

# **I Still Want More**

Rahab - My Past Is Not My Future

A Bible Study Series of The Mt. Zion Church

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**Introduction:** After spending a year in jail over a false accusation made by a police officer; Daylan McLee developed distrust and hatred toward all police. But in one heroic moment, McLee put his hatred aside and saved a police officer from a burning vehicle.

On July 10, 2020, McLee heard a boom, which shook his house. He thought for a minute that it might have been a small earthquake until a relative came running inside to say there had been a car crash involving a police cruiser outside the apartment in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. McLee ran outside and pulled Officer Jay Hanley from a mangled patrol car as flames began to spread into the cabin. Before that day, McLee could not have imagined ever speaking to another police officer or risking his own life to save one. However, he and Officer Hanley are the best of friends, often hanging out together. Both of their lives were forever changed that day because McLee chose to overlook his past and allow God to use him.

The purpose of today's lesson is to help students understand that our past does not dictate our future with God. If we decide that He will be our God we can move beyond what we were and have a future of MORE.

**Background Information:** By the time the history of the Israelites moves to our current passage we find out they are on the verge of moving into The Promised Land. The land was Canaan and was inhabited by people who knew about the Israelites. As a reminder, to this point, (1) Moses has died, (2) Joshua has taken Moses' leadership position, and (3) the Israelites are about to enter and take possession of the promised land. In order to prepare to cross the Jordan River, which separates the Israelites from the people of Canaan, Joshua sends two spies to Jericho which is one of the nearest cities. Their purpose was to gather information about the city.

## I. Rahab – A Woman of Possibility—Joshua 2:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. <sup>2</sup> And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.” <sup>3</sup> So the king of Jericho sent 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 country.” <sup>4</sup> Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So, she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from.” <sup>5</sup> And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went, I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” <sup>6</sup> (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)

Rahab was a Canaanite and a prostitute. Her value to the city centered on her ability to please people for money. The writer of Joshua purposefully tells us her vocation to force us to consider the people we often look down upon. None of us would raise our hand to advertise we have prostituted ourselves because of the negative connotations of the activity. Despite her beginning, we find that she has prominence in the narrative of God’s plan towards the destruction of Jericho. Rahab was part of God’s plan! This means that Rahab’s potential to be utilized for God was determined by her choice to change.

- How often do we declare people unusable due to their current struggles?
- In what ways can we begin to see those making poor choices as new in Christ versus bound by Satan?

In order to understand the story of Rahab, it becomes necessary for us to see ourselves in her position. Her condition is not much different than ours. In Isaiah 53: 6 we read that each of us has at one time or another failed to live up to the purpose that The Lord has for our lives. **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.** We have failed Jesus as His sheep when we have been disobedient, backslidden, unfaithful to Him, or wandering to and fro. Thus, none of us can look down our noses at Rahab’s beginning because in Christ we can be made new.

2 Corinthians 5:17 **Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

The Rahab lifestyles we have led and that others are leading have potential. The newness of life is possible. The key is that people experience a relationship with Christ. He is the only one that can cause the change.



## II. Rahab's Faith—Joshua 2:8-11

**<sup>8</sup> Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof <sup>9</sup> and said to them, “I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. <sup>10</sup> We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea<sup>al</sup> for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. <sup>11</sup> When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me <sup>lel</sup> a true token, <sup>13</sup> and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”**

Romans 10:17 reminds us that faith is only possible when people hear the Word of God. Someone **told** Rahab about God. It is clear that a testimony about God’s power had been shared. She was able to recount what she **heard**. This amazing testimony of faith was not based on a degree in theology. Someone told her the basic facts about God. He has power. He can defeat the enemies of His people.



He wants to give His people a land. Rahab believed what she heard. She **heard** about the Lord, the God of Israel, and the things He had done. Rahab **heard** the Lord had dried up the water of the Red Sea. She **heard** He had delivered the land of Canaan and its people into the hands of Israel.

