

# GOD'S CHRISTMAS GRACE TO FAMILIES: FOUR GRANDMOTHERS OF JESUS

## "Grandmother Rahab: Living God's Sustaining Grace To Families"

(Matthew 1:5a, 17; Joshua 2:1-24; 6:23-25)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

People feel the crunch of pressures against their even surviving:

(1) Early this week, I received a call from a fellow Christian, asking me to make contact with a needy party. A middle-aged man's newly married son had injured himself in a construction accident and was not going to walk again! On top of this, he was about to see divorce proceedings take away \$75,000 of his earnings money so that his estranged wife could have a home, and he was thinking about just giving her his current \$150,000 home in order to satisfy the legalities laid on him by the lawyers. On top of even this, another relative had been stabbed by a spouse, making for trying times for the extended family. When I talked with the man at Hartford Hospital, he was in a daze, wondering what had happened, and why, and what was next!

(2) Two days later, while on the phone with a member of Nepaug Church, I was informed that a number of the church family were hard-pressed this Christmas as money was not abundant as in years past! Gift-giving is being cut back not out of desire, but out of need!

(3) Added to the crunch, a report has surfaced that a leading **lesbian**, Rev. Eleanor Morrison is now writing UCC sex education curriculum for Congregational Churches of the UCC denomination! (The Witness: A Journal Of The Biblical Witness Fellowship, Vol. XV, No. 3, p. 1) But if you resist this move in the UCC and hold to sound, fundamental Bible theology, look out! The Yale Center for International and Area Studies has a pamphlet out defining "Fundamentalism" as ". . . a phenomenon . . . (producing) incidents as far afield as the explosion of the World Trade Center, . . . and multitudes of believers flocking to services held by Jimmy Swaggert." In reality, the term "fundamentalist" originally meant one who stood for the basic doctrines of the Christian faith! What is painful to note is that the Yale Center for International and Area Studies that put out this pamphlet is a **U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center** in International Studies! We face the crunch of trying to stand for the truth and yet being misrepresented for doing just that by **religious** groups that are subsidized by the **government**!

(4) Whether it's being crunched by physical needs, financial needs or unjust religious or governmental pressures, many feel the crunch this Christmas and wonder if their way of life can be **sustained**!

***Need: "Families are under real assault today! The government may encroach on family rights from without, where the economy undermines and moral decay eats away from within! What hope is there this Christmas for preserving families in such times?!"***

### I. In every way, Rahab's family lay in harm's way:

A. As a street harlot, Rahab faced personal threats to her welfare:

1. The Hebrew word, **zonah** describes Rahab as a common street harlot, Biblia Hebraica, p. 322; Z.P.E.B., v. 3, p. 34.
2. As such, she was subject to regular threats of physical disease and harm from rough clientele, Prov. 5:3,8-11.

B. Rahab's **family** stood in harm's way due to Israel's invasion plans:

1. Invading groups sent out spies who could quickly assimilate into a target city through frequenting a harlot's abode, Ibid. This fact left Rahab a target of suspicion by her own people, Jos. 2:1-2.
2. Ancient Near Eastern warfare included the seizure of a city by scaling its walls, and Rahab lived on Jericho's walls, Jos. 2:15!
3. Jericho's wall raised a special invasion risk unlike other city walls!
  - a. Archaeologists Garstang and Kenyon discovered that Jericho had two thirty-foot high walls of red baked brick surrounding it. A six-foot thick wall stood on the outside where an inner, twelve-foot thick wall fifteen feet away ran parallel to that outer wall, Unger, Arch. and the O.T., p. 146f; Waltke, Class Notes for Biblical Archaeology (He. 214), Dallas Seminary, '76.
  - b. Since Jericho was compact, people lay wooden planks between the two walls upon which to build homes, B.K.C., O.T., p. 332!
  - c. An attack from invaders would harm not only the people on the wall, but collapse their fragile, suspended houses as well!

C. Morally and spiritually, Rahab's family structure was destitute:

1. Inhabitants of Jericho worshipped the moon god, a far cry from the God of the Bible, Ibid., Waltke. The family had no spiritual life.
2. With her being a common street prostitute, Rahab's family inevitably suffered from gross relational abnormalities!

