

God Carves Rotten Wood

Hebrews 11:30-31

One of the most difficult things about being involved in church work is the tendency by leaders to create an artificial climate of superficial perfection. All of us have hurts, hang-ups and habits that are difficult to shake, but church people are often professional cover-up artists (so are politicians by the way). We so desperately want people to perceive an image of us, an image that we try to create and control; we become puppets to peoples' perceptions. We don't mind calling ourselves "the chief of sinners" because that sounds religious, but *God forbid* that anyone get real specific with us about the real problems we face. This is why there are many powerless churches. Martin Luther said, "God rides the lame horse and carves the rotten wood." God's Spirit only moves in power on those who freely admit their weaknesses.

I. Faith in Jesus Christ should not preclude us from being honest about our personal struggles.

"By faith Rahab **the harlot** did not perish along with others who were disobedient" (v. 31). What if the Bible recorded this same thing about you? **By faith**, (put your name here) **the** (fill in the blank)?

A. But Rahab was not saved by God's grace through her faith? Oh yes she was.

Joshua sent two spies into Jericho. They found their way to Rahab's home and sought refuge there. She granted them refuge in return for their guarantee of safety for her and her family. The spies agreed and told her to tie a *scarlet cord* on the window of her home (Josh. 2:12-21). On the day of battle the city was captured and everyone died, except for Rahab and her family. Can you picture this? Her house was built into the city wall, the very wall that went tumbling. Of all the massive stonework, only that portion containing the home of Rahab was left standing.

B. But Rahab never struggled again with her sin nature after faith? Oh yes she did.

She would not have been human. Imagine her walking through the land of Canaan. Her home had been an inn in Jericho, the crossroads of Canaan. She was well known in Canaan. When you come to faith in Christ, your struggles with sin don't disappear. Frankly, the fight just begins.

II. A person with faith in Christ has personhood not defined by past or present problems.

"By faith Rahab the harlot **did not perish** along with others who were disobedient" (v. 31). Why did she not perish? Because Rahab experienced God's grace through her faith in Him (see Josh. 2:11). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies: who is the one who condemns? Christ is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us" (Rom. 8:33-34). If someone asks, "Who are you?" and it is impossible for you to answer in terms of the grace of God, then it might be you are finding it difficult to understand who you are in terms of your personhood. Paul said, "I am what I am by the grace of God" (I Cor. 15:10). Who am I? I am ____ by His grace. I am ____ by His grace. I am ____ by His grace. Fill in the blanks.

III. God is honored to claim the rotten wood and the lame horse as His own.

From the time of Rahab's deliverance by faith in the Messiah, she dwelt with the Israelites. She eventually married a man from the tribe of Judah named Salmon and they had a son whom they named Boaz. Boaz took a Gentile bride from Moab named Ruth and they had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, who had a son named David, who is the Shepherd King of Israel. In Matthew 1:5, Rahab is listed in the genealogy of the Anointed One (Jesus Christ); she, the harlot. Next time you worry about whether God really desires having you in His family, remember Rahab. You say, "But it's not God I'm worried about, it's people!" No. When you have God, you have it all.