

THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Exercising The Mind || Igniting The Heart || Preparing The Hands

A free quarterly paper for rural pastors.

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Editor: Aaron Dunlop



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Editor: Aaron Dunlop; Contributors: Pastor Mark Rutuna (Uganda), Dr. Joel Beeke (USA), Rev. Jonathan Bartlett (USA), Pastor Tonny Karwa (Kenya), Dr. Michael Haykin (Canada), Rev. Reggie Kimbro (USA). All articles by the editor, unless otherwise stated. || Proofreading: Odelia Chan; Layout & Design: Rev. Calvin Goligher (USA).



WELCOME TO THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Welcome to this issue of The Pastor's Study. This is a tool designed specifically for rural pastors. The goal is to help pastors dig into the Word of God and expand their minds in biblical exegesis, theology, and in church history. These subjects are essential to your ministry. Our prayer is that this magazine will help you reach deep into the Word of God and teach effectively in your church.

In the editorial we look at the subject of the preacher as a sower of the Word (pages 5-7). Then we go straight into the theme of this issue: the conversion of Rahab (Joshua 2). There is a section on preparing to preach from the passage, a sermon example, a step by step guideline through the study (pages 8-10), and a preacher's workshop (pages 24-29). The feature article is a commentary on the passage (pages 11-17).

In the practical and pastoral theology section, we have a theology of salvation, by Pastor

Mark Rutuna (pages 30-33), an explanation of how Christians use the law of God by Dr. Beeke (pages 34-38), an article on the pastor as a leader by Kenyan writer, Tonny Karwa (pages 42-44). Pastor Jonathan Bartlett introduces us to biblical counselling and how we can guide someone to repentance.

Our history column, Dr. Michael Haykin writes on the legacy of the great North African theologian, Augustine (pages 45-48), and on the closing page our devotional on the theme topic by Rev. Reggie Kimbro (pages 49-51).

Sincerely, Aaron Dunlop

EDITORIAL: THE PREACHER AS A SOWER OF THE WORD

Pastor Aaron Dunlop reaching is difficult work. The prophets referred to the message as a “burden” that the Lord had given them, that they needed to deliver. There is the hard work of reading, researching and studying the Word. Alongside this, there is the spiritual activity of praying that message into your soul, so that you can preach it with conviction, passion and with convincing exhortation.

On top of this, the preacher must live with the realisation that after all the work that he has invested in his sermons, there may be very little visible results. The sermon is over, the people leave and life goes on as normal.

While the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18; Mark 4:3; Luke 8:4-15) teaches us to be good hearers of the word, there is also some instruction for preachers. J. C. Ryle, the English preacher (1816-1900) said that this parable is a

“warning to all ministers of the gospel, not to look for too great results from sermons.” This idea of preaching without results (or “in vain”) was often on Paul’s mind, as it should be also on ours (for example, 2 Corinthians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:1; 3:5).

So how should the preacher deal with this difficulty?

First, we should remember that we are only sowers of the Word. The “sower” identifies a particular class of people—preachers. Sowing is the task of the preacher. The sower handles the seed, and he can water and tend the plants, but he cannot make the plant grow.

Secondly, we should pray that the Lord would use the preached Word in the hearts of the hearers. This is what Paul asked the believers to pray for—that the Word preached would have an effect on his hearers (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Thirdly, we should remember that results will not be immediate. Jesus could have used an example that showed immediate result, perhaps like a goat-herder's goad that produces an immediate response. But Jesus used this image of a sower because the Word planted in the heart takes time to germinate, and to grow. Also, it needs care dressing, pruning, watering, etc.

Remember what Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

PREPARING TO PREACH ON RAHAB

Preparing a sermon from a story like this is like harvesting mangoes. Just as you pick the low-hanging mangoes first, so you find those points that are emphasized in the text, those themes and points that stand out and are easy to identify.

God's witness to sinful Rahab (Joshua 2:10)
What was it that God used to speak to Rahab?
Another way to ask that question is what had Rahab heard about God? It was his mighty acts (verse 10). God's works are displayed in judgment (the destruction of the Egyptians or the judgment on the kings of the Amorites), and salvation (the opening of the Red Sea).

God had revealed himself in power. The people of Jericho resisted and were destroyed, just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Rahab's response to the living God (Joshua 2:12-13).

