

“The Faith of a Prostitute: Rahab” // Hebrews 11:31 // *Hebrews 11: Broken People & Famous Faith #12*¹

Introduction

Hebrews 11:31, if you have your Bibles.

“By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”

How many of you recognize the name Arnel Pineda? Arnel was born in the Philippines in 1967 to pretty poor Filipino parents. At age 13 his mother, who’d always held the family together, died and his dad began to spiral, and so Arnel left home, at age 13, and he began to live on the streets, sleeping on park benches and under bridges. He managed to feed himself by collecting glass bottles, newspapers, and scrap metal and selling them to recyclers.

He had musical abilities though, and so he started to sing in a makeshift band that performed in a pizza parlor. That eventually grew to singing in bars and nightclubs around Manila, and eventually he got discovered by a group in America called Journey, whose lead singer, Steve Perry, had resigned for health reasons. Steve Perry, an American, of course, had one of the most distinctive, iconic, one-of-a-

kind voices in music history, but it was uncanny how much this poor Filipino kid, Arnel Pineda, who grew up not even speaking English, could sound like him. Eventually, in 2007, Journey hired Pineda to replace Steve Perry as the lead singer for one of the most popular American rock bands in history, and Pineda still performs with them today--he’s so good that even some of the biggest Journey fans, can’t tell whether it’s Steve Perry or Arnel Pineda on lead vocals unless you’re looking at them.

You’d never look at the profile of Arnel Pineda--poor kid, Asian, grew up on the streets of Manila not really speaking English--and think he was capable of becoming *THAT*. **I share that because that’s a little how I feel about Hebrews 11:31.** How does Rahab join this illustrious group of faith heroes in Hebrews 11?

Rahab is as unlikely a person of faith as you could imagine. She’s a Gentile--the only Gentile mentioned in this list; and not only that, she’s a citizen of Jericho, the enemy Canaanite city that opposed Israel’s possession of the Promised Land. She’d grown up worshipping idols, with no knowledge of the living God. And on top of all that, she was a prostitute. And yet, Hebrews 11 lists her as one of the great all-time heroes of faith. **In fact, Biblical scholar Carl Mosser** argues that Rahab is the most significant figure of Hebrews 11; in fact, he says, all of Hebrews 11 builds up to her. For the author, she’s the prime example of the faith that pleases God.

¹ Sources consulted: Scott Sauls, “[Rahab, the Prostitute](#)”, December 5, 2021, Christ Presbyterian Church; Joby Martin, “[Scarlet Thread - Joshua Week 2](#)”, January 17, 2016, The Church of Eleven22; Ray Vander Laan, “[That the World May Know](#),” Dr. Tony Evans, “Rahab: The Deliverance of Faith”, December 26, 2021, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. Accessed July 27, 2024; Charles Spurgeon, “Rahab: The Scarlet Line in

the Window”; John MacArthur, “Joshua and Rahab: A Conquering, Courageous Faith,” preached with Grace to You, April 4, 2017; Carl Mosser, “Rahab Outside the Camp,” from *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, edited by Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A Hart, and Nathan MacDonald. And others as noted throughout.

Her story is going to answer a question that a lot of you have asked at some point, namely: *“Do I have enough faith?”* *“Because sometimes,”* you say, *“I have doubts. Questions. And sometimes I think these thoughts--dark thoughts--thoughts that are so bad and unbelieving that it makes me wonder how I could be considered a person of faith at all. “Nobody of true faith,”* you think, *“ever thinks like this.”*

Or maybe you ask, *“Do I know enough about the Bible to have faith?”* I mean, everyone else in my small group seems to know so much more about the Bible than I do. I don’t talk much in small group because I don’t want everyone to know how weak I am in faith.”

If you’ve ever asked those questions or ones like them, then Rahab’s story is for you.

“By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”

If you have your Bibles and want to go back to Joshua 2 where Rahab’s story is told, meet me there.

