

JOSHUA SENT TWO MEN TO SPY OUT THE LAND

Joshua 2:1-24

Key Verse 2:11

"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."

In the last passage we learned how God established General Joshua as Moses' successor. General Joshua accepted what God had said to him. Suddenly he felt great courage and the power of God in his soul. God also told General Joshua to conquer the Promised Land. As we know well, General Joshua was Moses' aide. Moses was a great man of God who by faith liberated his people from the hand of Pharaoh and led his people across the Red Sea by faith. The people of Israel had obeyed him absolutely, but it was a matter of question whether they would obey Joshua as they had obeyed Moses. But when General Joshua kept God's words in his heart, he became a man of courage, and God's Spirit was in him. To General Joshua, Moses' shoes were too big to wear, but he had faith in God and the word of God was in his soul, so he could be the successor of Moses. What was the response of his people Israel? They realized that General Joshua had received God's power and Spirit in his soul. So they accepted him as Moses' successor. The people of Israel encouraged General Joshua, saying, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses, so we will obey you...Only be strong and courageous." It's remarkable that the people of Israel accepted Joshua as Moses' successor. But when we read the Bible carefully, we see that they accepted him, not because of his humanness but they accepted him as their leader when they realized that he was clothed with God's power and

Spirit. All the people of the world want to be a kind of leader. Even a woman wanted to be president of the United States and her husband, vice-president. The problem of changing a leader or succeeding a leader has been an issue of political struggle. But the people of Israel accepted General Joshua as Moses' successor with joy and encouragement. Here we see the evidence that the people of Israel were God's chosen people. Today's story is about General Joshua sending out two men to spy out the Promised Land, especially Jericho. We learn in this lesson the courageous two spies activity to fulfill their mission. We also learn Rahab the prostitute's creation faith.

First, two spies fulfill their mission (1-7). General Joshua said to the two men, "Go, look over the land, especially Jericho." To go into a foreign land to spy out the land is not an easy task. It requires great courage and a venturesome spirit. It is the mission which demands their lives. Nobody can promise that the spies would not be arrested. It is not easy to get out of the enemy country. We remember POWs in Cambodia after the Vietnam War. There was one father who was very rich because he was the president of a world company. His son was a POW. There was another man who came back from the battlefield of Vietnam, but his son did not come back. The rich world company president asked the man whose son was also a POW in Cambodia to try to rescue his son. Both men agreed that the president of the world company would back up the task with money and the father whose son was also a POW would go to Vietnam and next to Cambodia and save their sons. The man gathered several Vietnam War veterans. They experienced many deathly dangers and there were many opportunities they could have been killed. The man who was the Vietnam war veteran finally found the world company president's son. But he could not find his own

son. In this way, they came back to the Baltimore airport. The world company president was happy to see his son who had been a POW. On the other hand, the Vietnam veteran whose POW son was not found was making a bitter smile, drinking a lot of tears. The POWs had been initially treated like spies. The enemy nation which had the POWs demanded such a high ransom that the US government would not buy them back. Actually buying back the POWs by the government was possible, but no sons of Congressmen and Senators joined the war. As a result, the ransom price was not approved by the Congress. My point is, the mission to spy out the enemy land is not easy. Even if they die there for the mission, there is no way to rescue them. Only the left over family members cry with broken hearts for the Vietnam veteran who found the son of the world company president but could not find his own son.

The two Israelite spies went into the promised land and somehow got into the fortress of Jericho. God gave them wisdom and the two of them entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab. It was better for the two men to enter the Jericho soldiers' sleeping room. They wisely entered a prostitute's house. Still there was only a fifty-fifty chance of surviving. They needed strong and courageous faith. In doing any kind of mission, danger and suffering and life-giving effort always follow.

The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." (2) 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." Probably the king heard that the people of Israel had crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. They also completely destroyed Sihon and Og, the two kings of

the Amorites east of the Jordan. This is the reason the king of Jericho was alert and nervous. So the king was eager to arrest the two spies of Israel. The king also knew that the place where they could sleep was the prostitute Rahab's house. Immediately 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.'

In this situation, what could Rahab the prostitute do? If she reported to the king she would have a big reward from the king. If she hid the spies there was a great danger that she would lose her life. It was time for her to make a decision. But when we read this passage, there is no hint that she made a decision. On the other hand, the woman hurriedly had taken the two men and hidden them. The KGB officer asked her, "Where are they?" She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 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." Her wisdom is indeed great. She told them the fact that she had seen the spies, and they stayed there for a while, but at sunset, before the gate was closed they went out. She also encouraged the Jericho soldiers, "Go after them quickly and you will catch them." The fact that she admitted that the two men came to her home was remarkable wisdom. If she had not admitted that the spies came to her house she would have been suspected and tried. But she admitted that they came to her house and left. She also said, "If you go after them full speed, you might catch them." This is the woman's wisdom. Rahab the prostitute's suggestion was to "go after them." This encouraged the soldiers with the hope of catching the spies and at the same time it was the way she could quickly send them away.

