

THE RED ROPE OF HOPE

How many of you are aware that the Bible is first and foremost a book of redemption. It is not merely a book of history, science or anthropology. It is a book of salvation and deliverance for all of lost mankind.

The idea of redemption is two-fold; it refers to deliverance and it refers to the price paid for the deliverance, a ransom if you will. We know today that Jesus' life was the ransom paid for our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness and death.

We are redeemed from the penalty of sin, from the power of Satan and evil by the price Jesus paid on the cross for us. We are redeemed into a new freedom from sin, a new relationship to God, and a new life of love by the appropriation of that atonement for our sins.

In other words, we have to pick up the hope of redemption that God offers us. We have to pursue it and hang on to it no matter what others around us are doing and no matter what they are saying to us.

When you look at the patterned workings of God in scripture you will see this "red rope of hope" everywhere. You will see God preserving the godly in the midst of the most difficult of circumstances down through all of history.

In the Garden of Eden, when God protected Adam and Eve in spite of their sin, He turned to Satan and said, "I will put enmity (hostility or opposition) between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden and had two sons, they named them Cain and Abel. In jealousy and insane fury, the older brother killed the younger brother, leaving no "clean seed" from Eve.

But the seed, the promise of God, the "red rope of hope" would not be denied. The lord gave Eve another son, named Seth. Seth was a man of faith, as much as Cain was a man of the world.

When the children of Seth, the Godly seed, intermarried with the children of Cain, the people of the world, the result was a fallen condition on mankind that filled the earth with violence.

Finally, god says, "enough is enough" and 120 years later he destroys the Earth with water; but not before he extends favor to Noah (Gen. 5:8). (Noah was a direct descendent of Seth).

In order to preserve the righteous seed, God directs Noah to build an ark; into that ark of safety, salvation and hope, Noah brought his family. The ark, representative of God's love and mercy, the promise of God's deliverance and salvation, became the "red rope of hope."

After the passing of the awful judgment of the flood, the Earth once again begins its story of redemption, through the life of Noah and his three sons.

Again mankind degenerates into gross sin and again God has to take action. He does so by scattering mankind all across the face of the earth and in doing so protects the godly seed that was among them from destruction.

Out of all these scattered nations that came forth from Noah and his sons we see God call Abraham forth from the nation of the Chaldees. In obedience to Gods' call upon his life Abraham goes out from his home and his family and eventually, through the promise of God upon his life, has a son named Isaac.

Sarah had even laughed when God told her they would have a son. She said, "Will my lord give me pleasure at this age? That thing doesn't work anymore

Isaac is the son birthed out of the promise of God. Abraham and Sarah had to hang on to the promise of God, the red rope of hope, in order to see it come to pass. They had His promise that the barrenness of their lives would not last forever. They hoped in God and His word to them that they would have a son.

Eventually, through Isaac and then Jacob, we see the twelve tribes of Israel come forth. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt and eventually his entire family came to Egypt. They later became the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel also became enslaved in Egypt, just as God had told Abraham. They were in captivity and living in a hard place, but had the promise of freedom that had been passed down to them, by oral traditions, from Abraham. They had a "red rope of hope" to hang on to."

If you remember, when Abraham was put into a deep darkness at the time of the initiation of the covenant, he was told by God that the people that would come forth from him would be taken into slavery but would later come forth into freedom, carrying many possessions (Gen. 15).

They had a promise from God that they would be brought out of slavery, it would not last forever.

God is saying the same thing to you today. You have been given promises from Him that you have not seen come to pass and He is saying to you today, "don't give upon my promises. Hang on to that "red rope of hope." Trust in the blood of My son. Believe me that His blood is strong enough to do what I have promised you it would do."

the conditions that god gave in each of these situations... of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and the nation of Israel was the willingness to believe god, in the midst of difficult situations.

Would his people believe the promise even in the midst of the darkness of the pit of slavery in Egypt?

When Sarah and Abraham looked at their physical bodies and saw no "hope" of a child because they were well past their childbearing years, they needed to hang on to that "red rope of hope", the redemption of god in their physical bodies if they were to see the promise come forth.

Let's look now at another situation that required the redemption of god, the salvation of god and the "red rope of hope" in a woman's life.

Joshua 2:1 and Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim, two men to spy secretly, saying, go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

(The name Rahab means violence, pride and arrogance.) It speaks figuratively of Egypt, which in turn represents the world and its system of doing things.)

To have the name Rahab says this woman is fully immersed in the world's system, the ways of Egypt, which are an abomination to god. And yet the word says these two spies came to her and lodged in her inn and ate at her café. She was a sinner, yet God came to her.

God sent His people to her and invaded her life. God came to her own home, even when she did not know who He was, just as He came to Abraham and Sarah, and extended a "red rope of hope" to her in the midst of the carnality of her life. Doesn't this sound like what He has done in our lives? In the midst of our not knowing him, He invaded our lives and brought his "red rope of hope" to us also.

