Rahab: A Paragon of Faith

by Robin Nelson

Joshua 2

For several weeks now, we have been reading the book *Winning the War in Your Mind*, which presents evidence from the Bible and modern science of how our thoughts shape who we are. The book’s opening statement that “our lives are always moving in the direction of our strongest thought” has prompted me to consider the thoughts that dominate my mind and how they originate. To help change these thoughts, I have reflected on Rahab, and have identified both the lies Satan could have used against her and the truth of how God viewed her. Ultimately, Rahab’s actions show that she chose to ignore the lies and faithfully trust the Lord.

**Lie #1: My value lies in my social status.**

In Joshua 2:1, Rahab is described as a prostitute. As such, she was a marginal member of society. Even her home and place of business were situated on the outskirts of Jericho. Joshua 2 does not speak specifically about how Rahab was viewed by the public, but I gather from other similar examples in the Bible (Luke 7:36-50; John 8:3-5) and the fact that prostitution was considered a waste of a man’s semen, that she was not seen as a valued or productive member of society.

**Truth #1: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

***25****For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.* ***26****Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.****27****But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.****28****God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,****29****so that no one may boast before him.*

God used Rahab’s physical and societal position to help the Israelite spies escape being captured by the king of Jericho and to provide the spies with vital information about the disposition and morale in Jericho. Because Rahab’s home was located on the edges of Jericho, the spies were able to get out of the city quickly after the king came looking for them. Also, being a prostitute, Rahab likely had access to prominent men from whom she learned important secrets of the land. Some commentaries suggest that the spies stayed at her house for that very reason. To the spies, Rahab served as a prophet delivering the message that “…. the Lord has given you this land…” and encouraged them with the news 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 (Joshua 2:8-9).” The spies took that news back to Joshua and spurred on Israel to continue trusting God’s plan for them to take over Canaan.

**Lie #2: God’s love depends on (or my identity is rooted in) my nationality and/or cultural background.**

In Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Canaanites were included as one the groups of people that were to be destroyed when Israel took over the nations God promised them. As a Canaanite woman, it would have been logical for Rahab to conclude that her fate was sealed, and that no action on her behalf would change that.

**Truth #2: Ephesians 3:6-12, James 4:6-10, Psalm 103, Acts 11:18**

*Ephesians 3:6-12*

***6****This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.* ***7****I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.****8****Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,****9****and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.****10****His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,****11****according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.****12****In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

Although Canaan was going to be destroyed, Rahab must have trusted God. Her faith in God reminds me of the level of faith Abraham displayed when God told him to sacrifice Isaac at Moriah (Genesis 22:1-5). Just as Abraham reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead and keep his promise to make him the father of all nations, Rahab trusted God’s character and reasoned that He would reward her for the faith she showed when she hid the spies and helped them escape the king of Jericho. Rahab has also been compared to the Hebrew midwives (Shiphrah and Puah) who, because they feared God, ignored Pharoah’s order to kill all male babies born to the Hebrew women (Exodus 1:15-17). As a result of her faith, Rahab and her family became converts to Judaism. Additionally, Rahab was added to Jesus’s family tree despite being a Gentile.

**Lie #3: My past must determine my future.**

I struggle with believing that because I am one way today, that is the way I will always be. I tend to worry that my mistakes today determine the entire trajectory of the rest of my life. As a result, I fall into the trap of perfectionism and get anxious about trying new things. I tend to rely on my own thinking instead of God’s work in my life. I suspect that Rahab was confronted with a similar lie. I believe she may have had to overcome the thought that her life and future were limited to those of a prostitute.

**Truth #3: Hebrews 11:30-31**

***30****By faith the walls Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.* ***31****By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

As the spies were hiding at her home, Rahab asked them to show her and her family kindness by sparing their lives when they attack Jericho, and the spies agreed (Joshua 2:12-13). After Israel took over Canaan, Rahab was incorporated into the Israelite community, married Salmon, and was Boaz’s mother and King David’s great-great-grandmother. Because she aligned her actions with God’s truth instead of the world’s lies, Rahab was considered righteous for her works and became listed among heroes of faith in the Bible (Matthew 1:3). Her faith changed the trajectory of her own life and her family’s generational legacy, while leaving a practical example for us to imitate.