

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

WORSHIP SERVICE

10.30 AM 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024

Rev Dr Julia Binney Leading & Preaching

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).

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**Summer Series:** Not Only for Heroes... Twelve studies on the lesser known heroes of faith from Hebrews 11

**Theme 7:** The Refuge of Faith – Rahab (Hebrews 11:31)

**Call to worship:** *From Psalm 95*

Come, let us sing to the Lord!

**Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.**

Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing songs of praise to him,

**For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all Gods.**

Come, let us worship and bow down.

**Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God.**

**We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.**

**HYMN MP 1008:**

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me lie in pastures green.

He leads me by the still, still waters,

His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone.*

*And I will trust in You alone,*

*For Your endless mercy follows me,*

*Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,

And He anoints my head with oil,

And my cup, it overflows with joy,

I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,  
I will not fear the evil one,  
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know.

STUART TOWNEND © 1996 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

#### **A PRAYER OF PRAISE:**

Lord God our hope is in you. You made the heavens and the earth and everything in it.  
You are faithful and trustworthy for ever.

**We praise and worship you.**

You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

**We praise and worship you.**

You execute justice for the oppressed and give food to the hungry.

**We praise and worship you.**

You set the captives free and lift up those who are bowed down.

**We praise and worship you, our loving and merciful God, who reigns for ever, our God  
for all eternity. Hallelujah. Amen!**

#### **A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

When we deny you, **forgive us.**

When plates are unfilled, **forgive us.**

When justice is left undone, **forgive us.**

When neighbours are unwelcome, **forgive us.**

When we store up worthless treasure, **forgive us.**

**Lord, restore us, renew us, transform us, and remake us for your kingdom.**

**In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and for ever and ever. Amen.**

**FAMILY TIME:** In a Mess

*(An offering will be taken during the next song, and then the children will leave us for their own groups)*

**SONG AND DANCE CLIP:** <https://youtu.be/af9I9DOTtq4?si=enjGe9Mwef91ZVAX>

Jesus came to save, set the sinner free.

God's amazing grace it's for you, and for me. *(repeat)*

Hey.

Amazing grace, what a sweet, sweet sound.

I was lost but at the cross,

I'm found, I'm found.

Jesus came to save, there's power in his name.  
He's broken every chain, He's overcome the grave.  
Now that's amazing grace.

Jesus came to save, set the sinner free.  
God's amazing grace, it's for you, and for me.  
It's for her, it's for he.  
It's for that kid over there (who me?)  
For everybody (cool!).  
So let's celebrate, one, two, three.

#### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**BIBLE READING 1:** Joshua 2:1-24

**BIBLE READING 2:** Joshua 6:12-17, 20, 22-23

#### **HYMN BP&W 329:**

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture burst on my sight;  
Angels descending bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Saviour am happy and blest;  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

FRANCES VAN ALSTYNE (1820-1915)

#### **SERMON: Not only for Heroes 7: The Refuge of Faith - Rahab (Hebrews 11:31)**

In our Sunday morning sermons we are looking at Hebrews 11 where we find the great list of Old Testament heroes of faith who lived wholeheartedly for God and exercised the faith that God had given them. Each hero illustrates a different facet of what it means to be a person of faith. From their lives, we learn how we can be the best we can be for God and live the way God wants us to. These Old Testament heroes were called to a life of faith but faith is not only for heroes. It is for ordinary Christians just like you and me – which is why in this series we are concentrating on the lesser known characters in Hebrews 11 – because we are **all** called to a life of faith.



This week we are looking at the story of Rahab: 'It was by faith that Rahab, the prostitute was not destroyed with the people of her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies' (Hebrews 11:31). The list of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 includes some interesting characters. They were far from perfect. There were failures and inconsistencies in their lives, such as those of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc., but we are happy to accept their inclusion in the faith hall of fame. But surely to include Rahab, a prostitute, as an example of faith, is a surprising choice to say the least. Yet Rahab despite her background enjoys a place of esteem in Jewish and Christian records. The Lord had given Joshua command of the Israelite tribes after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:1,2). Joshua sends two scouts from the camp to spy out Jericho, the great city on the plains of Moab, and they find lodging in Rahab's tavern. When the authorities, sent out by the king of Jericho, discover where they are, Rahab conceals them, giving them a safe place to hide and helps them escape (Joshua 2:1-24). Rahab's actions on behalf of the spies is seen as evidence of her personal faith in Israel's God. According to Hebrews 11:31, it was Rahab's faith and trust in God that saved her from the destruction of Jericho, a fate that befell those who were disobedient. As we trace her story from Joshua chapters 2 and 6, we see a wonderful illustration of God's way of salvation. Here we see the Refuge of Faith. What can we learn from Rahab's faith that will help us with ours?

