

# One of These is Not Like the Others

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hebrews 11, 30 and 31. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith, Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. Father, we are grateful for the privilege of gathering together. Father, thank you for giving us a space to worship in and giving us brothers and sisters to worship with. Thank you for the privilege of using music to celebrate your kindness to us.

Would you please help us now as we continue in our time of worship by turning our attention to the preaching of your word. We would so very much desire to hear the things that you have for us today.

And Father, I would so desire to communicate these truths effectively to these dear people, my brothers and sisters. So would you please give so much help?

[ 1 : 00 ] We ask all of this in Jesus' name, giving thanks. Amen. I like being liked. I like people to like me.

And I am willing to do just about anything to make sure that I am liked and that people keep liking me. And I wonder, is anyone else like me?

This is why we experience shame. Shame is the overwhelming sense or the sneaking suspicion that I am unappreciated or undesirable and therefore better off alone.

Shame is wondering and then realizing I'm not liked. Wrestling with shame is hard.

The author of Hebrews writes to a group of predominantly Jewish people. People who have professed faith in Jesus.

[ 2 : 21 ] And as a result of that faith, they are experiencing persecution. Everywhere they turn, there is shame and disgrace and reproach and adversity and persecution.

Some are even being struck down for their faith. And so this community is perplexed. It is a community in deliberation.

Do the blessings of salvation outweigh the costs of being a follower of Jesus? Is the reproach of Christ really worth more than the treasures of Egypt?

Will the glory of the promised heavenly city be more weighty than the shame that we feel right now? Will the author of Hebrews? Will the author of Hebrews certainly believe that the answers to these questions, the answer to these questions is yes.

[ 3 : 36 ] And so he presents a list of heroes of the faith. And these who are mentioned here are not mentioned because they believe the right doctrine.

Nor is it because they have some kind of a generic faithfulness to God. No. These are mentioned here. These heroes are honored here.

Not for their assent. But for their action. Not merely for their confession of faith. But for their conduct as a result of their faith.

Not merely for their orthodoxy. But for their obedience. And today we encounter the person that I think is the most surprising member of the Hebrews 11 hall of faith.

Rahab is not like the others. She is a Gentile. She is not one of God's chosen people.

[ 4 : 50 ] And as a result, she has minimal knowledge of God. She is very likely an idolater. A prostitute.

Perhaps even a priestess in her culture's cultic worship. And Rahab has one additional strike against her.

She is a citizen of Jericho. And Jericho is the first city that confronts God's people as they enter the promised land.

In other words, Rahab is an enemy. Rahab is not like the others. And yet, she is a worthy example of faith that pleases God by obedience.

And as I hope to demonstrate, in Hebrews 11, she is perhaps the most significant model of faith. Why?

[ 5 : 50 ] Because Rahab's obedience speaks directly to the situation that is confronting this community in deliberation.

Those like us. Who struggle with the choice of being like, being liked, or being like Jesus.

Forty years have passed since the crossing of the Red Sea. Moses is dead. Those who doubted God's promise have also died in the wilderness.

And Joshua, a faithful servant, a mighty warrior, has replaced Moses as the leader of God's people. So let's meet Rahab in Joshua chapter 2.

Verse number 1. Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent two men as spies from the Acacia Grove, saying, Go and scout the land, especially Jericho.

[ 6 : 59 ] So they left, and they came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

The king of Jericho was told, Look, some of the Israelite men have come here tonight to investigate the land.

Then the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab and said, Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house. For they came to investigate the entire land.

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. So she said, Yes, the men did come to me, but I didn't know where they were from. At nightfall, when the city gate was about to close, the men went out, and I don't know where they were going.

Chase after them quickly, and you can catch up with them. But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them among the stalks of flax that she had arranged on her roof.

The men pursued them along the road to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as they left to pursue them, the city gate was shut. Before the men fell asleep, verse number 8, She went up on the roof and said to them, I know.

[ 8 : 07 ] I know that the Lord has given you this land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of 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 Sihon and Og, the two Amor...

That's a terrible name, isn't it? Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings, you completely destroyed across the Jordan. And when we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone's courage failed because of you.

For the Lord your God is God, in heaven above, and on earth below, now, now, now, please swear to me by the Lord that you will also show kindness to my father's family because I showed kindness to you.

Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them and save us from death. The men, the spies, answered her, we will give our lives for yours.

[ 9 : 25 ] If you don't report our mission, we will show kindness and faithfulness to you when the Lord gives us the land.

Then she let them down by a rope through the window since she lived in a house that was built into the wall of the city. Go into the hill country so that the men pursuing you won't find you, she said to them.

