



THURSDAY 5/21/20

SERIES: Choosing Faith Over Fear

Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/Arnie & Cara)

Title: Your Past Doesn't Determine Your Future Pt. 1 (Rahab)

If you were to create a list of heroes of faith, what would your criteria be? How would you know who had faith above the rest? What kind of people would you look for? Would you look for liars? Murderers? Doubters? Or what about prostitutes? Would those kinds of people make your top 10?

I don't think any of us would choose those kind of people for our heroes of the faith, but let's be honest, every person is a sinner. So, God has no choice but to use sinners like you and me.

What kinds of people did God identify in his list of faithful people? Liars, murderers, doubters, and even prostitutes.

Over the next three days, we're going to look at Rahab as we work our way through Joshua 2. In case you're listening for the first time, we're in a series called "Choosing Faith Over Fear". We have been looking at various people who had a choice to make: faith or fear. Rahab had that same dilemma. Would she trust God in the face of great consequence or would she choose fear? That's what we're going to find out now in Joshua 2. Let's begin in verse 1.

Courageous Faith

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. (ESV, Josh.2:1)

Okay, what you'll find in chapter 2 are many characters, but only identified by name: Joshua and Rahab. Who was Joshua? Joshua was Moses' successor who led the Israelites into the Promised Land. I think there are two interesting points that should be brought up about Joshua. First is that Joshua was one of the twelve spies sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan in Numbers 13. Only he and Caleb gave an encouraging report. It was a faith or fear moment and Joshua chose faith. Why is this point interesting? Well, nothing is recorded by chance in the Bible. We don't know why Joshua sent two people instead of a large group. It says he sent these two men

secretly. I mean, that's what spies do, right? They do things secretly. But maybe Joshua sent these two most God-fearing men to spy, and he didn't want the same result as in Numbers 13. But ultimately, we don't know.

The second thing to note about Joshua is he has been regarded as a type of Christ. You see this referenced in Hebrews 4:8. Joshua's name means "God is salvation". It's Jesus name. Yeshua.

The second character is our main character in Joshua 2. It's Rahab and the writer holds nothing back in her trade. She was a prostitute. Yes, this term can be used as an innkeeper, but what we read in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 is that she's no innkeeper, she's a prostitute. She sells her body. This woman who lived in Jericho, this prostitute, is a hero of the faith according to Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 is the chapter known as the Heroes of the Faith. It has names like Abraham, Moses, Isaac, David and others. In chapter 11, you read in verse 6: "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Or this in Hebrews 11:13: These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

So, Hebrews 11 points to the fact that these Old Testament people had faith in God. They hadn't experienced the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But they were trusting in God to provide them of this Savior. It was their only hope. That's why Romans 4, says that [Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness](#).

It's kind of like pre-ordering a movie or a video game. You know it's coming, so you lay claim to it, though you know it won't be realized until a future date.

DISCUSSION:

N: Well, I want to stop there just for a moment and bring in my discussion partners, CEO of Back to the Bible, Arnie Cole and author Cara Whitney. So I'm curious who would be in your heroes of faith list and why?

C: Could I interchange them? Kind of like my goTandem app. [Absolutely.] If I decide I'm a jerk that day, I can, you know, find something new to put in there [for sure]. Because I like Paul's grit and his focus. I love Thomas's courage to ask questions, and you know, so I like to interchange my heroes, and borrow the faith as I need in that moment.

A: I like David, you know, man after God's heart. And he's just a loser sometimes, made stupid mistakes, but God loved him tremendously.

N: Any modern day heroes?

C: Arnie Cole.

N: Arnie Cole, man, that was mine too. [Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah].

C: He's like the bionic man. [Yeah]. You're like the bionic man, Arnie, [yeah] but you'd never lose sight of your mission. See.

A: My hero of modern times is, her name is Joy Ridderhoff, Gospel Recordings. She would step out in faith with no money and take the Gospel to the ends of the world. She was my, as a kid, I totally admired her. Just a tremendous person.