### **1. Rahab was saved by God's grace**

Rahab was a sinner, a Canaanite woman, a prostitute who ran an inn (the two often went together), someone who lived in spiritual darkness among a people given over to idolatry. By including her in the list of heroes of faith, the writer to the Hebrews is making clear that no-one becomes a member of God's people through merit or birth. A believing Canaanite is saved while unbelieving, disobedient Canaanites perish. Rahab believes and receives life through faith. She is saved by God's grace. This is the only way any of us are saved. The Bible tells us that we are all sinners. We are all failures who live inconsistent lives. Sin is called transgression which indicates a missing of a mark or standard. 'For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard' (Romans 3:23). But as the Apostle Paul clearly states that we are 'saved by grace, through faith' (Ephesians 2:8,9). Grace means God's unmerited love or favour. We cannot earn God's favour and we do not deserve it. It is not at all dependent on how good we are (or think we are).

Clement of Rome (35 AD – 99 AD) is the earliest Christian writer not to be included in the canon of Scripture. He tells the story of Rahab and describes her as a prophet because the scarlet rope she uses to let the spies down from her window on the city wall (Joshua 2:18, 21) and by which her house was identified at the capture of the city, foreshadows 'that through the blood of the Lord all who trust and hope in God shall have redemption' (1 Clement 12:7).

The ground of Rahab's salvation was the binding agreement between her and Joshua's representatives (2:12-14). The 'scarlet rope' hung in the window was not only a means of escape and sign but a symbol of this covenant agreement (vs.17-21). Rahab was obedient (v.21) and so received salvation. Her faith gave her refuge. The imagery of the 'scarlet rope' is clear. It represents the blood of Christ. The cross is the supreme example of God's grace in action. Christ shed his blood so we can be forgiven and rescued from the power and penalty of our sin. It is the only way we can be saved because 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins' (Hebrews 9:22). Through faith in Christ and his redeeming work we too can find God as our refuge, our protector, our strength and our salvation

### **2. Rahab's faith began when she heard God's word**

Twice we are told that Rahab said, 'we have heard...' (2:10,11), and she believed what she heard. She mixed hearing with faith unlike the disobedient unbelievers (Hebrews 4:2). We are saved in the same way that Rahab was by hearing God's word, the message of Jesus Christ, reckoning on it being true, trusting it and believing it. 'Faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ' (Romans 10:17). As Jesus said, 'Those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life' (John 5:24).

### **3. Rahab confessed her faith to the spies**

What was important with Rahab's faith was that she didn't keep it to herself. She was no secret believer. Romans 10:9 'If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised

him from the dead, you will be saved.’ Rahab’s was not mere intellectual assent or agreement but a genuine heart faith. She says ‘I know that the Lord...’ (2:9). Many in Jericho had heard about the Lord and his power and they believed what they heard but Rahab believed *in* him and trusted him. ‘For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved’ (Romans 10:10).

#### **4. Rahab demonstrated her faith by her works**

Rahab believed in her heart that God’s power was real and his promises were certain, she was confident that God would give his people the land (Joshua 2:8). She did not believe this as a vague concept or idea, she acted on her faith ‘by welcoming the spies’ (Hebrews 11:31). Clement of Rome used the story of Rahab to illustrate the virtues of faith and hospitality. She is considered an example of those who are made right with God by what they do and not by faith alone (James 2:25): ‘Was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?’ While the red cord was in the window Rahab was safe. The only safe refuge we have is the blood of Christ: ‘the blood of Jesus, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.’ We are not saved by good works but we are saved for good works. Where faith is real and genuine it will be seen.

#### **5. Rahab’s faith involved a radical change**

Rahab’s life was completely transformed. She left the doomed city and her own people and threw her lot in with God’s people. She turned from idols to worship and serve the true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Everything became new, she was a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). A real work of God’s grace in the heart will always lead to real transformation. Faith in the Lord Jesus will be evidenced by a change of life.

#### **6. Rahab reached out to her friends and loved ones.**

Rahab showed genuine concern for the salvation of her family and friends ‘Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families’ (2:12). Do we have such a concern for our family and friends? A desire to share our faith out of love for God and for others is a mark of the genuineness of our faith.

Apart from a brief mention of Sarah (v.11), Rahab is the only woman included in Hebrews 11. She is commended for her faithful, brave act of hospitality and protection of the spies. She offered them refuge and found refuge herself. This woman, brought into a living relationship with God by grace became the mother of Boaz, who in became the grand-grandfather of King David (Ruth 4:21-22) and ultimately to Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5-16).

