



Joshua 2:1-18 Rahab and the Sovereign Grace of God

Grace—what a sweet fragrance. It is the greatest theme in the Bible.

Abounding grace, wondrous grace, boundless grace, fountain of grace, unfailing grace, unmeasurable grace, electing grace, matchless grace, overflowing grace, redeeming grace, pardoning grace, plenteous grace, unfailing grace, the fullness of grace, efficacious grace, magnified grace, refreshing grace, sovereign grace, and salvation by grace, grace rich and free!

"Oh to grace, how great a debtor."

God is exceedingly gracious to sinful man. Grace is the unmerited and undeserved favor of a holy God upon sinful radically depraved human beings.

Grace is the very opposite of merit. It is totally undeserved favor of God toward the sinner. However, it is more than that, it is favor shown to the one who has deserved the very opposite.

"I'm so glad that God chose me before the foundation of the world, because He never would have chosen me after I was born!" wrote Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The God whom we worship is the God of grace. No where is it more evident than in His Word. In Joshua chapter two we see the grace of God in action in the life of a pagan prostitute.

When I was in the Baptist seminary in New Orleans I did my field mission work in the heart of hell. Every Tuesday and Thursday a group of us graduate students would go down town to Jackson Square and Bourbon Street in the French Quarter and we would share Christ with people. On a daily basis we encountered radical depravity in its vilest forms.

In Joshua chapter one the author introduced us to the new commander in chief. Moses is dead. Joshua will be the general who will take the children of Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The basic theological message of the Book of Joshua is that the LORD God has given the land to Israel.

Nothing is said of Joshua in chapter two. Another person is introduced to us and what a contrast. We see the LORD God preparing a woman and two spies for a divine encounter.

GOD AT WORK IN JERICHO (2:1-11)

Jericho was in the heart of hell.

The Canaanites in Jericho were pagans. The city of Jericho was inhabited since about 8000 B.C. and it was located six miles west of the Jordan on a rich oasis. Archaeologists have discovered that the city was surrounded by double walls twelve feet between them. Simple houses were built on top of the timbers laid on top and spread between the two walls. When the city was destroyed by Joshua the walls fell out and down.

The inhabitants were immoral, offered child sacrifices, priestesses were temple prostitutes, Sodomites were male temple prostitutes, etc. The Temples of Baal, Ashtoreth and other Canaanites were centers of vice. Baal was the principal god of the Canaanites, and his wife Ashtoreth was their goddess. She was the personification of the reproductive principle in nature. Her Babylonian name was Ishtar, Astarte her Greek name. What made Canaanite worship of Baal so appealing to Israel was it was held to be the god of the weather and fertile crops. The worship of these Canaanite gods consisted of extravagant orgies in their vice centered temples.

Immoral indulgence was a means of worship for the pagan Canaanites, and they murdered their first-born children as a sacrifice to the same gods.

One archaeological find revealed a number of jars containing the remains of children and new born babes who had been sacrificed to Baal.

God sent spies to Rahab's house.

God sent the spies into the heart of hell to the house of Rahab. "Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there." Rahab was a prostitute. It is possible she was also the owner of an inn. Keil and Delitzsch refer to *zonah* as "a harlot, not an innkeeper." That would have been the best place to find out the latest gossip and tidbits of information spies are interested in. No one would have been highly suspicious of men coming and going from there.

The New Testament references to Rahab clear up all misunderstanding or misinterpretation about the lady. She was a prostitute. That is the only way you can translate *porne*. The writer of Hebrews in the chapter on the great Faith Hall of Fame says, "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Hebrews 11:31). James 2:25 also mentions "Rahab the harlot" when referring to this same woman. We are dealing with a radically depraved sinner and a great God of grace.

The lies Rahab told the king were recorded by Joshua, but not approved by him. Wrong is wrong even if deception is a vital part of spying. When Rahab hid the spies she placed herself at great risk and was guilty of treason.

