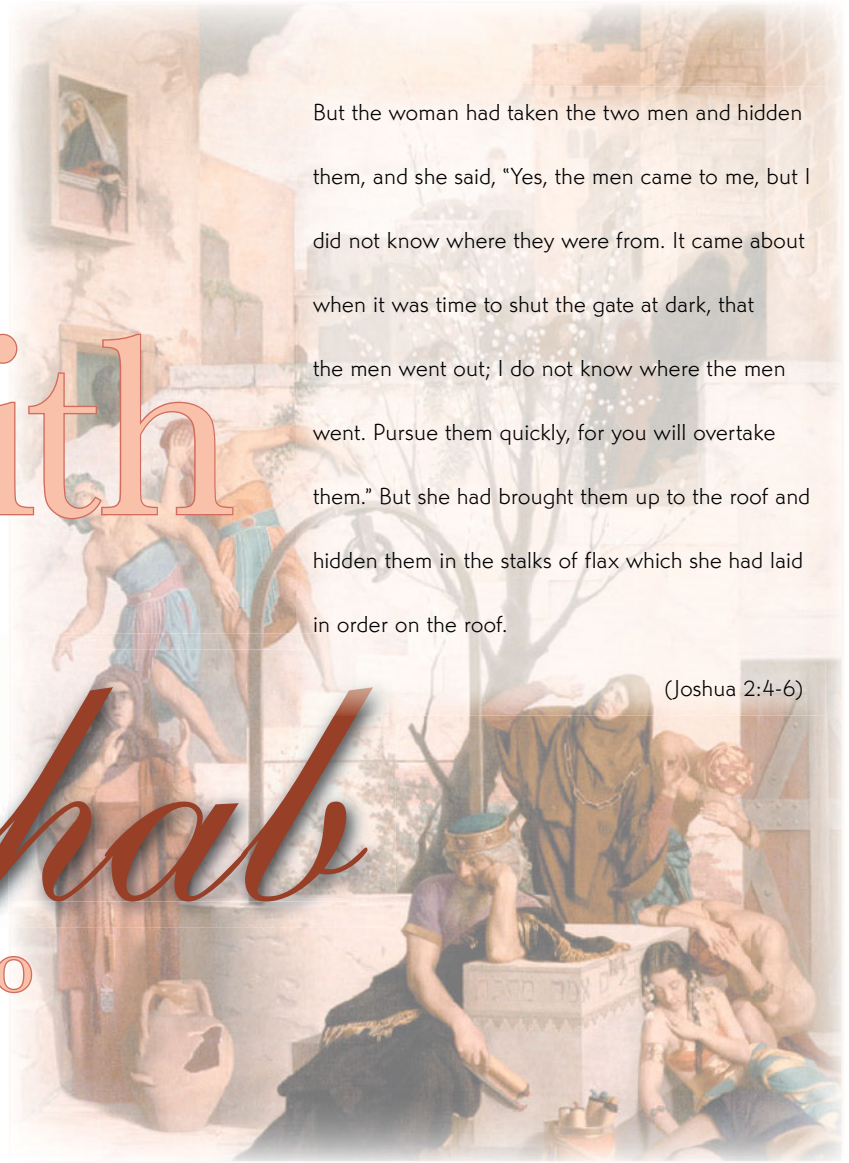


By Faith

Rahab

part two



But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof.

(Joshua 2:4-6)

THE MODERN EQUIVALENT of the mid-eastern roof, where Rahab hid the Jewish spies, is, in one sense, the attic. Though enclosed, the attic is similar in that it is where we store things and, in some homes, where play rooms are built for the children. In the modern home it is primarily where we put things we seldom use.

Rahab, living in a heathen city, hid God on her roof in the form of the men of Israel. In these men she saw hope, and her eventual salvation. But her salvation would only be realized if she released them to return to their people. If she had kept them there on her roof, they could not have reported back, and Israel would never have invaded and ultimately defeated Jericho.

Many people today keep God in their attic but never let Him out. They know

Him, even have a relationship of sorts with Him, but it remains a private, hidden affair. With about the same frequency that they go up to the attic to retrieve the Christmas decorations, they go up to have a chat and revive their tenuous friendship with God.

