The Promise of Victory

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God responds to whoever calls on His mercy and provides salvation to them.

MAIN PASSAGES: Joshua 2:8-13; 6:15-17, 20-25

If your car has ever run out of gas, had a flat tire, or broken down, especially in an unfamiliar area, you probably understand what it is like to feel vulnerable and helpless. Perhaps you even needed to rely on the mercy and kindness of a stranger to call a tow truck, give you a ride to a gas station, or help you repair your vehicle.

What have you felt when you found yourself at the mercy of others? Why do you think you had that response?
Point 1: An enemy recognizes God’s future victory and appeals for mercy (Josh. 2:8-13).

8 Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof and said to them, “I know that the LORD has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you. 9 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan. 10 When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. 11 Now please swear to me by the LORD that you will also show kindness to my father’s family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death.”

Rahab, along with all the people of Jericho, had heard about the God of the Israelites. They heard the stories of their escape from Egypt and their victories over their enemies, stories they accepted as fact, and they were so afraid. But there was something different about Rahab from all the other residents of her city—she knew the Lord would be victorious for His people and she put her faith in the only One who could save her.

| WHY DID RAHAB DESERVE JUDGMENT? | WHY COULD RAHAB HOPE TO RECEIVE MERCY? |

What can we learn about the nature of faith from Rahab’s example?
Point 2: An enemy escapes destruction and lives to see God’s victory (Josh. 6:15-17,20-21).

15 Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. 16 After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua said to the troops, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city. 17 But the city and everything in it are set apart to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent.

..................................................

20 So the troops shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. 21 They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey.

The last words before a battle hold significance. So we should note with care what—or rather who—Joshua mentions in his speech before the battle of Jericho: Rahab. It would have been easy for Joshua to ignore the two spies’ agreement with her, but Joshua understood that this woman had professed faith in God and had risked her life to prove that she believed in Israel’s God. So the trumpets blew, the men shouted, and as the city walls fell around her, Rahab escaped through judgment.

? What should we make of God’s pattern of rescuing His people through judgment?

The city was in ruins and the people destroyed, but when the dust settled, Rahab and her family were still alive. Her faith in God was vindicated. She had trusted that God would be victorious, so she placed herself at His mercy, and because of her faith, she lived through the destruction to see God’s victory. But God was not done with her yet.

? When have you had your faith in God vindicated?

Voices from Church History

“He hath changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross brought death to life; and having wrenched man from destruction, He hath raised him to the skies, transplanting mortality into immortality, and translating earth to heaven.”

–Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215)
Point 3: An enemy becomes part of God’s people and shares in God’s victory (Josh. 6:22-25).

22 Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, “Go to the prostitute’s house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her.”

23 So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

24 They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD’s house. 25 However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father’s family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

When Rahab hid the spies, she asked them to promise that they would spare her and her family from death during Israel’s conquest of Jericho (2:12-13), but she would receive so much more. Removed from the city for their safety, they weren’t just sent on their way but were settled outside the Israelites’ camp, and later they were welcomed into the victorious people of God. In God’s mercy, Rahab and her family were allowed to live. In God’s grace, Rahab and her family were brought into the people of God.

People of God: Scripture describes the church as “the people of God.”

Comprised of both ____________ and ____________, the church is created by God through the __________________________ of ____________. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under God’s ruling care while we are protected and cared for by Him.

Though she was now part of God’s people, God still was not done with Rahab. In Matthew 1, we see that her story continued. Rahab married Salmon and had a son named Boaz, who fathered Obed, who fathered Jesse. Then came David, the king whose descendant would be the promised King of kings—Jesus. Surely Rahab had no idea what was in store for her on the day she asked in faith for two spies to spare her life.

What are some ways God uses His people for His glory and mission?
My Mission

Because we have experienced victory over sin and death through Jesus, we tell people of every tribe and nation about Jesus so they too might trust in Him and become part of the one people of God.

- How will you follow Rahab’s example of faith in the one true God?
- What can your group do to grow as a welcoming group for all who are a part of it and all who could be?
- What people group will you pray for and strive to be part of reaching with the gospel?
Day 1: Read Joshua 2:1-7

The Israelites were at the cusp of the promised land once more. Forty years before, twelve spies, including Joshua, had gone into the land. Ten of those spies had returned declaring that Israel could not conquer the land. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, trusted in God. Now these two men were leading the next generation of Israelites into the land, and their first step was to send spies into the land once again. But that was where the similarities ended. This time it would not be twelve spies but two. And this time the spies’ mission was not to scout the land to help determine the probability of victory but to scout the land, namely Jericho, to help determine a strategy for victory. The victory had been promised by God, and this time the Israelites would enter the land in a posture of trust.

