

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because
she welcomed the spies, was not killed
with those who were disobedient

Hebrews 11:31

Chapter Seven

THE SCARLET CORD

Read: Joshua 2 & Acts 16:16-38



Reading Joshua chapter 2, I stop short at the word “prostitute.” To the world Rahab was nothing more than a harlot, but to the Lord she's highly esteemed. She's precious, and dear—a beloved child of God. Rahab's so loved in fact, that she is mentioned in Hebrews Chapter 11 alongside other men and women of faith, and again in James Chapter 2 as an example of someone whose faith and actions were both working together.

I think of the many names that I too could be called. We all have labels—sin we would rather leave in the past. Satan will always try to magnify our flaws and make us insecure, in hope that by doing so we lose our courage and turn our eyes away from God. Maybe that's who we were, but that is not who we are when we come to the cross.

So, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

That's easy to read, but some days it's not so easy for us to accept. Maybe you failed, maybe you fell, maybe you stumbled, maybe you chose to sin when you knew it was wrong... And, like Rahab, perhaps you have a label or two. But remember, you don't trip over something behind you, when you are marching ahead.

Don't minimize the grace you've been given. If you think that your sin is too big for God, think again. There was a cost for that sin. A price that was paid on the cross by the shedding of blood. God wants to use you, not because of your ability, but because of His great love for you.

THE WORLD BEHIND ME, THE CROSS BEFORE ME

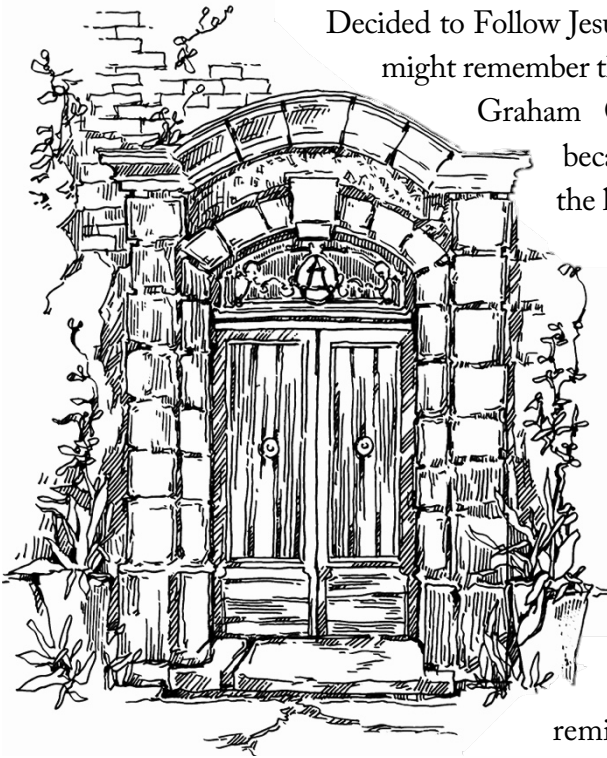
There's a hymn we used to sing in church, called "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," by Sadhu Sundar Singh. You might remember that it was often played at the Billy Graham Crusades. I remember it well

because my dad used to sing it around the house all the time with a big smile across his face and both hands up in the air.

"I have decided to follow Jesus," he'd sing, "no turning back, no turning back."

One of the other lines that stands out to me was this, "The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back, no turning back."

I can't help but be reminded of Rahab. How she



decided to follow God, turned her back on the world as she knew it, and even though she stood alone, she still pressed on.

Let's look at four courageous decisions she made:

1. She disobeyed the king and risked her life to protect the spies sent by Joshua.
2. Being a Gentile, she adopted a new faith.
3. She gave up the comfort of home, and the only culture she knew.
4. She did all this alone.

DID YOU KNOW

HISTORICALLY, IT WAS COMMONPLACE FOR BROTHELS AND INNS TO OPERATE UNDER THE SAME ROOF. AS SUCH, THIS COULD BE THE REASON THE SPIES ENTERED RAHAB'S HOUSE.

HE CAN USE YOU RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

Notice that God used Rahab right where she was. She had a home and she used it faithfully to follow the Lord. He didn't send her to a mission field in some far-off land. He used what she had, where she was. In the same way, God can use you right where you are. Don't ever think that being a homemaker or going off to a 9-5 job is any less a mission field than that which is overseas. God has called you to the place you are in, and there's potential there to do great things for God.

Don't get me wrong. God calls people every day to mission fields across the globe, but for the ones who stay behind the opportunities to serve are every bit as vital.