In fact, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof. We guess that the two Israelites spies' hearts almost melted when Rahab and the soldiers were talking about them, as they were hiding on the roof of Rahab's house. They almost slipped down to the ground because of their fear. They overcame their fear, hiding inside the roof. Like them, we need courageous faith moment by moment to overcome the situation. Suppose you were hidden inside Rahab's roof. You might have surrendered, saying, "I am here. Only save my life." But the Israelite spies overcame themselves by faith and waited for the time God's rescue reached them. Their spying out mission was a small matter, but they had to risk their lives, leaving behind their family members. These holy spies had to enter Rahab the prostitute's house and hide in rotten stalks of straw. They experienced breathing difficulties until they felt like they were dying by choking, but they were very courageous and brave soldiers of God in carrying out their mission to spy out the Promised Land as spies. Here we learn that we must overcome fear to do God's mission. When we don't overcome fear we cannot be normal men.

Second, Rahab the prostitute's faith (8-11). The spies were tired and they wanted to lay down for the night. Then Rahab 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." In these verses we learn that she was a woman of God who knew what God was doing at that time. She had a fear of God. She believed that God is the Mighty Sovereign God who rules the history of mankind. She also knew that Jericho was in the

hand of God. But her faith was not based on her feeling. Look at verses 9-11, "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."

The faith of Rahab the prostitute was based on the history of God. When we carefully observe what she said, we see that she had creation faith. She had the fear of God in her heart. Because of her faith in the providence of Almighty God, she became helpless and protected the spies and let them go in peace. In this country, Stanford University, MIT and Harvard University, and in England, Oxford University made risky budgets to in order to invent ways to use computers in the production of all kinds of industry. It may be good to do so, but the most urgent problem is not the effective use of computers, but to raise many women of faith like Rahab. Rahab was a woman. Because of her human situation she became a prostitute in a military fortress. Humanly speaking, she was a most pitiful woman. For a woman to become a prostitute is inconceivable. Suppose your daughter was going to become a prostitute. You would be hospitalized in a mental clinic. Humanly speaking, Rahab was in the grip of the goddess destiny. Because she was living in this world she had to support herself and her family members.

It is surprising that she had creation faith in God. She also had

faith in the sovereignty of God who rules the world. Of course she thought about her own country, especially the place where she lived, the fortress of Jericho. But she knew what God was doing at the moment. It was very difficult for her to deny her own country and support God's history. But her faith was very certain that God rules the world. This is the reason she protected the two spies and betrayed her people. She was humanly a prostitute, very smelly and nauseous, and she stunk to those standing around her. But she had the image of God in her soul. Many women deny the image of God and do whatever they want to do, cheating their consciences, and as a result, suffer much denying the image of God in them, and they experience the torment of the devil in their souls. It's good that they are in the torment of the devil. These days we find that many souls are dead and are completely under the control of Satan. When they think there is no God, they have the attitude of godless women. They want to come to the church to hear the gospel message. They make many decisions to do this, but they fail because they are spiritually dead. But Rahab was alive because she had the image of God in her soul.

Let's think about what woman is like. Many philosophers define women as the mothers of the universe. Indeed, their definition is right. There was a doubles ping pong match between two Chinese women and two Korean women at the Olympics of '88. The Korean team defeated the Chinese team, two to one. As soon as the game was over, many journalists and TV people came and interviewed the two Korean champions who had won the gold medal. One said, "I thank God for my mom." The other one said, "Without my mom's support, I would have given up many times. I thank God for my mom." If we watch many boxing matches, we see that the winners, when interviewed, almost all say, "Mom, I got it. It is for you." All

young men of the world have their moms in their minds and hearts always.

We remember President Roosevelt. He could have remained as a permanent cripple because of his polio, but his wife did not leave him alone. His wife planted hope and courage in the heart of Roosevelt. Finally, Roosevelt got up from his despair and decided to become a useful man. Finally, he became the president of the United States. He overcame the Depression and under his leadership America won WWII. We remember President Roosevelt. But we do not know who was his wife. She was a suitable helper to President Roosevelt to the end. If there had been no Mrs. Roosevelt, there would be no President Roosevelt. If there were no women, the world would be like a desert.

We also remember Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. Augustine was an intellectual hedonist. He was a rich African who wandered around the world. In his wandering he mastered Aristotle and Plato and embraced neoplatonism. He also joined a sect called Manichaeism. But his mother prayed for this wandering son for 17 years. By chance he stepped in the church in which St. Ambrose preached. There he met Jesus the Christ. On his way back he met one of his prostitute friends. Then he suddenly turned around and ran away. His transformation was complete and his faith in Jesus Christ was absolute. When the Church was crumbling because of corruption, he wrote the "City of God" to defend the Christian church. In his work he mainly emphasized personal faith in Jesus. We have thought about several great women. Here we learn that Rahab the prostitute was the mother of two spies of Israel, thus the work of God was possible.

Third, the spies' report (12-24). On the condition of saving them, Rahab the prostitute asked the spies of Israel to promise to save her

and her family members. The spies told her to tie a scarlet cord in her window. The spies assured her, "If anyone goes outside your house his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him. But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear." Look at verse 21. "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills and went to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 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."

In this passage we learn that man should be men of holy mission like the spies of Israel and by faith, woman must be a suitable helper.