N: Yeah. You know, for me, it's actually my wife. Tiffany is a remarkable person, who in some ways has a very childlike faith, in that she trusts God with a sense of what He says is true. And I don't need you to prove it to me, I've seen it, and I read it, and that's good. But she also has a prayer life of a warrior, who has prayed for me many times in my life, when I've wandered and not been the person God has called me to be. And yet she has faithfully called out to God, and trusted Him to oversee me in my life, and our family's life, through great trials and great moments of struggle. And yet she remains faithful. So my wife is mine.

C: That's a spiritual gift too, those prayer warriors. Because I mean, I love Him. I know I have friends that are prayer warriors. I pray, but I just, they just go right to their knees as their first response, and it is awesome.

N: So I'm curious, what do you guys take away from God's list? I mean, people who showed great faith, but they were people just like you and me. They were sinners. I mean maybe not completely like you and me, you know, murderers, and you know, a prostitute, and you know, liars and doubters, but they were just everyday people. What do you make of God's list?

A: Reminds me of that song. Nothing is impossible.

C: I'd like to say, how do you know I've never murdered anyone Nat?

N: All right. Would you like to make a confession on air? [Laughter]

C: No. I love it because I can look at them and go, okay, well if he's allowing these guys to partner with Him, then anything is possible.

N: Yeah. It's a message of hope and redemption. [Yeah.] That's why I love this list, because He does use everyday people: Nothing special, people with backgrounds, people who we would call losers, no hope, probably no chance of any type of redemption. And yet God uses them in their brokenness, to accomplish something far greater than they ever could by themselves. It's just amazing.

C: Maybe that's a good way to look at people you are witnessing to, is that you might plant a seed in there, and you might be planting the seed in the next big evangelist. So it's just amazing.

N: Well, and you're exactly right. I mean, you know, if you look at heroes of the faith, or maybe not heroes of the faith, but people that I guess I've felt a connection to in the Bible, it's Jonah. You know, Jonah's one of those guys who you know, God's saying Go, and he's like, I'm not going to go to those people, because I don't like those people. And he had good human reason not to. But those are the exact same people that Christ came to save: sinners who do evil, wicked things. And yet Jonah, he struggled with it. In fact, he threw temper tantrums because of it, and I realized, man, I'm a lot like Jonah some days, because the people that drive me nuts, those are the same people that God called Jesus to go and save. Pretty humbling.

C: I heard one time, love difficult people because you are one.

N: Right. That's an unfortunate reality.

Well, let's turn back to Joshua 2 and learn more about Rahab and her choice of fear vs. faith.

So it's clear from this passage and James 2, as well as Hebrews 11, that Rahab is a prostitute. Some people ask, well, was she saved at this point in the story or was it later? I mean, if she's saved, why would her name remain Rahab the prostitute?

I'm inclined to think she was saved. James 2:25 says, "And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" Her faith was displayed in her obedience to saving the spies. That action didn't save her. No action can save anyone. Ephesians 2 says, salvation comes by grace through faith and not of

works. So her actions were the realization of her faith. But she had a young faith, a naïve faith. So like many believers, when they are young believers, they only have so much knowledge of God. They don't fully realize how much our Salvation changes us. She didn't have the Bible like we have. This is a huge benefit to believers. If we'd only read it!

But Rahab had a past and likely very current struggles in her baby faith. But she was like the people in Thessalonica. She had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

So, these spies are sent out to find out the best way to enter the land. And they are welcomed in to Rahab's place. This was a huge risk if found out. So, let's see how this pans out. Verse 2.

² And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." ³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. ⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

Immediately, you see what I see. She lied. The men are hidden on the roof of her house covered up by stalks of flax. These stalks could be over four feet high. So it would have provided great covering should her house be searched.

But no one enters her home. Instead they ask, have you seen these spies? And what does she do? She lies. She says no.

So, is the Bible endorsing lying? The short answer is no. The Bible records events as they happened and not how we think they should be. That's a reason to trust the Bible. It has some very troubling events. But this is an example of a *description* and not a *prescription*. It describes an action, but does not prescribe it for us today.

So she believes in God. She risks her life by hiding and protecting these spies. That's a choice of faith. She trusted God over her own life. She had the choice and she chose well. And then she's faced with an ethical dilemma. The King is looking for the spies. She can tell the truth, just like Corrie Ten Boom did.

