

## God's Use of Failures

"By Faith Rahab..." – Hebrews 11

"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."  
Hebrews 11:31

"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."  
Luke 14:33

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life."  
Matthew 19:29

Rahab was an unlikely candidate for inclusion in a list of great heroes of the faith. She had at least three strikes against her. First of all, she was a female (not a coveted position in Old Testament times). Second, she was not a Hebrew (she wasn't included among God's chosen people). Thirdly, she was a prostitute. Enough said?

Rahab provides an example of faith to us despite these strikes against her. Despite the mistakes she made, she also exhibited a willingness to take great risks for God. Her boldness is admirable.

Rahab stood alone in her faith. Rahab's act of faith was not in response to what the crowd was doing or what seemed popular at the time. As far as we know she didn't have the support of any of her family or friends.

What emotions come to your mind when you think of standing up for something alone?

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Rahab risked everything she had for what she believed was right. Another who showed this reckless abandon to Christ was the woman in Mark 14 who broke a costly alabaster vial of perfume in order to anoint Jesus. These women were ready to sacrifice everything in an instant in the recognition that there is One worthy of such a sacrifice.

We can learn much about the trait of reckless abandonment to Christ from Rahab's life. She turned from sin in order to be used by God. She did not hold on to any part of her former life. She was ready to, at a moment's notice, throw away all that was familiar to her in order to have God's best for her life. This is a scary thing to do. Regardless of what kind of life we lead, it is familiar, and it is always difficult to give that up for the unknown.

What is at risk if you obey God in what He has asked you to do?

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Are you willing to take this risk?

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A risk taken in obedience to God is always worth it! Jesus speaks of this fact in Matthew 19:29, when He talks about how the things we leave on account of Him will be rewarded to an extent far beyond what we sacrificed.

Rahab's reward was even more than she had requested or anticipated. Not only was her family saved in exchange for what she did, as she requested, but she received a new life, a new identity, when she came to live amongst the Israelites. God took Rahab from her former life and gave her a new one. Also, although Rahab never knew this while she was alive, she was also part of the line of Jesus. As with all of those

*"He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm."  
Psalm 40:2*

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."  
2 Corinthians 5:17*

listed in Hebrews 11, Rahab did not live to see the full results of her acts of faith. "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Rahab had faith to turn from sin and trust that God had a better plan, and she did not let her former life of sin hold her back from obedience to God.

What event or sin from your past are you letting hold you back from obedience to God?

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Below are some of our typical reactions. Which ones of these have you thought?

- God would not want to use me- He can find someone with a more suitable background.
  - My position in life is such that I will never have the same opportunities as most other people.
  - I would do great things for God if only \_\_\_\_\_
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Along with the other heroes of the faith that are written about in Hebrews 11, Rahab had a right perspective of God, herself, and what is eternally valuable versus what is valued on earth. The immediate costs for her may have been great: she risked her income, possessions, home, freedom, and even her life. But the eternal rewards far outweighed these costs, just as is true in our own lives and the lives of the others told of in Hebrews 11, and Rahab recognized that truth.

Rahab's story demonstrates the significance of our decisions of whether or not to exercise faith. In her case it was a life or death matter, and even more than that, one of eternal significance. We do not know which of our decisions will be the same, but we can know that whether we choose to have faith or not, it will have an effect both on our own lives and the lives of countless others.

We can learn something about God from this story, as well. We see evidence of His redemptive nature many before Christ's death and resurrection. Even at this time that the Old Testament law was still in effect, and righteousness was based upon obedience to that law rather than on acceptance of Christ's free gift of salvation, God demonstrates His ability and willingness to take fallen, sinful individuals from the mud and mire of sin and redeem them, change them, and make them new (Psalm 40:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

God delights in using the unlikely, and He delights in making the old new. God did this for Rahab, and He desires to do it for each one of us, as well.

Take a moment right now and think about what way you are like Rahab. What strikes do you have against you? In what way are you unlikely to be used?

"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."  
2 Corinthians 12:9

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Now, based upon God's use of Rahab despite her weaknesses, what does God desire to do with your life?

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What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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