

Joshua 2:1-24

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[0 : 00] If you don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm part of the leadership team here at Harvest Church. I just want to say it's great to see you all here, great to be able to worship with you, our wonderful God.

And I am going to, as Tim said, open up God's word. We're going to be continuing in the book of Joshua, which is an Old Testament book, just to give you a little highlight of what has gone before, if you like, if you're a little unsure.

The nation of Israel had been in slavery in Egypt, and God had miraculously brought them out of Egypt, led by Moses, and Joshua was kind of Moses number two.

And, you know, Joshua stayed in God's tent all the time. He worshipped and delighted in God. And they'd come out of Egypt about 40 years earlier than where we'll pick up in a minute.

And they have now been wandering around in the wilderness. Many have died because they displeased God, and I'll mention that in a moment. But they are now come to the River Jordan, and they are getting ready to cross.

[1 : 22] And previously, so almost 40 years previously, Moses had sent 12 spies into the land. They crossed the River Jordan to spy out the land, to scout it out, to see that it was good.

This was the land that God had promised to Abraham. And out of those 12 spies, two came back.

That was Joshua and Caleb, and gave encouraging reports, saying, Yes, it is what God has said.

This is fantastic land. Let's go up and take it. But 10 had come back and gone, Oh, the people there are giants. We look like grasshoppers in their sight, and we will be destroyed.

Don't go up. And this negative response from the spies meant it put fear into the people, and they were afraid to go up. And this displeased God, and so they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

So that kind of brings us now to where we're at, which is Joshua chapter 2. We'll be looking through the whole chapter, but we'll read it in two parts.

[2 : 30] We're going to start in a moment at verse 1. Okay, it's going to come up on the screen, but you are, obviously, you can read it in your own Bibles if you prefer.

Then Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent two spies from Shittim. Go, look over the land, he said, especially Jericho. Now, Jericho was a walled town or city.

And in the minute, we'll see that this is where this part, this Joshua, the second chapter here is based in and around Jericho.

So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. Now, Rahab's house, it was on the city wall.

And as it said, she was a prostitute. But the likelihood is that the men went there, maybe for a number of different reasons. They might have gone there because it was often frequented by men.

[3 : 41] They might have went there because it often had travelers going there. It might have been they went there because it gave them a quick escape out of the city, over the wall, as it were.

But to be fair, I tend to think that actually they were divinely led there. God took them to Rahab's house. And we'll see a bit more of that as we go along.

Carrying on then, verse 2. So the king of Jericho was told, Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.

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.

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. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left.

[4 : 41] I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them. But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.

So Rahab here lies to the king's men to save the spies. So she basically rejected the authority of the king.

Continuing, verse 7. 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.

Before the spies laid down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given you this land 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.

We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for when you came out of Egypt and what you did to Sion and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

[5 : 52] So Rahab is saying, we heard what your God did 40 years ago and we are in fear.

It's amazing, isn't it? Going back to the 12 spies, 10 of them were in fear and yet the people of the land were already in fear of what they heard God was doing.

What a mess they made of that. Now, carrying on then, when we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you.

For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. What an incredible statement by a gentlewoman, Gentile woman, a non-Israelite, someone that didn't worship God. In fact, as a Gentile, she would have worshipped multiple gods. And I mentioned this before, these gods were of different locations.

[7 : 03] So they would have worshipped Baal, who was the god of storms and rain and fertility and agriculture, so they believed. Or Asherah, who was the god of fertility, motherhood and the sea.

But Rahab here is saying, my gods are nothing. They aren't gods at all. Your God is so much more powerful. Your God is God in heaven and on the earth below.

As in everywhere. Okay, so let's start to draw some bits and pieces out of this.

Now, let's be honest here. Who struggles a bit with Rahab? I have to confess that I do. Or I have done in the past.

I mean, she's a prostitute. She's a liar. She rejects her own people. And she's disobedient to authority.

[8 : 12] And as I was thinking about this, I realised that actually, I was prejudiced. I looked at this woman and all that she'd done here, and I thought, hmm, that doesn't tie up with my thoughts of what's good and what's right.

And I often have to question myself when reading this. Am I prejudiced? Who can be a hero? Who can get involved in God's work? And we'll pick up that again in a few minutes' time. So God is God over all, as declared by Rahab.

He is the creator. He is sovereign. Is he prejudiced? Well, in Romans 3.23, it says, All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

So in one sense, God looks at all of us and goes, you've all fallen short. Whether you're a prostitute. Whether you're a liar. Whether you reject your own people. Whether you're just a little bit dishonest here or there.

