

One Way - Joshua 2:15-24
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Open your Bibles if you would to Joshua, chapter 2, this morning. Today we'll be tackling the last half of chapter 2, verses 15 through 24, where we'll learn how the 2 Israelite spies, who had come to spy out the city of Jericho, responded to the prostitute Rahab's expression of faith in the one true God and her request for mercy and deliverance as she aligned herself with the one true God at the risk of her life and the lives of her family members.

If you'll remember from last week, Rahab had taken the spies into her house, hidden them in some stalks of flax on the roof, lied to the king's men who came looking for them, and sent them on a "wild goose" chase. Rahab then had a life-changing conversation with the 2 spies, in which she expressed her personal belief that their God was the one true God, gave them inside information about the great fear and terror that all people in the land were feeling toward the Israelites, and then requested deliverance from death for herself and her family in exchange for the kindness she had already shown to them. These were the bold and risky actions Rahab was taking in response to her newfound faith in the one true God.

Last week we also spent some time discussing the 4 lies Rahab told to protect the spies, and how those lies were in a strange way an expression of her faith in the one true God whose character and ways she didn't yet understand. We found that Rahab is never commended in Scripture for lying, but rather for her efforts to protect and welcome the spies, which demonstrated the reality of her saving faith in God. In Scripture we also noted that God himself never lies and that he commands us as his children not to lie, but instead to live lives of truthfulness and honesty as we trust in him. This situation with Rahab's lies in no way gives us authorization to lie in order to accomplish God's purposes. What it instead shows us is that God always accomplishes his purposes in the world, and in his mysterious ways he somehow accomplishes those purposes through the free-will actions of human beings...some of which actions are good and some of which are

sinful. God doesn't do the sin or force people to do the sin, but he is still able to accomplish his purposes through it all. Lying is clearly the way of the world and the way of our old self and we are to leave it behind for good as God's children and trust him to accomplish his purposes as we live in honesty and truthfulness.

We also spent a fair amount of time last week talking about "the day of the Lord," a day when the time allowed for repentance and faith in the one true God is over and all that remains is wrath and judgment for all those who are not aligned with him; an alignment that only occurs for us today through repentance and faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ. In verses 1 through 14 of Joshua, chapter 2, we noticed that all people dwelling in the land of Canaan had heard about the miracles God had done for the Israelites at the Red Sea and about how he had enabled them to defeat the powerful kings of the Amorites and had concluded that the God of the Israelites is the one true God. As such, they would have had opportunity to surrender and align themselves with him like Rahab did. Yet sadly, they chose instead to fight against God rather than aligning themselves with him, thereby subjecting themselves to the coming wrath and judgment which we'll see unfold as we continue studying the book of Joshua. The important truth to remember as we move forward is that God gives evidence of who he is and opportunities for repentance and saving faith prior to the judgment and wrath that comes on the "day of the Lord."

And finally last week, we focused heavily on the saving faith of Rahab and how that faith was shown to be real by the bold and risky actions she took in response to it. Rahab had heard about God and the miracles he had done for the Israelites and she responded to what she'd heard with belief in God that was shown to be true by the actions she took. This was in sharp contrast to the non-saving intellectual belief of the rest of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who believed that the God of the Israelites was the one true God, but decided they didn't want him for themselves and would rather take their chances fighting against him.

So last week we ended with Rahab at the end of her conversation with the 2 spies, just after she had asked them for deliverance from death because of her faith in God and the way it had motivated her to protect and help them. She also asked them for a pledge of truth, some kind of promise that would

reassure her that they would honor their commitment to her. In verse 14, we hear the men's response to Rahab's request:

14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Their pledge of truth to Rahab was pretty significant: "***Our life for yours.***" If Rahab would agree not to tell the king and the people of Jericho about their visit and their plans, the men promised to deal kindly and faithfully with her and would back up that promise with their very lives.

II. RAHAB'S CONTINUED ACTIONS OF FAITH (vs. 15-16)

Well, the men's promise and their pledge of truth was evidently sufficient for Rahab as we continue to see her faith in action through what she does and says next. In verses 15 and 16, we read:

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. The afterward you may go on your way."

