

The Faith of Rahab



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The Spies (Joshua 2:1-3)

In the second half of chapter 1, the Holy Spirit has recorded the response made by Joshua unto the great commission he had received from the Lord: He complied promptly, he conducted himself according to the Divine Rule, and he acted in faith. The command he issued to his officers (Jos. 1:11) showed he had no doubt whatever that the Jordan would be crossed, and his words to the two and a half tribes (Jos. 1:15) evinced his full confidence in the Lord's help for the whole campaign. Such language had been both honouring to God and encouraging to His people. We have already seen how the Lord rewarded His servant by constraining the two and a half tribes to accept Joshua as their leader and yield full obedience unto his authority. Those things are recorded for *our* instruction and encouragement—to show that none are ever the losers by trusting in the Lord and rendering obedience to His Word. In what is now to engage our attention, we have a further proof of the Lord showing Himself strong on behalf of the dutiful.

The land which Joshua was called upon to conquer was occupied by a fierce, powerful, and ungodly people. Humanly speaking, there was no reason to conclude that the Canaanites would render assistance or do ought to make his task easier; rather to the contrary, as the attitude and actions of the kings had shown (Num. 21:1, 23, 33). When he sent forth the two spies to obtain information about Jericho, he could not naturally expect that any of its inhabitants would render them any help in their difficult task. Yet that is exactly what happened, for those spies received remarkable favour in the eyes of her in whose house they obtained lodgement. Not only was she kindly disposed toward them, but she even hazarded her own life on their behalf. What an illustration was this that “when a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7)! Those two men were in the path of duty, carrying out the orders of God's servant, and He undertook for them.

“And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy

secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there" (Jos. 2:1). For some time past, the children of Israel had been encamped in the plains of Moab [Shittim], which bordered on the Jordan and lay opposite Jericho (Num. 33:49). And now Joshua sent forth these two spies to obtain information about this enemy stronghold, which lay in their path of advance. In so doing, Joshua has been severely criticized by some who regarded him as here acting according to a carnal policy that was dictated by unbelief. They argue that he should have trusted the Lord wholly, and that had he done so, he would have relied upon Him alone, instead of resorting to this device. We do not agree with these faultfinders, for we consider their criticism is entirely unwarranted, arises from their own confusion of mind, and is a most mischievous one.

In the first place, Joshua had a good precedent for acting as he did, for Moses had sent forth spies to view Canaan on a former occasion (Num. 13); and Joshua had been Divinely ordered to regulate his conduct by "this book of the law...to do according to all that is written therein" (Jos. 1:7-8)—and *that* was one of the things recorded therein! But there are those who say that the suggestion to send forth those first spies proceeded from the unbelief of those who proffered it, and that Moses failed to detect their evil motives. That is indeed the view taken by most writers on the subject; but there is nothing whatever in the Word to support it. Moses declared, "the saying pleased me well" (Deut. 1:23); and he made no apology later for his action. The exercise of unbelief appeared in *the sequel*; it was the gloomy report of ten of the spies which expressed unbelief, and the ready credence of that report by the faithless congregation.

Not only is Scripture silent upon any unbelief prompting the sending forth of those twelve spies, but Numbers 13:1-2 expressly informs us, "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan!" Nor is there the slightest indication that that was a concession on the Lord's part, or His giving up the people unto their hearts' lusts. Joshua, then, had a good precedent, and a written example to guide him in the

sending forth of the two spies. Yet, even had there been neither, so far from his action being reprehensible, it was the exercise of wise prudence and the use of legitimate means. It was his duty to “look before he leaped”—to ascertain the lay-out of Jericho, to discover if there was a weak spot in its defences, to learn the best point at which to attack and make his plans accordingly. In so doing, he was but discharging his responsibility.

There is much misunderstanding today about the scope of those words, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov. 3:5), and only too often, fanaticism is confounded with faith. It needs to be clearly insisted upon that the exercise of faith does not preclude the use of all legitimate means, though we are not to rest in the means alone, but rather count upon God’s blessing the same. To decline the locking of my doors and the fastening of my windows when there is an epidemic of burglary in the neighbourhood, or to retire for the night and leave a roaring fire in the grate—under the pretext of counting upon God’s protecting my property—is not trusting, but *tempting* Him: Should any disagree with that statement, let him carefully ponder Matthew 4:6-7! Faith in God does not preclude the discharge of my performance of duty, both in taking precautions against danger, or using proper means for success.

Joshua was no more actuated by unbelief in sending forth those spies than Oliver Cromwell (1599-1659), as when he bade his men, “Trust in God, and keep your powder dry!” Faith does not release us from our natural obligations. As yet, Joshua knew not that the Lord had purposed that Jericho would fall without Israel having to fight for it. It was some time later when He revealed to His servant that this stronghold of the Canaanites would be overthrown without Israel’s army making any direct assault upon it. The secret will of God was in nowise the Rule for Joshua to order his actions by. He was to do according to all that was “written” in the Scriptures; and thus, it is for us: Our responsibility is measured by the Word—not by God’s decrees, nor the inward promptings of His Spirit. As Israel’s leader, it was Joshua’s duty to learn all he could about Jericho and its surroundings before he advanced upon it—Luke 14:31 illustrates the principle for which

we are here contending.

“And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went” (Jos. 2:1). In view of his own earlier experience (Num. 13), there is good reason to believe that Joshua made a careful selection on this occasion and chose men of faith, courage, and prudence. We are, therefore, justified in concluding that ere those spies set out on their dangerous venture, they first sought unto the Lord, committed themselves and their cause into His hands, and asked Him to graciously give them success in the same. If such were the case—and it would be uncharitable to suppose otherwise—then they received fulfilment of that promise, *“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear”* (Isa. 65:24). Ere those two men set out on their mission, the Lord had gone before them, preparing their way, by raising up a brave and staunch friend in the person of her in whose house they took refuge. How often has the writer—and probably the reader too—met with just such a blessed experience!

“And they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there” (Jos. 2:1). They were Divinely directed to that particular house, though it is not likely they were personally conscious of the fact at the first. God’s providence acts silently and secretly, by working in us *“both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13). Those spies acted quite freely, by their own volition, yet their steps were *“ordered by the LORD”* (Psa. 37:23). The house in which they sheltered was owned by a harlot, named Rahab—not that she was still plying her evil trade, but that formerly, she had been a woman of ill fame, the stigma of which still clung to her. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, *“Simon the leper (Matt. 26:6) though cleansed from his leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name as long as he lived: so ‘Rahab the harlot,’ and she is so called in the New Testament, where both her faith and her good works are praised.”*

“And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country” (Jos. 2:2). Since it must have been known unto all in

Jericho that the hosts of Israel had been encamped for some months on the opposite side of the Jordan, a keen watch had doubtless been kept on all their movements, and the entry of the two spies had therefore been observed. Even when we have committed ourselves and our cause unto God, and are in the path of duty, we have no right to expect that we shall be exempted from trials, and that all will be smooth sailing. So long as Christians are left in a world which lieth in the Wicked one (1 John 5:19)—and is therefore hostile unto true godliness—they may look for opposition. Why so? Why does God permit such? That their graces may be tested and developed, evidencing whether they be real or fancied; and if the former, bringing forth fruit to the glory of their Author.

Had He so pleased, the Lord could have prevented the discovery of those spies in Jericho. Had He not done so in the case of the twelve men sent forth by Moses? From Numbers 13, it appears that they made an extensive survey of Canaan, and returned to report unto Israel without their enemies being aware of what had occurred. But God does not act uniformly, varying His methods as seems best in His sight. That not only exemplifies His own sovereignty, but keeps us in more complete dependence upon Him, not knowing whether His interposition on our behalf will come in one way or in another, from this direction or from that. No, even though those two men were under His immediate guidance and protection, He permitted their entry into Jericho to become known. Nor were they the losers by that; instead, they were granted a manifestation of God's power to deliver them from a horrible death.