In 1 Samuel 30 we read a story about David and 400 of his men who went out to fight the Amalekites, while 200 of them stayed behind. The Bible tells us that David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken from Judah, including his two wives. After returning with the spoils of war, some of the men selfishly assumed they wouldn't be sharing, but David rebuked them saying, "The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike."

Sometimes God says to one, "You're going to go out to battle." To another, He says, "You're going to stay back, and I'll use you right where you are."

It's a reminder to all of us that some of the best soldiers are working behind the scenes.

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.
(Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

As I look at the Bible, I see God using people right where they are. Mordecai sitting at the king's gate day after day. Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer. Jael, a woman who assassinated the commander of the Canaanite army hiding inside her tent, James, and John two fishermen out on the lake.

We don't need much to serve God, we just need to be willing to answer His call. If all that we have are two hands, let's be faithful with the hands that we have. If all we have is a door, let's open it wide. If all that we have is a pocket of change, let's give. When and if He calls us to step out of our comfort zone, we must be willing to get off our "butts" and courageously follow our faith.

Rahab was true to her faith despite her fear. The two spies told her to hang a scarlet cord in her window, and as soon as they left, she did. She didn't question the reasoning behind it, and she didn't delay.

WHEN WE'RE AFRAID, WE HAVE A TENDENCY
TO PRAY AND ASK GOD FOR PEACE BEFORE
WE'LL STEP OUT AND DO WHAT FRIGHTENS
US. BUT MOST OF THE TIME, WE SIMPLY
NEED TO MOVE FORWARD.

– SADIE ROBERTSON

THE SCARLET CORD

The scarlet cord is vital to the story, and here's why. If you look at Joshua Chapter 5 (verse 10), you see that Passover week coincides with the 7-day battle of Jericho. If you remember the first Passover in the Book of Exodus, remember that the angel of death killed all the first-born males in Egypt. To protect their homes, the Israelites marked their door frames with the blood of a lamb. This symbolized their faith in the coming Messiah. When the angel of death saw the blood, he "passed over" that home.

The scarlet cord was a symbol of Rahab's faith in the power of God and the coming Messiah. While she may have feared the king to some extent, it was obvious that she feared God more. She had heard stories about the Israelites and how they crossed the Red Sea. She knew their God was the One true God, and while the rest of the city was frozen with fear she stepped out in faith.

Compare these verses from Joshua and Exodus:

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. 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. (Joshua 2:18-19)

Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. (Exodus 12:22-23)

DID YOU KNOW

THE TWO SPIES IN THIS STORY—REFERRED TO AS “MESSENGERS” IN THE BOOK OF JAMES—SYMBOLIZE THE WORD OF GOD. RAHAB HIDING THE SPIES IS REMINISCENT OF PSALM 119:11, WHERE DAVID WROTE, “I HAVE HIDDEN YOUR WORD IN MY HEART THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST YOU.”

As a result of Rahab’s obedience to her faith, she was not only saved, but she was also taken in by the Israelites as one of their own. The Bible tells us that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, and He did that very thing in life of Rahab. As we look at Matthew Chapter One, we see her listed as an ancestor of both King David, and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

HE IS NO FOOL WHO GIVES WHAT
HE CANNOT KEEP TO GAIN WHAT
HE CANNOT LOSE.

– JIM ELLIOT

Courage starts by saying yes. Choosing to step out in faith regardless of what it might cost. And, with each step we take we find that God is working in us and through us.

FAITH UNDER PRESSURE

In Acts 16 we read a story about Paul and Silas who were met by a female slave (a fortune teller) as they were going to a place of prayer. The Bible tells us that she was shouting at them. Her shouting continued for days, until Paul finally rebuked the Spirit within her.

As a result, they angered her owners who dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. After they were severely beaten, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison where they were given an opportunity to not only share their faith, but to testify to that faith. They did so by remaining calm under pressure and worshipping God from their jail cell.

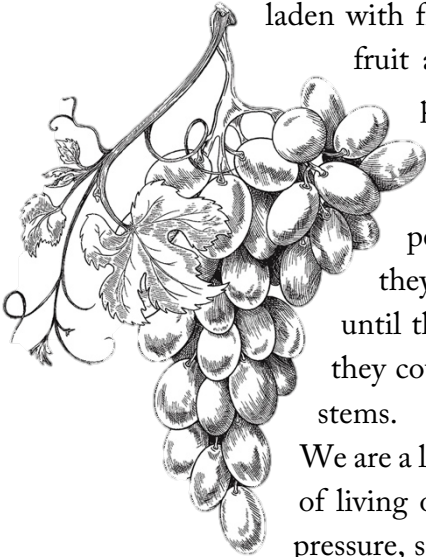
The story goes on to tell us that a violent earthquake suddenly shook the foundation and opened the doors of the prison. Instead of leaving however, Paul and Silas seized the opportunity to share their faith with the guard on duty that night.

