What Makes a Woman Beautiful? Rahab

NKJV Scriptures used include Joshua 2, 6; James 2:18-26; Hebrews 11:30-31.

Many days, Rahab looked out her window and dreamed of a different life – a life of freedom. She grew up in Jericho; her family, including her mother, father, brothers and sisters all lived here. Even if there was a way that she could escape or leave and have a different life, she wouldn't go. How could she? For she loved her family too much to leave them behind.

She's identified in the Bible as a harlot. A harlot is a prostitute, one who trades sexual acts for money or other things of value, such as jewelry or even information. In Jericho, in the land of Canaan, the ways of her people included idolatry and every manner of immorality; she had experienced all of it. This was not uncommon, nor even frowned upon, as the pagan gods were even worshiped in such ways.

Being a harlot had shaped her. She'd learned to survive; she'd learned to play the game. This is the hand she had been dealt. Many a man of various positions of power and different locals visited her in that knowing way. She had entertained many a stranger.

It was no surprise then, for two unknown men visiting the city, to appear at her house. Since the enemy army, forty-thousand strong, was nearby and closing in, everyone in the city was on edge, believing that it was just a matter of time before Jericho would fall. Suspicious eyes easily marked the two strangers as enemy spies, and someone rushed to tell the king.

Rahab welcomed them inside. Aware of who they were and why they had come, she felt no fear. You see, Rahab had heard of their God, and she believed that He was indeed the God of Heaven and Earth! She had heard how the God of the Israelite people had demonstrated His power time and time again and acted in ways to deliver and save His people. She knew all the land of Canaan was to be given to them by God himself; since He was on their side.

She, however, was at peace receiving the spies because she recognized that the Lord God at work- that He had come and He was again displaying His power. Peace may seem a strange word considering the circumstances. Nevertheless, when the spies came knocking on her door, she was not afraid! Scripture says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." Hebrews 11:30-31

Rahab, being wise to the ways of men, knew the king would send for the spies. So she took them up to the roof of her house and hid them under stalks of flax that she laid in order.

Rahab told the spies that she would be their ally! She also proclaimed her faith in God when she said, "The LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath!" Joshua 2:11

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She told them that everyone had heard about the Red Sea being dried up when the Israelites were escaping Egypt. They had also heard about the victory over the Amorite kings and said that "everyone was fainthearted because of you!" Joshua 2:8-10

(Her words later became the information that the spies gave in their report to Joshua. They considered this very encouraging news and confirmation of the Lord's favor. Joshua 2:24)

Then Rahab did a very courageous thing- in return for the kindness that she was currently bestowing, she asked that the spies show her kindness when they took over the city! Bravely, taking it even further, she also requested that her family be spared as well.

Sure enough, the king's men came knocking on the door, seeking the spies who had come. As a woman in the oldest profession, Rahab had become very good at being very bad. Having had had lots of practice lying, in this instance, it served her well. Purposefully deceiving, she feigned innocence. She kept her hands still, controlled the tone of her voice, and looked directly into their eyes, holding their gaze, and convincingly told them that the spies had been there, but they had already gone out of the city gate. Believing her report, the soldiers left the city in hot pursuit of the spies, heading toward the Jordan River.

Alone with the spies, she instructs them to go for three days to the mountains in the opposite direction of the king's soldiers. By her actions, she demonstrated her faith in God! She is honored for this in scripture when James writes that faith is demonstrated by works. He writes, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?" James 2:24-25.

As they were leaving, the three of them made agreements for Rahab and her family's deliverance in the days to follow. Because the city gate had already been shut, she helped the spies escape – she let them down by a rope through her window- the very window which led to freedom she so longed for.

Rahab is beautiful for many reasons. Her faith in God gave her peace when she had an opportunity to serve the Lord. Her actions of alliance with the spies demonstrated her faith in their God. She interceded for her family to be saved as well.

Leaving behind her past and immoral ways, Rahab grafted into the Israelites and embraced her faith and her new identity with the people of God! Her future included marriage and children, including Boaz. She loved him well and taught him of his heritage as a child of a foreigner who believed in God and chose to follow His ways and who unselfishly helped save the members of her family! Boaz learned these lessons well and God used him to serve as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth and Naomi, thus helping to save the family once again!

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