In more than one respect is it true that “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8): A case in point is here before us. Does not the wise precaution taken by these Canaanites put most of us to shame! Are not the wicked much keener in looking after their interests than the righteous are? Are not unbelievers much more on the alert against what would be disastrous to their prospects than the saints are? The Christian ought ever to be on his guard, watching for the approach of any enemy. But is he? Alas, no; and

that is why Satan so often succeeds in gaining an advantage over him. It was while men slept that Satan sowed his tares (Matt. 13:25); and it is when we become slack and careless that the Devil trips us up. We must “watch” as well as “pray” if we would “enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Let those who have access to John Bunyan’s (1628-1688) works read his *Holy War*. [*Holy War* – the Christian allegorical masterpiece telling of the wicked prince Diabolis leading a rebellion in the city of Man-soul, only to be conquered by Emmanuel in retaking the city, showing grace to its faithful inhabitants and judgment to its many rebels, and rededicating it to the rightful Great King].

There is yet another line of truth which is illustrated here, and which we do well to heed. A careful and constant watch—by “night” as well as by day!—had evidently been set; yet notwithstanding the same, the two spies succeeded in obtaining an entrance into Jericho! “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa. 127:1) was strikingly exemplified on this occasion. And what is the spiritual application of that unto *us*?—this should ever be what exercises our hearts as we read and ponder God’s Word. Is not the answer found in the verse just quoted above: Since watchfulness—as well as prayer—be necessary if we are to avoid temptation, equally indispensable is prayerfulness, as well as watchfulness. No matter how alert and vigilant *we* be, unless *God’s* assistance be humbly, earnestly, and trustfully sought, all our efforts will be in vain. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; *trust also* in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psa. 37:5).

Viewing this detail from a higher standpoint, may we not also see here a demonstration of that truth. “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, *that* shall stand” (Prov. 19:21). It was so here: The king of Jericho proposed, but God disposed. He determined to prevent any Israelite from entering his city, but his well-laid plans came to naught. When the Lord sets before us an open door, “no man can shut it” (Rev. 3:8), and *He* set before those two spies an open door into Jericho; and it was utterly futile for any man to endeavour to keep them out.

Equally true is it that when the Lord “shutteth, ... no man openeth” (Rev. 3:7), yet God Himself can do so; therefore, it is the privilege and duty of His servant never to accept defeat, but seek the prayers of God’s people that He “would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3).

“And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country” (Jos. 2:3). If the reader has not already formed the habit of so doing, let him now begin to read such a passage as the one we are considering with the specific object of trying to find something in each verse of practical importance to *himself*—not that which is “deep” and intricate, but what lies on the surface and is obvious to a *thoughtful* reader. Here we may learn an important and needful “lesson” from the action of the king of Jericho. When he was informed that Israel’s spies were now in the city, he did not treat the report with either contemptuous scorn or careless unconcern, but believed the same and acted promptly upon it. Well for us if we heed a timely warning, and seek to nip a danger while it is still in the bud. If we do not heed the first alarms of conscience, but instead trifle with temptation, a fall is sure to follow; and the allowance of one sin leads to the formation of an evil habit.

Changing our angle of meditation, let us contemplate the effect upon the two spies of the demand made upon Rahab by the king’s officers. If she complied with their peremptory order and delivered her guests into their hands, then—humanly speaking—they could hope for no other treatment than what has always been meted out unto captured spies. Imagine the state of their minds as they listened intently—which doubtless they did—to that ominous command. Remember they were men of like passions unto ourselves; would they not, then, be filled with perturbation and consternation? Up to this point, things had gone smoothly for them, but now all seemed lost. Would they not ask themselves, Did we do the right thing after all in taking shelter in this house? Ah, have we not, too, passed through some similar experience? We entered upon what we believed was a certain course of duty, committed the same unto God, and sought His blessing. At first,

all went well, His smile appeared to be upon us, and then a crises occurred which seemed to spell sure defeat. Faith must be tested, patience have her perfect work.

Rahab (Joshua 2:3-5)

“And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took [“had taken”] the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them” (Jos. 2:3-5). This passage has presented some formidable difficulties to not a few of those who have carefully pondered it, and perhaps we can best help our readers by seeking to answer the following questions. First, did Rahab do right in defying the king’s authority and betraying her own country? Second, is she to be exonerated in the untruths she here told? Third, if not, how is Hebrews 11:31 to be explained?

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). God requires us to render submission to human government: To be obedient to its laws, to pay the taxes it appoints, to cooperate in upholding its authority. Christians especially should set an example as law-abiding citizens, rendering to Caesar that which he has a right to demand from his subjects. Jeremiah 29:7 makes it clear that it is the duty of God’s people to seek the good of the country in which they reside—see the sermon by Andrew Fuller on “Christian Patriotism,” which appeared in ‘Studies in the Scriptures’ as articles in the July and August, 1945, issues. There is but one qualification, namely, when the powers that be require anything from me which is obviously contrary to the revealed will of God, or prohibit my doing what His Word enjoins. Where such a case arises, my duty is to render allegiance unto God, and not unto any subordinate authority which repudiates His requirements.

The refusal of the three Hebrew captives to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image and Daniel's defiance of the decree of Darius which forbade him praying unto God are cases in point (Dan. 3:18, 6:10). We must never render to Caesar that to which God alone is entitled. "Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Pet. 2:17) indicates our relative obligations: God must be feared at all costs; the king is to be cheerfully and universally honoured, so far as that consists with my fearing God. When the religious powers forbade the apostles to preach in Christ's name, they replied: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). It was thus with Rahab. There was a clash of interests: Loyalty to her king and country; loyalty to God and His servants. In the kind providence of God, such a dilemma is rarely presented to a saint today; but if it were, the lower authority must yield to the higher.

It is indeed the duty of a saint to seek the good of that country which affords him both shelter and subsistence; nevertheless, he is bound to love God and His people more than his country and fellow-citizens. He owes fidelity to the Lord first, and then to the place he lives in; and he is to promote the welfare of the latter so far as it is compatible with the former. In seeking to estimate the conduct of Rahab, we must carefully weigh Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25, and especially Joshua 2:9-11. From her language, it is manifest that she was fully convinced the Lord had purposed the destruction of the Canaanites; and therefore, she must either side with Him and His people against her country, or enter into a hopeless contest against the Almighty and perish under His judgments. By her actions, she exemplified what God requires from every truly converted soul: to renounce allegiance with His enemies—however closely related (Luke 14:26)—and refuse to join with them in opposing His people.

As one who had received mercy from the Lord—for Hebrews 11:31 evidences that sovereign grace had brought her out of darkness into God's marvellous light before Joshua sent those men to reconnoitre—and as one who knew Jehovah had given the land of Canaan unto Israel, it was plainly the duty of Rahab to do all in her power to protect these Israelish spies, even at risk to her own safety. That principle is clearly enunciated in the New Testament:

“We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). But now the question arises, in view of that being her duty, was Rahab warranted in resorting to falsehoods so as to protect the two men she had given shelter to? Different opinions have been formed of her conduct, and various arguments employed in the attempt to vindicate her. Some of the best commentators, even among the Puritans, pleaded she was guiltless in this matter; and we know of none who plainly stated that she sinned therein.

One of the most difficult tasks which confronts a Christian writer is that of commenting on the offences of God’s dear people: that on the one hand, he may not dip his pen in the pharisaic ink of selfsuperiority; and that on the other hand, he does not make light of any evil or condone what is reprehensible. He is himself compassed with infirmity and a daily transgressor of God’s law, and should be duly affected by a realisation of the same when dealing with the faults of his fellows. Nevertheless, if he be a servant of God, preaching or writing to the saints, then he must remember that “it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); and he is most certainly unfaithful if—even from a desire to be charitable—he deliberately lowers God’s standard of holiness, minimizes that which contravenes it, or glosses over anything which is culpable. Much grace and wisdom is needed if he is to act in both a spirit of meekness and righteousness, of compassion and fidelity.

It is one of the many evidences of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures that their Author has painted the conduct of the most eminent characters portrayed therein in the colours of reality and truth. Unlike human biographies, which almost always present a one-sided view—setting forth and extolling the virtues of its subjects and ignoring or toning down their vices—the Holy Spirit has not concealed the blemishes of the most distinguished saints: The lapses of Noah, Abram, Moses, David being faithfully chronicled. It is true that their sins are not mentioned in the New Testament, for the sufficient and blessed reason they were all under the atoning blood of the Lamb; nevertheless, the record of them remains on the pages of the Old Testament—left there as a lasting warning unto *us*. Moreover, it is to be borne in mind that

the sins of New Testament saints are not to be ignored, but to guide those whose task it is to comment thereon.

