordan they became conscious that in spite of their walls and defences they were helpless because this army had the living God with it. My is this not one of the most potent factors in the conviction and conversion of souls ? God's Presence and God's Power in the lives of us His people ? *What a challenge.* I mean what evidences of the supernatural are to be found in my life and yours ? Do unbelievers realise that we are different and wholesome ? That we are a separated and holy people ?

That we derive our way of life from a book, which is the Word of God ? ? Do people see that God is in you, for you and with you ? Do people see not merely the correctness of our creed but the chastity of our character? Not merely what we believe but how we behave. Rahab was changed. (1) There was (a) (b) But, look at,

(c) HER LIVELIHOOD:

Do you see the significance of what is said in (2:6) ? Flax was laboriously gathered by industrious women and laid out on the tops of houses to dry for use in spinning and weaving. Working with flax was not only considered

hard work but honourable work. It was a respectable trade and one that was associated with women of honourable character. *You see, Rahab was no longer a vile woman but a virtuous woman.* She was now making an honourable living. Something else seems to confirm this. Look at (2:18) Now this scarlet thread was used a signal to show the advancing Israelites which house it was, that was to be preserved. But how would Rahab have a scarlet thread in her home if she was not in the habit of weaving and sewing ? My it was part of her trade now. She was living and honourable and honest life. Do you recall what Proverbs says about such a woman ? “ *Who can find a virtuous woman ? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands.* ” (Prov 31:10-13) My this is the godly woman. I tell you Rahab was a woman who experienced a radical change. What about you ? Has there been a transformation in our lifestyle ? Does our practice match our profession ? I don't want to leave this aspect of Rahab's life without saying something about,

(d) HER LIE:

Look if you will at (2:4-6) Now since Rahab was a believer at this time how do we defend her lies ? *Was she justified in lying to the King's men ? Was it wrong for Rahab to lie, since her lie protected the spies ?* Are there some situations in which a lie is acceptable ? After all, say some this was a cultural matter, for Rahab was born and

raised among the depraved Canaanites who thought nothing of lying. She probably saw no evil in her act. And sure if she had told the truth, the spies would surely have been killed by the King of Jericho ? I mean let's be honest if it were a matter of life and death most of us would hesitate to tell the truth. Well there it is, either tell a lie or run the risk of being killed. So really Rahab had no option. ***If she had not told this lie, the spies would have been killed. But we do not know that, do we ?*** I mean God was not dead. Do you recall what happened in Sodom when the depraved men of Sodom attempted to lay hands upon the angels of God ? God blinded them. (Gen 19:11) They went about groping helplessly. Could God not have done that to these men who were searching out the spies ? Do you really think that it would have stretched God to have done this ? Of course not. My I don't say that that is what ***would*** have happened, but that is what ***could*** have happened. And if Rahab had said nothing and allowed the soldiers to search the house, do you think that God would have managed to deal with the situation ?

After all, it was God who brought the men to her house, they were the servants of God and when you are in the service of God you're immortal until your work is done. Without being too hard on Rahab we can say this. Lying is wrong. Proverbs says, “ *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* ” (Prov 12:22 Titus 1:13) Paul says, “ *Wherefore put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour for we are members one of another.* ” (Eph 4:25) My Rahab's lie cannot be condoned or disregarded but we must bear in mind that Rahab was a

new believer, that her culture was conducive to lying. Then we can at least understand how she yielded at this moment. My what is written here is not recorded to justify telling lies, but that we might see that a believer is not perfect in a day, and that the faith of Rahab is not called in question by the lie that she told. (1) She,

(2) EXEMPLIFIED A BIBLICAL FAITH

Now it's very interesting to notice in this chapter the interaction of faith and works. We see this of course in Rahab herself, and in this connection it is highly significant that two epistles in the New Testament quote the story of Rahab. The writer to the Hebrews quotes it as an instance of **Faith**, whereas James quotes it as an instance of **Works**. Both are true, because faith without works is dead, and Rahab's faith was proved by her works. Now not everything that is called "*faith*," is really true faith, the kind of faith that is described in the Bible. What kind of faith did Rahab have ? Well, look at (Ch 2) and notice that it was,