Hide there for three days until they return, and afterward, go on your way. The men said to her, we will be free from this oath you made us swear, unless when we enter the land you tie this scarlet cord to the window through which you let us down.

Bring your father, mother, brothers, and all your family into your house. If anyone goes out the doors of your house, his death will be his own fault, and we will be innocent. But if anyone with you in the house should be harmed, his death will be our fault, and if you report our mission, we are free from the oath you made us swear.

Let it be as you say, she replied, and she sent them away. After they had gone, she tied the scarlet cord to the window. Now this is not a complicated story, and I thought it was worth reading, for the most part, straight through, so we get kind of the flow and the gist of this story.

[10:49] But there is an elephant in the room. Kids, do you know what that means if I say there's an elephant in the room? It doesn't mean there's actually an elephant in the room.

It means there's something that needs to be talked about, and we're not really sure how to talk about it. I don't know why we call it an elephant in the room. Maybe it would be better saying there's a cockroach in the room.

I don't know. But I think the idea is that there's a big thing that we don't want to talk about, something that could be potentially sort of scandalous and crazy.

The elephant in the room is this. We need to answer the question, did Rahab lie to the king's men who came to arrest Joshua's spies?

Now, initially, it certainly seems that way, doesn't it? If we just read this text straight through, it certainly seems like she lies.

[11:54] But I would love to look a little closer because there are some important things for us to notice. First of all being this. telling the truth will cause serious harm to others.

If she tells the truth, the spies will be killed, as far as she understands. And so this becomes an unusual and an extraordinary circumstance that requires wisdom.

Think about the midwives in Exodus, who are told, in Exodus chapter 1, who are told, you need to kill all of the Hebrew sons that are born.

that was an unusual and extraordinary circumstance, wasn't it? To deceive the king.

Jonathan, in 1 Samuel 18-20, lies to his own father, the king, Saul, in order to protect David. Again, an unusual and extraordinary circumstance.

[13:20] Think about those who protected the Jews during World War II. Telling the truth would have certainly led to serious harm for the Jewish people.

An unusual and extraordinary circumstance. There is an additional piece of textual evidence that links Joshua 2 to another unusual and extraordinary circumstance in Scripture.

Look again at Joshua chapter 2 and verse 4. But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. Do you see that there? Hidden them.

The very last time this Hebrew word was used, hidden, is when an unnamed woman named her baby that we now know as Moses from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

An unusual and extraordinary circumstance where Moses certainly would have died had his mother told the truth.

[14:28] In addition, Rahab's response may be more clever than an outright lie.

I say this very carefully and this is worth talking about in your families. So, just be mindful that I'm intending to be very mindful and careful about this.

Some words have different meanings. For example, this morning I heard a young person say, I brought the keys in.

And then another person said, No. I brought the keys in. And they were both telling the truth. One person was actually hauling in the keyboard, the keys, and one person was carrying the keys for the door.

So, you might ask that child, did you bring in the keys? Did you lose the keys? And she would say, I did not lose the keys. They are right there.

[15:35] Do you see that? Think about this phrase. Do you recall phrases like this in the scripture? Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived.

Look again at verse number four. So she said, Rahab said, Yes, the men did come to me, but I didn't know where they were from.

By saying, I didn't know, Rahab, the prostitute, cleverly denies doing what the king of Jericho certainly believes she would have done with the spies.

And this does two things. It simultaneously reveals the spies' purity, despite their questionable choice of lodging, and simultaneously obscures the truth of their whereabouts right now.

finally, Hebrews 11 and James chapter 2 commend Rahab for her action rather than rebuking her for her deception.

[17:00] It seems as if the answer to this question of Rahab lied isn't the point of the text, and at minimum, the book of Joshua seems not to regard this as unethical.

But let me say this so that there is absolutely no confusion. According to Titus chapter 1, God cannot lie.

And Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And so God rightly commands truth-telling in Exodus chapter 20.

you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. And so let us be known for truth-telling in all but the most unusual and extraordinary circumstances, like if someone is about to die.

And if you are faced with that kind of an extraordinary situation, then I urge you to pray and then apply careful wisdom as you choose your words.

[ 18 : 11 ] Good? Let's continue in Joshua chapter 6. Joshua chapter 6. Now Jericho was strongly fortified because of the Israelites.

No one leaving or entering. And the Lord said to Joshua, look, I have handed Jericho, its king, and its best soldiers over to you.

March around the city with all the men of war, circling the city one time. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry seven ram's horn trumpets in front of the ark.

But on the seventh day, march around the city seven times while the priests blow the ram's horns. When there is a prolonged blast of the horn and you hear its sound, have all the troops give a mighty shout.