Throughout the centuries, Christian commentators have attempted to explain away this seemingly inappropriate action on behalf of Israel's spies. Many scholars, such as Josephus, refer to Rahab simply as an "innkeeper", because for Israelites to stay in such a place means they would be "unclean."

But the word in Strong's concordance, in the complete dictionary of Bible words and in the KJV Bible commentary all say she was a "whore." Corresponding references in the New Testament use the Greek word "porne", the root of pornography to describe her way of making a living. (Heb. 11:31; James 2:25)

Doubtless she was an innkeeper and her establishment obviously was a café as well as an inn, but she was a whore, nonetheless.

It was not a likely place for the Israelites to be found, but usually the cafes of a city were the best places to hear the common talk of the town and the least likely place where strangers would be recognized. And so, by the leading of the Lord, they found themselves lodged in Rahab's establishment.

Isn't this just what Jesus did, to sit and eat with the unbelievers that all might be saved? He is the law and he knows that loving the unbeliever is the most important thing we can do because it is god's love through us that will show them the father.

Rahab is obviously a woman of substance because she is an innkeeper, runs a café and makes a little money in other extra-curricular activities. She is more than likely a good business woman, because you didn't survive in business then, any more than now, if you aren't intelligent and have "quick wits."

It says in verse 15 that her house, her inn and café were upon the town wall. For her to have her business or inn built right into the wall of the city was a very common practice in these ancient cities. Space within the city was very precious, especially during times of war. The walls were very wide, easily accommodating an inn and café, as well as her house.

So here come the two Israeli spies into her inn and they "lodged there."

But they were quickly noticed by the people and the king was told. The king of Jericho sends a message to Rahab saying, "Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are in your house; for they come to search out all the land."

vs. 4 but the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."

vs. 5 and it came about when it was time to shut the gate, at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."

vs. 6 but she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had lain in order on the roof.

Rahab had apparently already discerned that these men were spies from the armies of Israel. She could have simply asked them to leave; but there were stirrings in her heart, the beginnings of faith in the God of Israel, which could not be ignored.

Rahab had heard the reports of the incredible things which the God of Israel had done for the Israelites. She had heard of how He dried up the water of the Red Sea.... "and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites, which were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed."

So awesome were these victories that Rahab admitted, in verse 11, "Our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you." "For the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." Rahab knew in her heart that Jericho was a doomed city; the "hope of salvation was stirring in her heart." Maybe, just maybe, if she reached out to this God of the Israelites, she and all her household could be saved from the coming holocaust.

And so Rahab the pagan believed god and he counted it unto her for righteousness.

Where else do we hear this statement? From Abraham, who also came out of a pagan culture. He too, believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. He trusted in the promises of God, just as Rahab was trusting in the promises of God.

The word goes on to say that she hid the men on the rooftop, under the flax which she was drying, so we see that she is a maker of linen fabric as well. This is quite an industrious woman. Whore or no whore, she is a good business woman and obviously one who cared for her family. There is no mention of a husband anywhere in this story, which is even more remarkable. Something else we must keep in mind is this. In her culture a prostitute was not looked down upon; she was considered respectable in Jericho.

She has worked hard and built up a good business, and now, when God is stirring in her heart, she is staking everything she has on the word of these two men and in their God.

Verses 8-11 "I know that the Lord hath given you the land.

What a strange comment coming from this little harlot in Jericho! Jericho is a city that sat up on a hill. It had incredibly wide walls, a small gate at the top of a winding road that is just wide enough for one chariot, its own well inside the city and a two year supply of food. It was a wealthy city and well able to defend itself. Yet she says, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land."

This is exactly the same comment made by Caleb and Joshua in Numbers 13:30. "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it." Joshua and Caleb were speaking in faith in what their God could do, but nobody believed them. Who were the only two spared from all the millions that came out of Egypt? Who were the only two to go into the Promised Land? Caleb & Joshua. Why? They believed the words of the Lord. They held onto the "red rope of hope" that their lord had given them. They never let go of the promise that god had spoken to them.

Rahab, some 38 years later utters the exact same words, "I know that the lord hath given you the land."

Verse 12-14 "now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you that you also will deal kindly with my father's household and give me a pledge of truth. (a pledge of faithfulness) and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

(believe on the lord with all your heart and ye shall be saved, you and all your household there are several references in the new testament of faith in the promises of god saving not only the person who responds in faith, but their entire household.

Also notice here who Rahab asked them to swear by. She had already turned away from her pagan gods and asks them to swear by the lord. She doesn't say to them, by your lord, she says "The Lord." She has acknowledged who he is. She is openly declaring who this god is; He is "The Lord."

