

I. Introduction

- A. This is message three in a series called BirthRight: It's Yours, Take It Back. This series is based on the Bible book called Joshua. Today, we're in chapter two—one of the coolest stories in the whole Bible.
- B. I would like to dedicate today's message to that part of you that feels like you've crossed a point of no return with God. That part of you that feels embarrassed, ashamed, evil, guilty, messed up.
- C. You know you have "parts," right? Good parts, bad parts. Okay parts, wonderful parts and nasty, evil parts. Don't you?
- D. The Bible calls these "members" and it says:
 - 1. *1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (James 4:1, NKJV).*
- E. So you have members or parts—little mini-me's. And I have no doubts that some of your members freak you out. Maybe this is the part of you that...
 - 1. Crosses moral boundaries, sexual boundaries, affairs, pornography, and extra-marital sex
 - 2. Embezzles from your company
 - 3. Hateful, bitter, unforgiving, anger, road rage, abusive, and cruel
 - 4. Suicidal and self-destructive
 - 5. Judgmental, critical, superior
- F. Neighborhood Church has some of the most messed up people I've ever met and that's okay, because it's pastored by one of the most messed up pastors I've ever met!
- G. Today's message is for that messed up part of you. And I want to give a name to that part of you today, so we can talk about it. Let's call this nasty part of you your INNER RAHAB.
- H. And you'll understand why in a minute.
- I. First, I'd like to back up and set the stage of this story.

II. Previously in Joshua

- A. God is telling a cosmic story. We're just looking at a snippet from the ancient past. We do this to understand God's wisdom for the snippet we're all living in today.
- B. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the Jews are finally coming into the Promised Land. This is the place where they experience maximum grace from God, and where God receives maximum glory from them.
- C. God promised to give them the land. But they still have to fight for it. That's because the land is occupied, and the occupants don't want to leave. So the Jews have to fight for the land called Canaan, one city at a time.
- D. That's the story we're looking at in Joshua.
- E. And the cool thing is that this story is exactly parallel to the story you're living in today. God has a promised land for you: A place of blessing, and happiness, and fullness. It is the realm of spiritual maturity—the place where you experience maximum grace from God, and God receives maximum glory from you.
- F. Only God doesn't bring you into that land all at once. You have to fight, one city at a time. God brings you into your inheritance little by little, not all at once (Deut 7:22).
- G. So here is how God's people possess their birthright, one city at a time. The first city is called Jericho. Let's pick up the story in Josh 2:1.

III. *1 Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." 3 So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." (Joshua 2:1-3, NKJV).*

- A. So, meet Rahab. She is a prostitute.
- B. Rahab prostituted herself for money. Now, in the ancient world, depending on the culture, this wasn't always viewed as bad. The people of Jericho were saturated in evil. They worshipped idols, which might not sound like a big deal until you realize that idol worship included a whole lot of other stuff: it included human sacrifice, infant sacrifice, ritual prostitution, a strict caste system, and not a whole lot of mercy to be seen.
- C. The word for prostitute here doesn't refer to a religious prostitute; just one who did it for money. That was Rahab.
- D. But something happened to her. In this huge city of Jericho—some say there were 250,000 people here—Rahab had heard of a different kind of God. And this God tugged at her heart like none of the idols of Jericho ever did. God tugged at her heart, and she responded. She opened the door.
- E. And maybe, today, God is tugging at your heart. What will you do with that?
- F. But let's notice that the two spies come to her house and lodged there—which means that Rahab operated a small hotel, an inn. This is not unusual. Later on we discover where this inn was situated: right smack on the walls of Jericho.
- G. So, two spies from Israel show up at her door and only a few minutes later, the king's personal Secret Service agents come to capture them. They ask for the men.
- H. What does Rahab the Prostitute do?

IV. *4 Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." 6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) 7 Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. (Joshua 2:4-7, NKJV).*

- A. What do you call this? You call it a lie. Was it right or wrong for Rahab to lie? Bible experts can't agree.

