

**ESF Lord's day message**  
**5/7/2017**

**The Faith of Rahab**

Joshua 2:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

<sup>2</sup> The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." <sup>3</sup> So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." <sup>4</sup> But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from." <sup>5</sup> At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." <sup>6</sup> (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) <sup>7</sup> So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. <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 this land to you 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 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 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 then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign<sup>13</sup> that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."

This is a story of a woman who was a prostitute. She was an unbeliever who did not know the God of Israel. But when she met two spies of Israel and did something to them by faith, she came to belong to God's people and received God's tremendous blessing. By faith, she and her entire family were saved from destruction. She got listed in the Hall of Fame of faith (Hebrews 11:31). By faith she was recognized as one of the most blessed persons in the family tree of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).

Through the example of Rahab's faith, God proves that no matter how shameful a past we have, how bad or sinful lives we have lived, by faith, we can instantly receive God's forgiveness, deliverance and blessing.

Then how did Rahab have the faith and what was the nature of her faith? How can we have such a faith as Rahab?

### **Faith comes by hearing the word of God**

Rahab gained her faith by hearing what God did for His people. Rahab told the two spies: "... *We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea 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. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below*" (verses 10-11).

She had never seen what God did by her own eyes. But she believed by hearing what God did. Hearing what God does is the same as hearing what God says. Because God does what He says. Rahab's faith came from believing the word of God that she heard

Other people in her city heard the same word as Rahab. But they ignored the word they heard. They did not believe what they had not seen.

Faith comes not just by seeing what God is doing, but believing what He says.

When the risen Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples, Thomas was not there. Although all the other disciples testified to him that they had seen the risen Lord, he still did not believe in the resurrection. He said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”

A week later, Jesus appeared to Thomas and showed him His resurrected body. Then Thomas believed. However, Jesus said “*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (John 20:29).

In the parable of a rich man and a beggar (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus also explains that faith comes not from seeing something God does but from hearing the word.

In the parable, both a rich man and a beggar die and enter into the after life. The rich man finds himself in hell while the beggar is in heaven with Abraham. From hell, the rich man asks Abraham to send the beggar to warn his brothers that there is life after death, and that they must believe in God’s judgment before they die. But Abraham says, “*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead*” (Luke 16:31).

Although you may have never seen or experienced what God does, or what other people are saying about their experience with God, you can have faith. How? By accepting the word of God you hear as truth. If you are determined to believe what you hear from the word of God, the Holy Spirit helps you to have faith.

### **Faith among the unbelieving majority**

In the city where Rahab lived, there were hosts of people who heard of God’s wondrous works for His people Israel, and God would do the same thing when the Israelites attack their city. To be saved from the attack they

had to repent from their sins and ask God for mercy. But strange as it was, none but Rahab feared God. They did not repent of their sins. They did not seek God's mercy. Rahab was the only person who feared God, repented and sought God's mercy. She stood by faith alone among many unbelievers. She was alone in her faith among the multitude.

It may be easy for you to believe what the majority of people believe. But it is difficult for you to believe what no one else believes.

Rahab believed the word of God when nobody believed. She feared God in an atmosphere where nobody feared Him. How could she have faith in such an unbelieving generation?

Although she had the faith, she did not create the faith. It was God who gave her His word and so enabled her to believe. It was the Spirit of God who touched her heart and opened her spiritual eyes to see God. Her faith was God's gift. Faith is God's gift. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God* (Ephesians 2:8).

When we see the people in the Bible who lived a victorious life by faith, many of them had faith among the unbelieving majority. They kept their faith even though most people didn't believe. But nobody created faith. Their faith was God's gift. As God's gift faith has power to overcome all trials.

Of the entire world only Noah and his family lived by faith in his time. When Joseph was living in Egypt as a slave, he was the only one who believed in Jehovah God in the land. Daniel and his three friends kept their faith in the midst of enormous pressure in the foreign land where people did not fear God at all. After Jesus was gone, some 2000 years ago, the followers of Jesus started the first church in Jerusalem. At that time, their number were just 120. Compared with the entire population of their

nation and of the world at that time, the number 120 was insignificant. But they kept their faith.

God used the faith of this small number of believers. Through their faith, God performed miracles, saved thousands of unbelieving souls, and revealed His glory to the world. In Luke 12:32, Jesus encourages the believers who are small in number, *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom”*

Have you ever thought your faith was insignificant because you are the only believer among many unbelievers, people who don't fear God? Do you think that you can't make a difference in the world with your faith because you belong to the small number of believers?

See what God did through the faith of one person Rahab, and all the believers in the Bible. Through their faith God did marvelous things. God says to you today, *“I count on your faith. Don't be afraid of standing alone with your faith. Don't fear the large number of people who don't believe me. I can do marvelous things through your faith. I can turn the world upside down through your faith.”*

### **Living faith**

Rahab demonstrated her faith through her action. Her faith was active faith. Active faith is living faith.

First of all, she confessed her faith before the believers: *the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below (verse 11)*. Active faith begins with confession of faith.

Romans 10:9 says, *“If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Have you ever confessed in front of other people that you believe in the living God and the Lord Christ? If you have, your faith is already active. If you have not, you may confess now and make your faith active.

Secondly, she demonstrated her faith through loving God and His people (Galatians 5:6). She risked her life to help the spies who were serving God's people.

Faith which does not have actions, is "dead" faith which in fact is not faith at all (James 2:17).

The faith of Rahab was living faith which was demonstrated by action (James 2:25). This does not mean that her good works merited God's salvation for her, but that they were the evidence of her genuine faith.

Third, her living faith came from believing in God's grace. Rahab's action of faith came from not believing that she could do something good enough to get God's approval, but from believing that only by God's mercy and grace could she be saved. She had lived as an unbeliever and had worshipped idols which God very much hates. She was a prostitute. If she had not believed in God's grace, she would not have taken any action to believe.

Active and living faith comes from believing in God's grace. With faith in God's grace, everyone can take action. With faith in God's unconditional grace, everyone can start a new life, everyone can have hope again, and everyone can get out of their shameful past and hopeless life condition.

Some years ago there was a promising junior executive at IBM who was involved in a risky venture for the company and ended up losing ten million dollars in the gamble. He was called into the office of Tom Watson Sr., the founder and leader of IBM for 40 years ... a business legend. The

junior executive overwhelmed with guilt and fear, blurted out: "I guess you've called me in for my resignation. Here it is. I resign". Watson replied, "You must be joking. I just invested ten million dollars educating you; I can't afford your resignation".

When we have fear and think that God wants our resignation what we need to understand is that God has invested so much into us. He doesn't want us to give up because He has invested the most valuable asset that He had- His Son. God so loved the world, you and me, that He sacrificed His only Son.

With faith in God's unconditional grace, take action to serve the Lord. God does not ask you to pay the total price for all the sins you have committed. God does not ask you to clean up your past and make yourself good enough to come to Him. God encourages you to come as you are. God offers you His unconditional grace in Christ. All you must do is to confess that God is the living God, and Christ is the Savior. And God gives you the opportunity to do something about it. Even if you do something small to serve God and God's people, God considers your faith living faith, and God works miraculous things through your living faith.