

# God Protects His People

Joshua 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

SS Lesson for 06/19/2011

**Devotional Scripture:** Ps 34:11-22

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# Introduction

## **Overview and Approach to Lesson**

The lesson outline came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator. This week's lesson describes how **God Protects His People**. The **study's aim** is to show that God has all kinds of resources to protect His people. The **study's application** is to teach us that when we know that God is with us to protect us at all times, we have nothing to fear.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

#### *Providential Protection*

The chief of an American Indian tribe traveled many miles to see George Washington, the man he described as the “favorite of Heaven.” The year was 1770, and the chief’s assessment was based on the famous battle near the Monongahela River that took place on July 9, 1755, during the French and Indian War.

Approximately 1,400 troops under British General Edward Braddock were a few miles from Fort Duquesne (modern Pittsburg). They had crossed the river and were going up a ravine when an ambush force of French and Indians attacked. The battle lasted two hours. When it was over, the British had suffered more than 50 percent casualties. The casualties included every officer on horseback except one—a 23-year-old lieutenant colonel named George Washington.

The chief gave an account of the battle from his perspective. The British soldiers in red uniforms were easy targets for the French and the Indians from their places in trees, behind rocks, or other safe cover. As the battle progressed, the chief ordered his men to concentrate their fire on Washington, the only officer who was still on horseback. His horse was shot from under him twice, and both times he changed to horses from fallen officers. These were good marksmen, and they could not understand why the officer was not even wounded. The chief then did something strange: he ordered his men to stop firing, for he concluded that this man was under a “special protection of the Great Spirit.” After the battle, Washington examined a strange tear in a sleeve of his coat, discovering that it had been made by a bullet. He found three other holes in his coat. Bullets had gone through his coat, but the force of the bullets was spent, and they did not reach his body. Washington wrote that it was by the “all-powerful dispensations of Providence” that he had been protected. This account is thrilling, but it also raises questions. First, what is providence in such situations? It may be defined as ordinary happenings over a period of time in which the total impact is to fulfill God’s purpose in a remarkable way. No miracles are involved in acts of providence, for natural laws are not set aside by the supernatural. Acts of providence are sometimes called miracles, but there are differences that must be recognized. The current lesson is about some “haps” of history that are recorded in Joshua 2. Things just happened, but they worked to bring about God’s protection for key individuals who helped bring about the fulfillment of promises that God had made in prior centuries. The final effects are still in process today through Jesus Christ.

#### *Lesson Background*

Joshua 2:1 is the verse between the previous study and this one. Its basic content is that Joshua sent two men as spies to see the land and Jericho, and that they lodged in the house of a prostitute named Rahab. The verse deserves additional attention before beginning the commentary on the selected verses for today.

Rahab. Her occupation as a prostitute gives concern to many. As far back as Josephus (a first-century Jewish writer), attempts have been made to say that she was simply an innkeeper. That probably was one of the services that she offered. Two New Testament passages confirm that she was a prostitute: Hebrew 11:31 praises her for her faith, while James 2:25 states that she was justified by her works of receiving the spies and then sending them out another way (out the window on the wall, which was illegal in some ancient cities). Matthew 1:5 tells us that she was the mother of Boaz, the person who married Ruth in the book of Ruth. Rahab is therefore in the lineage of the Messiah. The spies may have gone to Rahab’s place because (1) strangers going to her home would be normal, (2) the location of her home on the wall could facilitate an emergency escape, and (3) the Lord led them there because she was an astute individual who was

developing a faith in the God of Israel. The timing. The careful student will recall that Joshua had said that Israel would cross the Jordan in three days (Joshua 1:11). Rahab instructed the spies to hide for three days after they left her house, and they followed her advice (2:16, 22). This could make Joshua's statement seem erroneous. Scholars have suggested various ways to resolve the problem. Let us offer two of those proposals here. Proposal #1: The events in Joshua 2 are a "meanwhile, back at the ranch" situation; it is possible to translate the primary verb of Joshua 2:1 to say that Joshua had sent the spies earlier. Proposal #2: Two of the three-day periods mentioned in the early chapters of Joshua (1:11; 3:2) may be combined, thus being the same period of time; the day to move the nation from a large base camp to the edge of the Jordan does not count. The spies. According to Joshua 6:23, the spies were "young." The fact that the Jordan was in flood stage (Joshua 3:15; 4:18) dictated that the strength of young men was necessary to attempt a crossing. They probably went upstream to a ford and made their way across. Some students suggest that after crossing the Jordan the spies (1) made their way to the west in order to approach Jericho from the opposite side, (2) wore garments that did not reflect Israelite attire, and (3) pretended to be merchants with wares to sell. There are 2 spies this time, compared with the 12 spies who came into the land some 39 years before (Numbers 13). Previously, it was the Lord who commanded that the spies be sent; this time it seemed to be Joshua's decision. Perhaps he had learned that you can have too many spies and opinions, but he still wanted to know more about Jericho, its fortifications, and its people.

