Meditations on the Book of Joshua

Joshua 2

Rahab

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and the affairs of this life, in the bottom of the river of death, we have now to fight to take possession of all our privileges in Christ, realising them by faith, and enjoying them in the power of the Spirit.

Notice, too, that whether they will or not, all cross the Jordan. Our brethren fight with us against infidelity, and against the power of Satan, who displays his tactics in the world; but death and resurrection is for them only a fact (it is so for all), not a realisation. The soul must realise it in order to take possession of the land.

Joshua 2

RAHAB

In the second part of Joshua 1 we have seen two classes of persons called to cross the Jordan to enter the land of promise, type of heavenly places: the people, and the two and a half tribes, whose moral character is not on a par with their vocation, but who take part in the combat to ensure to Israel the possession of their inheritance. In Rahab we find a third class of persons: the Gentiles who share by faith the enjoyment of the promises in common with God's ancient people Rahab the harlot was a Gentile; she belonged by birth to that large company of which the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks; "Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But more than this, Rahab was a degraded person amongst the Gentiles themselves.

But the word of God comes to her: "We have heard," she said to the spies. It was a word which assured grace and deliverance to some, and judgment to others. Faith in this word places her immediately, as to her conscience, under the weight of the judgment. "As soon as we heard it our hearts did melt." (v. 11) Like her people she is filled with fear; but whilst they had lost all courage, for her this very fear is the beginning of wisdom, for it is the fear of the Lord, a fear which makes her look to God, and immediately she acquires the certainty ("I know," v. 9) that this God is a God of grace for His people. She seeks her resources in this God who is the resource of His own. Faith is not mere human imagination which likes to deceive itself, and which sees things in whatever light it pleases. It is not the human mind building its conclusions on possibilities or probabilities; she says simply, "I know," because she had heard what the Lord has done.

Rahab looks to God. She is threatened with judgment, but she sees that God takes interest in His people. She says to herself: If God is to be gracious to me, I must be with His people. So when the spies appear, Rahab by faith receives them "with peace" (Heb. 11: 31); and whilst the world seeks them everywhere, so as to rid itself of the testimony of God, she hides them safely, and values them as being the means which God would use to preserve her from future judgment. Her deliverance depends on their preservation. Not only does she believe in Israel's God, but, as some one has said, "she identifies herself with the Israel of God," and her faith receives an immediate answer. She does not need to acquire the certainty by seeing Jericho surrounded by the army of Jehovah. That would not be faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Notice how perfect and worthy of God is the answer. She had said: "Swear unto me . . . that ye will deliver our lives from death"; and the messengers reply: "Our life for yours." Her faith finds in others (we, in Christ) the guarantee by substitution that death would not reach her.

That is not all. A scarlet thread, unpretending type of the death of One who could have said: "I am a worm and no man," suffices her as token and safeguard. Just as the blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels of the doorposts averted the judgment of the destroying angel, so the scarlet thread suspended from the window of a house which was "upon the town wall," was to preserve the house and all in it when the wall itself should fall down at the noise of the trumpets of Jehovah.

One more point: they are living witnesses who are the guarantees that death is Rahab's safeguard. In the same way for us, Christ is the living witness before God of the perfect efficacy, in redemption, of His blood shed for us on the cross. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9: 12)

Dear reader, how beautiful is Rahab's faith! She does not wait, as recommended by the spies, until the people "be come into the land" (v. 18) to bind the scarlet line in the window; they are scarcely gone when she hastens to put it there, testifying thus to what she has believed; her faith does not linger, it speaks henceforth loudly; she proclaims from her window Christ and the efficacy of His work to save the most miserable of sinners.

Finally, Rahab is not only an example of faith, but also of works. "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (James 2: 25) Works must follow faith. There is such a thing as