Then the city wall will collapse and the troops will advance each man straight ahead. So Joshua, son of Nun, summoned the priests and said to them, take up the ark of the covenant and have seven priests carry seven ram's horns in front of the ark of the Lord.

[ 19 : 25 ] And he said to the troops, move forward, march around the city and have the armed men go ahead of the ark of the Lord. After Joshua had spoken to the troops, seven priests carrying seven ram's horns before the Lord moved forward and blew the ram's horns, the ark of the Lord's covenant followed them.

While the ram's horns were blowing, the armed men went in front of the priests who blew the ram's horns and the rear guard went behind the ark. But Joshua had commanded the troops, do not shout or let your voice be heard.

Don't let one word come out of your mouth until the time I say shout. Then you are to shout. So the ark of the Lord was carrying around the city circling at once and they returned to the camp and spent the night there.

I think I watched too many Veggie Tales because I carried into this text the presupposition that the children of Israel must have sort of objected and doubted and wondered after day two and day three and day four, is this really going to work?

But that's not in the text and neither are the grape slushies in the Veggie Tales story. Chapter 12. Joshua got up early the next morning.

[ 20 : 52 ] The priests took the ark of the Lord and the seven priests carrying seven ram's horns marched in front of the ark of the Lord. While the ram's horns were blowing, the armed men went in front of them and the rear guard went behind the ark of the Lord.

On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way.

That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. After the seventh time, the priests blew the ram's horns and Joshua said to the troops, shout, for the Lord has given you the city.

Verse number 20. So the troops shouted and the ram's horns sounded. When they heard the blast of the ram's horns, the troops gave a great shout and the wall collapsed.

The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead and they captured the city. Verse 25. However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family and all who belonged to her because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho and she still lives in Israel today.

[ 22 : 25 ] By faith, Abel offers. God by faith, Enoch pleases God. By faith, Noah builds an ark.

By faith, Abraham obeys. By faith, Sarah receives power to conceive. By faith, Abraham offers his son. By faith, Isaac blesses.

By faith, Jacob blesses. By faith, Joseph makes mention of the exodus and tells them what to do with his bones. By faith, Moses is hidden.

By faith, Moses refuses the royal title, son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith, he chooses to be associated with God's people. By faith, he leaves Egypt.

By faith, he keeps the Passover. By faith, he sprinkles the blood. By faith, the people crossed the Red Sea. this pattern, this repetition.

[ 23 : 34 ] We are invited to anticipate a particular character. Who is it? Well, we think Joshua must be next.

But instead, we get this. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 30. by faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been marched around by the Israelites for seven days.

We should be puzzled a bit. This is not a person at all. this breaks the flow. What is this writer, what is this preacher of the book of Hebrews chapter 11 doing?

Now I'm sort of on my heels a little bit wondering, like, are you not going to mention Joshua? He must be the next person you're going to mention.

a faithful servant of Moses and his people, a powerful warrior, a godly leader. Surely it's Joshua who will be mentioned next.

[ 25 : 04 ] But Joshua, a godly example in his own right, is excluded and instead we read verse 31 by faith.

Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed.

And notice verse 32. And what more can I say? Having mentioned Rahab, I've made my point.

This is the end of my argument for you. I have nothing more to say. Do you feel that here?

We have been working up through this repetition by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, some action, by faith, some action. We are anticipating Joshua and we get the inanimate walls.

[ 26 : 23 ] And so we're definitely anticipating Joshua next. And instead we get Rahab the prostitute. And having mentioned Rahab the prostitute, he says, that's it.

I've said it all. I have nothing else to say. You should get the point. what moves the author of Hebrews to exclude Joshua and to say of an idolatrous Gentile prostitute, she is the end of the list.

She's the pinnacle. She is the most significant example of obedience by faith that I'm going to use in Hebrews chapter 11. Some say that it is Rahab's confession that gives her this place.

And I don't believe that's the answer, but I do believe it's where we need to start looking for the answer. Joshua chapter two and verse number ten. we have heard this is Rahab's confession to the spies we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt narrator voice this is a 40 year old news story 40 years have gone by Israel's been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years since last week when Mike preached to us but she says we have heard there's a story that's been going around for 40 years and the result of this story verse 9 verse 11 terror panic we lost heart everyone's courage failed why are they afraid end of verse number 11 the

Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below the people of Jericho heard about Israel's God and it stirred something inside of them it stirred up fear they are scared to death even though it happened 40 years ago but their fear never turns into faith except for Rahab Rahab like Noah Rahab is warned about coming judgment that she has never seen and like Noah does something to care for and protect and save herself and her family like