## II. **Yet, Rahab's faith in Israel's God made all the difference in salvaging her family life!**

- A. Based upon the reports of the Red Sea Crossing and other military victories for Israel, Rahab believed that Israel's God was superior to her moon god, Jos. 2:9-11.
- B. Accordingly, she urged the Hebrew spies who visited her to have mercy upon her and her family during the invasion, Jos. 2:12-13.
- C. The spies promised to protect them if Rahab would allow them to return to Joshua unharmed, Joshua 2:14.
- D. She was used to sinning, and Rahab sinfully **lied** to protect Israel's spies, Jos. 2:4-6. **However, her faith motivated her to protect the spies, and this faith, though incorrectly given saved her soul before God**, Hebrews 11:31!
- E. God's resulting deliverance of Rahab is abundantly gracious!
  1. The spies had Rahab leave a red chord tied to a window facing the outer wall so that the invading soldiers could identify her home and spare it, Jos. 2:17-21. In the invasion, God made the army march around the wall thirteen times so that all could assuredly identify Rahab's red chord and spare her family, Jos. 6:2-4!
  2. Then God caused the inner **and** outer walls of Jericho to fall down **except for** the sections that held up the planks for Rahab's house, Jos. 2:15 with 6:20,22! This enabled Rahab to remain safe until her family was later retrieved after the invasion!
  3. However, God ordered the destruction of Jericho, and that included Rahab's home on the wall, Jos. 6:17-19 with 6:23f. In reparation, God permitted Rahab to join a new home, including her in Israel's Messianic line that produced Christ, Mt. 1:5, 17!

**Application:** *Today's fragile families can find real sustainment if individuals in them (1) believe on the God of Scripture, Jesus Christ for handling sin, Jn. 1:11-12; 3:16. (2) Then, as believers, they sustain a walk with God by (a) confessing acts of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) relying upon the indwelling Holy Spirit for the ability to (c) obey Scripture, Gal. 5:16-23! (3) If economic threats, threats of losing the physical abode of one's home, threats of moral decay or governmental encroachments of any kind arise, they simply recall God's provision for Rahab's family and trust His eternal purposes regarding the family members. In this position, they face this Christmas expectantly!*

**Lesson:** *Though she and her family were morally bankrupt, though they lived in relationship dangers and threats to their physical home, though they worshipped the moon as god, Rahab and her family found God's family relief by faith in the God of Scripture!*

### **Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . .)

A number of years ago, a tiny little woman named Irene belonged to the cult known as Jehovah's Witnesses. She went from door to door witnessing the error of this belief in an effort to gain salvation from God.

But Irene came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour by a miracle of God's grace, and we were privileged to baptize her in the Nepaug River behind our Church. I remember when she came up out of the water, that she folded her hands together in pure joy, looked up to the sky, and said, "Thank you, Lord!"

Bruce Worley then later shared with me an incident that occurred on the rough streets of Hartford. As has been her custom, Irene has witnessed from door-to-door even in hardened areas staked out by gangs. One day while going about her witnessing, Irene was confronted by a group of Latin Kings gang members. They felt that she was trespassing on their "turf" by witnessing, and moved up in a threatening way. Little, humanly helpless Irene responded to them by saying, "Don't you mess with me! I serve Jesus Christ!" The Latin Kings moved back and let her continue doing her work! She was given thousands of tracts to give out in her efforts, and since then, she has asked for more tracts as she has none left!!

Irene came to Christ from spiritual darkness in the Watchtower Society by the power of God's grace! She lives her life by that power. Because of this power, Irene has seen the Lord sustain her on the dangerous, gang-infested streets of Hartford, Connecticut! She witnesses effectively on Hartford's streets in the same state where a U.S. government Title VI National Resource Center subsidizes a Yale group that lumps her beliefs along with those of people who bombed the World Trade Center and who flock to hear Jimmy Swaggart! Irene experiences the sustaining power of God like Rahab did when Jericho's walls fell down all around her but stood up to protect her household!

**Irene is a living testimony that God can sustain us emotionally, financially, physically and in every way necessary to fulfill His will this Christmas. We merely need to look to Him!**