Here’s the context: We’re in the weeks leading up to the battle of Jericho. Joshua, who is trying to get a sense of what they’re up against, sends out a couple of spies to check out the city. (At this point he doesn’t know what the battle plan is going to be; God hasn’t told him yet that he’s going to knock the walls down himself), so Joshua is doing some recon.

The 2 spies go into the city, and that night they enter the house of a prostitute to spend the night. They don’t go in because they want to use her... services... but because brothels back then functioned a little like hotels, and this was the easiest way for them to avoid suspicion, because it’s what most traveling men would do.

Well, somebody in Jericho figures out that these are not just normal traveling men, and so they send a message to Jericho’s king. They’re like, “Hey, I think a couple of representatives from that traveling Israelite horde we’ve heard so much about are here spying out our city.” And one of them says, “Yeah, I think I saw them go into the house of Rahab the prostitute.” And so, vs 3, the king sends soldiers to Rahab’s house to find out if they are there:

Vs 4: But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said (to the king’s representatives), “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. [5] And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.” [6] (In actuality) But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof...

8 (But) Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 9 and said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt... 11 And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. 12 Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal *kindly* with my father's house. (That word “kindly,” btw, is “*hesed*,” the word used for God’s loyal, covenantal love. Rahab is asking, in whatever feeble way she knows how, to be covered by God’s covenant with Israel.

The spies promise her that, because she’s helped them, it will be so, but on one condition: she’s got to **hang a scarlet colored cord** outside of her window so when they come and attack the city in a few days, they’ll know which house is hers. They tell her, “Hang this scarlet cord outside your window, and when we come, you and anyone else

within the shelter of the house with the scarlet cord hanging from it will be saved.”

Now, one small textual thing I want to address before we get to the heart of the message. In these verses, Rahab outright lies. The king’s soldiers asked directly, *“Are these 2 Jewish spies there?”* And Rahab said “No,” and then she pointed far out over the horizon, and said, “They went that way. And I bet if you run real fast right now you could catch them.”

The 9th commandment is “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” but Rahab was clearly lying here to her neighbors, and not only them, her king, too. So, here’s the question: Was Rahab’s lie sinful?

Some Christians say, “Yes, it was a sin. Because a true person of faith would have told the truth and trusted God to take care of it.” But, they usually say, Rahab was so new in her faith, and it was such a small, well-intentioned lie that God just overlooked it.” That’s a legitimate opinion and I know many who hold it.

But I actually have a different perspective based on what I see to be the consensus of biblical evidence. **(This is your theological nerd moment, btw). Here it is: While it is true we are commanded not to lie, throughout the Bible, in extreme situations (such as when it is apparent that someone will use the truth to physically harm someone else) we don’t owe the evildoer the truth.** When we know someone is up to evil, we don’t provide for the oxygen that enables their evil.²

Here’s my biblical evidence:

- In **Exodus 1**. The Hebrew midwives lie to Pharaoh to protect Hebrew babies so that Pharaoh can’t murder them, and God specifically commends those midwives for doing that.³

- In **1 Sam 18**, Jonathan lies to his father, King Saul, to protect an innocent David, and David regards his actions as faithful and true.
- Here, in this situation, with Rahab, the **writer of Hebrews** calls what Rahab did righteous and points to it as an example of great faith. **The book of James says the same thing: James holds up Rahab as an example of faith in action.**

So, here’s what I conclude: Lying is sin. Almost without exception. But, in extreme situations, when we know someone will use the truth to physically harm someone else, we are not required to tell them the truth.

- During the Holocaust, Corrie Ten Boom famously hid Jews in her closet when the Nazis came looking for them and lied about it to the SS. That was a righteous, not a sinful act.

Again, I want to emphasize that these are extreme situations.

Teenagers, I’m not talking about you saying, “Well, I knew my parents were going to ground me and that was really going to mess up my Saturday night plans and it didn’t feel fair to the other people who would be affected by my grounding so I lied to them but it’s ok because Pastor J.D. said it was ok.” No, I will not reply to that email or come to your aid against your parents. I’m only talking about hiding Jews-in-the-basement-because-the-Nazis-are-coming type of situations. We clear?