We're told here that Rahab actually lived on the city wall, making it possible for her to let the men down with a rope through her window, thereby putting them outside the city wall and ready to go on their way. Next week I'm hoping to share some interesting archeological finds that support this fact that Rahab actually lived on the city wall. So stay tuned! But as Rahab was preparing to send the men down the wall we see her giving them instructions to go in the opposite direction of the king's men and then to hide out in the hills for 3 days, by which time the king's men would have returned to Jericho. Clearly Rahab was "ALL IN" with God and his people. She'd made up her mind and the great risks she was taking to align herself with God and his purposes were a beautiful expression of her saving faith and the works that always flow out of true saving faith.

III. THE CONDITIONS AND MEANS OF RAHAB'S DELIVERANCE (vs. 17-20)

So do you have in your mind now this picture of Rahab holding the rope at the window and having a final hushed conversation with the 2 men as she prepares to send them down the city wall? She probably keeps glancing over her shoulder to make sure no one's listening and that no unwelcome guests have arrived. The lights are dimmed and there's some dramatic music playing in the background reflecting the intensity of the moment. Sounds like a good movie, doesn't it? I'm feeling a little tense just thinking about it and imagining the terrible consequences Rahab would face if she was discovered assisting the spies. You just know someone's going to come around the corner just as the men are climbing out the window holding onto the rope! But this is much more than just a good story or a great movie plot. This is something that really happened in history to real people and life and death consequences were on the line for each individual involved.

Well, as the men were preparing to climb out the window, they also had some final instructions for Rahab containing special significance and stringent requirements for obedience. Understanding and following the men's instructions exactly would mean life and salvation for Rahab and her family, while disregarding any part of them would mean certain death and destruction for all of them. Let's listen to the men's final instructions to Rahab as they prepared to discreetly leave the city through her window on the city wall, beginning in verse 17:

17 The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. 19 "It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.20 "But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear."

How are you at following instructions? Do you prefer to just “wing it” and rely on your common sense to figure it out your own way? Or do you like to just get a quick overview and then follow your instincts from there? Or perhaps you’re one who likes to carefully read all the instructions and drive other people crazy as you carefully think through each specific step, ponder every diagram deeply, and then slowly and methodically put it all together just as instructed? Well, there’s a downside to each of these approaches, isn’t there? And if we raised our hands to see which of us here today prefer which approach to following instructions, there would probably be a good number of people in each group, and I’m sure each person would have a strongly-held reason why their approach is best along with a few examples of how it went badly for someone who used one of the other approaches.

But as we consider these instructions Rahab is asked to follow, I’m guessing we could all come to an agreement as to which approach is the best in this situation. Fortunately, these instructions are quite simple. They don’t require any diagrams or extensive reading and study to decipher, so the wasted time argument would lose its power. Also, the consequences for not following these instructions exactly are life and death and involve blood, so that would hopefully affect how we would approach following them. I think we could all agree that this would not be a good time to say, “I’ll do it MY way!” It wouldn’t be a good time to say, “I don’t like the color red, I think I’ll hang a green cord in my window. I’m sure they’ll understand. After all, green signifies life, so that makes a whole lot more sense than red.”

Well, as the 2 spies had last words with Rahab at the window, they told her that their promise to deal kindly and faithfully with her would be null and void unless she followed every aspect of the following instructions:

- 1) Take the cord of scarlet thread they were giving her;
- 2) Tie the cord of scarlet thread in a certain window...the one from which she was letting them down the city wall...in other words, not just any window would do;
- 3) Make sure the cord of scarlet thread was tied in the window by the time the Israelites would come into the land;
- 4) Gather herself and all her family into her house;

- 5) Stay in the house...anyone who would go out of the door of her house into the street would not be protected...their blood would be on their own head;
- 6) Do not tell the business of the spies.

This was a case where every element of these instructions was clear and significant and not open to interpretation or adjustment. Following these instructions exactly was the one means of salvation for Rahab and her family...the only way they could be saved from the coming destruction and judgment of Jericho.

IV. AN ECHO OF PASSOVER AND A POINTING TO THE FUTURE

You may have noticed some significance to a few of the elements required for Rahab and her family's deliverance from destruction and judgment. In this means of salvation provided to Rahab, we hear some echoes from the past and we see a pointing to something crucial that would happen in the future. And as we consider the fact that ultimately the Bible has one Author, telling one Story, the focus of which is Jesus Christ and the salvation available through him, we shouldn't be surprised to see how God coordinates the details of human existence and history to give us significant peaks and hints into the salvation he's bringing.