(a) A COURAGEOUS FAITH:

Jericho was one of many "*city states*," in Canaan each one ruled by a king. (12:9-24) This city covered about eight or nine acres, and there is archaeological evidence that double walls protected the city. Now Jericho was a strategic city in Joshua's plan for conquering Canaan. Joshua's policy was divide and conquer. You see, after taking Jericho it would then be much easier to defeat the cities in the south and then in the north. But what part did

Rahab play in all of this ? Well look at (James 2:14-26) Now let me just say here that there is no conflict between James and Paul. James is not contradicting Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone, rather he is seeking to examine the nature or kind of faith we have. James is telling us that there is a faith unto salvation (2:21) and a faith not unto salvation (2:17) a genuine faith and a false faith. *A saving faith, and a spurious faith.* What is James saying ? **That faith alone saves but the faith that saves is not alone it's always accompanied by good works.** Genuine faith produces genuine results. Now he uses Rahab as an example. Look if will at (2:25) The Amplified Bible puts it like this, "*Was she not shown to be justified by good deeds when she took in the scouts and got them away by a different route.*" Rahab not only **said** she believed in God, she **showed** it. The confirmation of her faith was so simple, she put her life in jeopardy in order to save the lives of two fellow believers. A lady who had ruined her life by lust at its lowest, now revealed her faith by love at its highest. There were works in her life that proved the reality of her faith.

This was a courageous faith. Young folk, when the worlds wants you to have its standards, accepts its beliefs, visit its places, go by its morals, how do you respond ? (Dan 1:8) In that university lecture room, when that professor starts to undermine the Word of God, how do you respond ? When some of your peers say, "*Come on, its just a little drink, a few drugs, a social dance,*" how do you respond ? My in this day of empty profession and counterfeit Christianity God is insisting on works as an evidence of

faith ? Is your faith real ? Is it saving faith ? Does it produce good works ? (a)

(b) A CONCERNED FAITH:

Do you see what she says to the spies ? “ *Show kindness unto my father’s house* ” (2:12) It’s the Hebrew word *hesed*. This is one of the most beautiful words in the Old Testament. It means the unfailing of God. She was saying “ *I want you to show the kindness of God to my father’s house.* ” When people get interested in seeing their family saved, it’s a pretty good indication that they’ve been saved. This is what true Biblical faith is. It’s a faith that reaches out and encompasses others. Rahab was like Esther who pleaded for the deliverance of her people. (Esther 8:6) Like Andrew “ *who first findeth his own brother Simon and brought him to Jesus.* ” (Jn 1:42) Rahab was like the Samaritan woman who went her way into the city and said to the men, “ *come see a man which told me all things that ever I did is not this the Christ and many believed on Him.* ” (Jn 4:28-29 4:39) (b) An old Puritan used to speak of having “ **a concern,** ” and a meaningful expression it is, yet we live in a day when there is an absence of concern for the lost. Oh how cold and callous and benumbed are our souls.

**Oh for a passionate passion for souls,
Oh for a pity that yearns
Oh for a love that loves unto death,
Oh for a fire that burns**

(c) A COVENANT FAITH:

Now a covenant is simply an agreement, a contract between two or more parties, with certain conditions laid down for all parties to obey. You will find a number of **Divine Covenants** recorded in Scripture. God’s covenant with our first parents in Eden. (Gen 2:16) God’s covenants with Noah. (Gen Ch 9) Abraham. (Gen 12:1-3 15:1-20) Israel. (Ex Ch’s 19-20) The covenant, concerning the Land of Palestine. (Deut Ch’s 28-30) The Davidic covenant. (2 Sam 7:8-19) The New Covenant. (Jer 31:31 Matt 26:27-28) You also find **Human Covenants** such as the agreement between David and Jonathan. Now before the two spies left Rahab’s house they reaffirmed their covenant with her. Look if you will at (2:18) My this scarlet rope would identify the “ *house of safety,* ” to the army of Israel when they came to take the city. Isn’t the colour of the rope significant ? It reminds us of blood. Indeed this incident reminds of the wonderful picture of redemption given to us in the story of the Passover.