The prevarications of Rahab unto the king's officers is appealed to by the Jesuits in support of their pernicious dogma, "The end justifies the means:" That if we aim at a praiseworthy object, it is permissible to use questionable or even evil means to attain the same—a principle which has regulated many so-called "Protestants" during the past century, and which is flagrantly flouted before our eyes today throughout Christendom, as seen, for example, in the carnal and worldly devices used to attract young people to "religious" services. But "let us do evil that good may come" is a sentiment entertained by no truly regenerate soul; rather it is detested by him; and Scripture plainly declares of such as are actuated by it that their "damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8). Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), the infamous champion of Popery, boldly declared in his work on "De Romano Pontifice" that "If the Pope should err in commending vice or forbidding virtue, the Church is bound to believe vice to be good and virtue to be bad" (Book 4, chapter 5).

Some have pointed out the exceptionally trying position in which Rahab found herself, arguing that considerable latitude should be allowed her therein. We are aware that appeal is often made to that aphorism, "Circumstances alter cases," and while we are not sure what its originator had in mind, this we do know: that no "circumstances" can ever obliterate the fundamental distinction between good and evil. Let the reader settle it in his mind and conscience that it is *never* right to do wrong, and since it be sinful to lie, no circumstances can ever warrant the telling of one. It is indeed true that all transgressions of the Divine Law are not equally heinous in themselves, nor in the sight of God—that some sins are, by reason of certain aggravations, greater than others, even of the same species. Thus, a lie unto God is worse than a lie unto a fellow-creature (Acts 5:4), a premeditated and presumptuous lie is viler than one uttered upon a surprise by temptation.

It is also true that attendant circumstances should be taken into account when seeking to determine the *degree* of criminality: It

would be a far graver offence for writer or reader to utter falsehoods than it was for Rahab, for we should be sinning against greater privileges and light than she enjoyed. She had been reared in heathendom; yet while that mitigated her offence, it certainly did not excuse her. One preacher who occupied a prominent pulpit in London asked the question: “Was Rahab justified in those falsehoods?” and answered in the affirmative, arguing, “She must either utter them or else betray the spies, and their lives would have been lost.” But that is the reasoning of unbelief, for it leaves out *God*. Had Rahab remained silent before the king’s officers, declining to give any information, or had she acknowledged that the spies were on her premises, was the Lord unable to protect them?

We much prefer the brief remarks of Thomas Ridgley’s to those of his contemporaries. “She would have been much clearer from the guilt of sin had she refused to give the messengers any answer relating to them, and so had given them leave to search for them, and left the event hereof to Providence.” Undoubtedly, Rahab was placed in a most trying situation, for as Ridgley went on to point out, “This, indeed, was a very difficult duty, for it might have endangered her life; and her choice to secure them and herself by inventing this lie brought with it a degree of guilt, and was an instance of the weakness of her faith in this respect.” That last clause brings us to the heart of the matter: She failed to fully trust the Lord, and the fear of man brought a snare. He whose angels had smitten the men of Sodom with blindness (Gen. 19:11) and who had slain the fifty men sent to lay hands on His prophet (2 Kings 1:9-12) could have prevented those officers finding the spies.

Some have gone even farther than exonerating Rahab, insisting that God Himself *approved* of her lies, appealing to Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 in support. But there is nothing whatever in either of those verses which intimates that the Lord sanctioned her falsehoods. Hebrews 11:31 says nothing more about this incident than that “she had received the spies with peace.” James points out that the faith of Rahab was “justified by works”—*not* by her “words”—and then specified *which* “works,” namely, her

receiving of the messengers and her sending them out another way. "But," it may be asked, "Did not the workings of providence in the sequel go to show God approved of Rahab's policy? Did He not give success to the same?" Answer: His providences are no Rule for us to walk by or reason from. Though water flowed from the rock which Moses smote in his anger, yet that was no proof God approved of His servant's display of temper. God indeed graciously overruled Rahab's conduct, yet that did not vindicate her.

We frankly acknowledge—though to our shame—that were we placed in a similar situation to the one which confronted Rahab, and God should leave us to ourself, we would acquit ourself no better than she did, and probably far worse. Yet that acknowledgement by no means clears her, for two wrongs do not make one right. If God's restraining hand be removed, or His all-sufficient grace be withheld, the strongest of us is as weak as water. Therefore, none is in any position to point the finger of scorn or throw a stone at her. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) tersely summed up the case, "Her lie was an infirmity, pardoned by God, and not to be exaggerated by men." It should be remembered that Rahab had only recently been brought to a saving acquaintance with the Lord. Many young converts have but little clear knowledge of the Truth, and therefore, less should be expected from them than mature saints. They make many mistakes, yet they have a teachable spirit; and as light increases, their walk is more and more regulated by the same.

In closing, let us point out one or two lessons which may be learned from what has been before us. First, we may see therein the refutation of a popular and widespread error—namely, that if our motives be right, the action is a praiseworthy one. It is quite true that an unworthy motive will ruin a good deed—as, for example, contributing to charity in order to obtain a reputation for benevolence, or in performing religious exercises so as to be seen and venerated by men—yet a good motive can never render an evil act a desirable one. Even though Rahab's design was to protect the lives of two of God's people, that did not render commendable the deception which she practised on the king's

messengers. Four things are required to render any action a “good work” in the sight of God: It must proceed from a holy principle, be regulated by the Rule of righteousness, be done in a right spirit of faith or love, and be performed with a right end in view—the glory of God or the good of His people.

Second, it is recorded—as in Holy Writ are all the failings and falls of the saints—as a solemn warning for us to take to heart. So far from furnishing examples for us to imitate or refuges for us to hide in, they are so many danger-signals for us to heed and turn into earnest prayer. We are men and women of like passions, as they were subject to. Native depravity still remains in us as it did in them, even after regeneration. In ourselves, we are no stronger than they were, and no better able to resist the inclinations of the flesh. What need has each of us, then, to pray, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. 119:117). And even when we are preserved from outward sins, the flesh obtrudes and defiles our best performances. It was “by faith” that Rahab received the spies with peace, and at risk to herself, concealed them on her roof; yet when the officers appeared on the scene, her faith failed, and she resorted to lying. Our godliest deeds would damn us if they were not cleansed by the atoning blood of Christ.

Third, this incident gives real point to and reveals our deep need of crying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4). Indeed, that seems the principal lesson to draw from: that I may be kept from any such situation in that, conscious of my weakness, I may be preserved from such a temptation as confronted Rahab. We deem it more than a coincidence that in the very midst of preparing this article, we heard—the first time in five years—from an old reader in Holland. During the last half of that time, while the enemy was occupying that country, our friend and his wife concealed three Jewesses in their home, and the last ten days before liberation actually had two German billeted with them; yet no discovery was made of their refugees. I know not what my friend had done if they had asked him point blank whether he was sheltering any Jews; but I am thankful not to be placed in such a situation myself.

Had I been in his place, I would have begged the Lord to keep

from me any such interrogators and counted upon His doing so. Perhaps we may be pardoned for relating an experience—to the praise of the faithfulness of a prayer-hearing God. Some fifteen years ago when residing in Hollywood, California, we occupied a furnished bungalow. The owner was a typical Jewess, and when we gave notice of leaving, she put an advertisement in the local papers and stuck up a prominent sign, “To Let,” at the foot of our drive. Though she knew we kept the Lord’s Day holy and held a small service in our room each Sabbath evening, she insisted it was her right to show over the house those who answered the advertisement. We protested strongly, but she would not heed, saying “Sunday” was always her best letting day. We then told her that our God would keep away all applicants on the coming Sabbath, which she heard with derisive scorn.