OK, now that I’ve given you something you can debate for an hour in your small groups this week, let’s get to the real point of this message. If Rahab is the ultimate example of Hebrews 11 faith, there are 4 things that stand out to me about it:

1. Its Simplicity

² Paraphrase of theologian Jerram Barrs, via Scott Sauls

³ Exodus 1:17–21

Rahab doesn't have a lot of theological knowledge. I mean, all she really says is, *vs 10, "We've heard about how God brought you through the Red Sea, and when we heard that, fear of your God fell on us..."* and *vs 11, "our hearts melted"* when we heard the stories about your God. Please remember me in your victory.

Here's how I'd summarize Rahab's faith: **1. God is real. 2. Judgment is coming; I deserve it, and there's nothing I can do to save myself.** (Remarkably, she's not trying to run away or turn the guys in. **3. I appeal to your God for mercy.**)

That's it, and, hear this: **That's the essence of true faith.** "God, you're real; and I'm a sinner who can't save myself, but your love is strong enough and your mercy is long enough to save me."

It's the thief on the cross who looks to Jesus and says, "You're righteous, but I am not. Remember me when you come into your Kingdom." That statement is not rife with theological knowledge, either. It wasn't backed up by a lifetime of good works or church attendance or financial offerings. It was simply, "Jesus, you're true; and I'm unworthy, but I think you can save me."

I'm reminded here of the story of how Charles Spurgeon came to faith in Christ. Spurgeon as a teenager, troubled in conscience, was trying to walk to church one snowy Sunday London morning when the weather got so bad he couldn't make it to his church and he had to stop off at this little backwoods, sidestreet chapel. The main preacher wasn't even there that day, he said, because of the snow; so it fell to a deacon, blue-collar, untrained and completely unprepared, to give the sermon that morning to the 12 or 13 people who'd made it to church. Spurgeon said the man could barely read. The text for the morning was *Isa 45:22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."* The man was not prepared at all, he just read the text and said, *"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. (And I'm a*

very simple man.) The text just says, 'Look.—Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. Anyone can look; I can look; even a child can look. "But pay attention," he said: The text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" said he in a broad Essex accent (which I think is like 'English redneck'), "Many of you are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. ... No, the text says, 'Look unto ME.' Spurgeon said the guy then looked directly at him, and said, "Young man, you look very miserable... (Spurgeon said, "I wasn't used to having personal remarks about my appearance made from the pulpit, but he was dead-right: I was miserable...) and he continued, "And you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death,—if you don't look to Jesus. Obey now, and this moment you will be saved.... Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live."

Spurgeon said, "I don't know anything else he said that morning, I was so overcome with that one thought because in it I knew I had seen the way of salvation. Just trust Christ and you will be saved." How had I missed it all these years? **"God, you're real. I'm unworthy. God will have mercy."**

That's all faith is, and for the rest of your life you just keep going deeper in that. As a pastor and follower of Jesus for more than three decades, the substance of my approach to God is still the same. When I need help with a challenge I can't overcome, I say, "God, at my core I'm unworthy, and incapable, but this new Christian life is about Christ in me." When I have a need as a parent, I say, "God, I'm not sufficient as a parent; I'm unworthy, but your grace is enough.

The first thing we see in Rahab is faith's simplicity. Second thing:

2. Its Sufficiency

Rahab had 2 significant strikes against her. First, she was a Gentile-- and not just any Gentile, I showed you; she was a Gentile from the enemy blocking Israel's path into the Promised Land; and, then, **strike 2:** she was a prostitute. (Now, I do want to acknowledge. Quite often in those days women didn't choose prostitution. They were forced into it, whether through slavery or through poverty. But either way, she's a prostitute.) She's not high on the social or moral respectability chain.

And yet, all she has to do to be saved is believe in God's grace.

Charles Spurgeon said she had nothing to do but hang the cord and rest.⁴ She didn't have to reinforce the walls of her house with extra support beams or prepare a defense against the siege. She didn't have to learn a bunch of catechisms or go through a bunch of Hebrew rituals. All she had to do was put herself in the place of safety, behind the scarlet cord, and rest there.