And the men said to her, "our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall be that when the lord gives us this land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Verse 15 then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the wall, so that she was living on the wall.

She tells them to go to the hill country and hide for 3 days and then afterward they can go their own way.

Verse 17 and the men said to her, "we shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear,

Verse 18 unless, when we come into this land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all you father's household.

Verse 19 and it shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free, but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if a hand is laid on him.

Verse 20-21 "but if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." So she said, "according to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window."

She believed god for her deliverance and salvation and by faith she tied the red rope of hope in the window. She hung the scarlet thread of redemption in the window of her soul and put her confidence in "the lord."

In doing so she expresses openly her faith in "the lord." She put her hope in "the lord."

This kind of hope in god means that you are looking for the promises of god in confident expectation. You aren't anxious because of the circumstances, you are quietly waiting for the answer with confident expectation that god will do what he said he would do.

What happened next?

She gathers her family into her home, as instructed by the two Israelites. Remember they said that all must enter the "ark" of protection from what was coming. By faith they had to remain there, no matter what was going on outside that door. If anyone left the protection of that house their blood was on their own head. God will only protect those who obey his voice and do his commands.

Remember the "Passover night" in Egypt. The lord said through mosses, put the "red rope of hope" over your doors and on the door posts, go in your homes and shut the doors and do not open them until morning, when the spirit of death has passed over you.

Rahab is doing exactly what Noah did and the Israelites in Egypt did. They were walking in obedience so that they would see the promises come to pass. They were trusting in god's promises to them; they were hanging on to their "red rope of hope."

What happened next? They waited and they waited, and they waited some more. What in the world was going on? Why didn't the Israelites come to "rescue" them? Didn't they realize what danger my family is in? I've shut down the inn, closed the café, stopped receiving men, shut the door and now nothing is happening!

Let's look at what's going on outside the walls.

Verse 22 and they went out into the mountains and remained there three days until their pursuers returned to Jericho.

Then it took another three days to get back to the Israelites camp because they had to travel carefully to avoid detection.

What happens when they return to the camp? Remember now, all they did was come into the city and were immediately detected. They had not time to "scout out the cities fortifications." Yet, listen to what they say to Joshua.

Verse 24 "surely the lord has given all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land, moreover, have melted away before us."

Where did they obtain this information? Rahab the harlot! They were telling Joshua the report that rahab had given them!

This is amazing!! The entire spy report is based upon what an inhabitant of the city of Jericho had to say; and a harlot to boot!

Obviously the men heard more than just a woman and a harlot speaking to them. It appears to me they heard the lord speak through this woman or they would never have brought such a definite report. It was word for word of what they heard her say. They were reporting what they heard the Lord say to them through Rahab.

Notice also that they did not say "the city is ours." They said "the Lord has given all the land into our hands and all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

So here we are, the spies have returned to the Israelite camp and Rahab has the "red rope of hope" hanging from her window on the wall of the city of Jericho; and she waited, and she waited, and she waited, and she waited.

Can't you just imagine what is going on in that house on the wall? Remember now, these family members are here because Rahab told them to come. She probably has told them about the spies and their promise to her. But here they are, father, mother, sisters, nieces, nephews all bunched into one home; probably not a very big home either, even though it is an inn. The family members don't have the stirring in their hearts, they have not received any sworn statement or promise and they certainly don't have a "red rope of hope", slim as it was, that rahab had.

Can't you just hear the comments that were made, especially by the children who wanted to go outside and play? All the social issues that arrive when there is a group of people shut up in one place over a period of time.

Rahab, are you sure you heard correctly? I'm getting tired of waiting for this, maybe we should just go back to our homes and forget what was said and take our chances.

Remember now, it is at least 4-5 days after the spies left.

Chapter 3:1-4 describes Joshua rising up early the next morning, so we are between 5-6 days since Rahab hung out her "red rope of hope."

Verse 2 speaks of three days having elapsed. However, scholars do indicate that the three days the spies spent in the mountains and the three days of preparation may have been simultaneous.

I'm sure Rahab had second thoughts during this time as anyone would, but there is no indication in scripture that she turned back. She never gave up hope because she knew what she did have been doomed. Her only hope was in the God of the Israelites; this was a woman of faith!

Verse 5 says sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow you will begin passing over the waters of Jordon, bringing us to the 7th day.

Remember how many people there were? How long do you think it would take for a few million people and their livestock to cross a river, even with the water being held back and walking on dry land, and some of them remaining behind?

Historical calculations tell us that the river bed was dry for approximately a twenty mile distance. Even so, 2 ½ million, plus livestock, carts, etc., takes some time to cross over.

Chapter 4:19 tells us that the people came up out of Jordon on the 10th day of the first month and chapter 5: 10 indicates that they celebrated the passover on the 14th of the month, bringing us to 11 days of waiting for Rahab and her family.