That Saturday evening, my wife and I spread the matter before the Lord and begged Him to cause His angel to encamp round about us, and protect us by keeping away all intruders. During the Sabbath, which was a cloudless day, we continued seeking God’s face, confident He would not put us to confusion before our landlady. Not a single caller came to look over the house, and that night, we held our little meeting as usual, undisturbed!—one of those present will read these lines, though not until he does so will he know what has been related. Next day, our landlady, who owned two similar bungalows, stated it was the first time in her ten years’ experience of letting that she had ever failed to let on a “Sunday.” Ah, my reader, God *never* fails those who trust *Him* fully. He will protect you if you confidently count upon Him. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Rahab (Joshua 2:6-11)

Little as Joshua may have realised it, he was Divinely impelled and directed to send forth the two spies to “go view the land, *even Jericho*” (Jos. 2:1). Why so? Because there was one of God’s elect residing in that city, and none of His sheep shall perish (John 10:27-28). Unto that vessel of mercy were they led, in order that arrangements should be made for her protection, so that she “perished not with them that believed not” (Heb. 11:31). There

was, then, a *needs be* why those two spies should visit Jericho and converse with Rahab—not merely a military needs be, but one far more vital and blessed. It is still another example of what we have, on several occasions, called attention to in these pages—namely, that when God works, He always works at *both* ends of the line. As it was in the case of the Ethiopian and Philip the evangelist, and of Cornelius and Peter, so it was here. Before those two men set foot in Jericho, the Lord had already wrought—signally and savingly—in the heart of Rahab; and now, opportunity is afforded for her to confess her faith, to receive a token for good, and to be made a blessing unto others.

The needs be for those spies entering Jericho reminds one of John 4; and there are some striking parallels between what is recorded there and the case of Rahab. First, we are told of the Lord Jesus that “He must needs go through Samaria” (John 4:4). That “must” was not a geographical, but a moral one. From all eternity, it had been ordained that He *should* go through Samaria. There was one of God’s elect there, and though she was “alienated from the common-wealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12), being a Samaritan, yet she could not be ignored: “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I *must* bring” (John 10:16) declared the good Shepherd. There were those in Samaria whom the Father had given Him from before the foundation of the world, and them He *must* save. And, my reader, if you be one of God’s elect, even though now unregenerate, there is a needs be put on the Lord Jesus to save *you*. For years, you have been fleeing from Him, but when the appointed time arrives, He will overtake you. You may kick against the pricks, as did Saul of Tarsus, but He will overcome your rebellion and reluctance, and win you to Himself.

Second, not only was the one whom Christ was constrained to seek and save in John 4 a woman and a Gentile, but she was one of loose moral character. Said He to her, “Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband” (John 4:18). Such too had been this chosen one in Jericho: Defiled both in mind and body with idolatry and adultery—“Rahab the harlot.” Many of God’s elect—though by no means all of them—fall into

gross wickedness in their unconverted days: Fornicators, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, extortioners: “And *such were* some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). How illustriously is the sovereign mercy and invincible might of God displayed in the conforming of such unto His image! “Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen” And why so? “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29), that His wondrous *grace* might the more clearly appear.

But grace does not leave its subjects in the condition in which it finds them. No; indeed, it appears, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:12-13). Saving faith is ever accompanied by evangelical repentance, which mourns over past sins and resolves to avoid a repetition of them in the future. Saving faith ever produces obedience, being fruitful in good works. Those who are the recipients of God’s grace are not only grateful for their own salvation, but are concerned about the salvation of others, especially of those near and dear to them by nature. When Christ stood revealed to the Samaritan adulteress, she “went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” and “many...believed on him” (John 4:28-29, 39). So too Rahab asked for kindness to be shown her father’s house, and her whole family found deliverance (Jos. 2:12-13, 18). But we are anticipating.

The case of Rahab is worthy of our closest attention, for it exemplifies and magnifies the riches of Divine mercy in many striking respects. Born and brought up in heathendom, belonging to a race that was to be exterminated, her salvation was a signal display of God’s dominion, who not only singles out whom He pleases to be the recipients of His favours, but is trammelled by nothing in the bestowal of them. “She was not only a Gentile, but an Amoritess, of that race and seed which, in general, was devoted to destruction. She was, therefore, an instance of God’s

sovereignty in dispensing with His positive laws, as it seemed good unto Him, for of His own mere pleasure, He exempted her from the doom announced against all those of her original and traduction [propagation]” (John Owen, 1616-1683). Being the supreme Potentate, God is not bound by any law or consideration other than His own imperial will, and “therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18).

In God’s saving of Rahab and bringing her into the congregation of His people, we may perceive a clear and glorious foreshadowing of the fuller scope of His eternal purpose, as it is now made more plainly manifest in this New Testament era. Since Rahab was a Canaanite, she was by nature cut off from the Abrahamic stock, and therefore, a stranger “from the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12). By her conversion and admission into the congregation of Israel, she was obviously both a type and a pledge of the calling of the Gentiles and their reception into the mystical Body of Christ. Thus did coming events cast their shadows before them. In such cases as Rahab and Ruth, God gave an early intimation that His redemptive purpose was not confined to a single people, but that it reaches out unto favoured individuals in all nations. Their incorporation by marriage among the Hebrews was a blessed adumbration of the “wild olive tree” being graft in and made a partaker of “the root and fatness of the [good] olive tree” (Rom. 11:17). Such we believe is, in part at least, the typical and dispensational significance of what is here before us.

But the outstanding feature of this remarkable case is the free and discriminating grace of God toward her. Not only did Rahab belong to a heathen race, but she was a notorious profligate, and in singling her out to be the recipient of His distinguishing and saving favour, God made it evident that He is no respecter of persons. By her choice, she was given up to the vilest of sins, but by the Divine choice, she was predestinated to be delivered from the miry pit and washed whiter than snow by the precious blood of Christ, and given a place in His own family. It is in just such cases as her that the unmerited favour of God shines forth the more resplendently. There was nothing whatever in that poor fallen

woman to commend her to God's favourable regard, but where sin had abounded, grace did much more abound, bestowing upon her His unsolicited and unearned favours—the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23), the gift of saving faith (Eph. 2:8-9), the gift of evangelical repentance (Acts 5:31). He is indeed “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10); and as such, He is a giving and freely-conferring God, and not one who barter and sells. His bestowments are “without money and without price,” imparted to spiritual bankrupts and paupers.

Not only may we behold in Rahab's case the exercise of Divine sovereignty and the manifestation of Divine grace, but we may also pause and admire the wondrous working of God's power. This is best perceived if we take into careful consideration the virtually unparalleled element which entered into it: Here the Holy Spirit wrought almost entirely apart from the ordinary means of grace. There were no Sabbaths observed in Jericho, there were no Scriptures available for reading, there were no prophets sounding forth messages from Heaven; nevertheless, Rahab was quickened unto newness of life and brought unto a saving knowledge of the true God. The Lord Almighty is not restricted to the employing of certain agencies, nor hindered by the lack of instruments: He deigns to use such, or dispenses with them entirely as He pleases. He has but to speak, and it is done; to command, and it stands fast (Psa. 33:9). It is to be duly noted that this woman who had previously walked in open sin was regenerated and converted *before* the spies came to her house: Their visit simply afforded an opportunity for the avowal and public manifestation of her faith.

It is quite clear from both the Old and New Testament that Rahab was converted before the two spies first spoke to her. Her language to them was that of a believer: “I *know* that the LORD *hath* given you the land...for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Jos. 2:9, 11)—yea, such assurance puts many a modern professing believer to shame. “*By faith* the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31). Summing up the whole of her conduct on that occasion, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) pointed out: “It cannot therefore be reasonably

doubted her faith had, before this, been accompanied with deep repentance of those sinful practices from which she derived the name of ‘Rahab the harlot’”—with which we heartily concur. But some, who have been poisoned with the errors of dispensationalism, and others who are slaves to the mere letter and sound of the Word, are likely to object, saying *that* is a gratuitous assumption, for the word “repentance” is never found in Scripture in connection with Rahab. For their benefit, we will devote another paragraph or two unto this subject.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15); “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). A contrite spirit and a heart acceptance of the Gospel are inseparably connected, so that wherever the one is mentioned, the other is presupposed. For example, take the passages recording the Gospel commission: In Mark 16:16, the emphasis is on “believing,” while in Luke 24:47, it is on “repentance”—the two together explaining the “make disciples” of Matthew 28:19-20. The one cannot exist without the other: It is just as morally impossible for an impenitent heart to believe, as it is for an unbeliever to repent. There may indeed be a mental assent to the Truth unaccompanied by any brokenness of heart, as there may be natural remorse where no faith exists; but there can be no saving faith where evangelical repentance is absent. Since the faith of Rahab was a saving one, as Hebrews 11 clearly shows, it must have been attended with godly sorrow for sin and reformation of life. There can be no pardon while there is no repentance (Isa. 55:7, Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19), i.e. mourning over and abandoning of our evil ways.