1. Erwin Lutzer (it was wrong): "...The end does not justify the means. Whenever we lie that good might come, we actually call God's power and authority into question" (Grasshopper, p. 48).
 2. Theodore Epp (wrong): "Rahab's lie cannot be condoned. Such deceit cannot be justified as far as Christians are concerned" (Joshua, p. 93).
 3. Gleason Archer (extenuating circumstances): "In Rahab's case there were special factors that operated in her favor, and they should not be overlooked, even if they do not altogether excuse her mendacity. In this particular case the lie meant for her a step of faith that put her very life in jeopardy" (Diff's, 155).
 4. Matthew Henry (good work). "Now we are sure that this is a good work, but there is that in it that is not easy to justify, but it must be justified. (Comm., in loc)
 5. My favorite Old Testament expert, Walter Kaiser, says it was wrong. She should have invited the police in, and prayed that God made them lousy searchers (Hard Sayings, 96, 7).
- B. I love this, because Rahab lies and the Bible is silent. What do we know about Rahab? She's a prostitute and she's a liar and we could add she's a traitor, because she's siding with the Jews against her own people in Jericho.
- C. And that is exactly the author's point. Long before Rahab is the poster child for faith, she is the poster child for something else: for MORAL UNWORTHINESS. Rahab's life is a long story of selling her soul, and here she does it one more time.
- D. Can you in any way at all identify with Rahab? Have you ever sold your soul? Have you ever betrayed a friend or brother or sister or fellow Christian? Have you ever violated God's standards? Have you ever violated your own standards?
- E. It was no accident that the spies came to Rahab's inn. God was reaching out to her, just like he's reaching out to you today.
1. What is Rahab? Rahab is a morally broken woman, living in a doomed city, hopeless, and helpless; who has heard rumors of a Great God and is going to bank everything she has on that God.
- F. By simply laying out Rahab's actions, and by NOT clearly stating the wrongness or rightness of her lie, Joshua cleverly raises the issue of moral character—the very first person in the Promised Land who receives the Grace of God is a doomed, lying, pagan, prostitute. Why?
- G. Because the character of the person who receives God's blessing is irrelevant; it's the character of the One who blesses that counts.
- H. God blesses you because of who and what He is, not because of who and what you are. And the second you forget this, you're just like the idol-worshippers of ancient Jericho—trying to manipulate a blessing from a handy-dandy pocket deity.
- I. Under the doctrine of Grace, we are fallen and unworthy people in and of ourselves. But when you say yes to God—and maybe you can do that today—when you say yes to the invisible God of heaven, who has a divine-human son named Jesus, when you bank your time and eternity on this God—God immediately joins you to Jesus. His character becomes your character, and He is worthy of blessing, NOT YOU. In the eyes of God, apart from Jesus, you share the exact same moral profile as Rahab.
- J. There, aren't you glad you came to church for that today.
- K. But, in the eyes of God, with Jesus, you share the moral profile of Jesus. That is the huge promise of God's good news.
- L. Regardless of her lie being right or wrong, Rahab took sides. She took a leap of faith. And now she puts words to it:
- V. *8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted [lit. melting] because of you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."* (Joshua 2:8-11, NKJV).
- A. Rahab the harlot makes one of the greatest statements of faith ever recorded in history. Let's notice some of the details.
- B. She already knows what God's own people are just starting to figure out: "I know that the Lord has given you the land."
- C. Do you get that the Jews didn't just sneak up on the Canaanites? You can't hide 2 million people!
- D. These tribes knew the whole story of the Jews and they knew the God of the Jews. They were NOT ignorant of the gospel. They knew of a God who redeems, a God who protects, a God who forgives, and a God who cannot be contained by idols.
- E. They knew this God, and they rejected this God. And even when they deserved God's judgment, God gave them 40 extra years to think about it. They knew the Jews were coming with their God.
- F. And all they had to do was turn to this true God, and God would have let them live (e.g., Nineveh, Sodom and Gomorrah).
- G. Rahab is the only person in all of Jericho who responds in faith in this God. She expresses this faith in three parts:
1. Part one: Rahab admits her hopeless condition. v. 9-11a.
 - a) She has given up. Rahab knows that apart from grace she has absolutely no hope. What an excellent example of the pre-salvation work of God. When God begins working on your heart, the first operation is to bring you down. No one can come to God who makes any claim on God based on his or her own strength. And Rahab willingly takes her place in the lineup of history's moral losers. Would you stand beside her in that line?
 2. Part two: Rahab believes in the Lord, Yahweh, the God of the Bible. v. 11b
 - a) She says, "For Yahweh your God; He is God in the heavens above and on the earth below." She has given up hope in her old idols, and has come to believe in the one, true, invisible, transcendent God. Rahab admitted her hopeless condition; and Rahab believed in the invisible, transcendent God of Israel.
 3. Part three: Rahab chooses to bank on grace alone vv. 12-13. More on that soon.
- H. Rahab's speech has three parts: ADMIT, BELIEVE, CHOOSE and in a minute I'm going ask you to make that same speech to God.
- I. Rahab declares her faith. And 1,400 years later, the New Testament says:

1. *31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. (Hebrews 11:31, NKJV).*

- J. She starts as a poster-child for moral unworthiness.
 - K. And she becomes a poster child for faith.
 - L. Do you know what you call this? CONVERSION. Rahab converted from idols to God. From religion to God. From a life of moral brokenness to God.
 - M. And what triggered her conversion? Nothing but faith. She didn't improve her life first. She didn't turn in her prostitution union card first. She put faith first, and that was enough for God.
 - N. And it's enough for you, too. You need your very own conversion experience, just like Rahab.
 - O. Have you ever declared your faith? Have you ever signed on with the Lord Jesus Christ? He came from heaven to make God visible in human form. He is the God/man. He lived a sinless, perfect life by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then He died on the cross for your sins. By His death and resurrection life, you can connect with God now and forever.
 - P. All that God requires is faith. Not your good works, following the Ten Commandments, baptism, confession, morality or religion—just Jesus. Have you ever declared your faith? You can declare your faith today.
 - Q. But you say, Bill, I did that a long time ago. I've had Jesus in my life for a very long time and I still have a very active Inner Rahab. I blow it all the time! What's wrong with me?
 - R. First, let me say, welcome to the real world.
 - S. And second, look at this next paragraph, because it's the real core of the chapter.
- VI. *12 "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." (Joshua 2:12-13, NKJV).*
- A. This is the real core of the chapter. To interpret it correctly, you have to apply an important principle. The historical events of the Bible were written so that they make a spiritual point. And how do you figure out the spiritual point? By the literary structure of the story, and you figure out that, partly, by the selection of words.
 - B. The words that that author repeats and emphasizes are words that give you a clue to the author's intent. One word is repeated seven times in this chapter: the word "pursue/rs" (vv. 5, 7, 7, 16, 16, 22, and 22). So let me suggest that this chapter is about somebody pursuing something—really going after something.
 - C. What's that? Rahab states it in v. 12: this is her choice:
 - D. *"Since I have shown you kindness, I ask you that you will show me kindness."*
 - E. Do you know what the Hebrew word is that's translated "kindness?" It's the word HESED (with a hard H at the beginning, like you're clearing your throat; and accent the first syllable). Hessed means the gracious lovingkindness of God. Hessed means grace. Rahab pursues grace.
 - F. Now, I want to pause, because we toss around this word grace, and don't really get it.
 - G. What is GRACE?
 - 1. Grace is that quality in God by which He does for fallen and undeserving people that which we could never do for ourselves.
 - H. Or the short definition: grace is UNMERITED FAVOR. Ancient Israel had a national anthem; a theme song.
 - 1. *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy [HESED] endures forever. (Psalms 118:29, NKJV).*
 - I. True grace has three non-negotiable parts:
 - 1. The person who receives grace never deserves it. If you deserve it, if you work for it, you have to call it a paycheck, not grace. So there is no merit. There is no earning grace. God's love is not for sale.
 - 2. The person who receives grace has a humanly unfixable problem. For Rahab, it was living in a doomed city. For Rahab, it was years of prostitution, and the toll that took on her soul—a humanly unfixable problem. For us, what is it? It is sin, first of all. But it's more than sin: EVERYTHING THAT STANDS BETWEEN YOU AND THE LIFE OF YOUR DREAMS, YOUR BIRTHRIGHT, AND YOUR ABUNDANT LIFE. The giants. The habits. The evil. All that stuff that scares your Inner Rahab—that stuff you don't think you can ever fix. You know what? You're right. You can't fix it; not by human power. Not by human effort. Not by good works. Not by deserving it. Grace flows from God's heart to those who don't deserve it; and grace flows from God's heart into humanly unfixable situations.
 - 3. The person who receives grace discovers that God's power accomplishes what has to happen—even when we are weak, small, and afraid. When you are most Rahab-like, God is most God-like and most gracious. And under grace, HE PAYS THE PRICE, which involved the death of His much-loved son.
 - J. And here, Rahab goes after grace. And I'm wondering if you've gone after grace lately.
 - K. You see, there's a huge hindrance to pursuing grace: that is you telling yourself the lie that you can enter your Promised Land by your own power. Watch, the Jews do this in a few chapters; they will fail.
 - L. But watch them make room for God's power and city after city, they conquer their enemies and seize their birthright.
 - M. Maybe you've been beating your head against a wall, trying to get a job, fix your marriage, change your bad habits, leave a life of self-destruction, lose weight, gain weight, earn money, find a wife, or husband. Maybe you've been working and strategizing and campaigning—and I'm all for that. Really, you can't sit back and expect the Promised Land to come to you. You have to go get it; take it back.
 - N. BUT—
 - O. You have to do it by grace.
 - P. You have to do it by the power of God.

