

RAHAB . . . whose life hung by a thread
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(Joshua 2: 18-19)

The Bible has given to us several facts concerning the story of Rahab the harlot, and it is a little unfortunate that some of these are unknown to the casual reader. The fact that this remarkable woman was a great sinner has overshadowed all else, and in speaking of her scarlet thread, we have forgotten that this incident was only the beginning of a chain of events which, to say the least, is one of the most romantic stories of the Scriptures. Rahab the harlot, the great sinner, became one of the most dignified ladies in Israel.

The New Hope

The fear of the children of Israel had fallen upon Jericho, and the "city was straitly shut up." Faces were strained, and almost hourly the king and his counsellors met to discuss the threatened invasion. A state of emergency had been declared, and the future of Jericho seemed ominous. In common with all other places, the harlot's house on the wall was a place of dread. When she saw the two strangers furtively stealing through the gloom, she guessed that they were spies from Israel, and immediately became exceedingly resourceful. At the risk of her life she safeguarded the men, and received from them the promise of salvation. The scarlet thread hanging from the window would be a guarantee of protection. She believed the message, and would not have sold that thread for all the money in Jericho.

The New Heart

"And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho" (Josh. 6 : 25). Somewhere among the people of the Lord her family erected a new home, and a remarkable change came over the immoral woman. She listened to new conversations, and watched with shining eyes the ceremonial sacrifices, and slowly but surely she desired to leave her evil ways. It would not be difficult for Rahab to do this, for her change of heart helped her to renounce her former habits.

The New Home

Noble resolves changed her manner of living, and a new radiance shone upon her countenance. Probably she had always been an attractive woman, but now a singular beauty became apparent to everyone. It was not a cause for amazement when Salmon sought her in marriage. Perhaps this young man had been one of the original spies, and had never forgotten the kindness of this charming young woman. The new Rahab accepted her suitor, and somewhere in Israel another home came into being. The past failings were forgotten; happiness flooded the two young hearts; and when God blessed their home by sending a baby boy, their cup of joy was filled to the brim. The proud parents adored their son, and called him Boaz (Matt. 1: 5). Sometimes in the cool of the evening the young mother would nurse her child, and as his starry eyes looked into her face, she sang her lullabies and quietly thanked God.

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The New Happiness

The years passed by, and Rahab became a distinguished old lady of Israel. She enjoyed the respect of all people, and her son Booz was destined to become famous. "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz" (Ruth 2:1). If the great old lady saw the return of Naomi from Moab, she witnessed the unfolding of the greatest drama of her life. Her boy fell in love with the Moabite maiden Ruth, and ultimately married her. Ruth's new mother-in-law was Rahab, whose memory brought back many thoughts of bygone experiences. When Rahab looked into the eyes of her daughter-in-law, she remembered that she also had been a Gentile who had been rescued and brought into the fellowship of God's people. And if she lived to see the birth of her grandchild Obed, she was one of the happiest women in Israel. "And they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:17).

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