Repentance is a change of mind—one that goes much deeper and includes far more than a mere change of opinion or creed. It is a changed mind, a new perception, an altogether different outlook on things as they previously appeared. It is the necessary effect of a new heart. Repentance consists of a radical change of mind about God, about sin, about self, about the world. Previously God was resisted; now He is owned as our rightful Lord. Previously sin was delighted in, but now it is hated and mourned over. Previously self was esteemed, but now it is abhorred. Previously we were of

the world and its friendship was sought and prized; now our hearts have been divorced from the world, and we regard it as an enemy. Everything is viewed with other eyes than formerly, and an entirely different estimate is formed of them. The impenitent see in Christ no beauty that they should desire Him, but a broken and contrite heart perceives that He is perfectly suited to him. Thus, while He continues to be despised by the self-righteous Pharisees, He is welcomed and entertained by publicans and sinners. Repentance softens the hard soil of the soul and makes it receptive to the Gospel Seed.

Repentance necessarily leads to a change of *conduct*, for a change of mind must produce a change of action: Repentance and reformation of life are inseparable. It must have been thus with Rahab: She who had been a harlot would become chaste, and a life of wanton pleasure would give place to one of honest work. Some may deem our conclusion a ‘far-fetched’ one; but personally, we consider that we are given a plain intimation of her changed manner of life. In Joshua 2:6, we are told that “she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of *flax*, which she *had* laid in order upon the roof.” As there is not a superfluous nor meaningless word in the Scriptures, why then has the Holy Spirit specified the particular kind of straw which Rahab used to cover and conceal the two spies? Now “flax” was laboriously gathered by the industrious women, laid out on the flat roofs of the houses to dry, and was then used for spinning and weaving. The presence of a quantity of it “laid out” on Rahab’s roof was an evidence she was now living a useful life.

But that is not all the presence of the “flax” tells us. If we go to the trouble of searching our concordance and comparing Scripture with Scripture, we discover something yet more praiseworthy. In the last chapter of the book of Proverbs, we are supplied with a full-length portrait of “a *virtuous* woman,” and one of her features is that “she seeketh wool, and *flax*, and worketh willingly with her hands” (Prov. 31:13)! Such we are assured was now the character and occupation of this outstanding monument of mercy. Another mark of repentance is a changed esteem of and attitude toward the people of God: Formerly their presence irritated, for their piety

condemned us; but when the heart be changed by the operations of Divine grace, their company and communion is desired and valued. It was thus with Rahab and the two Israelites: She “received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31) is the Divine testimony. It was not with reluctance and complaint that she accepted them into her abode, but with a spirit of goodwill, welcoming and giving them shelter. Admire, then, the blessed transformation which the operations of the Spirit had wrought in her character.

Let us now consider more particularly her faith. First, the *ground* of it. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). This does not mean that faith is *originated* by hearing the Word of God, any more than that the shining of the sun imparts sight to the eye. No, faith is bestowed by a sovereign act of the Spirit, and then it is instructed and nourished by the Word. As an unimpaired eye receives light from the sun and is thereby enabled to perceive objects, so faith takes in the testimony of God and is regulated thereby. My acceptance of the Truth does not create faith, but makes manifest that I *have* faith; and it becomes the sure ground on which my faith rests. Unto the spies, Rahab said, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have *heard* how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you” (Jos. 2:9-11).

How marked the contrast between Rahab and that generation of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness! They not only “heard” of, but were the actual eye-witnesses of those wonderful prodigies which Jehovah wrought on behalf of His people. They personally saw Him cleave a way for them right through the Red Sea, so that they passed through it dry-shod; and then His causing the waters to come together again to the drowning of Pharoah and his hosts. They beheld the solemn manifestation of His august

presence on Sinai. They were the daily recipients of a supernatural supply of food from Heaven, and drank of water which was made to gush from a smitten rock. But their hearts were unaffected and no faith was begotten within them. They too “heard” God’s voice (Heb. 3:7-8), but responded not, and therefore, were debarred from the promised land: “They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19). Ah, my reader, something more than the beholding of miracles, or witnessing outward displays of God’s power, is required in order to beget faith in those who are spiritually dead, as was evidenced again in the days of Christ.

How marked the contrast, too, between Rahab and the rest of her compatriots! As her words in Joshua 2:9-11 clearly indicate, *they too* heard the same reports she did of the marvels performed by the Lord’s might; yet they produced no faith in them. They were indeed awestruck and terrified by the accounts of the same that reached them, so that for a season, there did not remain any more courage in them; but that was all. Just as under the faithful preaching of God’s servants, many have been temporarily affected by announcements of the Day of Judgment and the wrath to come, but never surrendered themselves to the Lord. God declared unto Israel, “This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee” (Deut. 2:25). That was literally fulfilled in the case of the inhabitants of Jericho, yet it wrought no spiritual change in them, for they were children in whom was no faith; and they had no faith, because no miracle of grace was wrought in their souls. Of itself, the soundest preaching effects no spiritual change in those who hear it.

Rahab (Joshua 2:8-13)

Mark the contrast: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not” (Heb. 11:31). And why? Because a sovereign God had made her to differ from them (1 Cor. 4:7). She was blessed with “the faith of the operation of God” (Col. 2:12). Consequently, she “heard” of the works of the Lord not merely with the outward ear, as was the case with all her fellow-citizens,

but with the ear of the heart; and therefore, was she affected by those tidings in a very different manner from what they were who heard but “believed not.” It is clear from her words, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land” (Jos. 2:9) that she had both heard and believed the promises which He had made to Abraham and his seed; and perceiving He was a gracious and giving God, hope had been born in her. Behold then the distinguishing favour of God unto this vessel of mercy, and realise that something more than listening to the Gospel is needed to beget faith in us. “The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them” (Prov. 20:12). Only those “who hath believed” the “report...to whom is the arm [power] of the LORD revealed” (Isa. 53:1). As later with Lydia, so Rahab was one “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14).

Solemn indeed is the warning pointed by the unbelieving fellows of Rahab. So far as we are informed, they heard precisely the same report as she did. Nor did they treat those tidings with either scepticism or contempt; instead, they were deeply affected by them, being terror-stricken. The news of God’s judgments upon the Egyptians, and their nearer neighbours, the Amorites, made their hearts melt, as they feared it would be their turn next. If it be asked, “Why did they not immediately and earnestly cry unto God for mercy?” the answer—in part, at least—is supplied by Ecclesiastes 8:11: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Space was given for repentance, but they repented not. A further respite was granted during the six days that the hosts of Israel marched around Jericho, but when nothing happened and those hosts returned to their camp, its inhabitants continued to harden their hearts. Thus it is with the majority of our fellows today, even of those who are temporarily alarmed under the faithful ministry of God’s servants.

The workings of natural fear and the stirrings of an uneasy conscience soon subside; having no spiritual root, they endure not. Only one in all that city was Divinely impressed by the account which had been received of the Lord’s work in overthrowing the

wicked. Ah, my reader, God's sheep have ever been few in number, though usually a great many goats have mingled with them, so that at a distance and to a superficial survey, it seems as though the flock is of a considerable size. Not only few in number, but frequently isolated from each other, one here and one there, for the children of God are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52). The experience of David was very far from being a unique one when he exclaimed, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psa. 102:6-7). God's thoughts and ways are not as ours, being infinitely wiser and better, though only the anointed eye can perceive that. Not only is His keeping power more strikingly displayed, and glorified by preserving a lone sheep in the midst of goats and wolves, but that solitary believer is cast back the more upon Him.

