

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 4: The Sufficiency of God's Power

Key Verse: ...and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.~Joshua 2.9

Don't you love a surprising, and often more fulfilling, ending to a story? What begins as a good spy story God turns into a shocking revelation of His **impartiality** as well as exposing His **irresistible grace**. *O Sovereign LORD, only You can defy our expectations of Your will. Only you can disrupt our mindset and our plans to fulfill Your promises, not only to us, but to those you surprisingly bring into our lives. May this story convict us of our judgments of who is worthy of Your kingdom, so that we will be courageous to boldly go out as You command. Amen.*

Joshua 2.1-24 And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

2 And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land."

3 Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." **4** But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. **5** And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." **6** But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.

7 So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out. **8** Before the men 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, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. **10** 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 the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. **11** And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

12 Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign **13** that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." **14** And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." **15** Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall.

16 And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way." **17** The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. **18** Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. **19** Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. **20** But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." **21** And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. **23** Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. **24** And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."

Diamonds:

Joshua has a decision to make on how to move forward on God's promise to enter the Promised Land now (1.1-9). Wisely (see Deuteronomy 34.9) Joshua notes that the Jordan is in flood season, and Jericho is an "impregnable citadel". Crossing the Jordan would place God's people in a vulnerable position with a flooded river behind them and a fortress of their enemies in front of them.

1. Having been given no specific direction by God of how to take possession of Jericho, what does Joshua do to better understand the next steps he needs to take to obey God's command?
2. What common sense steps do you need to take to better obey God's command, "call" or responsibility? Or, if there is nothing specific in your life right now, like the spies, how will you support a fellow believer in their desire to discover God's will in their obedience to Him?

Though some commentators wish to make Rahab more palatable for Christian readers, scripture is clear: Rahab was a prostitute (V 1). Honestly, her admission into God's people and inclusion in the lineage of Messiah is a relief to all sinners because it proves God's love pursues sinners. It is common to count some sins as more egregious before the Lord than others, and to condemn specific sins as being reserved for hell. But this is not God's view of sin; rather, all sin is egregious to Him. Period. All sin requires a sacrifice: Jesus or the sinner. All sin places humanity before the gates of hell, and only Jesus has the righteousness to transfer our eternal residence from "darkness" to His heavenly kingdom (Colossians 1.13-14). Rahab receives salvation from death at the hands of God's people (His instruments of His judgment against the Amorites). She is honored through inclusion in the lineage of Messiah (Matthew 1.1-17). Now, she knows His Glory which is a precious comfort to all His redeemed and solid proof of the depth of God's mercy and grace (Hebrews 11.31; James 2.22-26).

3. What comfort does Rahab's story of salvation provide to you? It may help to read the additional scripture provided in the above paragraph, using other translations to provide clarity.

It is common to attach spiritual significance to the "scarlet cord" (V 18) used to identify Rahab's home. However, commentators caution against adding too much to scripture when no additional scriptural evidence can be found to support any deeper meaning. The scarlet cord could point to the blood of Christ, or it could just be a scarlet cord. There is not adequate evidence to support a deeper spiritual meaning in its color. Rather, the focus here is God's love pursuing Rahab, a pagan sinner not born into the Jewish lineage required to have been automatically declared God's chosen. His salvation provided to her, and her family, is a radical revelation of God's plan for inclusiveness, rather than exclusive admission into His kingdom (John 3.16-18; Acts 10.13-16, 24-29, 34-35).

4. While the spies were given a clear mission by Joshua, what do you think their real mission actually proved to be? In other words, while Joshua sent them as spies, what did God send them to do for Him?
5. How does this recognition shape your understanding of the details of your daily life? What ordinary, or extraordinary, circumstances is God sending you into to accomplish His will?

Deity: Impartial~ Defined as treating all rivals or disputants equally; fair and just; without favoritism; free from discrimination. Synonyms include unbiased, neutral, objective, equitable, and even-handed.

6. Use the following scripture from both the Old and New Testament to help come to a definition and understanding of God as impartial: Joshua 8.33-35; Psalm 146.8-9; Ezekiel 47.21-23; John 3.15-18; Acts 10.13-16, 24-29, 34-35; 2 Corinthians 5.15-20; Romans 3.9-31; Romans 14.10-12; Hebrews 4.13. Share with your group what you learned.

7. Knowing that God's love through the Messiah is for all people, what sins found in others challenge you to invite them into God's kingdom?
8. What has Rahab taught you about people's worthiness for God's kingdom? What actions are you taking to avoid selecting the worth of people for God's kingdom (Matthew 28.18-20)?

Doctrine: Irresistible Grace¹~ "What is meant by irresistible grace is not what the word seems to suggest, that grace is incapable of being resisted. Indeed, we are capable of resisting God's grace, and we do resist God's grace. But the idea here is that, in spite of our natural resistance to the grace of God, God's grace is so powerful that it has the capacity to overcome our natural resistance to it. That's why I prefer the term effectual grace rather than irresistible grace, because this grace effects what God intends to effect by it."

"The way many Christians interpret [John 6.44] is to say that the 'drawing' has to do with God's external wooing, persuading, enticing, or luring and that God draws many people. Some respond positively to this drawing; others say no to the drawing. God draws everybody with an equal persuasive power, and, in the final analysis, those who acquiesce to the drawing are saved, and those who do not acquiesce are lost."

"When He brings you to spiritual life salvifically, it is His work, and His alone, that brings you into that state of rebirth and renewed creation. Hence, we call this effectual grace. It's grace that works, it's grace that brings about what God wants it to bring about...salvation is something that God does in us and for us, not something that we in any way do for ourselves." (Ephesians 2.1-8)

9. What does Ephesians 2 teach you about irresistible, or effectual, grace?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: In the lecture of Lesson 2 we were encouraged to pray a personalized version of Joshua 1.9 daily: "O Sovereign LORD! You command me to be strong and courageous. You command me to not be frightened or dismayed. I know that I cannot do this apart from You. O God, You have declared that you are with me wherever I go. You sovereignly reign over everything that happens or does not happen. And You promise to never leave me or forsake me. You are the All-Sufficient God! I want to walk in complete obedience to Your will. I want to live to the praise of Your glory this day and every day."

Share with your group how this daily prayer has impacted your life. What is God doing in response to your praying for strength, courage, and obedience to His will? How is His Glory being revealed in your day?

If you have not been able to follow this exercise in praying scripture, what are you doing to begin incorporating scripture into your prayers to God?

¹ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/what-is-reformed-theology/irresistible-grace>

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God pursues His people with an irresistible grace.

- I. Heart-Melting God (Joshua 2.1-11) **T1:** Hearts melted by God's irresistible grace respond to Him with a confession of faith.
 - a. How has God pursued you or your loved ones with His irresistible grace?
 - b. Which past deeds or powerful acts of God cause your heart to melt?
 - c. Does your melted heart cry out in fear or with faith?
- II. Heart-Melting Grace (Joshua 2.12-24) **T2:** Hearts melted by God's irresistible grace respond to Him with acts of great faith.
 - a. How does Rahab's genuine faith inspire you to trust God with your current difficulties?
 - b. Which acts of great faith will you take because your heart has been melted by God's irresistible grace?

Boice, James Montgomery, *Joshua, An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989) pgs. 27-34

Jackman, David, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014) pgs.33-40