

People of Promise
Rahab
611 words

A Delegated Promise

Rahab:
Dying to Be Saved

Joshua 2:14

A famous story in the New Testament recounts the salvation of a jailer and his family in the city of Philippi (Acts 16:25-34). The apostle Paul, and his companion Silas, had been jailed for their apostolic activities. In the middle of the night, a violent earthquake shook the prison, throwing open the prison doors and causing the chains to fall off the prisoners. The jailer was just about to kill himself (he knew he would be killed the next day for having allowed the prisoners to escape), when Paul and Silas made him a promise: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved--you and your household." He did and he was--and his family, too.

Now when an apostle makes a promise--in person or in writing--we don't hesitate to believe it. We know he speaks for God. But a woman named Rahab--a rank pagan, a Canaanite prostitute in the Old Testament--learned that God's promises are true regardless of who makes them. And when you're about to die--like she was, and like the Philippian jailer was--a promise from God is a good thing to cling to. The message, not the messenger, is the most important thing.

Rahab plied her trade in the Canaanite city of Jericho. As a prostitute, she probably plucked news off the Middle Eastern grapevine faster than most, given Jericho's location at an oasis on a primary trade route. She had heard about the power of the God of the approaching Israelites. If Pharaoh and the Red Sea were no match for him, what chance did Jericho and the Jordan River have of holding him back? She knew an attack was imminent and that she and everyone in Jericho were about to die. Therefore, she struck a deal with two Israelite spies whom Joshua had sent to reconnoiter Jericho and its environs. She basically asked the same question that the Philippian jailer did centuries later: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)

It turned out that she was not the only one who needed to be saved--the Israelite spies did as well. They had been spotted hiding in Rahab's house, and Jericho's king told her to give them up. So the spies made Rahab a promise: "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you [and your whole family; 2:13] kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land" (Joshua 2:14). Here was their point: "Rahab, we are not anyone who can save you. But we speak for Joshua, our leader, who speaks for Yahweh, our God. Joshua can, and will, save you and your family based on our promise to you." So they exchanged oaths to save each other.

Rahab lied to the king, hid the spies, and helped them escape. And the spies worked out a plan for her and her family's rescue on the day of battle. When Joshua and

the armies of Israel came to Jericho, he honored the promise the spies had made and saved Rahab and all her family (6:22-25). For Rahab, the promise, not the promisers, was what saved her.

The next time you're dying to be saved from an approaching calamity, think of Rahab:

- Have my sins deceived me into thinking God won't help me?
- Am I open to receiving God's promise of deliverance from an unexpected messenger?
- Am I maintaining a child-like faith, eager to believe and be saved?

God works in mysterious ways, doesn't he? Using spies and lies to save a prostitute and her family! The promise of God, regardless of its packaging, is what saves those who have ears to hear.