INTRODUCTION

Last week Pastor Jared gave a challenge from Hebrews 12 for us to get rid of hindrances and fix our eyes on Jesus no matter what. Hebrews Chapter 12 gives us this encouragement based on the examples of ten individual lives of faith listed in what we sometimes call the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11. Today I wanted to take one of these ‘Top 10 Examples of Faith’ and do a case study on what their faith looked like. The person we’re going to study today is the 10th example listed in Hebrews and is also mentioned in the book of James.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, also used old-testament saints as examples of faith. Instead of 10 people of faith, he chose one man and one woman from the Old Testament that exemplified the right combination of faith and good works. The man he chose is no surprise—Abraham! The Father of Faith. But the woman he chose as the supreme example of faith-in-action might be a surprise to you. It was not Sarah or Ruth or Esther, although they were definitely women of great faith. If Abraham was the father of our faith, according to James, the mother of our faith was Rahab the prostitute.

Today we’re going to look at her story in Joshua Chapter 2 and also discover what the New Testament has to say about her to see what we can learn from her life of faith-in-action.

As we all are quarantined and the normal rhythm of our Christian worship has been disrupted, this is a great time to make sure that we really have a faith that is alive—not just a religious routine or a self-help crutch dressed up as Jesus. I believe that the example of Rahab can really show us our own hearts and get us to the core of the Gospel.

Before we go back and read Rahab’s story from the book of Joshua, let’s look at what is written in Hebrews 11 and James 2 about Rahab.

**Hebrews 11:31 NLT**

*It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.*
James 2:25-26 NLT

Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

When we think of good works we usually think of being a morally good person or of helping others. But, Hebrews and James don’t say she was an example of faith because she looked at herself and decided to leave behind her sinful life and be a better person. The fact that she left her prostitution behind is barely a blip in the biblical narrative, although it is assumed.

Also, as soon as James mentions ‘works’ along with faith, it’s easy to think “OK, here comes the list of rules! I knew I needed more than faith to get God to like me!” But we need to take the whole counsel of scripture into view here. New Testament writers consistently contend that it is faith alone that saves us… but not faith that remains alone. It’s not that ‘good works’ save us, but the fact that a living faith cannot help but work its way out into how we live. The different and improved way of life that comes from faith doesn’t have any saving power in and of itself, but it is the “fruit” that Jesus talks about that proves that there is a saving faith that is active in our lives.

Today I want to look at 3 things that Rahab did that proved that she had a Living Faith.

A CHANGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Joshua 2:1-7 NLT

1Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, “Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.” So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night. 2But someone told the king of Jericho, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.”

3So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: “Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land.” 4Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, “Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn’t know where they were from. 5They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don’t know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.” 6(Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) 7So the king’s men
went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

What was her first work? Well, clearly the first work that proved her faith was alive was that she lied to the King of Jericho. Wait, that doesn't sound right… How does she end up in the hall of faith? What’s actually happening here?

What we really see happening here is that **Rahab changed her allegiance**.

She used to be a citizen of Jericho, serving the men of Jericho with her business and worshiping the gods of Jericho, but when Israel and their God showed up, she decided to change her allegiance. A change of allegiance is not something that just stays in your heart-- it is something that shows up in your actions.

But, why did she change her allegiance? Let’s pick up the narrative.

Joshua 2:8-11 NLT

8Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. 9“**I know the Lord has given you this land,**” she told them. “**We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror.** 10**For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed.** 11**No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.**

This is fascinating. She recounts the story of the salvation of Israel from 40 years before--- their walk through the Red Sea on dry ground-- which was apparently still fresh in the minds of the people of Canaan. She also recounts their victories over other powerful kings. She even declares that the “Lord Your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.” But she also asserts that these things weren’t secrets… she says that the entire society of Jericho is aware of these things and are afraid.

This shows the key difference between religious belief and a living faith. The entire community of Jericho had a religious belief that the God of Israel was real and powerful. But only Rahab believed this enough to change her allegiance. Just because you believe the bible contains truth about God doesn’t mean you have a living faith. Even believing that Jesus died and rose again for your sins isn’t enough.
The second half of Romans 10:9 affirms that we must believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, but the first half tells us that we must confess with our mouth [an action] that Jesus is what? LORD! That is a change of allegiance.

Unfortunately it’s all too easy to give mental assent to the truths of Christianity and leave the allegiance of our heart unchanged. Naturally, our allegiance is to ourselves. We are the sovereign of our own life. There are multiple ways that this self-sovereignty plays out in our lives and our culture.