Rahab's story reminds me of another of my favorite stories of faith: Mark 7, the story of a Syro-Phoenician lady, another *Gentile* woman, who asks Jesus to deliver her daughter from a demon. Jesus' response has to be the most politically-incorrect statement in all the New Testament: "Ma'am, it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs." The disciples were like, "Oh, snap! Did he just call her a *DOG?*" BTW, some scholars try to soften what Jesus said here by saying "dog here means something more like 'little puppy.'" No. The word "kunarion" in Greek means one thing: dog. And calling someone a "dog" in that day was even worse than it would be in ours, because

⁴ "After tying the thread to her window, Rahab rested. We do not read that she did anything else except bring her father and her mother, and her brothers into her home. She did not make preparations to defend the house against the siege; there is no

dogs were considered unclean animals! (For the Jews dogs were not cuddly household pets, they were unclean animals representing defilement and judgment.) So this seems, in every way, an insult. And yet, the woman remains undaunted, because she knows that Jesus' statement is not a racial slur against her; it's a description of her unworthiness before God to receive this miracle. ***And she agrees with that assessment and doesn't protest it.*** She says, "Yes, Lord, but even the little dogs get to eat what falls from the master's table."⁵ IOW, it's true that I have no more worthiness than a dog, but I believe there is enough grace and power flowing off your table that there's enough even for me. And she put all her hope in the compassion and power of Jesus, and Jesus not only healed her, he said, "I haven't seen faith like this anywhere in Israel."

Doesn't that sound like Rahab? Rahab is our final and in some ways ultimate exhibit in our great hall of faith, and she's not even an Israelite. She's just someone who puts all her hope in how gracious Jesus was.

And listen: **her faith didn't even have to be that strong!** I'm sure she had all kinds of unanswered questions. Wouldn't you have? I'm sure she didn't know that much about theology. I mean, the first she'd heard of the Israelites was when they crossed over into her land. I'm sure she couldn't recount the genealogy of Abraham or explain the nuances of the hypostatic union. All she knew was, "*God is real. And, I'm in trouble, but God, I think there's enough grace in you to help me.*"

I'm sure she was filled with fears and doubts. She was like, "But what about..." and "What happens after..." Or, "Why this way, God?," or

notification that she appealed to the king to have a special guard to protect that part of the wall." Charles Spurgeon

⁵ Mark 7:24-30

“What about those people?” And yet, even with all those doubts and unanswered questions, she was still saved. Fully and completely.

Listen, it’s not the strength of your faith that saves you, it’s the strength of the ONE YOUR FAITH IS IN that saves you. The weakest faith in Jesus still saves; the strongest faith in anyone else does not.

Hear this: The question, ultimately, was not about how strong her faith was; the question was whether she’d **obey** God’s command, stay in the house and hang the scarlet cord from her window.

A few weeks ago in this series we looked at the story of Noah’s Ark, and I told you that if you have doubts that’s ok, just have them inside the Ark. If you’re like only 60% this is all true, then get on the Ark and have those doubts. Staying outside the Ark is every bit as much a decision as getting on the Ark. So you have doubts? Well, have your doubts from INSIDE the Ark rather than from OUTSIDE of it.

The same is true here. She stayed in her house even with her doubts and unanswered questions, and she was saved. Faith is less about having undaunted, unshakable confidence and more about where you choose to put your hope. **It’s not about the steadiness of your knees** (that you stand with absolute rock-solid confidence), **it’s about the placement of your posterior** (where you choose to seat yourself).

The weakest faith in Jesus still saves; the strongest faith in anything else will not.

I was flying back from LaGuardia this week. Sometimes when I sit down and buckle in I’ll look around at all the people sitting around me on the plane. It’s like an interesting little case study in human nature. Some people you can tell fly all the time; I mean, they barely notice when the plane takes off and when it lands: totally unfazed by the whole thing. They’re mostly concerned with trying to keep their laptop out during takeoff without the flight attendant noticing.