Unlike the others, Rahab responded by faith and pleaded for deliverance. She recognised that Yahweh has the power over life and death and she pleaded for life—"deliver our lives from death."

Rahab's life of faith (Joshua 2:18-19) Rahab was saved not because of the scarlet thread, but because she hid the spies and welcomed them in peace (Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25).

So what was the purpose of the scarlet thread? Did it point to Jesus, or was it just to show the Israelites which house was Rahab's?

First, it was evidence of her life of faith, along with her obedience to stay inside the house. The natural and instinctive response to the sound of the walls falling would be to run to safety, yet faith demanded that they stay inside the house (Joshua 2:19; 6:17). Rahab

demonstrated a faith that endures to the end (Revelation 2:7).

Second, the scarlet thread indicated that Rahab was delivered from destruction in the same way as the Israelites. On the Passover night the Israelites put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost of the houses. The scarlet thread re-enacts this and brings Rahab into fellowship, not just with the living God, but with the people of God, as Ruth said, “your people will be my people” Ruth 1:16.

THE CONQUEST OF GRACE

With the beginning of the book of Joshua we come into the conquest of the land of Canaan. God had commissioned Joshua (1:1-9), Joshua mobilized the people (1:10-18), and it seems that the conquest has begun. We expect to see some action—the destruction of the wicked Canaanites.

However, the story of Rahab's salvation interrupts the action, and we discover that the very first act of God in the conquest of Canaan was not an act of war or destruction, but an act of salvation. Before a single arrow was shot, or sword drawn, before a single death occurred in the conquest, God saved Rahab. This was God's conquest of grace.

The Spies: Messengers of Mercy

The spies that Joshua sent out (verse 1) added nothing to the defeat of Jericho; they brought back no information that helped in the attack of Ai. As the story develops, so does the

description of the spies. At the beginning they are identified as spies (Joshua 2:1), but it seems that their role as spies is downplayed, and they are referred to as “two men” (6:22). By the end of the story, they are referred to as “messengers” (Joshua 6:17, 25).

Joshua sent out two spies, but God sent out two messengers of mercy in the conversion of Rahab.

Three locations mentioned in verse one underline the mercy of God in this story—Shittem, Jericho, and the prostitute’s house. First, the spies were sent out from Shittem. Why does the Holy Spirit tell us this? Back in Numbers 25:1-3 we read that Shittem was the place where Israel had “played the harlot” (the same word is used of Rahab) with the people of Moab. At the heart, Israel was no different than Rahab. But God had mercy and used them. So, we see God’s mercy not only in the people he saves, but also in the instruments he uses.

The second location is Jericho in “the land” promised to Israel. The wickedness of Canaan is spoken of as far back as the sin of Ham (Genesis 9:18-25). There Moses (the author of Genesis) links the sin of Ham to the Canaanites who would follow in his wicked path.

The sins of the Canaanites were extremely vile, and for many years, during the wilderness wanderings, Moses had been instructing the Israelites of these sins. They included body mutilation (Deuteronomy 14:1-2), incest (Leviticus 18:8), sexual relations with animals, (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15), witchcraft, (Deuteronomy 18:10), transgenderism, (Deuteronomy 22:5), homosexuality (2 Kings 23:7) and temple prostitution, (1Kings 15:12, 2 Kings 23:7).

God had already shown mercy to the Canaanites and delayed Israel’s entry into the land, giving them time to repent (Genesis 15:16). Now, as Israel prepared to enter and

possess the Land that the Lord had promised them, Moses told them that there would be utter destruction (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18).

So, we have to ask the question, were the spies right in offering salvation to this woman and her family? The answer is that in wrath, God remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2).

The third location mentioned here is “the house of a prostitute.” Here we see that God has mercy on the worst of sinners. Whenever Rahab is mentioned in the Scriptures, she is identified with prostitution (Joshua 6:17, 25; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). God does not choose people because they are any better than another person (Deuteronomy 7:7-8), nor does he reject an individual because he/she is any more sinful than another person (Isaiah 1:18).

Rahab: A Reasonable Faith.

Since the crossing of the Red Sea, the Canaanites had lived under a real sense of the judgment of God as though they had been sentenced to death (verse 11).