When Paul says, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 11:1) He's talking about the testimony he shares through living the gospel.

There's a common saying which goes, "You might be the only Bible that people read."

With that in mind, ask yourself, what do they see? What message are you sending out when you are under pressure, stressed out, or in fear? Do they see a God they can lean on by the way that you are leaning on Him?

Think of it this way: imagine a vineyard in season. Rows of vines, laden with fruit, ready to be picked. To fully enjoy the fruit and to share it with others, it needs to be processed. In fact, if you hope to make wine, it needs to be crushed and pressed to extract the juice from the grapes. Before people had wine presses available to them, they applied pressure by stomping the grapes until they were completely crushed, at which time they could separate the juice from the skin and the stems.



We are a lot like that fruit when it comes to the process of living our faith. Our testimony is produced under pressure, so that the more we're hard pressed the more we pour out the message of Christ. It's in the overcoming of trials that they taste of His goodness and power, and, as He pours Himself in, we pour ourselves out.

Paul writes,

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are

alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. (2 Corinthians 4:8-11)

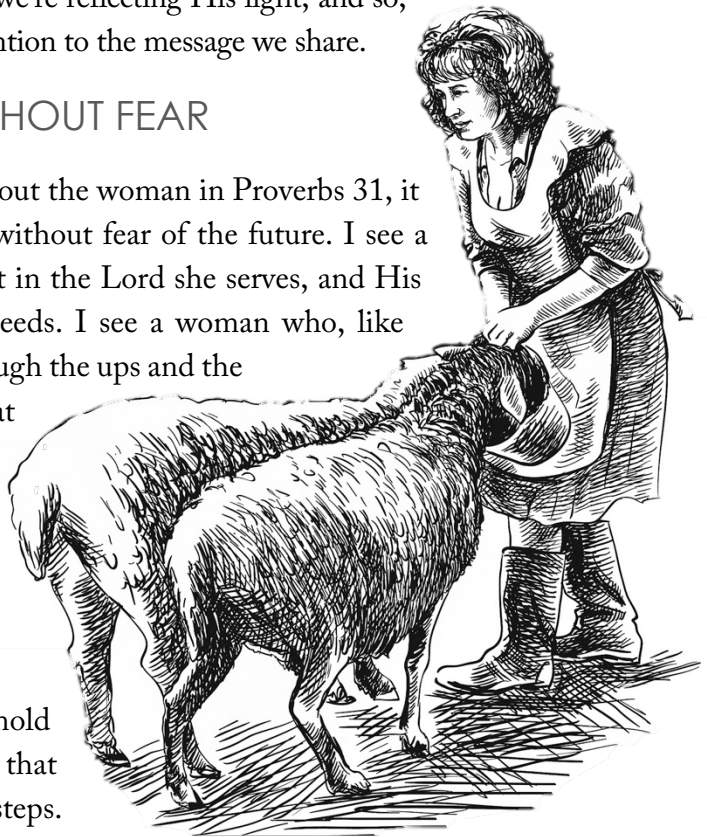
How many of us are willing to be stripped down and severely beaten with rods for the sake of our faith? Paul and Silas didn't choose that for themselves; however, they did choose their reaction to it, which speaks volumes about their faith.

We can't dictate the situations we're given, but we can choose the way we receive them. Our attitude toward life is a medium that God uses to draw others to Him.

As children of light, we're reflecting His light, and so, we must give careful attention to the message we share.

SHE LAUGHS WITHOUT FEAR

When the Bible talks about the woman in Proverbs 31, it tells us that she laughs without fear of the future. I see a woman who is confident in the Lord she serves, and His ability to care for her needs. I see a woman who, like Paul, is even keeled through the ups and the downs, knowing that obstacles offer her an opportunity to grow stronger in faith. I see a woman who has placed her future in His capable hands. Hands that are able to mold and to shape her. Hands that are wisely directing her steps.



PAUSE REFLECT

What does 1 John 3:1 say? Write the verse out here:

In your own words, tell us what Rahab told the spies before they went to sleep.

What promise did the men make to her?

Why is the scarlet cord vital to this story?

What three things do the verses from Joshua 2 and Exodus 12 have in common?

Why were Paul and Silas in jail?

What were they doing at midnight?

In this chapter, I wrote, "Our testimony is produced under pressure." What do you think that means?

If we can't dictate our situations, what can we do?

Can you think of any situation in your past or present where God has used you to minister right where you were?