In the most prevalent narrative, we subconsciously tell ourselves, “As sovereign of my own life I will live for my own pleasure and fulfillment no matter what everyone else wants me to do. This is the path to self-protection and personal fulfillment.” This is the central thrust of much of today’s cultural messages to find yourself, define yourself, and not let anyone else tell you not to enjoy yourself. This is an obvious path of self-allegiance.

But there is a sneakier variety of this same idea. Sometimes we tell ourselves (subconsciously, of course), “As sovereign of my own life I will do what everyone else wants and help others in every way I can because that is the path to self-protection and personal fulfillment.” In this seemingly unselfish version we do everything we can to please others and ‘do good’ for others but its all for the same motives--we think if we do this we will be affirmed, liked, and protected. The allegiance of our heart has not shifted one bit from ourselves.

And then there’s the sneakiest variety of self-allegiance. We think, “As sovereign of my own life I will do what God wants and obey God’s rules as much as possible… because that is the path to self-protection and personal fulfillment.” We can be on “TEAM GOD” and still be living for ourselves.

I’m well versed in this last form of self-allegiance as I think almost anyone who grows up in church can be. When you grow up in a Christian culture, we learn from a very young age that if we want to be affirmed, valued, and supported, then we need to do the Christian thing-- pray, read the bible, and witness. We get involved in ministry in the church and do good outside the church. And these are great things! We should do these things! But when we do it because if feels good to do it, the allegiance of our heart remains unchanged.

When I was sixteen years old I had the epiphany that I enjoyed ministry (especially music ministry), I was good at it, it helped people, it served God, and I could make a living doing these things. I volunteered for full-time ministry! I did feel God confirm that
that is what he wanted me to do, but I honestly did it for mostly selfish-reasons. I was convinced that becoming a music and media pastor would be more personally fulfilling than secular employment so I went with that. The allegiance of my heart was unchanged. It wasn’t until my life blew up in my early twenties that I realized that I was still living for myself.

And if you’ve ever gotten to the point, like me, where our life is a complete wreck, there is another danger. It’s possible to turn to Jesus to rescue us-- and still not change our allegiance! When our life falls apart because of our own bad choices it makes a certain amount of sense to have a “come to Jesus” meeting and vow to live a better life. But that can easily be because we don’t want the life we have anymore (who would?) and we need Jesus to improve our life. Our allegiance hasn’t changed if we just want Jesus to help us get out of our mess as a path to self-protection and personal fulfillment.

Here’s a clarifying question: Is Jesus worthy of our allegiance even if that means we aren’t in control? Is he worthy of our allegiance even if we are not always protected and don’t feel fulfilled all the time? Shifting our allegiance to Jesus means we have to willingly give up our autonomy--our freedom to define ourselves or live for ourselves.

The people of Jericho all believed that the God of Israel was powerful and they were even afraid of him. But the fear of losing their own autonomy was greater than their fear of God. As such, they condemned themselves to death in order to maintain their own ‘freedom.’ They stayed true to themselves all the way to the gallows. All except for Rahab and her family.

This idea may be really stretching you. And I sympathise. The idea of not being true to oneself but of giving up our freedom by giving our allegiance to anyone, even a God, is completely outside the bounds of the modern western mindset.

I have a colleague who is a missionary to Germany. She and her family had a successful ministry in Berlin and were very settled. Her kids were doing well in school and they had plans on being there for the long-haul. But then she and her husband felt that God was directing them to move from Berlin to Heidelberg. After deciding to be obedient to the Holy Spirit and move to Heidelberg, she sat down with one of her German friends to break the news to her. As she shared her decision, her friend kept asking, “Tell me again why you’re moving?” The only good reason she could come up with was, “We think this is what God wants us to do.” Because of how well everything was going in Berlin, there really was no other reason.
The friend got very upset and put a finger in her face and admonished her, “Don’t let anyone tell you what to do— even God!”

Those of us with a developed Christian worldview may snicker at this secular woman’s response, but the fact remains that for the majority of the western world, self-autonomy is an inalienable right and saying otherwise is considered antiquated at best and hate-speech at worst. This is the world we live in and these ideas affect those around us and they also make their way into our own thoughts easily.

You’ll know you’ve changed your allegiance when you feel like you’re betraying yourself. It’s that violent of a mental shift. But it is exactly what made the biblical authors pay attention to Rahab and hold her up as an example of a living faith that we should follow.