But then you have others who are a nervous wreck. I saw one lady with a Bible out and the way she was reading it I could tell she’s trying to summon up the presence of God. (Rocking back and forth). And I was like, “Calm down, Veronica.”) I’ve seen people clutching prayer beads during takeoff, and one guy I was with one time pulled a statue of St. Christopher out of his bag--St. Christopher who is apparently the patron saint of traveling--and he caressed it during takeoff. It was weird. I was like, “*Brother, are you, ok? Can I order you a drink or something?*”

The point is, you have people of all different kinds of comfort levels, faith levels, sitting on the plane, but here’s the thing: all those people--the ones with unwavering confidence AND the ones who are nervous wrecks--we all landed in Raleigh just the same. **The deciding factor is not the strength of your faith in the airplane, but the position of your posterior on the airplane.**

So, I’ll say it again: *Bring all your mess and all your confusion and all your doubt and enter into Jesus’ house and hang that scarlet thread from the window of your heart. It’s not about the strength of your faith; it’s about the strength of the one your faith is in. It’s not about the steadiness of your knees; it’s about the placement of your rear end. The weakest faith in Jesus still saves; the strongest faith in anything else will not.*

The 3rd thing significant about Rahab’s faith:

3. Its Legacy

Rahab was not only saved, her whole house was saved, too! The 2 Israelite spies had told her: **[18] Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window... and you gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your**

father's household... [19] But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.

Rahab somehow persuaded her parents and her brothers to join her in the house, and when the walls came down, they were all saved.

Ah, but it gets better. After Jericho was destroyed, Rahab apparently left with Israel and made her home among them. And there, 1 Chronicles 2 tells us,⁶ she met and married a guy named Salman, whom the writer of Chronicles describes as "The Father of Bethlehem", which basically means he founded and built the city of Bethlehem. Together they had a child named... Boaz.

Well, Boaz, when he grew up, met and married another young Gentile woman, a recent widow, who had fled to Israel as a refugee because of a famine in her country. Her name was Ruth. And Ruth and Boaz had a son named Obed, and Obed had a son named Jesse. And Jesse had a son named... David. And David became the greatest King of Israel. And from David's line would one day come another son, Jesus Christ, who would die for the sins of the world.

This prostitute, who showed this simple faith, became the great grandmother of King David, and even more importantly, of Jesus Christ himself.

Two takeaways here: **1. You think there's no hope for your family, for your legacy? That your past, your failures, your divorce, puts a curse into your family?** God included in Jesus' line two Gentile women--both poor, both refugees, one widow and one prostitute, to prove that he brings his best wine from broken pots. From the wombs of refugees and prostitutes God brought forth the Son of God.

But more importantly right here I want you to see this: Her ACT of faith saved not only her, but her family, and her future family line.

I point this out because some of you are sitting here right now on the fence with Jesus.

- Some of you dads--you're not quite sure if you're ready to follow him. Do you realize what could happen in your family, and in your family line, if you obey today?
- Some of you high school students, wondering if it's worth it to follow Jesus? Do you realize what kind of difference it would make on your current friends, your future friends, your siblings, your future family, if you choose to trust Jesus today?
- There are kids listening to me right now--do you know the difference it will make in the lives of others for the rest of your life if you choose to follow Jesus today? If you put Jesus first, every person you meet from here on out will be affected.

My mind goes back to a true story I heard about a troubled young man in his mid 20's whose wife was 8.5 months pregnant with their first child. A lot of things were changing in his life, he was about to move, and someone had invited him to church service. He reluctantly went, and the speaker that night was a visiting pastor who urged those in attendance to give their lives to Jesus if they never had before. An invitation hymn was given. The first stanza was sung, and this man stood there, he said, as if his feet were bolted to the floor. The preacher got up between the verses of the song and urged again--said he was sure someone else needed to come, and so they sang a second verse. Still, he couldn't move. So they sang a third verse. People were starting to get annoyed. *"Why can't we just end the service? The worship pastor is always dragging stuff out. I just want to go to Shoney's."*

⁶ 1 Chronicles 2:51

But they extended the invitation into the fourth verse. The man said he looked down and could see that his knuckles were white from clutching the pew in front of him. He didn't want to step out. But then, at last, he said, almost as if the decision wasn't even his, he let go, and Lynn Greear, my dad, stepped out in an aisle, walked forward and gave his life to Jesus, and not only did his life forever change, but my mom's and mine and my sister's and our children's lives changed, and many of yours, too. (In case you didn't put that together, I was the baby) born 10 days later. My life was changed because of that step he took. And yours, too! If you have ever been blessed by this church at all... it's because that man took a step.