Corrie Ten Boom told about some people in Germany who were hiding Jews from the Nazis. They had nailed the legs of their kitchen table to the floor. Beneath the table was a carpet concealing a trap door. Lifting the table would open the door to a secret basement where the Jews were hiding.

When the Nazis came to the door, they would accuse the people of protecting Jews in their home, and demand to know where they were hiding. The owner of the house would simply reply, "They're under the table." The Nazis would mock them and leave the house thinking they were crazy. The point, of course, is that they told the truth because the Jews were under the table. They just didn't reveal how far beneath the table they were hiding.

I don't believe you have to say everything that could be said at every point. There is some virtue in keeping your mouth shut.

The Bible is clear. Lying is a sin. Proverbs 12:22 says so. We also know that God cannot lie.

So, Rahab's story isn't a case for lying.

It's proof that her faith was real. Her faith was evident. She had a major choice: fear or faith. Risk her life if she chose faith. Or choose fear and endanger these servants of God.

Well, she chose well. She chose faith. Yes, she lied. Was that a sin? Of course. No excuse. But I think we should give her mercy, just like we want from God, and what we ask for from other people when we sin, because we're really no different. We as believers, we trust God. We love God. We desire to obey God. So we trust Him with the big things of life: our Salvation. Our future. But when it comes to our bank accounts, our bills, our jobs, our bosses, our neighbors, that's where we usually mess up. It's easier to trust God to secure our Salvation. But we doubt He'll meet our daily needs. We trust Him for our future, but we doubt He'll fix our marriage or help us conquer our addictions.

So when we doubt His power and faithfulness, we take control and often we sin.

I love what author and apologist Ravi Zacharias said about sin. He said, "sin is meeting a legitimate need in an illegitimate way." We do it all the time, even as believers.

N: So Arnie, you're not perfect, are you? I mean, I would have to think that you still struggle with sin. Is that true?

A: Yeah. It's a daily struggle.

N: And I know we're trying to be funny here, but you know, you tend to think here, I think we think, that as you age more, and as you walk in your faith, you know, sin wouldn't be such an issue. But the reality is, we still struggle. So part of that sin struggle is trusting God in the small things and taking control. So how have you wrestled with that battle between trusting God in the small things, and then trying to control the situation?

A: Yeah, I think it's just really Nat, keeping your focus on Jesus, no matter what the struggle, you know, whether you're in chemo or on the way to surgery, it's just focusing on the Lord.

N: Right. But how do you practically do that? I mean I think we would all agree with that. How have you done that in your life?

A: For me, one of my favorite scriptures is, *This is the day the Lord has made and I'll rejoice and be glad in it*. I mean it's just, it's day-to-day, step-by-step focus.

N: I think a key ingredient for that, is remembering and focusing on God's Word, keeping that at the front of our mind. And when we have that reminder, it changes how we think, and then it changes what we believe, and inevitably will change how we behave. I think one of the things we heard in this message is this idea of struggling with sin, because the reality is as believers, we are still going to struggle with sin.

So Cara, how would you coach our listeners? What would you say to our listeners today, who are believers, but they're struggling with sin?

C: I would tell them, don't do it.

N: Right, of course, and that's what a pastor would say, right? I mean, that's what the perfect Arnie Cole would say. [That's right.] But I mean, what more than that? Yeah, don't do it, but maybe why shouldn't they do it, or how do they overcome their sin battles?

C: What the sin is, as far as sometimes, I have sinned, I was sinning, and didn't realize that I was reverting back to my old self, until I was halfway through. And then I just stopped. I tried to make good where I screwed up. My goal is to disappoint the devil. All sin has an out. God gives us an out, if we're being tempted with something, I mean, don't do it. It's pretty simple. Don't disappoint the devil and stay in agreement with God.

A: Well, you know our research on temptation too, I would add to that, not only don't do it, stop thinking about it. In our research we did on temptation, we found that especially with serious,

serious sin, people spend weeks and months thinking about it, before they even do it. So it's not only don't do it, but stop thinking about it, would be a tremendous help as well.

C: The more time you have to think about it, the more time you have to justify the behavior.

N: Yep. Thinking is the seed.