Around 900 years earlier in history, God had provided ONE means of salvation from the worldwide flood he was bringing on the earth because of mankind's rebellion against him and extreme wickedness. Through Noah and his preaching God offered only ONE way to escape the coming judgment of the Flood and that was to enter through the ONE door on the ark, and to do it before the rain even began falling. In other words, faith in the one true God and his warning about the coming waters of judgment would have been necessary, and that faith would have required entering the ark through its ONE door when there was yet no sign of a coming rainstorm. Similarly, Rahab and her family had only ONE means of salvation from the judgment of Jericho and that was through getting themselves through the door of her house and staying there while the judgment was being poured out. Rahab's house, marked by a scarlet thread, was the "ark" of their salvation.

Another echo from the past was something that had taken place around forty years earlier in history, when God had provided only ONE means of salvation for the firstborn sons of Israel as he prepared to perform the 10th and final sign in Egypt that would finally motivate Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves. At that time God instituted what he called the Passover. Only by expressing their faith in God by killing an unblemished lamb, putting its blood on the lintel and two doorposts of their house, and gathering everyone into those marked houses for the entire night, would the Israelites escape the killing of every firstborn son in the land of Egypt. There was only ONE way to avoid the coming death and judgment and that was to follow these specific Passover instructions given to them by God himself. Listen to Moses' instructions to the Israelites at this first Passover, recorded for us in Exodus 12:

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. 22 "You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. 23 "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you. 24 "And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. 25 "When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. 26 "And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' 27 you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'"

As you think about the various elements of this Passover, do you hear an echo of it at all in the instructions the spies gave to Rahab? We see first that just as there was ONE way to be saved at that first Passover, there was only ONE way for Rahab and her family to be saved from the destruction of Jericho. Secondly, we see that Rahab and her family's salvation, just as at Passover, required being gathered into a house and staying in that house while the judgment was being poured out. And thirdly, we see that there was a sign required to signify that

Rahab's house was under the protection of God, and call me crazy, but it seems significant that the sign here was a RED cord.

I see this red cord, marking the only place to be saved from the judgment of Jericho, as one more signpost pointing to the necessity of shed blood for salvation...something God had been making clear since the Garden of Eden when he had to kill animals in order to provide clothing to Adam and Eve after their sin. I see the red cord as one more signpost pointing into the future to the Son of God, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who would come to shed his blood once for all...to be our Passover Lamb...the only sacrifice that would need to be offered only once...the only sacrifice that is able to accomplish permanent salvation for all who call upon the name of the Lord...the only sacrifice that provided the true basis for Rahab's forgiveness and deliverance and for the forgiveness and deliverance of all people throughout history who have called on the name of the one true God and placed their faith in him.

Well, the spies made it clear that if Rahab and her family followed every aspect of these instructions and stayed in the house marked with the red cord, their lives would be spared, but if any of them went out of that house for any reason, their blood would be on their own head and they would not be under God's protection. If there was ever a time to follow instructions to a "T," it was now!

V. RAHAB'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONDITIONS AND OBEDIENCE TO THE TERMS (v. 21)

Well, it seems in verse 21 that Rahab fully understood and accepted the terms of this agreement the men were making with her.

21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

So be it. That sounds pretty final! No "ifs, ands or buts" about it! And notice that Rahab didn't take any chances. It sounds like she tied the scarlet cord up in the window as soon as the men left. She had made her decision and didn't waste any time making that clear to them!

VI. CONFIDENCE BUILT BY THE LORD (vs. 22-24)

And this brings us to our final 3 verses for today, verses 22 through 24 of Joshua, chapter 2:

22 They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road, but had not found them. 23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

The men had followed Rahab's instructions to head to the hills and had found that she had been honorable and trustworthy and wasn't trying to set them up for discovery by the king's men. And after 3 days they came down from the hills, crossed back over the Jordan River and returned to Joshua with some very encouraging news. The Lord was graciously providing Joshua and the Israelites with lots of evidence that the time was right for entering the promised land and that he was preparing the way before them. And this gracious work of God to build the faith of the Israelites prior to warfare was going to reach a whole new level in what happens next in chapter three.

VII. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

So as we think about what we've studied today and how it applies to our lives, one theme that rises to the surface is the importance of doing things God's way. We live in a country where independence and freedom and self-reliance and the pursuit of happiness in any manner I choose are exalted as core principles of life. Being able to "do it MY way" is considered one of the most essential benefits of living in America. And whether we're consciously aware of it or not, these ideas and values have been drilled into our brains and belief system in thousands of ways throughout our lives.

This American approach to life is expressed well in a song popularized by Frank Sinatra. The lyrics go like this:

And now, the end is near;
And so I face the final curtain.
My friend, I'll say it clear,
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain.