[9 : 31] We all, in a way, fall into that same category, having fallen short of the glory of God. Which then leads us to grace.

What is grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor, mercy, or divine assistance. Grace is unmerited favor, mercy, or divine assistance.

So how exactly did Rahab experience God's grace? Well, the spies came to her house. Now, we don't know how big exactly Jericho was.

But there was going to be plenty of houses on the wall and plenty of houses inside. And yet, God directed the spies to her.

And so, an opportunity arises for her to be saved from destruction. As we will see, added into God's people.

[10 : 38] And if you carry on and see in the New Testament, she eventually is of the lineage of Jesus. In fact, she becomes King David's great, great granny.

God kept Rahab and her family safe. As in, her house didn't collapse when the walls fell down. Her past sins did not prejudice God's grace.

Did not deter him from choosing her. What then was Rahab's response to God's grace? The Bible tells us it's faith.

In the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, chapter 11, verse 31, we read this. Rahab goes, She receives them instead.

So, faith, her faith, leads to actions and works. She saves the spies. And as we will see, she gathers her family to her as well.

[12 : 24] So, they are saved. In the book of James, chapter 2, verse 24 to 26, it says this. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. So, Rahab's faith meant that she then had, you know, there were actions, there were works in what she did.

And to be fair, it meant standing up to the king's men. So, she did things in line with her faith in God because of his grace.

And her faith in him led to her salvation, to her being saved.

[13 : 31] So, let's pull this all together in a bit of an application then. What does this mean to us? Well, we are here this morning by God's grace.

God has called us to this place. He's spoken into our hearts. He brought a challenge maybe. He's drawn us here just as the spies were led to Rahab's house.

So, we have been brought here. That's part of God's grace. We are hearing and have sung even about his salvation in his grace.

Christ's sacrifice is his grace demonstrated to us. Despite our past sins, he offers restored relationship through Christ.

And in that, we are saved from destruction. Like Rahab, we can accept or reject him.

[14 : 35] She accepted what God offered and so can we. We, therefore, in accepting him, need to reject the false gods of this age.

And, I mean, that could be money, status, you name it, many things that keep us away from God. But, in accepting God's amazing grace, we need to reject the false gods of this age.

And, in receiving this grace, this salvation, we are no longer of the people of this world. We are in a new family, restored relationship with God.

And then, in that, our faith leads us to works of service. We go from shame to hope, just as Rahab did.

I said I'd touch a little bit more on the prejudice side of things. I asked whether you struggled with Rahab. Well, the question is, are you or can you be sometimes prejudiced towards other people?

[15 : 54] Maybe their status, their class, their... What work they do, maybe their race or their culture. Maybe even you're just prejudiced because you see their sins.

Or maybe you're prejudiced against yourself. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, I'm not really worthy of doing that. I'm not capable. That's not for me.

God wouldn't ask me to do that because of my past. I've done bad things, wrong thoughts. I'm not good enough. God looks for none of these things.

He looks for faith in him put into action. And I just want to pause here a moment and actually pray that through. Because I think it's important that we deal with prejudice.

Lord, I pray that we will not be prejudiced, whether it's towards others or even towards ourselves, but instead would see them and us as you see us.

[16 : 57] In Christ, we are righteous. We are saved. We are added. We are part of your family. And as you call them or us to do works, to live out our faith, I pray that you would help us to see them and ourselves the way that you see us, Lord.

Amen. Okay, so let's move on then to the second half of this chapter. Verse 12 then.

Now then, so this is Rahab, back to the Rahab and the spies. 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 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.

So Rahab knew death was coming. They'd seen the armies of Israel across the waters and they thought, oh, we're next. That you will save us from death.

[18 : 06] Our lives for your lives, the men assured her. If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land. So she let them down by a rope through the window for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.

She said to them, go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return and then go on your way. Now the men had said to her, this oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 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.

But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear. Agreed, she replied. Let it be as you say. So she sent them away and they departed and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. Then the two men started back.

[19 : 27] They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua, son of Nun, and told him everything that happened to them. They said to Joshua, The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands.

All the people are melting in fear because of us. That's the kind of report that Joshua brought back 40 years earlier. Okay, so let's pause and take stock.

Rahab was clearly a sinner, but she has understood who God is. She knows she is with the wrong people and is looking to change sides, if you like.

She wants to receive God's salvation. God's grace brings opportunity to her door. Does this sound like a gospel message to you?

Maybe God's grace has been extended to you this morning for the first time. Let's look a little bit more into this.

[20 : 37] Covenant. It's an odd word. What does it mean? A covenant is a binding formal agreement or a relationship between two or more parties. So marriage is a covenant.