If Rahab had kept the men as a prize, she never would have been saved. The Christian who keeps God tucked away as a silent trophy may ultimately be saved, but it will be without victory, and it will have been obtained without the unspeakable pleasure of truly knowing Him.

Willing to Submit

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the

Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

(Joshua 2:8-11)

The people of Jericho had heard how the waters of the Red Sea had dried up before the Israelites, giving them a safe and dry

escape from the pursuing Egyptians. They had heard how the Lord God had given them success against Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. And every day these conquering tribes drew closer to the Jordan, and to the massive walls of their city.

The typical response from the populace was an intense dread of what was about to come down on their heads. A vast army in possession of supernatural strength was coming out of the desert, and it was agreed: the end was near.

Since the fall, the human heart has had a built-in prejudice against the authority of God. Even when the evidence is clear and incontrovertible, it is the inclination of the human heart to reject His power over its life. Though they acknowledged His terrible might, the people of Jericho were willing to go to their deaths rather than submit to God's authority.

All except for one wise, brave woman. Rahab's fear was a respectful, holy fear. She was willing not only to acknowledge God's authority, but to submit to it.

An Influence for Good

"Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

(Joshua 2:12-13)

The home is to be a safe haven, an island in the churning sea that swirls around its walls, a stronghold against the vicious waves that batter its door. Each member of the household may bring into it those things that will make it stronger, or those things which will contribute to its demise.

Rahab saw an opportunity to bring God into her household. So many times before she had brought shame and ill-fame into her house, but this time, because of her, when the tempest swirled around them and battered at their door, every member of her family would be found safe within.

An Uncertain Future

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household." She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

(Joshua 2: 15-18,21)

Rahab, left alone, sank back into her swarming doubts. What would become of her? If, because of her years as a woman of the streets, a lowly harlot viewed with contempt even by her own people, how in the world could she be accepted into a new community already aware of her past? Was she stepping into a miserable new life—even one of subjection or slavery? She had no guarantee from the men beyond the taking of the city; after that, who could say what would become of her and her family?

And what of her new God? Yes, she believed in Him, had even been worshipping Him secretly behind closed doors, but she still knew little of His personality, His ways. What would He do with her? Would she be confined to a lower strata of His society because of her publicly sordid past? At least here in Jericho she could continue

her business; what would become of her with Israel?

As the inhabitants of her city awaited their fate with dread, feeling the weight of the approaching horde descend upon their fortified walls, Rahab resigned herself to a physically safe, yet possibly miserable life in the company of a new people.

And may the Lord have mercy on me, she thought.

Saved

Here is the picture of grace. It was not her brave act in protecting the spies that had saved Rahab. It was her faith in Jehovah. No act of heroism can buy salvation, but anyone, no matter their past, who comes to the Lord God by faith, will be received into His arms.

God keeps His promises. Rahab had been promised salvation and the Lord kept His word. Rahab survived the destruction of Jericho and a gracious Jewish man married her. From their union would spring Israel's greatest king, King David, and from his line would come a simple, greathearted rabbi who had a reputation for doing unorthodox things. One day this teacher would be invited to the house of a prominent religious leader, and He would be given the opportunity to display the same grace to a common prostitute.

And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

(Luke 7: 37-38,50)

Dear Father, that I may know You more, throw wide the doors that keep You hidden in the attics and closets of my life. Release the full depth of who You truly are, so I might bathe in Your goodness, and become more like Jesus, Your Son. You hold every life in the palm of Your hand. Sustain in me the wisdom and faith to believe in Your authority—and the humility to submit to it. Lord God, You have made the home of my heart safe by placing there the person and influence of the Holy Spirit. Make me such an influence in my earthly home. Make me an influence for good, rather than harm. And when the doors and windows have been shuttered against the storm outside, may the good within draw us ever closer to You. O God, You know that I love You, but sometimes I worry about my uncertain future. Please forgive me when I lean on my own understanding, but teach me how to trust only in You for my tomorrow. ✦