



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

March 25, 2018

Jump Start # 2034

Joshua 2:11 "And 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 the God in Heaven above and on earth beneath."

Our verse today are the words of Rahab. We can't say her name without putting the tag on her. It's not just Rahab, but it's, Rahab the harlot. Five times in the Scriptures that tag tags her. Israel was on the edge of entering the promise land. Joshua sent two spies to check out Jericho. Forty years before, Joshua had been one of twelve spies that Moses sent.

The two spies found Rahab. Her house was on the wall. She kept them and cared for them. The king heard about it and sent people to capture the spies. Rahab deceived them and sent the spies safely on their way back to Joshua and Israel.

Rahab is a puzzle for many of us. She was a pagan gentile. Worse, she was a prostitute. Yet, three times her name appears in the N.T.

The first time, in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1). Yes, Jesus had a former gentile prostitute in His family tree. But don't we all have horse thieves, black sheep and other sinners? Don't we all have a past and a history? There was a guy named Shouse who ran with the Dillinger gang for a while. He died in prison. A relative? Probably.

The second time, we find Rahab is in Hebrews 11. THE HEBREWS 11! She is there. There are only two women in Hebrews 11. Sarah, Abraham's wife and Rahab. Not only is she listed in Hebrews 11, but the expression found multiple times, "By faith," is attached to her name. Rahab did things by faith. Those listed in Hebrews 11 "gained approval" of God.

The third time Rahab is named in the N.T. is in James 2. There she is right with Abraham. The James text says, "In the same way, was not Rahab..." In what way? In the same way as Abraham. She and Abraham are God's proof of justified by faith. She gained approval. She was justified.

Now, some thoughts.

First, it seems that Rahab's faith was not based upon the spies. It wasn't what the spies told her. She had already heard about Israel and what God had done. The Egyptians drowned. The Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, were completely wiped out. Rahab was already a believer before the spies showed up. She knew why they are there. She knew that God was giving Israel all the land. She knew that there was no hope for Jericho.

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She doesn't try to save her city. She protects the spies and puts her allegiance with God. Her heart was with Israel.

Now, what was the basis of her faith? She believed reports. She heard stories. She took them to heart. Rahab, did what the apostles could not do. When the two men on the road of Emmaus came and told the disciples about Jesus, they didn't believe. When the women, who were the first to the tomb, went and reported to the apostles, they didn't believe. Rahab believed. There is no indication of any prophets passing through the area. There is no thought of any miracles being done in Jericho before this. She heard and she believed. She tops ole' Thomas who claimed that he'd only believe if he saw the nail prints of the resurrected Jesus.

We live in times of doubt. Even with Biblical evidence, so many will not believe. Had they lived in ancient Jericho, they would have died along with the rest of the city. Where's the proof? It's right before our eyes.

Second, it seems in many ways that the purpose of the spies was not so much to bring back a battle plan for Joshua, as it is to bring salvation to Rahab. God's fingers seem to run all through this story. How did they happen to find Rahab, who was a believer? Anyone else, and the spies could have been turned in and executed. Chance? Coincidence? Hand of God? She saves the spies and in turn a covenant is made to save the life of Rahab. Hang a scarlet cord out the window-so similar to Israel putting red blood above the door way in Egypt and so similar to the red stained cross of Christ.

Rahab is saved. She marries a Jewish man. Down the line comes David, the great king of Israel. Down the line, even more, comes Jesus, the Savior of the world. There is more ink given to Rahab than these spies. An entire chapter is devoted to her story.

Third, people change. Even harlots can become believers and be useful in the kingdom of God. That's a lesson for us. We know her as Rahab the harlot. That's what the Scriptures call her. Maybe it would be better to know her as Rahab the believer. God gives us second chances. God doesn't hold us to our past. We must learn from that. Bad people can become good. People with terrible backgrounds can preach and serve as elders, if we let them.

Fourth, What impresses God is faith. That always has and always will be. Your plaques on the wall doesn't move God. The years you've put in at the job doesn't impress God. How pristine your yard looks in the summer, doesn't do much for God. Your grades. Your 401. Where you went to school. The square footage of your house. All are impressive to us. Not to God. You want to move God's needle, it's faith. It's going out of your way, like Rahab did and getting involved. It's taking a risk, as Rahab did. It's knowing what God will do, as Rahab did. Faith that surrounds confidence, assurance and hope. Her faith led to action. Her faith changed the outcome of this story.

Rahab believed. God always comes for believers.

Finally, maybe the reason Rahab is found in the N.T. surrounded by heroes of the O.T. and coupled with Abraham and in the lineage of Jesus, is to remind each of us that we are welcome by God. Rahab didn't have the Ten Commandments. She didn't have Moses. She didn't the tabernacle. But she had a heart that believed. Many of us do not come from sterling backgrounds. Our parents may not have been Christians. We may have come from a broken home. We may, like many in the N.T. be outcasts. Leprous hands. Tax collectors. Samaritans. Caught in adultery. Yet, none shunned by Christ. We all have a bit of Rahab running through us. Broken in our own ways, God doesn't cast us aside. God can use us.

Spies were sent. They found a believer. The spies were saved. The believer was saved. Rahab's story is a mirror to ours.

Roger Shouse (used by permission)