It can be conditional, i.e. you do this, I'll do that. It's what the spies and Rahab had a covenant together.

If you do this, I'll do that. If you don't do it, then I won't do that. Or it could be unconditional. I will do it regardless. So Rahab is to stay quiet, put a cord in her window, which we will discuss in a moment, and bring her family into her house.

And the spies promised safety. But this covenant also involves God. So in a sense, because the spies were God's people as they made this covenant, God got involved.

And often, covenants, God gets involved in. I mean, marriage, God should be involved in that covenant. Why do I say God was involved?

[21 : 59] Well, when we go on further in the book of Joshua, you'll see that the walls collapse. Who flattened the walls? God. Who didn't flatten Rahab's house?

God. So the spies had made the promise, the covenant, but God was the one with the action. Rahab's household is saved by God.

And from that, they receive new life, a new relationship with God's people as well.

Okay, so moving on then. I said I'd mention the cord again. Scarlet cord. I've also added a few more bits in here. Passover and Christ's sacrifice.

So, the cord was scarlet for a reason. Scarlet blood, very similar in color.

[22 : 58] I've mentioned the word Passover. I've mentioned the word Passover. Now, the spies may not have been alive when the Israelites left Egypt, but there was a feast and a remembrance of what happened in Egypt called Passover, which we're going to briefly touch on.

So, the Israelites are still in slavery in Egypt. And many plagues have gone. And then this one final thing.

God says, sacrifice a lamb for each household and take the blood and paint it across the top of the door and down the sides. He said, you must keep your families inside that house.

Only then will they be safe from death. Only then will they be saved. And out of that then came release from slavery.

Salvation. New life. Following God outside of Egypt. This is very similar to what's going on here with Rahab.

[24 : 14] The cord is there. The family are drawn into the house. And God saves them from the death all around. But Rahab's story is also our story.

See, Christ came as the sacrificial lamb. He went to the cross. His blood was shed for our sins. And as we receive him, become part of his family, accepting that his sacrifice pays the penalty for our sins. So we are in effect coming in to his household and are saved from destruction.

Our salvation. Our salvation. The perfect lamb slain that is Jesus. God sees Christ's blood upon our lives.

And we are saved. Made alive. Death defeated. Freedom from slavery. We are now in a new kingdom. If we are in Christ.

[25 : 24] His kingdom. We have a new people group. We're here. That's just some of them. God's people. And a new life in him. Relationship restored.

And then as we start to draw this to an end, another funny word, atonement or at-one-ment.

To set at one. Bring into harmony. To be reconciled. Repair a fractured relationship. And I just want to touch on a few verses.

Hebrews 10 verse 4. They won't come up, I'm afraid, but they're only short. Hebrews 10 verse 4.

This is talking about the old system of sacrifice of animals.

In Hebrews 10 verse 4 it says, It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. But instead in the same chapter, verse 14.

[26 : 25] For by one sacrifice, he, that is Jesus, has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. So the sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament was something temporary, but when Jesus came, the perfect sacrifice, his sacrifice was so perfect that all could be made holy by the shedding of his blood.

God's grace and our faith in God's salvation, in Christ, leads to relationship restored, just as it did for Rahab.

Just, I'm just going to move on there because time's pressing, but I want to bring some application to this.

The New Testament covenant is in Christ between God and each person individually. God offers new life, restored relationship because Christ paid the cost.

We can accept or we can reject that salvation. If we accept it, then Christ's sacrifice is enough for all our sin that we can stand before God right.

[28 : 08] Nothing more needs doing. A perfect sacrifice to restore sinful man to God.

God. And in that, we are reconciled, that at-one-ment, atonement, reconciled to God through him and him alone.

I guess it's important to ask this question. For many of us, we have already received him. But have you?

Are you maybe hearing this message for the first time that only through Christ is reconciliation with God, salvation?

salvation? Maybe you've heard it a few times, but you've never made this step of faith, of receiving him as your Lord and Savior. I want to give that opportunity now.

[29 : 06] I'm just going to say a very simple prayer. And you can either repeat it quietly to yourself or just say amen at the end. But this is an opportunity to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Just as Rahab accepted that God was Lord over all, entered into a new life. So we can receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior and restored relationship with the one who created us.

Let's just bow our heads and pray. Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose again.

I turn from my sins and invite you into my life as my Lord and Savior. Amen. If you've prayed that prayer for the first time, speak to someone you came with or speak to some of us at the front.

We'd love to chat a little bit more about it. Christ died that we might live in restored relationship with him. Praise God. Amen.

[30 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.