A living faith includes a change of allegiance from “I AM LORD” of my own life to “JESUS IS LORD.” There’s no way around this fact.

 lets see what else it includes by picking up the narrative where we left off:

**TRUSTING A COVENANT**

**Joshua 2:12-13**

12 “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 13 when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.”

Here’s the second of Rahab’s saving works that showed she had a living faith: Not only did she change her allegiance, she trusted a covenant.

When she asks them to swear to her and to give her a guarantee, she’s asking for a covenant-- a binding agreement that will guarantee the safety of her family and herself.

Let’s look at the terms of this covenant:

**Joshua 2:14-21**

14 “We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed. “If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land.”

15 Then, since Rahab’s house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. 16 “Escape to the hill country,” she told them. “Hide
there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have
returned, you can go on your way.”

Before they left, the men told her, “We will be bound by the oath we have
taken only if you follow these instructions.

When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from
the window through which you let us down. And all your family members—your
father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house.

If they go out into the street and are killed, it will not be our fault. But if anyone
lays a hand on people inside this house, we will accept the responsibility for their
death. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way.”

“I accept your terms,” she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the
scarlet rope hanging from the window.

Rahab could not dictate the terms of the covenant, all she could do is ask for a
covenant-promise, ask for guarantee of that covenant, and accept the terms of the

So she gets a covenant-promise: Her life will be spared along with her family members.
She gets a guarantee of that covenant: The spies offer their own lives as collateral.
She accepts the terms of the covenant that (1) she has to maintain her allegiance to
Israel and not betray them and that (2) she has to stay in the house protected by the
sign of the covenant- a scarlet rope.

Do you see the parallels to our lives of faith? If we want to have a living faith, then we
need to trust God’s covenant-promise of eternal life. Jesus told us that if we believe in
him we will never die. Obviously our bodies will die, but our souls will never perish if we
trust this covenant. And one day at the end of time our bodies will be resurrected like
him and we will live forever, with him in a perfect creation with perfect minds and

That’s a big covenant-promise. How can we trust that Jesus will keep up his end of the
Covenant? Jesus offers his own life as collateral. His life is the guarantee.

All we have to do is not betray him. We have to keep our allegiance on Jesus just like
Rahab stayed true to her new allies.

But let’s be honest… we’ve all betrayed Jesus. Our allegiances are constantly shifting
back and forth between ourselves, our idols, and God. Some days we are faithful and
some days we are not. And this means that the covenant has been broken. And when
covenants are broken, someone is going to die.
This is where our covenant and the covenant between Rahab and the spies are different. In their covenant, if the spies didn’t rescue Rahab, they would die; if Rahab betrays them, she dies. But in our New Covenant, God says, “If you betray me, I’ll die for you.

If that doesn’t make our hearts explode in gratitude, I don’t know what will. If this doesn’t make us want to change the allegiance of our lives from our own wicked hearts to the perfect, sacrificial, crucified savior I don’t know what will.

Jesus says to each one of us… “When you betray me, I’ll die for you.”

This is why we can give up our autonomy and switch our allegiance to Him-- because He gave us his freedom for us! The Creator-God of the universe made Himself a slave and washed feet. He allowed himself to be killed in our place. He’s not asking us to do anything he hasn’t already done. He’s not asking us to do anything that his own death and resurrection life hasn’t enabled us to do.

Will you accept the terms of this covenant? It doesn’t do you any good if you don’t receive it as a gift.

Accepting this covenant is not just the way we enter into salvation, it’s also the way we grow in our Christian walk. Daily gratitude for this extravagant covenant is what captures our hearts and continues to draw the allegiance of our heart closer and closer to Jesus.

Before Jesus went to the cross, he had a meal with his disciples and he passed a cup of wine and said “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20 NIV) Rahab had a scarlet rope as a sign of the covenant, we have the scarlet cup filled with the blood of Christ.

Before I move on, I want to point out one last aspect of trusting the covenant by faith. It takes work to trust a covenant! Can you imagine Rahab and her family having to stay in the house that was built into the wall (yes, the wall that came tumbling down) in an exposed position facing all the warriors of Israel and the only protection they had was a lousy piece of rope? When the wall came down surely the rest of the city fled into the center citadel of the town for protection but Rahab and her family had to resist the urge to save themselves and stay in their exposed position with just the scarlet rope.
When we face difficult circumstances or see the brokenness of our own hearts and we look to Jesus sometimes it feels like all we’re given is a lousy piece of rope. We have the core of our sinful hearts AND all of a worldly culture AND even all of a religious culture telling us the SAME THING… that we should trust ourselves, live for ourselves, or save ourselves and all we are given as an antidote is an ancient story of the death and resurrection of a wandering Jewish teacher. It takes work to steady our hearts, resist the urge for self-salvation or self-preservation and trust the death and resurrection of Jesus as our only hope.