Prior to the event, she had put her faith in a lot of things such as: other gods, men, her body, and her possessions. We can only speculate as to how and when she realized that the God of Israel is God in heaven above and on earth below. But the

one thing we can agree on is that someone met her where she was and **shared the message** with her. She came to understand who God is and put her faith in Him. Whether they told her casually or spent a considerable time explaining to her who God was, we do not know. What we do know is the impact of the information that was shared. Rahab **heard** and Rahab believed. Rahab's faith was real. She demonstrated understanding and commitment to the people of God by protecting the spies.

The confession of faith that Rahab made is amazing. She did not know all the ins and outs of God's plan. Yet her basic understanding of God led her to decide to assist the spies. As a new believer, her first desire for ministry was to help protect and save the spies. Notice, she was using the same basic skills as before her faith statement. Previously, she served in an ungodly way. Now, she was serving God's purposes in a way that did not demean or degrade who she was as a woman. This was possible because someone **told** her about what God can do. Further, as seen in verses 12-14, Rahab had a desire for everyone in her family to be saved. As a new convert, she truly embodied what it means to be a disciple.

- When was the last time you met someone where they were (in their addiction, in their hatefulness, in their self-centeredness, etc.) and shared the simple truth about Jesus Christ with them?
- If they do not HEAR, how can they be saved?

### III. The Promise of Salvation—Joshua 2: 17-21



**<sup>17</sup> Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us <sup>18</sup> unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. <sup>19</sup> If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. <sup>20</sup> But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.” <sup>21</sup> “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.” So, she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.**

The spies and Rahab make an oath to one another. She let them out of the city and they vowed to protect her entire family when the battle came (vs. 14). However, the protection was conditional. If she remained in her house and if she identified who she was by the scarlet cord, then she and her household would be saved. God's destruction of the city was to come, but safety was possible. This was reminiscent of God's Passover protection in Egypt (Exodus 12) where those who remained in their houses identified themselves as God's people by painting the blood of a lamb on their doorposts.

To bind the oath, they instruct her to tie the scarlet cord to her window; the same one she used to let them down. If the cord were there when they returned, her household would be spared. However, only those in the house would be saved. The same cord that freed the spies will be the same one used to signify that she is one of them. The benefit of obedience to the oath is similar to that of salvation through Jesus Christ. Destruction is coming! Yet, when we make an oath of faith for Jesus to be our "red cord" we are saved. Remember, salvation was only for those who were in the right house with the right identifying mark on the house. No one else was saved. We too must come to understand that salvation is only possible for those who are in Christ and covered by His blood. Without this, there is no safety.

- Do we tell people that salvation is conditional or do we simply let them believe that God is kind and loving?
- How does our "feel good" ministry set people up for failure and destruction?

The promise of safety was realized when the spies returned (Joshua 6:20-25). Joshua ordered them to go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her. The city was destroyed but Rahab's family was saved. Her faith and obedience provided safety for them all. This Canaanite prostitute and her family would be saved and she would be recorded in the lineage of Jesus.

# MORE

The salvation of Rahab's family is an example of what God can do with us when we commit to Him. Regardless of who we have been or what we have done, we have a purpose in God's Kingdom. Though her story began as a prostitute, God had MORE in store for Rahab's life. So, what happened to Rahab? How does God show that He had MORE in store for her? In Matthew 1:5 we revisit Rahab in a short phrase.

**<sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse...**

Students will recognize this as a portion of the listing of the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew specifically highlights Rahab and thus identifies her as one of Jesus' relatives! Her past did not dictate what her future would become. Most would have counted Rahab as an unworthy option to be listed as a person of faith or to be considered one to be celebrated. Yet, God saw fit to give her a place of prominence in His son's earthly family because of her faith that "the LORD God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. (Joshua 2:14)." Imagine what God may have in store for us based on our faith in Him! Are you looking for MORE?

## **Conclusion:**

God saved a prostitute and her family, such that when the walls of the city fell, her home remained standing as a vivid witness to God's grace and mercy. Despite Rahab's tainted past, they are the objects of God's saving grace. As Christians, the scarlet cord symbolizes the blood of Jesus. His saving blood covers a multitude of sins, but we must be in His house of safety.