There are many facets to the life of faith here illustrated by Rahab. God’s promises were fulfilled for her. Through her faith, Rahab provided a refuge for herself and her family when Jericho was destroyed (Joshua 6:22-25). God’s gracious action on her behalf was not because she was perfect or deserved it. God’s gracious action for us in the giving of his Son to be our Saviour and for all his promises to be yes and amen in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20) are not because of anything about us or anything we have to achieve or attain. Salvation is God’s free gift. All we have to do is receive it. ‘Come now, let’s settle this,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them white as wool. If you will only obey me...’

#### **TIME OF RESPONSE**

#### **HYMN MP 937:**

Thank you for saving me;

What can I say?

You are my everything,

I will sing Your praise.

You shed Your blood for me;

What can I say?

You took my sin and shame,  
A sinner called by name.

*Great is the Lord.*

*Great is the Lord.*

For we know Your truth has set us free;  
You've set Your hope in me.

Mercy and grace are mine,  
Forgiven is my sin;  
Jesus, my only hope,  
The Saviour of the world.  
'Great is the Lord,' we cry;  
God, let Your kingdom come.  
Your word has let me see,  
Thank You for saving me.

MARTIN SMITH © 1993 CURIOUS? MUSIC UK/ADM. BY KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

### **HYMN: Hillsong**

I love You, Lord for Your mercy never fails me  
All my days, I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up,  
until I lay my head  
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

*All my life You have been faithful  
And all my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able  
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.*

I love Your voice, you have led me through the fire  
In the darkest night,  
you are close like no other  
I've known You as a Father,  
I've known You as a Friend  
And I have lived in the goodness of God.

Because Your goodness is running after,  
it's running after me  
With my life laid down I'm surrendered now  
I give You everything  
Your goodness is running after,  
it's running after me.

BENJAMIN DAVID FIELDING, BRIAN JOHNSON, JASON DAVID INGRAM, JENN JOHNSON, EDMOND MARTIN CASH © 2019 BETHEL MUSIC

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: Richard and Janet Kingston**

O God, we thank you for every evidence of your grace, truth, goodness, compassion and creativity in your world. Hear us as we pray to you this morning. As school terms come to the

end of the academic year we would pray for the children as their summer holidays commence. For those who will be changing schools come September; the younger ones leaving their 'safe' primary ones to start at a new junior one and those moving from primary to secondary schools. We remember the teachers, saying goodbye to long known children and their parents.

As the holidays loom, Father, please help young people to act wisely and stay safe and help all Christian teenagers to be a positive influence helping their friends and peers avoid harmful material and interactions on line, including social media for Christ' sake.

O Lord we pray for the success of initiatives that seek to protect and rescue vulnerable young people, especially children in care and those excluded from school, who have been caught up in crime, drugs and other dangers. May you help them to escape and recover their lives.

O God, ruler of the ends of the earth, we pray for those to whom you have entrusted power and responsibility. We think of our own country and those elected to office as Members of Parliament - those who serve in government, whether in cabinet office, junior posts or on backbench committees; those in opposition with their mandate to challenge and debate government policies and decisions; and especially we pray for our Prime Minister and the leaders of all the other parties. Grant them wisdom, insight, patience, dedication, integrity, open-mindedness and humility, that each may be equipped to honour the trust placed in them.

O Lord, we pray for those in authority in other lands, grant them the guidance and gifts they need to govern wisely that they may work for the good of all their people. We pray too for those nations affected by an abuse of power, rival factions and corruption exist, and that the time may come when truth and justice prevail.

O God, today we have heard the story of Rahab, which reminds us that God has a special care for us. May we take that message with us into the coming week as we pray to God who is always forgiving, always loving, and whose mercy is beyond understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

#### **HYMN BP&W 603 :**

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit!  
O what needless pain we bear!  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful,  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?

Jesus only is our refuge,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield you,  
You will find a solace there.

JOSEPH SCRIVENS (1819-86)

**THE BLESSING:**

As you go, empowered by God's unconditional love,  
Walk through the world with mercy in your hearts.  
Let your lips speak forgiveness and your hands be ready to bless.  
And so may God bless you and keep you today and always.  
In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



**THE GRACE:**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.**

**Dates for your Diary:**

**Church Meeting – today after the service.**

**Next Baptismal Service – 21<sup>st</sup> July**

**Special Church Anniversary weekend –**

- **Church Vision Day 3<sup>rd</sup> August**
- **Anniversary Service 4<sup>th</sup> August followed by a Church Lunch**

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