Having faith in Jesus takes work!

It reminds me of this passage in the Gospel of John.

**John 6:28-29 NLT**

28 They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?”
29 Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.”

Whenever we ask Jesus to give us a ‘to-do’ list, he gives us one ‘to-do:’ Believe. Probably because he knows that that one item is enough.

OK, so what did Rahab’s faith-in-action look like? (1) She change her allegiance, (2) she trusted a covenant, and (3) she joined a community.

**JOINING A COMMUNITY**

**Joshua 2:22-25**

22 Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, “Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute’s house and bring her out, along with all her family.”
23 The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.
24 Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the Lord’s house.
25 So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

What does faith-in-action look like? It looks like joining a community of faith. No, you don’t need to join a church to be saved. You aren’t saved because you are a member
of West County Assembly or any other church, but if you ARE saved by faith… you’ll naturally want to join with others who have changed their allegiances and have trusted this same covenant. You’ll do this for fellowship, for friendship, for worship, and for accountability.

Some of you who are watching today who are outside the community of faith have strong objections to what you call “Organized Religion” and could bring a laundry-list of accusations against the church. While I don’t have time to talk about each one in detail, what I can say generally is that the ORGANIZATION known as the church is made of imperfect humans. Its made up of SINCERE BELIEVERS that still fail from time to time and its made up of people who THINK they are sincere believers but whose hearts still bear allegiance to themselves, or to the idols of power, money, or sex. I cannot apologize for what every person calling themselves a Christian or what every organization calling itself a church has done throughout the centuries, but I can ask you to not judge the true community of faith by the actions of those who pretend to be a part of it.

If you have been hurt by the individual or corporate actions of Christians-- I am so sorry. Please accept this apology on their behalf. I implore you, for the sake of your own soul, to not let past offense keep you away from a living faith.

Another reason you might be outside our faith community is because you’re thinking, “There’s no way you would want ME in your community. You don’t know my past, you don’t know what I’m currently living like, and I’m sure you wouldn’t like my political opinions.”

You’re right--I don’t know your past. And quite frankly, you don’t know mine. The reason I’m a part of this community is not because I have a perfect history--far from it. I’m here only because of God’s mercy and the mercy extended to me by members of this community of faith.

Also--on the political front-- lets just say that there are a wide variety of political opinions represented in our community… which can make social media conversations interesting-- but we’re still committed to each other because we trust the same covenant for our salvation.

I challenge you-- when we’re all able to gather again… “Try us.” We’re not perfect, but hopefully we all realize that we’re only here by God’s grace.
If Rahab the prostitute can make it into the hall of faith and join the community of faith, you can too.

Do you have a living faith? A faith that is strong enough to work its way out into your actions? It's got to be more than believing facts about God. Like Rahab, a faith that is alive is going to produce action. It will look like a change of allegiance, trust in the new covenant, and joining a community of faith.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to look at one more scripture. We've looked at all the places in the New Testament that Rahab is mentioned except for one. In Matthew Chapter 1:5, in his genealogy of Christ, Matthew records this:

Matthew 1:5 NLT
5Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab)...

So what do we learn here? Rahab married a nice Israelite guy by the name of Salmon and their son was Boaz. The same Boaz who married Ruth. Side note--- for you genealogy nerds--- this means that Ruth has two famous mother-in-laws… Namoi (from her first marriage) and Rahab (from her second marriage).

But most importantly, this means that Rahab was the Great-Great grandmother of King David and a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ himself.

I find it poetic that every description of Rahab in scripture refers to her as "Rahab the Prostitute" except for here. When she’s in the line of Christ, she is just Rahab. Her past is overlooked when she is "In Christ."

Your choices may have given you a label that you think will never go away. Or, it could be a label that others have given you through verbal or physical abuse. Labels like “Failure, Worthless, Orphan or Addict.” People may have devalued you based on your race, your gender, your looks, or your choices.

Whatever label has stuck in your mind that condemns you--- Paul tells us in Romans 12 that there is therefore NO condemnation for those that are IN Christ.

Just like Rahab’s label dropped off when she was included in the line of Christ, all of our labels of condemnation drop off when we see ourselves as part of his covenant people. As you trust in Jesus through faith, please don't let any label stick other than this: "I belong to Christ."