The next indication of a time factor in this story is found in chapter 5 when it says that the manna ceased on the day after the Passover celebration, bringing us to 12 days of waiting.

Chapter 6: 12-13 speaks of Joshua rising up early the next morning, bringing us to 13-14 days of waiting by rahab. This first day was the beginning of the march around Jericho by the Israelites. We know it went on for 7 days, minus this first day, which brings us to 20-21 days of waiting inside the house on the wall.

20-21 days of being cooped up in a small place, forbidden to go outside lest they die. How many of you have been in such a place? You have been told by God to wait for your "red rope of hope." You have been given a promise by God and you seemingly wait forever!

Keep one thing in mind. Rahab didn't have the Bible, she didn't have any tapes or books, and she didn't have a preacher on Sundays and Wednesdays. She didn't have any Christian friends to whom she could turn for prayer and encouragement.

She had only her "red rope of hope". Remember this little woman, this social outcast in israel, this one who had only the inner stirrings of her heart and the promise of two men of the Lord to hang on to when you think you get tired of waiting and standing on his promises.

Another thing to remember; Rahab had no idea what was going to happen to the city when the time came. She only knew she had to stay within the "ark of safety" provided by God. From all scriptural indications she never allowed anyone in her family to leave, they were all redeemed from death by her faith in the living God.

On the seventh day, according to chapter 6:20, the people of Israel shouted, in response to the priests blowing the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. The indication is from scholars that the wall

literally went down like an elevator! Straight down! It totally removed the defenses of the city, leaving the people exposed to the charging Israelites!

It says that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him and they took the city and they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both men and women, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

Can you imagine how rahab and her family felt when those walls went down? I'm sure they had taken turns at the window in the wall, watching the Israelites march around the city. I'm sure Rahab had to listen to some pretty sarcastic comments and probably had to physically restrain some of her family from leaving. In the natural mind, the things of God, the ways of God make no sense to us, especially when we don't have our "red rope of hope."

In California we are fairly well acquainted with earthquakes and the shaking of the ground and yet when a big one hits, it strikes terror into your soul. They sometimes shake you out of bed and you run to the nearest doorway for a place of safety.

Can't you just imagine how they felt at the tremendous rumbling earthquake that took down those walls?

Can you imagine the incredulity of people on both sides of this conflict to see these walls go straight down, with just this one little house remaining intact?

I'm sure rahab and her family clung together trembling with fear when the fighting and screams of terror were going on outside their door. I wonder how many people ran to that door and banged on it, looking for safety, as they did to Noah's ark when the rains began to cover them.

But to try to get into the ark after the door is closed is folly, it's too late. Faith comes into play before the tragedy, not after. Remember the parable of the ten virgins? Five had prepared themselves in faith. They kept the fire of the Holy Spirit burning brightly within them. They were not complacent, thinking they were safe behind the city walls. They kept their relationship with their master fresh and filled with the Holy Spirits' fire and when the master came, like a thief in the night, they had enough oil in their flasks to hear him and obey. Those who were not prepared were left banging on the door of the ark of his presence, with no chance for safety.

Rahab prepared herself. In faith she hung the "red rope of hope" out the window of her house. Believing against all odds, when there was nothing to hang on to but a promise, she prepared herself and her family through faith.

God honored her faith in him, even when she didn't know him. She called upon Him for her safety and fulfillment of His promise to her.

Her reward comes in chapter 6:22.

Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, "Go into the harlots' house and bring out the woman and all that she has out of there, as you have sworn to her."

So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.

And they burned the city with fire and all that was in it.

verse 25 however, rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom joshua sent to spy out jericho.

How highly did god esteem the faith of a harlot in Jericho?

So high that she married an Israelite named Salmon, who along with Rahab became the parents of Boaz, the husband of Ruth, the grandmother of Jesse, the great-grandmother of King David and eventually the ancestress of Jesus Christ our lord and savior.

From a harlot living on the wall of the city of Jericho to an ancestress of Christ himself. Faith in God's promises will take us a long, long way. That "red rope of hope" called the Word of God will never fail you, never leave you nor desert you. It will make a way for you when there is no way. It opens doors that the world says are shut in your face.

It will set the captives free from the bondages of the enemy and bring the prisoners home. Never stop hanging your "red rope of hope" in the window of your soul. Never stop believing what God has told you in the secret places of your heart even when you are waiting and waiting and waiting.

Even when all around you your friends and family are giving you a hard time and the enemy is "hot on your tail" trying to discourage you.

Never let go of the "red rope of hope" known as the promises of God. Put it in front of your eyes, keep it wrapped around your wrists as a reminder, but don't

let go! Sooner or later, you will see the walls all around you go straight down and the promise of the Lord will come forth in your life.