I wonder sometimes, if he could have somehow had a vision of all the lives his act of faith that night would change, what would he have thought? What if he hadn't stepped? Think of all that would have been lost.

What if that same thing is happening right now? But the question is solely about you and whether you step out in faith?

One act of faith creates a legacy; it changes eternities--not just yours but also of many people who will be caught up in the wake of your influence.

So why are you waiting? Start that legacy of blessing TODAY.

4th and final significant thing about Rahab's faith:

4. Its symbol

They had her hang a scarlet cord from her window. Again, vs [18] Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your

father's household, (but) if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head.

VAMP

Sometimes when I read these things, I find myself just wondering, in amazement, how God in his wisdom set up all these things to give us a prophetic picture of the cross. Right? *I mean, a scarlet, blood-colored cord hanging from the window of your house to give any in that house protection from God's judgment--and only those underneath the protection of that scarlet thread would be saved?* Come on. This is John 3:16 in Joshua 2.

That scarlet cord runs through the entirety of your Bible, and all who hang the scarlet cord from the window of their lives will be saved.

In Genesis, it's the scarlet cord of blood flowing from the neck of that lamb God killed to cover Adam and Eve's sins; it's the blood of the ram Abraham found caught in the thicket that God told him to offer in the place of his son Isaac.

In **Exodus**, that scarlet cord is the Passover Lamb, whose blood they sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses so that they could avoid the curse of the death angel and escape the bonds of slavery.

In **Leviticus**, it's the blood that ran down the altar in front of the holy place so that people could meet with God.

In **Isaiah**, that scarlet cord is the coal that touches the unclean lips of the prophet cleansing him from his sin, and it's the blood flowing from the suffering servant wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and by whose stripes we are healed.

In **Ezekiel**, that scarlet cord is *the River of Life* that flows from God's throne *bringing healing to the nations*

In **Hosea**, it is the tears of the Ever-Faithful Husband pursuing his unfaithful bride

In **Haggai**, that scarlet cord is the water of God's cleansing fountain in David's house that washes away our sin and impurity

In **Zechariah**, we see that scarlet cord in the wounds of the Pierced Son whom every eye on earth will one day behold

And in **Malachi** it's the life-giving-rays from the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing in his wings

That scarlet cord is the blood that flowed from Jesus' hands, his feet, and his side **in the Gospels**, the blood that the **writers of the Epistles** explain is the propitiation for sins, our redemption from God's wrath, and the record of our debts with all its legal demands that God nailed to the cross.

That scarlet cord is **the blood that the writer of Hebrews** tells us enables us to go boldly before the throne of grace; it's **the blood the writer of 1 John tells us that our Advocate pleads** in our place before the bar of God's justice; the blood that guarantees our forgiveness and our cleansing from sin and enables us to overcome the Devil himself.

That **scarlet cord is the robe dipped in blood** that Jesus wears in Revelation when he appears again, for the final time, in power and glory to end injustice and restore peace and God's presence on earth.

That scarlet cord running through your Bible is the blood of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, for without the shedding of blood, Leviticus tells us, there is no remission of sin.

And all who grab hold of that cord, whoever they are, whatever they've done, like Rahab, will be saved.

So before we conclude: **Let me pose this question again:** Of all the people in Jericho that day, why did God send the spies to the house of a prostitute?

Or in the New Testament, of all the people in Samaria, why did Jesus go to the woman at the well in John 4, a woman with her own compromised sexual history?