God had provided a witness of himself in his acts of judgment, and the Jerichoites had an opportunity to flee from the wrath of God into the protection of his mercy, but they all hardened their hearts, as Pharaoh had in Egypt. But God had been working on one woman Rahab the prostitute.

Rahab's faith in the God of Israel was not a leap into the darkness. She had been thinking of the Israelites for forty years and had reasoned through the power of God in drying up the Red Sea and in the destruction of the two kings of the Amorites (verse 10), she also recognised the glory of God over creation (verse 11).

She came to the conclusion that the only thing left to do in light of all of the evidence was to appeal to God's mercy (verse 12), and she took the opportunity as soon as the spies arrived. Before the king had sent his soldiers, Rahab had hidden the spies, and she sent the soldiers away (verses 4-6).

Rahab had trusted the living God because she had evidence of his power. But could she trust these men, whose lives were given to secrecy and cunning? She asked for three things as assurance that they would deliver her from destruction; that they swear by Yahweh, that they return the kindness she had shown to them, and that they give her a "sure sign" (verse 12).

The spies gave her a "scarlet cord" (verse 18), and with this, she must fulfill the same requirements as the Israelites had on the night of the Passover. As the blood on the doorposts was a "sign," so also was the scarlet cord (Exodus 12:13, verses 12, 18). The command to

gather her family for safety and not to “go out” of their “houses” (Exodus 12:22; Joshua 2:19), also connects this event to the Passover night.

Rahab locked arms with the people of God. She was delivered from destruction in the same way as God’s covenant people—by the blood of the lamb, symbolised, in Rahab’s case, by the scarlet cord. After her rescue, Rahab remained outside the camp, until she was ceremonially clean (Joshua 6:23, see also Leviticus 13:46; Deuteronomy 23:3). But she was soon brought into the community of the people of God and remained among them (Joshua 6:25). She later married Salmon, a prince of Judah and became part of the promised line of the Messiah (Matthew 1:4–6).

THE STORY OF RAHAB, STEP BY STEP

Set the boundaries of your text:

In this issue we are focusing on the conversion of Rahab. This story is told in Joshua 2:1-24 and also Joshua 6:17-25.

Take time to read:

Read the story over and over again, and also the passages in the New Testament that mention Rahab. It will help you identify themes, repeated words or ideas, and get familiar with it for smooth pulpit reading. Read the story in different translations—English, Swahili or another language. Read the story aloud.

Do the work of Exegesis:

Exegesis simply means to “bring out” the meaning of the text. This is where you get into the details, the verbs, the nouns, the contrasts, repeated words, and connections with other Scriptures. See the Preacher’s Workshop (pages 10-11) for examples. You can also look

for theological reflections, pathways to Jesus, and other points of application.

Find the meaning of the text:

The Holy Spirit put this story where it is for a reason. The Israelites are about to begin the conquest of the Promised Land. But before that begins, the Lord shows mercy and saves Rahab. This story is about God's saving grace, in the midst of judgment.

Develop an outline:

Break the text into manageable sections. I have broken it down into two broad divisions; the spies and Rahab.

You could also think of it in terms of locations: the spies on the way to Jericho (verses 1-2), at the prostitute's house (verses 3-21), Rahab left alone in Jericho (2:22-24; 6:17-22) and Rahab among the Israelites (6:23-25).

Make connections:

As you follow the connections to the New Testament (Matthew 1:5; James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31), you will find paths to Jesus. With the scarlet cord (2:21), there is also an important connection back to the Passover lamb in Egypt, which points forward again to the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

Time to get the sermon(s):

Now you can pick up on different themes, or devotional ideas that you've found in the text. You could develop a series of sermons from the themes.

WHAT ABOUT RAHAB'S LIE?

When the spies came to Rahab's house, Rahab hid them and sent the soldiers away. She later sent the spies out by another way to safety (Joshua 2:16). The New Testament commends Rahab for this and says that this was an act of faith (James 2:25, Hebrews 11:31).

But did God bless Rahab for telling a lie?

First, the Bible does not condemn or commend Rahab for telling the lie. Rahab is commended for receiving the spies in peace and her faith in the Lord.

Secondly, lying is clearly condemned throughout the Bible (Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:11; Proverbs 6:16-19; Ephesians 4:25; Revelation 21:8).