[ 29 : 40 ] Moses Rahab is not afraid of the anger of the king and so she deceives his men and makes a covenant with the spies look at verse number 12 Rahab is speaking now now please swear to me by the Lord notice in your Bible it's the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush how does she know this name swear to me by the Lord by Yahweh that you will also show kindness I said show me the steadfast love of your God the steadfast love the covenant keeping love that your God has shown you I want in on that would you show me that kind of steadfast love and when

God fights the battle of Jericho and the walls come a tumbling down Rahab along with her family is not destroyed with those who were disobedient it's the same word that we see in our scripture in Hebrews chapter 11 she did not perish she is not destroyed with those who were disobedient why were they disobedient they heard the warning about the coming judgment of Yahweh and it only made them afraid it didn't cause them to believe in him!

verse 25 sorry this is chapter 6 verse 25 Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her I love this phrase in the ESV Joshua saved alive we expect to hear Joshua mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 maybe Joshua and Caleb as those who were faithful to God the survivors from the wandering in the wilderness but because of

Rahab's faith she not Caleb and Joshua she is the paradigmatic opposite example of those who died in unbelief during the 40 years wandering in the wilderness in other words Rahab doesn't

perish like a shrink backer Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 39 it's the same word she doesn't perish she is not one of those who was destroyed no Rahab believes and is saved Joshua 6 and verse 22 again Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there and all who are with her just as you swore to her so the young man who had scouted went in and brought out

Rahab and her father mother brothers and all who belonged to her notice they brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel now this could seem like a bit of a throwaway comment outside the camp of Israel but after the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament this is the only time this phrase outside the camp is used I think this is not an accident and if we can I say that facetiously of course it's not an accident this is not an accident and if you will allow me to connect one more dot

[ 34 : 35 ] I hope that you will see why when Rahab is temporarily placed outside the camp of Israel she is not alone there!

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse number 12 therefore! Jesus also suffered outside the gate so that he might sanctify the people for by his own blood let us verse 13 let us then go to him go to Jesus outside the camp this is the only time it's used after Joshua let's go to him outside the camp bearing his disgrace one day of disgrace with Jesus is better than a thousand elsewhere if you are not a Christian if Jesus is not yet your savior Jesus invites you to come to him outside the camp this is good news for you he is outside of the old covenant outside of that religious system outside of Jerusalem that's where Jesus is crucified this means he is not crucified exclusively for God's people the Jews he is for you he's not for those who have their life all together he's for anyone who will admit their need of salvation and look to him alone for salvation but hear this you are going to go to him outside the camp and that means leaving behind every other kind of religious pretense that you've been chasing every other attempt to do the right thing to clean up your act to get right with God on your own you will have to leave that all behind go to

Jesus go outside the camp see him on the cross for you and cling to that cross followers followers of Jesus Rahab is not like the others in the hall of faith and yet I do believe that Rahab is the most significant example of faith provided to us right here in Hebrews chapter 11 why because she gives up everything everything that she knows everything she grew up with everything safe everything culturally acceptable everything falsely but so called religious she gives up everything and she ventures wholly on God and his promises what does this mean to the community of readers of the book of Hebrews to this community that is deliberating whether all of this persecution and suffering and affliction whether this martyrdom is worth it what does it mean to them

Rahab's example of obedient faith says it's worth it leave the old covenant behind leave the temple behind leave those old sacrifices behind leave Jerusalem behind and go out to Jesus outside the camp and cling to him alone I know you want to be liked and I want to be liked too but we should joyfully accept not being liked in order to be like Jesus do you believe that brothers and sisters

[ 39 : 14 ] Jesus is outside of every institution that fails to be like him no matter its name no matter its history no matter its reputation he is outside of every institution that fails to be like him so let's not attach ourselves to any political party let's not attach ourselves to any organized religion let's not attach ourselves to any cultural association that does not act with the love and the grace and the compassion and the kindness and the peace and the gentleness of Jesus do you believe that one day of disgrace with Jesus like Moses do you believe that that one day of disgrace with

Jesus is better than being a thousand elsewhere without him then let's imitate our sister Rahab and let's go to Jesus outside the camp let's pray good father we are grateful to receive your word thank you for this example of faith in Rahab and the way that the author of Hebrews sets up this chapter so that we see this clearly the value of accepting disgrace with you outside the camp with the goal of being like you Lord Jesus thank you for suffering thank you for pouring out your blood on our behalf so that we could be forgiven so that we could have new life so that we could experience mercy and grace would you please help us and give us courage to believe and to obey the things that we hear from your word and would you stir us on and motivate us on by reminding us that we do not have an enduring city here but instead we seek the one that is to come help us we pray in Jesus name amen