It is this very *loneliness* of the saint which serves to make manifest the genuineness of his faith. There is nothing remarkable in one believing what all his associates believe, but to have faith when surrounded by sceptics is something noteworthy. To stand alone, to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause, when all others are federated unto evil, is a rare sight. Yet such was Rahab. There were none in Jericho with whom she could have fellowship, none there to encourage her heart and strengthen her hands by their godly counsel and example: All the more opportunity for her to prove the sufficiency of Divine grace! Scan slowly the list presented in Hebrews 11, and then recall the recorded circumstances of each. With whom did Abel, Enoch, Noah have spiritual communion? From what brethren did Joseph, Moses, Gideon receive any help along the way? Who were the ones who encouraged and emboldened Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah? Then think it not strange that you are called to walk almost if not entirely alone, that you meet with scarcely any like-minded or any who are capable of giving you a lift along the road.

During the past six years, this magazine was sent to quite a number in the different fighting forces, and without a single exception, they informed us that they were circumstanced similarly to Rahab. Some were with the British, some with the

Colonials, some with the Americans; some were in the Navy; others in the Army and Air Force; but one and all reported the same thing—totally cut off from contact with fellow-Christians. The “Studies” were sent to and deeply appreciated by men in both the Royal and the Merchant Navies; but in each instance, they were on different ships, surrounded by the ungodly. How easily the Lord could have gathered them together on to one ship! But He did not. And it was for their *good* that He did not; otherwise, He had ordered things differently (Rom. 8:28). Faith must be tried, to prove its worth. Nor is it a hothouse plant, which wilts and withers at the first touch of frost. No, it is hardy and sturdy; and so far from winds and rain dashing it to pieces, they are but occasions for it to become more deeply rooted and vigorous.

The isolation of Rahab appears in that utterance of her’s, “I know...that your terror is fallen upon *us*” (Jos. 2:9). They were but naturally and temporarily affected; she, spiritually and permanently so. What she heard came to her soul with Divine power. And again, we say it was God who made her to differ. By nature, her heart was no different from that of her companions; but having been supernaturally quickened into newness of life, she received “with meekness the engrafted word” (James 1:21). “All men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3:2), because all are not born again. Faith is one of the attributes and activities of that spiritual life (or nature), which is communicated at regeneration. The firm foundation for faith to rest upon is the sure Word of God, and Divine testimony. By it alone is faith supported and established. Frames and feelings have nothing whatever to do with it, nor is spiritual confidence either begotten or nourished by them. Assurance comes from implicitly receiving the Word into the heart and relying upon it. Such was the case with Rahab: “I *know* that the LORD hath given you the land...*For* we have *heard* how the LORD” (Jos. 2:9-10), etc. She received those tidings, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). Have you done so, my reader?

Observe well how definite and confident was her language. There was no “if” or “perhaps,” no dubious “I hope;” but instead, a sure and positive, “I know.” That was the knowledge of a saving

faith. It is true that faith and assurance may be distinguished, yet they can no more be separated than can faith and obedience. Faith without works is dead, and faith without assurance is something of which this writer can find no mention in Scripture. We refer, of course, to a *saving* faith. What is that faith? It is taking God at His Word, appropriating it unto myself, personally resting upon the testimony of Him who cannot lie. Now I either am doing so, or I am not. If I am, then I must be conscious of so doing, for I cannot possibly be trusting in God and relying on His promise and yet be unaware that I am so doing. Read through the New Testament epistles, and nowhere is there a single passage addressed to saints who questioned their acceptance by God; but everywhere, the language is “we *know*” (2 Cor. 5:1, Gal. 4:9, Eph. 6:9, Phil. 1:6, Col. 3:24, 1 Thess. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Rahab’s faith was not only accompanied with confidence, but it regulated her actions. The faith of God’s elect is a living, energetic principle, which “worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6) and produces fruit to the glory of God. Therein, it differs radically from that nominal and inoperative faith of frothy professors, which goes no deeper than a mere mental assent to the Gospel, and ends in fair but empty words. That faith which is unaccompanied by an obedient walk and abounds not in good works is “dead, being alone” (James 2:17). Far different was the faith of Rahab. Of her we read, “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (James 2:25). This does not mean that her good works was the meritorious ground of her acceptance with God, but that they were the evidence before men that a spiritual principle had been communicated to her, the fruits of which vindicated and approved her profession, demonstrating that she was a member of the household of faith. “Had she said, ‘I believe God is your’s and Canaan is your’s, but I dare not show you any kindness,’ her faith had been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her... Those only are true believers that can find in their hearts to venture for God, and take His people for their people, and cast in their lot among them” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

That is something which needs to be constantly insisted upon in

this day of empty profession. A faith which does not issue in conversion is not a saving one; and conversion is a radical change of conduct, a right-about face, a reversal of our former manner of life. Saving faith necessarily involves the relinquishing of what previously occupied the heart, the repudiation of what formerly was trusted in, the abandonment of all that is opposed to the thrice holy God. It therefore involves the denying of self and the forsaking of old companions. It was thus with Abram, who was required to leave his old situation in Ur of Chaldea and follow the call of God. It was thus with Moses, who “refused to be called [any longer] the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb. 11:24-26). It was thus with Ruth, who—in sharp contrast from Orpah—went “back unto her people, and unto her gods,” refusing to forsake Naomi, averring, “thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:15-16). And it was thus with Rahab. A faith which does not relinquish anything and produce a break from former associations is worth nothing.

Yes, Rahab’s faith was a *self-denying* one; and nothing short of that is what the Gospel requires from all to whom it is addressed. Said the Lord Jesus, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34); and again, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Ah, dear friend, you may profess to “believe John 3:16;” but suffer us to ask, Do you also, do you really, *believe* Luke 14:27? Be honest with yourself: Does your daily walk supply *proof* you do so? The self-denying faith of Rahab appeared in her preferring the will of God to the safety of her country, and in sheltering those two spies before the pleasing of her fellowcitizens. Still more conspicuously did it appear in the venturing of her own life, rather than betray the messengers of Joshua, who were the worshippers of the true God. Her faith in God and love for His people made her scorn whatever scoffs she might be subject to and the dangers threatening her. A saving faith is ready whenever God shall call upon us to part with

everything which we hold near and dear in this world. Acts of self-denying obedience are the best and surest evidence of a real spiritual faith.

From the standpoint of natural and temporal considerations, Rahab's faith cost her something. It induced her "to renounce all her interests among the devoted Canaanites (i.e. doomed to destruction), to venture her life and expose herself to the imminent danger of the most cruel tortures in expressing her love for the people of God" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Such is the wonder-working power of the Spirit in a human soul, producing that which is contrary to fallen human nature, causing it to act from new principles and motives, making it to prefer sufferings for Christ's sake and to endure afflictions by throwing in its lot with His people, than to pursue any longer the vanities of this world. Such was the transformation wrought in Saul of Tarsus, who not only bore with fortitude the persecutions which faith in Christ entailed, but rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Such too has been the blessed fruit borne by the faith of many a converted Jew since then, and many a Gentile, too—especially those in Papish and heathen countries, as the missionary records abundantly testify. And such in some measure is the case with every converted soul.

In receiving "the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:31) Rahab made it manifest that she had a heart for the people of God, and was ready to do everything in her power to assist them. That brief clause summarises all that is revealed in Joshua 2 of her kindly conduct toward the two Israelites. She welcomed them into her home, engaged them in spiritual conversation, made provision for their safety, and refused to betray them. "Her whole conduct manifested a reverential fear of the Lord, an entire belief of His Word, a desire and hope of His favour, an affection for His people, and a disposition to forsake, venture and suffer anything in His cause" (T. Scott). We believe there is a latent reference to her kindness (as well as Abram's) in Hebrews 13, for the word translated "messengers" in James 2:25 is the one rendered "angels" in Hebrews 13:1-3: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained

angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” Alas, that so many today instead of so doing, are almost ready to rend each other to pieces over every difference of opinion.