Thirdly, Rahab's case is not isolated. There are other examples in the Scriptures when men and women found themselves trapped between an obligation to the Lord, and the

demands of an evil circumstance. The midwives in (Exodus 1:15-21), Jael's deception (Judges 5:24-30; cf. 4:17-22), See also 2 Samuel 17:19-20, or when the Lord himself sent a "lying spirit" (1 Kings 22:22, 23).

Fourthly, not all the commandments of God are absolute. For example, we are commanded to obey our parents. But what if our parents demand something that is against God's word? Then we must disobey our parents and honour the Lord. We are to honour Christ more than father and mother (Matthew 19:29).

The same is true for civil authorities. We have an obligation to our government (Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1; 2 Peter 2:13). But, in the case of conflicting obligations, as the apostles discovered, "we ought to obey God, rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

There are times in rare and extraordinary circumstances, such as war or crime, for example, where we must defend the honour of

the Lord, and protect the innocent, rather than be a party to the evil doer. This was the situation in which Rahab found herself—her obligation was first of all to the Lord and to the safety and the cause of his people. To surrender the two spies to the king of Jericho would have been a sin against God.

PREACHER'S WORKSHOP

EXEGETICAL NOTES

(Notes on the text, words, and grammar)

- Rahab: Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:21-25
- The spies: Men (2:1, 3; 6:22), young men (6:23), also called “messengers” (Joshua 6:17, 22) which shows that they were being used by God not just for spying, but for the conversion of Rahab.
- Verse 1. Shittim: Josephus identifies this city as being about seven miles from Jordan. But Shittim was where Israel had “played the harlot” (Numbers 25:1-3) and the spies lodged in the house of a harlot in the enemy territory. God is showing Israel that victory is not because of their faithfulness or righteousness, but according to his mercy.
- Verse 7 “as far as the Jordan”

- Repetition – “view...Search out the land” (1, 1-3); “Hiding the spies” (4,6).
- Verse 11: “Lost heart” – these are people living under the sure judgment of God.
- Verse 11: she referred to the Lord as “the Lord your God.” Soon she will know him as her own.
- Verse 18 “come into the land” some translations have “the outskirts of the city”

PREACHING NOTES

(Points for explanation and application)

- While we believe in the sovereignty of God there must also be a wise strategy in the work of God. Jericho was a strategic city in the Jordan Valley, and the first city attacked. Two secret agents were sent out, the Israelites did not know and the King of Jericho did not know

- Why the prostitute's house? There was no strategic information. They learned more about the Lord in that visit than they did about Jericho, especially God's saving interest in Rahab.
- Not all the security and fortressing of the enemy can protect against the forward moving of the Lord's people. They had impregnable walls. But what they learned at Jericho had already been prophesied by Moses (Exodus 15:15-16).
- We need to move forward with the intelligence that God is closing in on the target, not us! (verse 8-11).
- The King of Jericho depended on the Jordan as a natural defense, but when the Red Sea happened all their security was undermined.
- Rahab had faith in God for her own salvation, but she also desired to see her family rescued.

QUESTIONS

Here are some questions you should ask as you prepare your sermon. They will help you focus on the most important matters. The text of Scripture holds many truths under the surface of the words, and as it relates to other parts of Scripture. It is the preacher's job to interrogate the text, as a police officer would interrogate a suspect, trying to get information.

1. What does the story teach about God?

God is merciful. Out of the ruins of Jericho, he saves Rahab and her family.

2. What does the story teach us about ourselves?

We (like the Israelites), are no different than Rahab for they played the harlot at Shechem (Numbers 25:1-3)

3. What does the story teach about Christ?
Salvation is through faith in the blood of the lamb, just like the Israelites.

4. What does this story tell us to do?

We are warned to flee from the wrath to come, to throw ourselves on the mercy of God, and enjoy the safety found among the people of God.

What would you add to these questions and answers?

APPLICATIONS

Application is an important part of every sermon. It is like driving a nail home to secure a secure place. Application is really showing the hearers how the Bible's teaching affects them personally. Show them what God wants them to do and how God wants them to change. Apply your sermon specifically to different kinds of people. Here is an example:

The Lost

God saves the worst of sinners. He does not choose people because they are any better than another person, nor does he reject

because he/she is any more sinful than another person.

