

RAHAB'S EXAMPLE

Jon Macon

Hebrews chapter 11 gives many great examples of faith, beginning with righteous Abel and continuing through the judges and the prophets to the point that “time would fail” to mention every member of the “great cloud of witnesses” that surrounds us to encourage us in running our Christian race (Heb 11:32-12:2). This “great cloud” also includes many godly women, such as Sarah (Heb 11:11-12) and others not called by name in this chapter (Heb 11:35). Another great woman of faith who is mentioned by name in Hebrews chapter 11 is Rahab: “*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace*” (Heb 11:31). Furthermore, Rahab is given as an example in James chapter 2 of one whose faith was *alive*, demonstrated by works. She and Abraham are the only two mentioned by name in that chapter. Without doubt, Rahab is one of the great examples of the Bible to learn from and follow.

Rahab's background and conversion

Rahab was a woman who, before knowing God, lived in sin as a harlot (Josh 2:1). But then she learned of God and changed her ways. Not only Rahab, but “all the inhabitants of the land” of Canaan had heard of the great things God had done for Israel (Josh 2:9). Rahab testified to the Israelite spies who came to her house, “*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*” (Josh 2:10). As a result of what they heard, everyone in Canaan felt terror and became faint (Josh 2:9), and their hearts melted and none of them had any more courage (Josh 2:11). But with all the other people of Jericho, hearing of Jehovah's great works only inspired fear, but not faith. Rahab, on the other hand, became a believer. She said to the spies of Israel, “*I know that the Lord has given you the land*” (Josh 2:9). Rahab said she *knew* this. She knew it would happen because, as she said, “*the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath*” (Josh 2:11). Rahab had faith. She *knew* that the God of Israel was truly the God of all the earth and that He would give Jericho and all of Canaan to the children of Israel.

Rahab's living faith

But Rahab's faith was not a dead faith. James 2:14-26 teaches us that faith without works is dead. Two specific examples of a living faith are given in that passage, Abraham and Rahab. James 2:24-26 says, “*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.*” Because of her faith in God, Rahab

RAHAB'S EXAMPLE

(continued)

“received the spies with peace” (Heb 11:31) and “sent them out another way” (Jas 2:25; see Josh 2). Without faith in God, Rahab would not have done this, and then she too would have perished with the rest of the unbelievers (Heb 11:31). Rahab’s faith in God and the fact that He would deliver Jericho into the hands of Israel also caused her to request the spies to spare her life and the life of her family (Josh 2:12-13). The spies agreed, with three conditions: 1) that Rahab bind in her window the scarlet thread which she used to lower the spies down from her house on the wall so that the Israelites would be able to identify her house when they came against Jericho; 2) that Rahab bring all her family into the house; and 3) that Rahab not reveal the matter to anyone (Josh 2:17-20). Rahab again demonstrated her living faith in God by meeting all three of these conditions (Josh 2:21; 6:22-23). As a result of all of her actions, she and all her family were saved when Jericho was conquered by Israel (Josh 6:22-25).

Rahab’s faithfulness

But Rahab’s faith did not end there. She became a permanent part of the nation of Israel (Josh 6:25), and obviously put away her sinful past as a harlot. She even married the son of Nahshon who was the captain of the children of Judah under Moses (Num 1:1-7; 2:3; 7:11-17; 10:14). God then brought David and later His Son Jesus Christ through Rahab’s lineage (Ruth 4:20-22; 1 Chr 2:10-15; Matt 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-32). By mentioning Rahab’s deeds in the book of Joshua and then giving her as an example for all Christians to follow in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25, and by making His Son Jesus Christ a descendant of hers, God has greatly honored Rahab for her faith in Him (Heb 11:6). Speaking of Rahab and the other examples of faith, obedience, and endurance given in Hebrews chapter 11, Hebrews 12:1-4 says, *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”* We have the race set before us of becoming perfect (complete) like Christ (1 Cor 9:24-27; Php 3:11-15; 2 Tim 4:7-8). We are striving to resist and overcome all sin (Eph 6:16; Jas 3:2; 1 John 2:1; 5:4). In running this race, we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, including Rahab. We need to take these witnesses as good examples to encourage us to lay aside every weight and sin, and run our race with the endurance and faith that we see in Rahab and the others.