In this passage, we are reminded that actions can be misleading. Both Moses’ generation and Joshua’s generation of Israelites began with the same action—from the outside they looked to be mirroring one another. However, the intent of their actions was very different. At best, the intent of Moses’ spies was to act for faith—to find evidence that would help them develop trust in God. The intent of Joshua’s spies, on the other hand, was to act from faith—to find what God had given them and perhaps how He had given it to them. Similar actions; different motivations. One scouting trip was done honoring God, the other rebelling against Him.

When have your actions seemed right from the outside but performed with the wrong intentions or motivations? What happened?

Voices from Church History

“These three be all one, ‘perfect faith’,—‘assured hope and confidence in Christ’s mercy’,—and ‘undoubted trust in God, in his words and promises.’”

—Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)
Day 2: Read Joshua 2:8-24

Word had traveled fast about what God had done for the Israelites. Rahab and the rest of the people of Jericho had heard about God drying up the waters of the Jordan River. They had heard of God giving the Israelites victory over the Amorites. And they believed. But while the people of Jericho believed in fear, Rahab believed in faith, which would lead to her deliverance from the coming judgment and inclusion with the people of God.

In these verses, we are reminded of the power of a testimony. Word of what God had done had traveled to Jericho because someone, somewhere, had told others what he or she had witnessed. It may have been one person or it may have been several people, but someone’s testimony ended up in Rahab’s ears and led to her faith in God. Just as most of the people of Jericho heard without faith, many who hear what we tell them about Christ will also refuse to believe. But that should not discourage us. We must continue to tell the gospel to others, trusting that God might send a Rahab our way this very day.

What has God done, or what is He doing right now, that you can tell someone else about today?

Day 3: Read Joshua 6:1-14

Grammar is not a favorite subject for many people, but it sure helps to pay attention to it as we study the Bible. Notice the verb tense the Lord used in verse 2: “I have handed.” God used the past tense to speak of the future event of delivering Jericho, the king, and the soldiers into his hand.

We know that God did not make a grammar mistake here; there is a reason why He used the past tense in this way here. He was affirming His sovereign authority over the situation. He was speaking of the future victory He would give Joshua and the Israelites in the past tense because He had already willed it to happen and nothing can stop Him from bringing to pass what He wills.

We see something similar in Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17. In verse 4, Jesus said to the Father, “I have glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” Jesus used the past tense to speak of a future event, in this case, the cross. Just as Jericho’s fall was sure in Joshua 6, so was Jesus’ exaltation on the cross in John 17.

What sure promises of God do you need to rest in today?
Day 4: Read Joshua 6:15-21

The Jericho account in the opening chapters of the Book of Joshua is full of faith, with Rahab’s and Joshua’s faith rising to the top. But we have to be careful not to miss another great example of faith—that of the Israelite soldiers. Here we see an army ready to go to war and likely full of a mixture of anticipation and nervousness. And yet, for six days, God had them take a stroll around their enemy’s fortified city. Surely this was frustrating for the Israelite soldiers. They could see the thickness and height of the city walls. They could appreciate the size of the city they walked around.

Then, finally, on the seventh day, they were called to action, although it was not the action a soldier would expect. They would not charge the walls. They would not hoist ladders and scale their enemy’s fortifications. Instead, they would shout. That was it. Nothing else. It must not have made much sense to the Israelite soldiers. It must have been frustrating. And yet, they did exactly what God had called them to do in obedience and in faith. Sometimes God calls us to act in faith; at other times, like here, He calls on us not to act, in faith.

Consider a time in your life when God’s plan was simply to move. How willing were you to follow His simple instruction? Why?

Day 5: Read Joshua 6:22-27

The battle was over. The once thriving, formidable city of Jericho was now a smoldering mound of ruins. But Joshua wasn’t done with Jericho just yet. It wasn’t enough that the city was destroyed; he cursed the pile of ruins, declaring that anyone who attempted to rebuild it would suffer greatly. This was not just an end for Jericho, it was to be the end.

But the end of Jericho was also a beginning for Rahab and her family. And in the same way, Rahab’s beginning was not just a beginning, it was the beginning. Her old self was as dead as the city she was leaving behind; she was now part of God’s people. Her faith in God had given her a new life. Her life was changed forever in this one event.

We see here a picture of the power of God to change us by grace through faith. When we trust in Christ, our old self is put to death and we have been given new life in Christ.

How do you live as your old, dead self at times? Why? How can you live as your new self?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- An enemy recognizes God’s future victory and appeals for mercy (Josh. 2:8-13).
- An enemy escapes destruction and lives to see God’s victory (Josh. 6:15-17, 20-21).
- An enemy becomes part of God’s people and shares in God’s victory (Josh. 6:22-25).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

What are your stories of trusting in Christ for salvation, and what do they have in common with Rahab? Why should this humble believers?

What opportunities do you have to invite outsiders into the people of God through the gospel? What steps will you take this week to do so?

Notes
UNIT 7
SESSION 1
1. Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

UNIT 8
SESSION 1
1. Noël Piper, *Treasuring God in our Traditions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 64.

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

EASTER SESSION

UNIT 9
SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.