The Rebellious

The people of Jericho were given many warnings, and evidence of the power of God. But they resisted the power of the living God and perished in the fall of the city.

Servants of God

God can use us as instruments of mercy in unusual and unexpected circumstances. The two men went out as spies, but God used them as messengers (Joshua 6:17).

Brothers and Sisters

We are commanded to receive those whom the Lord receives without prejudice (James 2:1-13). Rahab was received into the family of God and among the people of God (Joshua 6:25).

THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

Pastor Mark Rutuna

The story of Rahab sheds some light on God's plan of redemption. Rahab is a shining diamond in the history of redemption that glitters on the pages of the book of Joshua. The events recorded in Joshua 2:1-13 and 6:22-25 serve to demonstrate the depth and the distance that the Lord would go in his plan of redemption.

You can find these truths in the salvation of others in the Old Testament, and the New Testament makes them much clearer centuries later—the breaths and depths of God's love in salvation. Let's consider these details.

The Depth of God's Redemptive Plan

Joshua 2:1 identifies Rahab as a harlot. The Hebrew word used to describe her here is the usual word for the activity of a harlot or prostitute. It is used also of Tamar (Genesis

38:24) and the mother of Jephthah (Judges 11:1).

Why would God include a story of a harlot who repented and trusted him for deliverance? The reason was to show us the depths of His saving grace! He reaches out to the worst offenders and delivers them from their wretchedness.

By including a prostitute in the story of the Bible, the Lord shows us that no one is beyond the reach of His redeeming grace. His grace is deep, and it reaches to the deepest pits of vileness.

Like the hymn writer rightly observes, “Where sin runs deep His grace is more.” Harlots and other wickedly immoral individuals are not beyond the reach of God’s saving grace. This is love beyond measure.

The Distance of God’s Redemptive Plan

How far does the Lord’s rescue mission go? Who is it intended to reach? This story clearly

displays the Lord's plan for the Gentiles, he had room for them. Rahab was not part of the people of Israel, she was a Gentile and a Canaanite.

In Genesis 12:3, the Lord had promised that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham, and here we see his commitment to that plan. He displayed his works before Gentiles so that they too might look to him for salvation.

Rahab's statements, especially in Joshua 2:11 are full of trust and faith. This is a Gentile's confession to the greatness and uniqueness of the God of heaven over the Canaanite gods. It was a confession of her personal conviction, the abandonment of her sin and surrender to the majesty of the Lord.

Rahab's declaration of faith proved genuine by the fact that she helped Joshua's spies—this was an act of faith. It may be translated in full,

“Yahweh your God, He is God in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath” (2:11).

She was brought into the company of people of God, despite her Canaanite birth and her wicked occupation, clearly demonstrating the unfolding of the Lord’s promise to Abraham for the Gentiles.

HOLINESS AND THE LAW OF GOD

Dr. Joel Beeke

In the last issue (3.2, April-June) we considered the three uses of the Law. Remember, when we speak of “the law,” we are thinking of the Word of God, the Bible.

The law promotes holiness in three ways:

1. It restrains sin and promotes righteousness.
2. It disciplines, educates, convicts, and drives us outside of ourselves to Jesus Christ.
3. It becomes the rule of life for the believer.

In the Genevan Catechism (published in December 1545 to teach children) John Calvin asked the question “What is the rule of life which [God] has given us?” The answer Calvin gave was, “His law.”

Later, Calvin says that the law:

“shows the mark at which we ought to aim, the goal towards which we ought to press, that each of us, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon him, may endeavor to frame his life according to the highest rectitude [i.e. goodness], and, by constant study, continually advance more and more.”

In the first edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion, Calvin also writes about the law. He speaks of Christians as servants, wanting to do their master's will.

“Believers ... profit by the law because from it they learn more thoroughly each day what the Lord's will is like.... It is as if some servant, already prepared with complete earnestness of heart to commend himself to his master,

must search out and oversee his master's ways in order to conform and accommodate himself to them."

Also, Calvin speaks of the weakness of Christians and how the law acts as a goad:

"However much they may be prompted by the Spirit and eager to obey God, they are still weak in the flesh, and would rather serve sin than God. The law is to this flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to goad, stir, arouse it to work."

In the last edition of the Institutes (published in 1559), Calvin was more forceful about how believers profit from the law in daily reading and study.