God at work in Rahab's heart.

God was at work in this pagan woman's life. God's grace always takes us right where we are in whatever condition it finds us. God does not tell us to get our life straightened up and then He will accept us. He doesn't say clean up your act and then I will save you. God comes into our sinful lives and changes us from the inside out. God's grace is for those who need it. Only sinners qualify. Self-righteous people need not apply.

The king of Jericho also had his spies around Rahab's place (Joshua 2:2-7). In the context God kept Rahab safe from the King of Jericho and his spies.

It may have been that where Rahab lived was a tavern or hostel where travelers boarded overnight. We know that Jericho was on the caravan trade route which ran between Babylon and Egypt. The people of Jericho can see Israel off in the distance camped across the Jordan River.

It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." And the king of Jericho sent *word* to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when *it was time* to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid

in order on the roof. So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate (Joshua 2:2-7).

The spies God sent were not interested in her professional services; they were interested in the Promised Land. They were on the roof, not in the bed. The Israeli spies have come to spy out the land. "The text carefully avoids implying a sexual liaison between the spies and their hostess," writes Richard Hess (*Joshua*, p. 83). Verse eight, "Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof . . ." Flax stalks, three or four feet in length, were piled up on the roof to dry in the sun. They were used to weave linen. Perhaps her family made their living by agriculture. If so they had a marginal lifestyle.

Rahab the spy!

Rahab has been spying herself! She has also been hearing the rumors. The king of Jericho and the people did not want to know the LORD God. Rahab was different. She had heard about the God of Israel (vv. 9-11).

From whom had she heard about the LORD God? We are not told. My guess is from the foreign travelers who passed through her hostel. The foreign visitors would have told about what was happening across the river. They would tell what they heard about Yahweh delivering the Jewish slaves from the Egyptians. Rahab's conclusion was the LORD God had given Israel the land of Canaan.

Moreover, there is something deeper going on in this passage. God is at work. God was preparing Rahab and the two spies for a "divine encounter." James Boice reminds us how Jesus "had to go through Samaria" to meet the Samaritan woman in John 4:4? Jesus entered Samaria to save a similar woman. The two spies were sent to Jericho to save Rahab. God was preparing Rahab's heart to lead her to true faith in Yahweh, the LORD God of Israel. Now He sends messengers who spy out the land and deliver Rahab and her family.

Listen to the reasoning of her faith in Joshua 2:8-12. She said to the men,

"I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

W. E. Sangster said, "The very craving after God, is in itself, a signal mark of His presence, for these desires are not generated in our hearts by ourselves."

The LORD has given Israel the land.

Rahab concludes: "the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth" (Joshua 2:11b-12). Rahab committed her soul to the true and living God of Israel.

Keil and Delitzsch observed, "Rahab was convinced of the truth of the miracles God had wrought for His people, and acted in firm faith that the true God would give land of Canaan to the Israelites." The omnipotence of God had been visibly displayed.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." God was at work in the heart of this pagan woman before the spies arrived! God strangely moved her heart. Where was God at work in Canaan? Right here in Rahab's heart. He set up His camp in the heart of a prostitute. That is what God's grace does. There is nothing strange here. God chose Rahab! Who would you have chosen? No one is good enough for God the way he or she is.

"Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of grace, and have not yet learned the gospel" (C .H. Spurgeon).

God has placed deep within this woman's heart a growing spiritual attitude sensitive to His work in her life. God's grace, His pardon, His eternal love was working in this pagan's heart.

"If God would have painted a yellow stripe on the backs of the elect I would go around lifting shirts. But since He didn't I must preach `whosoever will' and when `whosoever' believes I know he is one of the elect," C. H. Spurgeon.

