

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 “Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.”

14 “Our lives for your lives!” the men assured her. “If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.”

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.”

17 Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.”

21 “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.”

So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

A Scarlet Thread

There is good rope and there is bad rope. This is bad rope. Growing up we always had good rope around. Grandpa’s hardware store was our source for rope and we didn’t have to worry about rope giving way. We’d throw rope over a tree branch, tie it to our new back packs, and play rocket man with siblings. We’d tie each other up and see who could escape. We’d even lower siblings through the floor vent on the second floor. We always had good rope.

Until two weeks ago I wasn’t aware how cheap rope has become. Before loading up the organ I picked up supplies, straps, tarps and such but then skimped on the rope

thinking, "I've already have some in the car. Why buy more?" That turned out to be mistake number one. After everything was loaded, strapped down, I tarped everything and started cinching it down with rope. I didn't realize that Walmart rope has something like a paper core. I couldn't get it tight without hearing the core start to snap. The next day I bought more rope. A day later on the road I bought more rope. By the end of the trip it looked like our load was held together by shoestrings and chewing gum.

Thankfully Rahab didn't buy rope from Walmart when she let the spies down. I doubt she skimped on rope when it came to the scarlet thread that was placed in her window. I'm certain that she would want all of Israel to see that rope that served as the signal, "Stop. Don't kill." Her life hung on that thread. She not only placed her life in the balance but her families as well. All she owned and had was supported by this single thread.

That's the life a Christian. At times it feels a bit uncomfortable, putting your trust in a single thread may feel like you've reached the top of a rock wall and have to repel down. Leaning back into that rope and jumping away trusting that it will support you can be a bit hair raising. God doesn't want us uncertain about our rope. Rather he wants us to hold fast with the same certainty as Rahab even if we've had a hopeless past or present. God wants us to relax in his work for us as our present and future hope in this scarlet thread.

We pick up that thread when Joshua enters the Promised Land and Israel arrives at their first fortified city. Some say that Jericho was a double walled city and Rahab lived within these two walls. Jericho was the strongest fortress in the land of Canaan and the first line of defense. Joshua sends in the spies but instead of 12 he sends two. I wonder if Joshua was thinking back to the days when he and Caleb came back with a favorable report?

These two spies just happen to end up in a harlot's house. Sounds like the beginning of a bad joke. But if they were looking to draw the least amount of attention why not go where you can hide in the shadows and protect your identity? There Rahab a sordid citizen of Jericho turns tyrant and collaborator with the enemy. Here they are on the brink of war, everyone is on edge and she betrays her people. "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.

Rahab displays her faith and holds on to this rope. It wasn't easy either. She was a prostitute. An outsider racially and morally. She was under a ban and outside of the covenant community. She is going to align herself with Israel? She's taking a great risk for what looks like a flimsy rope. She misleads the king, lies to them, misdirects them, and

even informs the spies. If she or the spies were caught it would mean death for her. But that rope isn't flimsy. Somehow or another she has come to know the Lord. She refers to his covenant name. She speaks of his great work and how everyone knows, "the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed." She cleaves to God, to his chosen nation. She asks them to swear not by their name but in the name of the Lord. She is placing all of her eggs into one basket, all her hopes, her trust, her fears into the power and mercy of God.

We see the faith of Rahab holding onto a thread not doubting even though she a Gentile with a poor background. Would we hold onto that same scarlet thread as Rahab? Would you grab hold of the same rope and throw your lot with her even if it meant risk to one's life. If we're honest we might find it difficult to remain faithful when money or social statues are on the line let alone our neck. If we're honest with ourselves we may not want to hold onto the same thread as Rahab. We hedge our bets, buy a few extra ropes, and have a backup plan.

Those backup plans are like cheap rope. It looks good until a little tension is applied or in unwrapping a new rope you end up with a gordian knot only fit to be cut apart. Our works only add doubt, "Have I done enough? There is more that I can do." Our additional ropes pull us away from safety and if we place our weight on them we might very well fall from grace. We aren't saved by our additions to grace. We are saved in spite of ourselves. We aren't saved by birth into a chosen nation. We aren't saved by our obedience to commandments because none of us keep the commandments. In fact the only thing that we contribute to our salvation is the fact that we make it necessary.

Then when we are saved we often don't cleave to God's people but rather go in search of more rope. Instead of holding only to the cross that scarlet thread we find a way to cling to everything we can.

Rahab threw her weight on that line. As Israel marched around that city they too were constantly reminded of that rope. That promise. The red rope of Rahab, "Stop. Don't kill."

There is no need to talk about her past. What's done is done. I don't like to refer to her as a harlot nor do I like to make her out to be less of a sinner. The fact of what she once was magnifies the glory of God which made her what she has become. She is part of the scarlet thread that runs throughout the bible. Rahab lives through the destruction of

Jericho. She joins Israel. She finds a husband, maybe one of the spies was named Salmon. She has a son named Boaz. Boaz had Rahab to thank for his good looks and godly character. Boaz later married a Moabite woman named Ruth. (Joshua, Judges, Ruth) - that Ruth. Ruth and Boaz have a son named Obed. Obed has a son named Jesse. Jesse is the Father of David. This scarlet thread continues and Matthew gives us a recap in his gospel. **Matthew 1:5-6** list Jesus genealogy. Rahab, Ruth, and Mary are the only women named.

That thread is at times so small you almost lose track of it. It's a scarlet thread that leads straight to the cross. By faith Rahab received more than a home with the Israelites in the Promised Land she received an eternal home in the Promised Land of Heaven. Because of Jesus and his work binding her to himself, bringing her into his family. By faith we find her name inscribed in the halls of the hero's of faith. Hebrews 11:31 - *"By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."*

She put her faith what she believed into action and she held onto that scarlet thread. She made a request that they spare her life as well as the lives of her friends and family. Just imagine her outreach to family, "Come to my house. The Harlot's house had become the church! Joshua may not have needed the report from the spies in order to attack the city. Maybe the only reason they were sent was because God was searching for family.

If God can save Rahab. If God can save a prostitute, outside of Israel, a Gentile, a sinner - God can save me and include me in his family tree. Exactly what he does. We hold on to the same scarlet thread of Rahab. The same thread that saves a sinner saves us. That rope connects us to the cross where we are firmly anchored and able to place our life in the balance. Here we realize that Jesus paid not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world. Including our doubt, our extra ropes, and even the gordian knot of sin that we've tied to us.

There is no better rope, no better lifeline than the one he has given us and connected us to. It's dependable. You can trust in him. You can also tell others to join you. The church may not have been used as a harlot's house but it is our home. I don't like to refer to us as sinners so much as what we have become. Children of God. Saints who struggle with the sinful nature who have followed a scarlet thread to the cross and have found hope. You may not ever have to risk life or limb to hold onto this rope. But you can have confidence that it's a lifeline that will not fail even if you do risk money, social status, or life. Maybe the reason God has placed people in your life is because he is still searching for family. Point them to good rope.

Some rope is good. Some rope is bad. Some rope will leave you in a bind when you need it the most. Rahab let down the spies. As children we let our sister down slowly from the tree. We tried to let our little brother down slowly from the second floor but the rope slipped. Walmart let me down yet again. But that's alright. We have another rope worth holding on to and pointing others to. Jesus: the Christ.