Do you recall that Israelite father, taking that lamb, that lamb that was spotless, that lamb that had to be tested and shedding its blood and applying it to the lintel and doorposts of the houses. Then God said, “ *when I see the blood I will pass over you.* ” (Exod 12:13) The Israelites were to find protection under the blood. Was this not the same with Rahab ? You see when that advancing, avenging Israelite army coming up against Jericho saw the scarlet line hanging from her window, that household would be secure. It was as if the Lord said, “ *When we see the scarlet line we will pass over you.* ” Where can guilty sinners find safety from the storm of God’s wrath ? Where

we can find refuge from Jehovah the avenger ? There is but one place of refuge.

**Jesus the sinner's friend
We hide ourselves in Thee,
Gods looks upon Thy sprinkled blood,
It is our only plea**

Now I said there three aspects of Rahab's life that I wanted to mark. Rahab (1) (2)

(3) EXERTED A PERSONAL INFLUENCE

The writer to the Hebrews says this about Rahab, “ *Rahab perished not with them that believed not.* ” (Heb 11:31) But that's only part of the story. Look if you will at (6:25) She dwelt in Israel and in that land she exerted a personal influence. Think about this in closing. She exerted a personal influence,

(a) DOMESTICALLY: HER SON WAS BOAZ:

Did you know that ? Matthew says “ *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab and Booz begat Obed of Ruth and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king.* ” (Matt 1:5) Rahab became the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz. We all know how he turned out don't we ? So full of grace and truth. So like the Saviour he typified. Can we doubt for one moment that this was brought about at least in part by a godly mothers influence ? Do you recall that Susannah Wesley had seventeen children and she found time to instruct and pray for each of them ? Mother's how

will your children remember you ? Will they rise up and call you blessed for you were “ *a woman that feared the Lord ?* ” (Prov 31:30) My Rahab (3) (a)

(b) NATIONALLY : HER SEED WAS CHRIST:

The wife of Salmon, the mother of Boaz who was the great grandfather of King David from whose line came our wonderful Saviour. (Matt 1:16) **Think of this from the Land of Canaan to the Line of Christ.** Think what she was and think what she became. Hers was a wasted life, a life in which lust and passion had burned up all that pure in her, and left nothing but ashes and then by Gods grace she became, not only a believer but an ancestor of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Think of it, she found a place in the plans of God for the blessing of the world. This is what God did with this woman. Do you not think that is absolutely wonderful ? Jericho a city doomed to destruction but the sovereign grace of God said, “ *I will take this life,* ” and He magnified His grace in this broken, soiled piece of humanity.

This is the kind of thing that Peter meant when he said, “ *The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.* ” (1 Pet 5:10) Now that phrase “ *make you perfect,* ” means bringing something or someone into its proper condition. That is what happened to Rahab. The hand from eternity reached out and a voice said “ *I want an ancestor for My Son who will be born centuries from now in a manger at Bethlehem,* ” and the hand reached out into Jericho and

Rahab the harlot was claimed. My this is what the grace of God can do. Here is word of immense hope. Are you discouraged because of your unconverted family ? Are you disillusioned because of their lack of interest in the things of God ? My there is no life so hopeless, so useless, so marred, so lost but the grace of God can take it up and redeem it and use it. God says through the prophet Joel (2:25) “ *I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.* ” This is what our God can do. This is what he did to Rahab. My if all this has something to say to us surely it is this. Our God is an awesome God, an all powerful God. A big God, “ *able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.* ” (Eph 3:20)