If you have an intimate love relationship with God, He will show you where He is at work all about you. How do you know God is at work around you? Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Rahab didn't choose to get up and go to God. He chose her. No one seeks God on his own initiative. When a man or a woman begin asking spiritual questions listen carefully because you know the Holy Spirit of God is at work in that person's heart. If someone asks you spiritual questions ask yourself what God is doing in that person's life. Give your undivided attention to that person. Listen to the Holy Spirit. He is drawing that person to Himself. God works in people's hearts to cause them to seek after Him. When they ask questions about God, or make observations about Him you know that He is at work. When men come under conviction of sin, the righteousness of God, and eternal judgment you know God is doing something in their hearts.

GOD CHANGING LIVES IN JERICHO (2:12-16)

Just like the children of Israel God insists that we depend upon Him. He opens the doors to sinner's hearts, and He will lead us to them if we are yielded to Him.

Rahab was willing to help the spies escape (Joshua 2:4, 12-16).

Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way."

The word "kindness" and "kindly" is *Chesed* in the original and means covenant love, loyalty or love, faithfulness (v. 12). It is a pledge of faith, faithfulness, and steadfast love.

Saved by grace through faith

The scarlet rope is tied in her window (Joshua 2:18). The spies told her, "We *shall be* free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household" (Joshua 2:17-18). If this was the same rope with which they were let down the wall it could be the deliverance of the spies. Her response, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window" (Joshua 2:21). The people of the land had no idea what that piece of rope was for in her window.

All believers are protected and sheltered from the wrath of God by God's scarlet cord that symbolizes the blood of Jesus. The world sees the cross every day and does not understand the meaning of it. There is cleaning power in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse every sin (1 John 1:7-9). Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away our sins (John 1:29, 31), and not only our sins but also the sins of the whole world. He gave Himself as a ransom for our sins, (Titus 2:14) "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

This great truth runs like a scarlet thread through all the Scripture from God providing garments of skin to cover the naked bodies of Adam and Ever after they disobeyed God and Abel's lamb slain to the Lamb on the throne in heaven. C. H. Spurgeon said cut the scriptures at any point and it will bleed the blood Christ.

All who are in Christ are sheltered by His precious blood. Christ died for me, therefore my soul is safe. Christ is the security for all who put their trust in His precious blood.

Romans 10:9-10 sounds like Rahab in Joshua. Paul wrote, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Rahab committed her soul to the LORD. Trusting in Jesus Christ alone saves you. You confess because you already believe. You are not saved by confessing Christ. You re saved by trusting Christ. You confess before men because you have put your faith in Him alone to save you. You confess because you are saved.

How do we know she was saved by grace through faith? Rahab exhibited her faith in the LORD to save her and her family. It was demonstrated by the fact she tied the scarlet rope in the window, hid the spies, and helped them escape. It is faith in action. She acted on what she knew to be true. The scarlet rope in the window anticipates the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to atone for the sins of the world.

Evidence of Rahab's salvation

In Hebrews 11:31 Rahab, not Joshua is the person whose faith is honored. Matthew 1:5, 6 informs us she married Salmon. She is in the genealogy of the Messiah. She is the great-grandmother of King David! She was ancestor of Joseph, husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. Wow! What a savior!

Rahab had nothing going for her except for the abounding grace of God. She was a Gentile. She was a foreigner to the "covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the

world" (Eph. 2:12). Moreover, she was an Amorite, the most corrupt, vile people who sacrificed their children in religious worship. She was a pagan prostitute. But God in His grace saved her.

James 2:21, 25 reads: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? . . . In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" Keep in mind the context of both Joshua chapter two and James two. Harry Ironside made this keen observation:

When she hid the spies, she showed that real faith that was in her heart. Her faith was manifested by her works in hiding them and sending them away safely. Whenever there is genuine faith in God it will always be accompanied by good works. We are not saved by works. Let no one make a mistake as to that. Scripture is absolutely clear that we are saved by grace alone through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." But on the other hand, where there is genuine faith, where people really believe God, where they truly receive His testimony, their faith will be manifested by their works, and that is what the Apostle James stresses (Harry Ironside, *Addresses on the Book of Joshua*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1950, p. 29).