First, he says, "here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the

nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it."

Secondly, he says, it causes "frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression."

In this way the saints are encouraged to press on to holiness. Calvin concludes. "For what would be less lovable than the law if, with [persisting] and threatening alone, it troubled souls through fear, and distressed them through fright?"

Notice how Calvin viewed the law primarily as a guide that encourages the believer to cling to God and obey him. This is another instance where Calvin differs from Luther.

For Luther, the law is primarily negative. It is closely linked with sin, death, or the devil.

Luther's interest in the law is mostly negative: it points out our failures and drives us to Christ.

By contrast, Calvin views the law primarily as a positive expression of the will of God. Law and love are not enemies, but friends and relatives. For Calvin, the believer follows God's law, not out of compulsory obedience, but out of grateful obedience.

Under the teaching of the Spirit, the law prompts gratitude in the believer, which leads to loving obedience and turns the believer from sin.

In other words, for Luther, the primary purpose of the law is to help the believer recognize and confront sin. For Calvin, the primary purpose of the law is to direct the believer to serve God out of love.

MOTIVATING REPENTANCE

Pastor Jonathan Bartlett

Counselors can overlook one of the most powerful motives for repentance. In our zeal to stress the filthiness and odiousness of sin, we can neglect what the Westminster Shorter Catechism calls the "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ" (WSC 87).

An unbalanced call to repentance can cause the sinner to see God as angry and condemning only. The sinner can be driven away from Christ rather than sweetly wooed to Him. But a proper focus on the law combined with a sight of God's mercy provides the biblical motive to repentance.

One practical example comes from my experience counseling men seeking to overcome the sin of pornography. A turning point for a few men has been seeing their sin in light of Christ's work on the cross. Not only does Christ's sacrifice for sin make their sin

appear far worse, Christ's cross encourages them that it is possible to overcome their sin. Christ died to deliver them from their sin.

Furthermore, focusing on God's mercy in Christ reorients conversation away from problem-solving one sin to reorienting their entire life to live for God.

Joel 2:13 provides an Old Testament example of encouraging repentance by focusing on God's mercy. In this verse, God reminds them of His character: "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." His character is the chief draw to repentance.

A New Testament example comes from Romans 2:4, where Paul reminds readers: "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." In each case, God sets a pattern for Christian counselling by drawing sinners to Himself through a display of His mercy.

The next time you call a sinner to repent, do it God's way – expose their sin by the law, then draw them to repentance by presenting God's mercy in Christ.

THE PASTOR AS A LEADER OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Pastor Tonny Karwa

How is the biblical concept of church leadership different from the secular models of leadership, such as a boss, CEO, or general manager or president?

This question is especially important in the African context where power is almost absolute. Let me suggest to you three ways in which pastoral leadership is different from our secular conceptualisation of leadership.

First, a pastor is a shepherd. He cares for the flock (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28). He feeds them on God's word and protects them from spiritual danger. He is intimately involved in the life and affairs of the flock. This type of relational leadership has been modeled for us by Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, (John 10:1-21, 1 Peter 5:4).

Second, the pastor is a servant. This demands great humility and love for the flock. A pastor does not lord it over the body of Christ but rather serves them (Luke 22:24-27; 1 Peter 5:3), washing their feet (John 13:12ff). Servant leadership means leading by example as opposed to being domineering (1 Peter 5:3). The posture of a servant is rolled-up-sleeves. It is the opposite of the posture of a boss or a CEO of a company. It is a posture of being ready to lay down your life for the sheep out of your great love for them.

Third, the pastor is “God’s steward” (Titus 1:7). A steward acts as a manager on behalf of the owner to whom he must ultimately give an account. A pastor does not own the flock under his care but stewards them on behalf of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd. He stewards the means of grace, the gifts bestowed on the church, and the opportunities in a local church for the good of the sheep and the glory of God.

A steward does not set any rules or standards but implements the ones already set. The most important quality in a steward is faithfulness to the master for whom he is working.

THE LEGACY OF AUGUSTINE

Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin

The ancient Church gives us three great gifts: the doctrine of the Trinity, the canon of the New Testament, and the works of the African pastor-theologian Augustine.