- Q. Only God—God does it: His power, His work, His Son’s crucifixion, His effort. God’s commitment to you, infinitely more than your commitment to Him—Grace.
 - R. And that’s what Rahab discovered. She starts as a poster child for moral unworthiness; she becomes a poster child for FAITH and then a poster child for GRACE.
 - S. And what I’m saying is that maybe your Inner Rahab needs to take a hint from the historical Rahab. Haven’t you sold your soul enough? Aren’t you ready to bank your life—to bank even your eternal destiny—on a God of Grace?
 - T. The only power that can turn around a ruined life is Grace.
 - U. In a minute, we’re going to pray, and finish, but I have one more verse in this chapter to show you:
- VII . 14 *So the men answered her, “Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly [HESED] and truly with you.” 15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. (Joshua 2:14, 15, NKJV).*
- A. Rahab asks for HESED. The spies, who represent God to her, swear an oath to show her HESED AND EMETH (grace and truth). They swear an oath, and are totally obligated to show her grace.
 - B. Scripture teaches, and theology observes, that God is free. This means that God is under no compulsion to bless anybody. God is nobody’s debtor; God does not have to do anything for anybody. There are no constraints on God—except for this:
 - 1. God is constrained by His own character.
 - C. God cannot be other than what He is. And that means that when God utters a promise, then God not only will, but must, fulfill that promise.
 - D. And God has promised to empty a treasury that cannot be emptied, pouring out an inheritance on Jesus Christ. And the amazing message of the gospel is that, along with Christ, God pours out the same treasures on all who are attached to Him.
 - E. You are attached to Jesus by faith alone. It is not your works or performance ever. And though God is free, He has promised to bless faith wherever it is found.
 - F. Therefore, Christian you have not only God’s character, but also God’s oath as a guarantee that all the grace you need and want will come to you in due time—if you have faith enough to ask.
 - G. Grace is obligated to faith and to faith alone. Grace is not obligated to performance. Grace is not obligated to obedience. Grace is not obligated to success stories.
 - H. Grace is obligated to that part of you that feels you’ve past a point of no return—to your Inner Prodigal, your Inner Failure, your Inner Sneak, your Inner Rahab.
 - I. Grace is obligated to lying, pagan, doomed, prostitutes who have the nerve to just ask for it.