Or when Matthew records Jesus' genealogy, and he puts four women into it, why is it that the 4 women he chooses were either a Gentile, guilty of sexual sin or the victim of sexual abuse? Tamar was a prostitute; Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute; Ruth was a Gentile and a widow; Bathsheba was most likely a sexual abuse victim-- maybe a willing adulteress, we don't know. But those are the only 4 women mentioned in the genealogy.

You know, it's striking to me that no mention is made of the great, esteemed matriarchs of the Old Testament in Jesus' genealogy-- there's no mention of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel.⁷ Instead; all we get listed in Jesus' genealogy are notorious sinners or great sufferers.

Why record only Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba? I think it was to answer this question: Have YOU ever felt like you are damaged goods?

⁷ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/grace-four-women>

Have you ever felt like you are beyond redemption? That you're not good enough, or capable enough, or clean enough to be saved? That you're just not the Jesus type?))

Rahab's story shows you that is not true. It doesn't matter how much dirt and trash is in your past. If you'll let the grace of God into your life, he'll make you a better person than you ever thought possible and he'll change the entire trajectory of your family in ways beyond what you ever dared hope. He takes prostitutes, sex abuse victims and forgotten refugees and turns them into his family.

Martin Luther wrote, *"It is as though God intended this genealogy to say, 'Oh, Christ is the kind of person who is not ashamed of sinners—in fact he even puts them in his family tree.'"*

The good news I stand up here and proclaim week by week: Anyone who grabs hold of this scarlet thread can be saved. It's like the great apologist **Francis Schaeffer** said, *"The truth is, we're all prostitutes, we are all harlots. Each of us is a whore in the idolatry of our own hearts."* But Hosea shows that God pursues harlots. All of us. Any of us.

But here's the thing: You have to grab the cord for yourself. You have to enter the house where it hangs. If you don't, it doesn't matter how much you know, you won't be saved.

I've heard it said that one of the great tragedies is that many people will miss heaven by 18 inches. That's the distance between your head and your heart. Some of you listening to me today will miss heaven by 18 inches--because you know a lot about Jesus, but you never grabbed hold of that scarlet cord for yourself. You never entered the house of Jesus.

So, you have doubts? That's ok. So did Noah, and Rahab, and all these great people of faith. Just enter into the house and have your

doubts there. To quote Steve Perry, or Arnel Pineda, *Don't stop believing; hold on to that feeling!* Because Jesus comes to you with open arms, nothing to hide, believe what he says, so here he is, with open arms, hoping you'll see, what his love means to thee, open arms... He's forever yours, faithfully. (I tried to get them to do those songs for worship today and they said no.)

That's Jesus to you. So enter the house, the house of the scarlet thread, and stay there..

And then testify to it. One interesting thing is that they had her hang this scarlet cord from a window, not in a closet. It was to be a testimony to others, put into the window of her life for all to see. Her private belief needed to be accompanied by a public declaration, a symbol for others to see. For us, this is baptism.

Water baptism is a symbol, like that scarlet cord, that shows others that we've switched to Team Jesus. The water of baptism doesn't save you, of course, but it gives a picture of your faith to others, like the scarlet cord did for Rahab.

In fact, when you think about it, it's a cool picture... remember when the walls fell down, the entire army of Israel had just shouted praise to God! What must all that have been like for Rahab? I mean, you hear this shout of praise and then all these city walls come down--everywhere, except for the walls of your one, little house that has a solitary scarlet cord hanging from the window?

I like to think of all that as pictured in your baptism, by the way. You come up out of the water, and we all clap and shout praise to God as God brings the walls of sin and shame and condemnation down around you. That's your baptism.

If you've never done that, we want to extend that invitation to you. If you've never been baptized but want to, **Text BAPTISM to 33933...**

I can't wait to hug Rahab when I get to heaven. Faith is simple. It's sufficient. It leaves a **legacy**. It gives a **symbol** for others to see.

Have you acted on it? Do so now...

Prayer teams down front at every campus... There are people listening to me, like my dad, who need to be saved. Maybe you need to be baptized. Come and tell them.

When I stand you, let go. You come. Don't cling to the back of that chair!