Augustine was born in the Roman Province of Numidia, in North Africa in the year 354 AD. His mother was a Christian. Augustine was converted at the age of 31 in August of 386. He was a good student with a brilliant mind, and soon he rose as a leader in the Church, a theologian and philosopher. He served as Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and died in 430 AD.

Some might be surprised to see the last in this list, but the truth of the matter is that so profound has been the influence of Augustine, that we who are heirs of western Christianity, are all Augustinians. We get an idea of his

impact when we realizes that 95% of his writing lived on after his death.

So, what is his theological legacy and how has he shaped us? Consider the legacy of Augustine in two major works: his *Confessions*, and his *On the Trinity*.

The Confessions

We know so much about Augustine because of his Confessions, which is actually one extended prayer of thanksgiving for the grace of God shown to him as a sinner.

Through the account of his life, Augustine also strongly establishes a theology and spirituality of grace. Augustinian theology and piety are strongly shaped by a view that recognises human depravity and therefore the necessity of sovereign grace for conversion. This focus on the sovereignty of divine grace is fully present in his Confessions, but in a non-argumentative form.

The Confessions also set forth a perspective on God that has had enormous influence on Western thought: God is a being of ultimate beauty.

At the very onset of his Christian life, Augustine was deeply concerned about the question of beauty: what is it? What is its impact on the human frame? In his Confessions he develops a vision of God's beauty which has captivated Christians for centuries.

The Trinity

Augustine's second major work is called On the Trinity, which clearly establishes the full deity of the Son and the Spirit from Scripture.

Most helpfully, Augustine properly distinguishes the persons of the Trinity and avoids modalism (the idea that God is one God, but presents himself in three different modes or ways). He avoided modalism because he emphasised the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal generation of the Spirit.

Then, the Augustinian conception of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son gives us a tremendous vision of the inner life of the Godhead as one ruled by love.

Not all of Augustine's thought is helpful—one thinks of his view of human sexuality—but there is so much that is, that we should never be ashamed to own this African theologian and acknowledge that our Christian Faith is profoundly Augustinian!

THE RESCUE OF RAHAB

Pastor Reggie Kimbro

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.
(Hebrews 11:31)

The rescue of Rahab from the city of Jericho is a remarkable illustration of the grace, providence, and the power of God. Jericho was a leading city among the Canaanites whom God had purposed to destroy.

The leaders of the city were set in their opposition to Israel, and Rahab was a harlot there. She pursued a sinful occupation in a notoriously sinful city. Yet God was pleased to meet her there and save her.

Rahab's views of God were very different from others in the city. While others in the city trusted in their strong city walls and continued in their ungodliness,

Rahab was moved in a different way by the reports of Israel's God. He had already overcome the Egyptians and two Canaanite kings.

Rahab was afraid of God's punishment against sin. She knew it was well deserved. While others continued in their rebellion Rahab turned to the God of Israel in repentance.

Rahab was moved by the knowledge that Israel's God was a God of compassion and grace. She came to see him as a God who would forgive and receive those who trusted in him. She believed that God was willing and able to save someone like her.

Rahab put her faith in the God of Israel when she hid the spies. It was by this same faith that she appealed to the spies to remember and rescue her and her family when God destroyed the city.

What an illustration this is of God's willingness to save the deepest of sinners in the most unexpected of places, and to be counted among the faithful (Hebrews 11:31).

He is willing to save all who will call upon Him. His grace reaches even to a harlot in a place like Jericho.

CONTRIBUTORS

- **Mark Rutuna** is married to Margaret with three children. Mark serves as deputy principal at the Shepherds Training College in Luwerro, Uganda.
- **Joel R. Beeke** is a minister of the Heritage Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA), and President of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, where he is also the professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics. He is the author of many books and articles.
- **Jonathan Bartlett** is the pastor of Sovereign Grace Community Church in Hughson, California.
- **Tonny Karwa** is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Kisumu, and a missionary with Heart Cry Missionary Society. Before his call to full-time ministry, Tonny studied Mechanical Engineering at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, and theology at Trinity Baptist College in Nairobi.
- **Michael A. G. Haykin** is the author of many books and articles. He is the Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kentucky, USA) and the Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies.
- **Reggie Kimbro** has been the pastor of Grace Free Presbyterian Church in Winston Salem, NC in America for over thirty years. He is married to Jan and they have three adult daughters.