Yet, as we saw in our last, Rahab’s faith—like ours—was not free from defect, for her falsehoods proceeded from one who failed to trust God fully. This illustrates, in a general way, the humbling fact that in our best performances, there is a mingling of frailty and folly. But let it be pointed out that in this matter, her conduct is far from being recorded as an excuse for us to shelter behind. Rather, it is chronicled as a solemn warning, and also to teach us that faith in its beginnings has many blemishes. God bears with much weakness, especially in the lambs of His flock. Those who have faith do not always act faith, but there is often much of the flesh mixed with that which is of the Spirit. Very different is *our* case and situation from that of this young convert from heathendom. Rightly did the editor of Matthew Henry’s Old Testament commentary point out, “Her views of the Law must have been exceedingly dim and contracted: a similar falsehood told by those who enjoy the light of Revelation, however laudable the motive, would of course deserve much heavier censure.”

“And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you...for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Jos. 2:9, 11). Here we find her making an open avowal of that which the Holy Spirit had secretly wrought in her heart. She acknowledged Jehovah to be the true God, that Israel was the people whom He had loved and owned, and hoped for a place among them. Nothing less is required from the believing sinner today: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). The Lord will not own any cowardly and secret disciples. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33). Joseph

was not ashamed to confess his God in Egypt, nor Daniel in Babylon; and when Paul stood forth in the midst of the idolatrous crew and soldiers on the ship and told of the reassuring message he had received from the angel of God, he added, “whose I am, and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). Then, no matter where we be, let us not be afraid to show our colours and make known whose banner we serve under.

“Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (Jos. 2:12-13). Some contracted hearts, in which the very milk of human kindness appears to have congealed, would regard this request of Rahab’s as highly presumptuous. Personally, we believe that her soul was so overflowing with gratitude unto the Lord for having saved such an abandoned wretch, that her faith now perceived something of the infinitude of the Divine mercy, and believed that such a God would be willing to show grace to the whole of her family. Nor was she disappointed. Moreover, as Matthew Henry rightly pointed out, “Those who show mercy may expect to receive mercy.” Thus God promised Ebedmelech, in recompense for his kindness to the prophet, that in the worst of times, his “life shall be for a prey” (Jer. 39:18).

That this request of Rahab’s was something more than an expression of the tenderness of nature is evident from the whole of its tenor. That it was the language of faith appears from her assurance, that without any doubt, Canaan was going to fall before Israel. Her “swear unto me by the LORD” (Jos. 2:12) indicates the intelligence of her faith—a solemn oath would clinch the matter. In asking for a “true token,” she made request for some pledge of deliverance: The word occurs first in Genesis 9:12, where God announced that the rainbow would be “the token of the covenant.” In supplicating for the deliverance of her whole family, she left us an example which we may well follow. It is right that we *should* desire God to show mercy unto those who are near and dear unto us. Not to do so would show we were lacking in natural affection.

It only becomes wrong when we ignore God's sovereignty and dictate instead of supplicate. It is blessed to observe that He who has said, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29), responded to Rahab's faith!

Rahab (Joshua 2:14-21)

Rahab's request of the two spies that they should enter into a solemn covenant with her—guaranteeing the preservation of her family from the impending destruction of Jericho (Jos. 2:12-13)—placed them in a very awkward predicament; or it is more accurate to say that it presented an acute problem, which we fear some of our moderns would fail to solve aright. Only a short time before, Israel had received the following commandment concerning their treatment of the Canaanites: "When the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them" (Deut. 7:2). In the light of that express prohibition, what ought the spies to do? The correct answer to that question turns upon the proper application of a real and necessary distinction between the Divine commands—a distinction which has been drawn by well-instructed scribes in all ages—namely, between moral and positive laws: the one being grounded in essential rectitude; the other, in sovereignty. The moral nature with which God has endowed us teaches that parents should cherish and care for their children, and that children should revere and obey their parents; but it would not prompt Christians to practice baptism or observe the Lord's Supper—those are positive institutions, *ad extra*.

The things enjoined by God's positive laws depend solely on His sovereign pleasure, there being no other reason for them. But the things enjoined by His moral precepts are required not only by the authority of His will, but also by that nature and order of things which He has placed in the creation. The former are alterable at His pleasure, being appointed by mere prerogative; the other are perpetual, enforcing as they do the necessary distinctions of good and evil. All the ceremonial laws given unto Israel were of the former order: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself—the sum of the Ten Words—belonging unto the latter. The former are only of local application unto those who receive them by Divine revelation; the latter are universally binding on all who are possessed of moral accountability. Whenever obedience to a positive law would involve a plain violation of the principles of the moral law, then the inferior must necessarily yield to the superior—though God requires us to believe and do many things which are contrary to our depraved inclinations, yet He never demands from us that which is opposed to the moral nature He has given us.

An illustration of the distinction pointed out above is supplied by the case of David and his men when they were a hungered, and he requested five loaves of the showbread. Ahimelech the priest pointed out that that bread was not for common use, but had been sanctified unto the LORD (1 Sam. 21:3-6); yet after being assured the men were free from defilement, he gave the loaves unto David. None other than our Lord tells us that though it “was not lawful” for them to eat the sacred bread, yet they were “blameless” (Matt. 12:3-6). Thus the positive law which prohibited the priest from giving the hallowed bread for food unto David and his men yielded to the pressing need of the situation. “The Son of David approves of it, and shows from it that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice, that ritual observances must give way to moral duties, and that that may be done in a case of urgent providential necessity which may not otherwise be done” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The law laid down in Deuteronomy 7:2 was, then, a positive one, and neither absolute in its force, nor binding in all cases—for justice itself requires that we must ever show mercy unto the merciful and never return evil for good. Now Rahab *had* shown mercy unto the two spies, and at great risk to herself. The instincts of humanity would fill them with kindly feeling toward their benefactress. Gratitude is a law of nature, and the law of nature takes precedence over positive precepts. Thus, those two godly Israelites had sufficient moral sensibility and spiritual discernment to perceive that Deuteronomy 7:2 could not debar them from acting justly and kindly toward her who had ensured their safety.

Yet, though their duty was quite clear, that did not warrant them acting hurriedly and rashly. No arrangement should be entered into thoughtlessly, on the impulse of the moment. No definite promise should be made, until we have carefully weighed what we are committing ourselves unto, for our word must be our bond. Still less should we enter into any solemn compact without first prayerfully and thoroughly pondering all that is involved in it.

“And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye [better “thou,” as in verse 20] utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee” (Jos. 2:14). Let it be noted that the fulfilment of Rahab’s request was suspended upon an “if!” Necessarily so, for those men were entering into a covenant with her—as her “swear unto me by the LORD” (Jos. 2:12) intimated (compare 1 Samuel 20:16-17; Psalm 89:3)—and a covenant is a mutual compact in which each party agrees to do or grant certain things in return for the other fulfilling certain conditions. That which they agreed upon was qualified by three provisos, the first of which was that she must continue loyal to their interests. Thus, we see their circumspection in binding Rahab to this condition. “They that will be conscientious in keeping their promises will be cautious in making them, and perhaps may insert certain conditions which may otherwise seem frivolous” (Matthew Henry). The Christian should always qualify his promises with “the Lord willing” or “the Lord enabling me.”

They solemnly bound themselves for her preservation in the common destruction of Jericho. Their “our life instead of you to die” (margin) not only affirmed that they would be as much concerned about her safety as their own, but signified a definite imprecation of God’s judgment on them if they failed in their part of the agreement. “We will *deal* kindly and truly with thee” (Jos. 2:14) was an assurance that their words would prove no empty ones, but that there should be an actual performance of what was promised. Observe, too, how they employed the language of faith: “It shall be when the Lord hath given us the land.” There was no doubt in their minds about the issue. Instead, they were fully convinced that Canaan was going to be conquered—yet “by the

Lord” and as His “gift!” We too should wage the fight of faith with full assurance of the outcome, that the Lord will grant ultimate success so that each exclaims, “I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psa. 23:6). In their “we will deal kindly,” they gave proof they were imbrued with no ferocious spirit, and were far from being the blood-thirsty creatures which infidels charge the conquerors of Canaan with being.

“Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall” (Jos. 2:15). As soon as she received promise from the spies, Rahab set about assisting them in their escape. It was most convenient for them that her house was so situated, for had it been in the centre of the town, there was much more likelihood of their being recognised and arrested; but being on the outer wall, they could be let down by night unseen by unfriendly eyes. Yet let it be pointed out that the convenience was no mere happy co-incidence, but *ordered* by the Lord, for of all men, He hath appointed “the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26)—a sovereign God ordained where each of us should be born and reside. But not only was the particular location of Rahab’s house of assistance to the spies, it also served to display more evidently the power of God, for it was the wall of the city which “fell down flat” (Jos. 6:20), and the preservation of her lone house amid the universal devastation stood forth as a monument—both of His might and of His mercy.

“And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way” (Jos. 2:16). It is striking to behold the blending together of Divine power and human precaution all through this incident. The grand truth of Divine preservation is typically illustrated, yet that preservation was accomplished *by* the use of means at every point: Rahab’s by obeying the orders she received, her house because of the cord in her window, and the spies by concealing themselves in the mountain. Let those who teach the “eternal security of the saints” see to it that they present it *with* the safeguards by which God has hedged it about. True, the accomplishment of His eternal

purpose of grace is not left contingent upon the acts of the creature; nevertheless, He who has ordained the end has also appointed the means by which that end is reached. God has not promised to conduct any one to Heaven without the exercise of his faculties and the discharge of his responsibility. He deals with us throughout as moral agents, and requires us to heed His warnings and *avoid* that which would destroy us (1 Cor. 9:27).

Committing my soul and its eternal interests into the hand of the Lord by no means releases me of obligation. “He who has fixed the limits of our life, has also entrusted us with the care of it; has furnished us with means and supports for its preservation, has also made us provident of dangers, and that they may not oppress us unawares has furnished us with cautions and remedies. Thus, it is evident what is our duty.” That, my reader, is a quotation not from the Arminian John Wesley, but from the Reformer, John Calvin!—alas that so many who claim to be Calvinists lack his wisdom and balance of doctrine. The truth of Divine preservation is not designed as a shelter for either laziness or licentiousness. God’s promises are made to those who honestly strive against sin and mourn when tripped up by it, and not to those who take their fill thereof and delight therein—for He undertakes to keep His saints *in holiness* and not in wickedness. If God has turned our feet into that way which leadeth unto life, we must continue therein. Otherwise, we shall never reach our desired destination. Only those who press forward to that which is before reach the goal (Phil. 3:14).

Saving faith is far more than an isolated act. It is a spiritual principle which continues to operate in those to whom it is communicated. Divine preservation works through Christian perseverance, for grace is given us not to render our efforts needless, but to make them effectual. God does not carry His children to glory in a state of passivity, but works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13)—to hate and fear sin, to desire and strive after holiness, to heed His warnings, to shun the things which would destroy, to *keep* His commandments. The Christian must continue as he began, for Christian perseverance is the maintaining of godly affections and practices.

We are indeed “kept by the power of God,” yet “through faith” (1 Pet. 1:5); and therefore, so long as the flesh is left in us, and we in the world, we are required to attend unto that exhortation, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12)—for the verses which follow solemnly remind us that many of those who came out of Egypt never entered Canaan! “They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19).

“And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way” (Jos. 2:16). Observe how this illustrates and enforces what we have just said above. The spies were under the immediate care of God, they had trustfully committed themselves into His hands, and He would certainly bring them safely back unto Joshua. Nevertheless, they were required to exercise care and caution; and they did so, for Joshua 2:22 shows they acted in exact accordance with Rahab’s counsels. They might have argued, We cannot afford to waste three days in the mountain, rather does it behoove us to make all possible speed to Joshua and make our report unto him. But that had been only the feverish energy of the flesh: “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16)—alas that that wise old proverb, “Slow but sure, is sure to do well” is now despised. Nor did those spies, under the plea of trusting God, recklessly disregard the peril of being captured by the pursuers—that would have been tempting Him, acting presumptuously, rather than believably. God requires us to conduct ourselves circumspectly, to exercise good judgment.

“And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread [or “rope”] in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household, home unto thee” (Jos. 2:17-18). If the spies must need take due precautions for their personal safety, equally indispensable was it that Rahab should act in obedience with their orders; otherwise, they would be released from their promise, and the oath would no longer be binding upon them. Their oath, as

pointed out above, was for the confirmation of the covenant they had entered into with Rahab—and a covenant is a mutual compact between two parties, which is rendered null and void if either of them fails to keep his part of the agreement. Now the Gospel itself is a covenant, for in it, God offers and promises certain blessings upon our acceptance of His offer and compliance with His terms (Psa. 50:5, Jer. 50:5), and we are required to be “*mindful* always of his covenant” (1 Chron. 16:15) and to “*keep* his covenant” (Psa. 25:10)—for a fuller discussion of this, see the March and April articles on “Reconciliation.”

The binding of the scarlet cord in her window was for the purpose of *identification*, so that when Israel made their attack upon Jericho, they might know which was her house, and spare it. It must be borne in mind that when the spies gave her those instructions, they knew not that the Lord was going to work a miracle, and cause the walls of the city to fall down without any assault upon them by Israel. That was not revealed unto Joshua until later (Jos. 6:5), illustrating the fact that God’s will is made known unto us only a step at a time—He sees the end from the beginning (Acts 15:18), but He does not permit us to do so (John 13:7). That cord was the “token” for which she had asked (Jos. 2:12), and it enabled the army of Israel to ascertain which was her house—just as the sprinkled blood on the door-posts of the Hebrews in Egypt caused the angel of death to recognise their houses and pass over them when He went forth to slay the firstborn (Exod. 12:13); and just as the 144,000 who are exempted from judgment are “sealed...in their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3), their identifying mark being that of *obedience* to the Lord (Rev. 14:1-5)—for it is obedience which manifestatively distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil.

“And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on *our* head, if any hand be upon him” (Jos. 2:19). Thus, the terms of the covenant or agreement were precisely stated and carefully explained to her before they parted. Those of Rahab’s family who were to be preserved from the common

destruction must be inside her house, *separated from the wicked*. If they forsook that shelter and mingled with the heathen inhabitants of Jericho, they would perish with them—as Noah and his family had in the flood—unless they had separated from the ungodly and taken refuge in the ark. Typically, this teaches the imperative necessity of separation from the world if we would escape from its impending doom. The case of Rahab’s family remaining secluded in her house as the condition of their preservation is parallel with Acts 27, where we find that though the angel of God assured Paul, “There shall be no loss of any man’s life” (Acts 27:22), yet when the sailors were about to abandon it, he cried, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31)—and except Christians maintain separation from this evil world, they cannot escape destruction with it.

“And *if* thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear” (Jos. 2:20). Let those who proclaim the grand truth of “the eternal security of the saints” fail not to give due place unto that “if”—the “if” not of uncertainty from the Divine side, but of enforcing responsibility from the human. Let them carefully ponder the “if” in Romans 8:13 and 11:22; 1 Corinthians 15:2; Colossians 1:23; and Hebrews 3:6, 14. Scripture does not teach a mechanical security, but one which is obtained through our use of means and avoidance of dangers. The preservation of Rahab from destruction was conditioned upon her obedience to the instructions of God’s messengers, and her use of the means they specified. First, she must mention not their business or betray them to their enemies. She must be loyal to them and promote their interests—a figure of love for the brethren. Second, she must place the scarlet cord in the window so that her house might be recognised—we must bear the identifying mark of God’s children. Third, she must abide in her house—we must maintain separation from the world.

“And she said, According unto your words, so be it” (Jos. 2:21). There was no resentment, no offering of objections. “And she bound the scarlet line in the window” (Jos. 2:21), manifesting by her obedience that she was an elect and regenerate soul. Unless you, my reader, are walking in obedience to God, you have no

scriptural warrant to conclude you are “eternally secure.” The *reward* of her faith and obedience is revealed in other passages. First, she “perished not with them that believed not” (Heb. 11:31). Second, she “dwelleth in Israel” (Jos. 6:25): from being a citizen of heathen Jericho, she was given a place in the congregation of the Lord. Third, she became the honoured wife of a prince in Judah, the mother of Boaz, and one of the grandmothers of David (Matt. 1:5). Fourth, she was one of the favoured ancestresses of the Saviour (Matt. 1). Thus did God do for her exceeding abundantly above all that she asked or thought: delivered from awful depths of sin and shame, elevated to heights of honour and dignity.