I've lived a life that's full.
I've traveled each and every highway;
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.

Regrets, I've had a few;
But then again, too few to mention.
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption.

I planned each charted course;
Each careful step along the byway,
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.

Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew.
But through it all, when there was doubt,
I ate it up and spit it out.
I faced it all and I stood tall;
And did it my way.

I've loved, I've laughed and cried.
I've had my fill; my share of losing.
And now, as tears subside,
I find it all so amusing.

To think I did all that;
And may I say - not in a shy way,

"Oh no, oh no not me,
I did it my way".

***For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has naught.
To say the things he truly feels;
And not the words of one who kneels.***

The record shows I took the blows -
***And did it my way!
Yes, it was my way.***

Did you hear any self-reliance those lyrics?...all the "I's" ...*I ate it up and spit it out...I faced it all...and I stood tall...to think I did all that...and I did it **my** way. And what does man have in life except **himself**? To say the things he truly feels, and not the words of one who kneels. Interesting choice of words, isn't it? We hear in these lyrics clearly expressed an exalting of pride and self-reliance and a bold proclamation that I'll do whatever the heck I want and I'll do it my way. This song is a great picture of what life without God looks like.*

Life with God, in stark contrast, functions through faith in God rather than myself...a humble dependence on him and a willingness to follow his way and not my own. We're told in James 4, verses 6 and 7, that "'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God." I'd say being one who kneels is a good thing in God's kingdom! You see, God never designed us to be independent, all-knowing creatures who have the capacity to navigate life on our own. Instead, he created us to live in a dependent relationship with him where he gives us the wisdom and strength we need as we draw near to him; as we know and meditate on the guidance he's given us in his Word; and as we put it into practice in our daily lives. He invites us to live in his love and experience the true freedom only he can bring...a freedom that doesn't come from doing it our way, but from learning to live in step with the way God designed the world to operate. That's where true freedom, salvation, joy, hope and fruitfulness is found!

As you consider your life today, would you say it's characterized by doing it your way or God's way? Are you earnestly seeking God and his purposes in all you do,

or are you mostly pursuing your own dreams and personal goals. If your life truly is characterized by doing it God's way, one thing is certain to be true in your life: you love God's Word and you're earnestly seeking to know it, meditate on it, and follow it. The fact is, you can't do it God's way, if you don't truly know and understand what his way is. And the only sure path to knowing God's way is through prayer and study of his precious Word.

And, of course, let's not miss the most important truth that permeates this historical account of Rahab's salvation and deliverance from judgment, and that is the truth that God provides only ONE way to be saved and rescued from the penalty of our sin and rebellion against him. He has demonstrated this truth over and over again throughout history, using Noah's ark, the Passover, the salvation of Rahab, and many other historical events and practices. These were all shadows of the reality to come which found their basis and fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. Only the shed blood of the perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ, is able to bring about eternal salvation, forgiveness and new life that frees us forever from the coming wrath and judgment of God.

Listen to these words of Jesus echoing this truth of ONE way to salvation and the ONE place it's found:

Matthew 7:13-14

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

John 10:9-10

9 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 3:36

36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The ark, the Passover house, the scarlet-thread marked house of Rahab, all point to Jesus Christ and find their basis and fulfillment in him. Be sure that you've entered God's house of deliverance from the penalty of your sin through the one Gate, the one Door, the one Way, the one Truth, the one Life: Jesus Christ! You do this through repenting or (or turning from) your sin, believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead, and inviting him to be your personal Savior and Lord. Those are God's simple instructions every person needs to follow if they want to enter into eternal, abundant life with their Creator and move out from under his wrath to being the recipient of his amazing love and grace!

Rahab understood clearly God's one way for her and her family to escape the coming judgment of Jericho, and she made sure she was following it exactly. She made no effort to do it her way. And as she trusted in the one true God and followed his instructions, she experienced miraculous salvation and deliverance and walked into a hope-filled future as one of his forgiven children. Her future would include life among God's chosen people; prostitution left behind forever; marriage to an Israelite man named Salmon; a beautiful son named Boaz whom she would raise to be a kind and generous man who would show great mercy and kindness to a hurting woman named Ruth, marrying her and having a son with her named Jesse, who would be the father of King David, whose kingly line would be established forever through the coming of Jesus Christ our Savior. That's just a little glimpse of the glory and grace that comes through accepting God's one way of salvation and learning to live life his way by his power!