The God of grace is interested in the Rahab's all about us.

Rahab is a burning log snatched out of the fire. She is an example of sinners whom Jesus Christ came to save. She was dead in trespasses and sins, and was quickened by the saving grace and mercy of the true Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God doesn't say clean up your act and then I will save you. That is legalism. God approaches the lost sinner and begins working in his heart. God seeks the lost to save them. God is interested in sinners, not self-righteous people. Rahab is a sinner. I am a sinner. What matters is who Jesus Christ is, and what He has done for the sinner. Will I humble myself and trust in Christ alone to save me?

James Boice candidly observes, "Rahab was no worse than we are, and yet God saves us. It is not the righteous, but sinners whom Christ redeems" (*Joshua*, p. 30).

Joshua 2:21 tells us Rahab was a home missionary. She was concerned that her family was brought to safety when Israel invaded Jericho. When you are truly saved you want your loved ones to come to Christ.

Go and sin no more!

Jesus was teaching in the Temple one morning when the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in the very act of adultery. The Jewish law said such a woman should be stoned to death. They wanted to know what Jesus thought. It was a set up. They wanted to trap Him. Jesus stooped down and began to write on the ground. God was writing. What would He say? They "persisted in asking Him." It was push, push push. We'll get you yet. Jesus stood up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Then He stooped down and wrote on the ground again. His listeners began and continued to go out one by one until Jesus was alone with the woman. Jesus stood up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She answered, "No one, Lord." Jesus responded, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

That woman could also go out saying to herself, "No condemnation! Sin no more! What grace!"

You and I say with all our heart, "I am secure because of the scarlet thread in the window. I am secure in the precious blood of Jesus. Saved by grace!"

Salvation is by grace through faith. Rahab the sinner was saved by placing the rope in the window. The rope was a symbol of her faith. It pictured the blood smeared above the door in the home of Israelites on their last night in Egypt. It is a marvelous picture of what God has done for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Have you had a divine encounter lately? Has He brought into your life someone whom He has prepared for an encounter with His saving grace? And now He wants you to be that messenger to share the good news of Christ's saving gospel.

CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S WORK (V. 24)

There are some beautiful spiritual principles in this great chapter.

- It is a reminder of our spiritual depravity and the grace of God for all sinners. "And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:1-9).
- Who are the names of members of your family who are lost? Will you make a commitment to pray over them every day until they are saved?
- Rahab was concerned about others in her family. When God shows mercy to one person in a household, it is an indication that He wants to save every member of that family. God is at work in the AWANA program. Acts 16:31 is a promise for all of us to claim. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer and his family, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." No the family was not saved automatically when the jailer was saved. He put his faith in Christ and then one by one all the rest of the members of his family trusted in Christ. Where is God at work in your Jericho? Pray that God will take the whole family of all of our AWANA children.
- Rahab made a commitment of her life. She made a decision to side with Israel against the king of Jericho. She would have been guilty of treason in his sight if he knew what was going on. Where do you stand in your commitment to Christ? Have you sided with Him? How do you know? Do you have the security of knowing that if you were to die today you would be saved from the judgment of God? Why? There is eternal security only in the redeeming blood of the Lamb of God who gave Himself for our sins. A scarlet cord runs through the Scriptures. His blood and nothing else will save us.
- "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands" (Joshua 2:24a). On which side of the Jordan do you chose to live? If you know Christ as your personal Savior please do not be

content with just being saved. Let's go on into a mature intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ.

- "All the inhabitants of the land, moreover, have melted away before us" (v. 24b). That is what happens when God is at work in your heart. Are you ready to go across this Jordan and take Jericho? You are not ready if you have never come to Jesus Christ. That is where the new life begins. Since you know Jesus as your savior let's cross the Jericho in our lives, go into Canaan and kill some giants.

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