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**"POWER UP!"**

- Powerful Insights From Some Ancient Saints -  
(Hebrews 11:31; Joshua 2:1-24; 6:22-25; Matthew 1:5)

**Intro** ... "Power Up!" ... That's the title of our current preaching series and that's what we are encouraging ourselves to do. Specifically we are encouraging ourselves to "power ourselves up" this Spring by plugging ourselves into some incredible insights for Christian Living garnered from some of God's ancient saints.

Our theme verse for the series is Hebrews 11:1 ...

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for."

And those commendations were based upon the particular "actions of faith" that each of those ancient saints took and it's those 'actions of faith' from which we draw these "insights for living powered-up lives".

So far we have plugged ourselves into powerful insights drawn from **Abel** and **Noah** and **Abraham** and **Moses** ...

Today we look at the fifth and final ancient saint whose commended action is reported in Hebrews 11. Today's ancient saint is also the first (though not only) woman in the list. Consider with me ...

**Today's Key Scripture** ... Hebrews 11:31

By faith the prostitute **RAHAB** because she **WELCOMED** the spies, was not **KILLED** with those who were disobedient.

Now if that were the only verse we had on the subject, I would probably be preaching a message this morning on the commendable virtues of **Hospitality** ... particularly toward your Christian brothers and sisters - which wouldn't be a bad message to preach, by the way, especially in light of the tragedies that so regularly disrupt people's lives on this ever-groaning planet we call home.

"*Open your arms and your homes to people in need*" could have been Rahab's insight for living. If Hebrews 11:31 were the only verse that spoke of her commended action.

But that's not the only verse and there's much more to the story ...  
The fuller story is told in Joshua chapters two and six.

This morning I want to walk you right through it and then frame our insight for living when we are done. As we read, I want us to see **five key actions** that she took - I want us to see how God used her to accomplish His Purposes.

***Look How God Used Rahab ...*** (Joshua 2:1-24)

\* She **WELCOMED** the spies - **She saw the opportunity.** (vs. 1)

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

Now it's important to point out that Rahab was exactly what the text says she was - a woman for hire, a prostitute. Though the NIV has a footnote that says "or possibly innkeeper" as an alternate translation, the rest of the Scripture (Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25) use words that leave no doubt. She was a "woman for hire" - the type of woman that would seem most out of place in the service of the Lord and yet a woman that had been specifically prepared for God's use.

Not doubt the two young spies went to her house because that would be the one house in town where two strangers could enter without causing suspicion. And as soon as they entered her house, she saw an **opportunity** to ally herself with the People of God and she took it. She **welcomed** them - not as clients, but as agents of the One True God.

But if she could immediately identify them as men of Israel, so could everyone else and word reached the King/Mayor of Jericho that two Israelites had been seen entering Rahab's home.

And as a result, she took her second significant action ...

\* She **PROTECTED** the spies - She saw the necessity. (vs. 2-7)

The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

A bold-faced lie in the service of the Lord - that's what Rahab told. We'll have to let the ethics police deal with that but the fact was she did what she felt she had to do to protect the two young men that were her only link to any eventual survival. She saw the absolute ***necessity*** in keeping these two spies alive; she had a ***story*** to tell them and an ***appeal*** to make to them.

It's interesting that the King took her word at face value; his men did not come and search her house. Did they not want to be seen entering her house or was she a woman that perhaps knew things that they didn't want told? Whichever was the case, they believed what she said and headed off on a wild goose chase.

I would believe that as soon as the king's men had left, she took the next step in her "faith-inspired" plan.

\* She **INFORMED** the spies - She told them the story. (vs. 8-11)

Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you 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. 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. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

What an incredible story she told ... The inhabitants of Jericho were terrified of the Israelites. They were more in awe of the God of Israel than some of the Israelites were. Rahab had no doubt that the God of the Israelites was the One True God - the God above all gods.

How thrilled those two young men must have been to hear her speak.

Here's what they told Joshua when they finally got back to the Israelite encampment ... Joshua 2:24

"They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

God used Rahab not only to ***tell the story*** but to greatly ***encourage*** the hearts of His People - The people of Jericho had already given up.

However, knowing the story and possessing such encouraging intelligence wouldn't do the spies or anyone else any good unless they made it back safely to the Israelite camp and so Rahab took the next step ...

\* She **WARNED** the spies - She explained the strategy. (vs. 15-16)

So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. Now she had 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."

How fortunate that her house was built right into the outer wall of the town. Her back window served as a perfect escape route - a route that perhaps more than one man had taken over the years. Now it would be used for the spies. She told them where the searchers had gone and where and how long they should hide before they sought to cross back over the Jordan.

It interesting that the spies believed her completely and followed her ***strategy*** precisely. Tells us something of Rahab's intelligence and persuasive ability. They snuck out the window (probably before dawn) hid in the hills for the full three days and then made their way back to report to Joshua.

Now there's one more thing. I rearranged the order of these last two things so I could finish with this one.

Before she warned them and lowered them out her back window ...

\* She **APPEALED** to the spies - She worked out a policy. (vs. 12-14)

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 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.

"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."

There was no doubt in either of their minds what was going to happen. God was going to deliver the city of Jericho into the hands of the Israelites. She asked for assurances that she and her family would be spared. Those assurances were granted. She would be treated like the "servant of God" that she was. The entire nation would know that she had allied herself with them and that God had greatly used her.

***Look How It All Turned Out ...*** (Joshua 6:22-25; Matthew 1:5)

\* She **SURVIVED** the attack - She became part of the community.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho--and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Like the woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus so many years later, Rahab would "go and sin no more". She would take up residence among the

people of God and she would serve as a continual reminder of the marvelous way God had provided for His People as they launched their Conquest of Canaan. She would serve to remind them that God can and will call people from all nations and that they should never forget that God's ultimate plan is that "all nations be blessed through them".

\* She **MARRIED** Salmon - She became part of Christ's lineage.

Matthew begins his Gospel with a recounting of Jesus' family line and there right in the middle of it is **Rahab** - the one-time prostitute who became a follower of the God of Israel. Here's how it reads ...

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.  
(Matthew 1:5-6)

So Rahab married a man named Salmon and became the mother of Boaz who became the father of Obed who became the father of Jesse who became the father of **King David**, the ancestor of Jesus. Jesus had Rahab's blood in his veins ... She wound up listed among the "*Heroes of Faith*" in Hebrews 11. Who would have thought it!

So what powerful insight for living do we gain from Rahab's life?  
What would she say to us if she were to speak to us today?  
I believe she would say something like this ...

***Today's Power Insight ... RAHAB***

***"Your BACKGROUND doesn't matter to God;  
He can SAVE you and will USE you."***

***Just BELIEVE in Him and COMMIT yourself to Him!***

***And there it is ...*** For some of you that's a far more impactful insight than for others. But for someone with a less than stellar history, it's incredibly important to wrap your heart around.

***"God can save me and He will use me  
if I just believe in Him and commit myself to him!"***

*Final Thot ...* Some of God's most **FLAWLESS** work has been done by  
incredibly **FLAWED** people - There is no one He cannot **USE!**