

**Hebrews 11:30-31**  
**(Joshua 2:1-21)**  
**“By Faith Rahab Did Not Perish”**

**Introduction**

Even when we speak frankly of the failures and weaknesses of these great examples of enduring faith, it is easy to be daunted by them. Noah, Abraham and Moses, for all their faults, were extraordinary people. Their names are synonymous with faith, endurance, leadership and strength of character. By any measure, they were great men. How can people like you and me really look to them as role models?

So it is a relief to find the author of Hebrews closing out this list of illustrations of enduring faith with the example of Rahab, the Jericho prostitute. Her story should bring hope to every one of us who has ever felt too lost, too broken, too bad, too guilty, too weak, too used and abused, to ever be loved by God, to ever become someone wonderful. She reminds us that salvation is all about God's grace, about God choosing people that this world despises, people considered weak and foolish, in order to shame the strong and wise, as this world reckons wisdom and strength.

Seventeen miles northeast of Jerusalem is a ten-acre mound called Tell es Sultan, raising fifty feet high from the Jordan River valley. It contains about 10,000 years' worth of debris and was once the city of Jericho, a flourishing, wicked city, built at the point where a popular trade route crossed the Jordan and favored by merchants stopping to take their pleasure and refresh themselves before continuing on their journey. It was a logical place for a prostitute to ply her trade, and Rahab had done well enough to have her own house built into the city wall with a window facing out to watch for approaching caravans.

Why, of all the people living in Jericho, was Rahab the one on whom the Lord had mercy? Why was she alone able to save herself and her family? Surely there were people in Jericho living more respectable lives, with higher moral values than Rahab. There must have been a philosopher, a sage, a holy man or woman, an educator, a kind and generous person. Why this prostitute?

We are simply told by the author of Hebrews that by faith she did not perish with the rest of the city because she welcomed the spies. But isn't that what prostitutes do, welcome whoever shows up at their door? And wasn't it only logical that the spies would knock on the door of a house that was accustomed to welcoming strangers without asking questions? We cannot understand these verses in Hebrews without remembering Rahab's story, as told in Joshua 2. Look with me at this wonderful story as we ask two questions: Why did Rahab give a friendly welcome to the spies, not the welcome of a prostitute, but the welcome of someone seeking salvation from destruction? And, what lessons are we to learn from her example?

## Body

### 1. Why is Rahab included as an illustration of enduring faith for us to emulate? Why did she “give a friendly welcome to the spies” (11:31)?

*She believed that the God of Israel was the true God.*

*She aligned herself with God and with his people rather than with her own, even risking her life to prevent the spies from being caught.*

*She entrusted her life and lives of those she loved to the Lord, not despising the “foolish” way the city was taken, by marching around the city seven times, or the “foolish” way that she was saved, by the scarlet cord hanging from her window, marking her as the Lord’s own, even as the Passover lamb’s blood marked out the Israelite homes, and as the blood of Christ marks you and me, to keep us safe in the day of destruction.*

### 2. What lessons should we learn from Rahab?

*It is not your past, but your present and your future that ultimately matter.*

*Morality cannot save you, nor can immorality prevent the salvation of one who turns to the Lord in repentance and faith, asking him for salvation.*

*God is a great rewarder of those who seek him: The prostitute became royalty: Rahab married a prince of Judah named Salmon. Their son, Boaz, married Ruth, and their great-grandson was King David. Through David, Rahab was an ancestor of Jesus.*

## Conclusion

What a beautiful story of grace and of enduring faith! Just as the spies came to a prostitute and left her transformed by grace, so Jesus came to those whom the world despised, to prostitutes and tax collectors, not to the righteous, but to sinners. So he comes to us still and finds us lost in sin and without hope. And just as, through Rahab, he would one day bring his Son onto the world, so too through you and me who have been saved by grace, he wants to bring his Son into our world. For this he has redeemed us. Rahab became royalty, and so do we, who once prostituted ourselves, living for pleasure, pride and ambition, but who have been made by God’s grace the Bride of Christ.

Do you yet realize the wonder of his loving kindness, his tender mercy toward you? He comes and knocks today, offering himself to those who cast themselves upon his mercy, who trust the scarlet cord of God’s amazing grace to keep them in life and death, and bring them at last to glory.

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