### **From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

There are many wonderful things about life, and when God chooses to surprise us with special blessings, we always rejoice over them. He wants His children to have joy, even in the midst of trying times. During those times, we still have the reassurance that He is in complete control and that things do work for the best for those who love Him and are called by Him (Rom. 8:28). Only mature believers, however, are able to find that kind of joy when they are going through great difficulty, for their faith has been tried before. In spite of the many blessings of life, there is always present with us a sense of uncertainty about the future. One of the uncertainties we may face is a move from one location to another or from one situation to something else. We usually do what we can to research the possible outcomes before making the change. Joshua and the children of Israel were waiting near the Jordan River for God to lead them across it and into the land of Canaan. There were many unknowns; so Joshua determined to do some research ahead of time. We have all felt fear at times in our lives. Fear is something that can cripple us. Satan knows that and uses it to his advantage to put us in a state of paralysis. We see such paralyzing fear in our little children when they have to go to the dentist or get their first haircut. They do not want to move away from the comfort and protection of their parents. Even as adults, we deal with fear and are often in need of protection. This is exactly what our God offers His children. When God steps in, fear is replaced by courage. God protects His children at all times; we simply need to rely on Him. Our lesson this week shows us how God used a Gentile woman to protect His own people.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **God Protects through Providing Shelter (Joshua 2:3-9)**

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."

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.

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 because of you.

### **Shelter from those who seek our harm (3)**

*Shelter from harm of weapons and accusations (Isa 54:17)*

17 no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

*God is our shelter (Ps 32:7)*

7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

*Shelter from physical danger, spoken impacts and famine (Job 5:20-22)*

20 In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. 21 You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. 22 You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth.

*Shelter that only God can provide (Ps 18:2)*

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

*Shelter in the form of refuge in God (Ps 46:1-3)*

46 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

*Shelter from calamity (Prov 14:32)*

32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

*Shelter from evildoers (Ps 14:6)*

6 You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge.

### **Shelter through unusual sources (4-7)**

*Shelter from a vine (Jonah 4:5-6)*

5 Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine.

*Shelter and food from a tree and an angel (1 Kings 19:3-6)*

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel

touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

*Shelter and food from a ravine and a raven (1 Kings 17:2-6)*

2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." 5 So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

*Shelter and food from a starving widow and son (1 Kings 17:10-14)*

10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." 12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die." 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.""

**Shelter because of the fear of the Lord (8-9)**

*The fear of the Lord will allow safe passage (Exodus 15:13-16)*

13 "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. 14 The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. 15 The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; 16 terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone until your people pass by, O Lord, until the people you bought pass by.

*The fear of the Lord will cause panic and defeat of foes (1 Sam 14:13-15)*

13 Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. 14 In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. 15 Then panic struck the whole army — those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties — and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.

*The fear of the Lord will cause foes to run away (2 Kings 7:5-7)*

5 At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, not a man was there, 6 for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" 7 So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.

*The fear of the Lord will crush foes (2 Chron 14:11-13)*

11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." 12 The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, 13 and Asa and his

army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the Lord and his forces.

### **God Protects through Providing a Way of Escape (Joshua 2:15-16)**

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.  
16 And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way."

#### **Escape through careful planning (15)**

*Careful plans that seek those whom God has given an instructed tongue (Isa 50:4-5)*

4 The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. 5 The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

*Careful plans that seek advice at the right time (Prov 15:23)*

23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!

*Careful plans that are careful from whom they get advice (Ps 1:1)*

1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

*Careful plans that have many godly advisers (Prov 15:22)*

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

*Careful plans that commit ourselves to God (Prov 16:3)*

3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

#### **Escape through following instructions (16)**

*Following God's instructions through the Scriptures that provide knowledge and encouragement (Rom 15:4)*

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

*God's instructions and knowledge are worth more than gold (Prov 8:10)*

10 Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold,

*Following God's instructions to ensure of going the right way (Isa 30:21)*

21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

*Following God's instructions so that God will make the way lighted and smooth (Isa 42:16)*

16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

*Following God's instructions in every detail (1 Sam 15:14-26)*

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" 15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest." 16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied. 17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. 18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.' 19 Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?" 20 "But I did obey the Lord," Saul said. "I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. 21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal." 22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king." 24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. 25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord." 26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!"

*Following God's instructions in spite of setbacks and the complaints of others (Ex 6:9-12)*

9 Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. 10 Then the Lord said to Moses, 11 "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country." 12 But Moses said to the Lord, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?"

### **God Protects through Renewing Faith (Joshua 2:22-24)**

22 They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them.

23 So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them.

24 And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

### **Renewed faith through obedience (22)**

*Obedience leads to knowing God and knowing God leads to godly character (1 John 2:3-6)*

3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

*Obedience means that God lives in us and God living in us means a godly character (1 John 3:24)*

24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

*Obedience means that we love God and loving God is the right motive of a godly character (1 John 5:3)*

3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

*Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

*Obedience that proves the reality of ourselves (2 Cor 9:13)*

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

*Obedience that leads to perfection (Heb 5:7-9)*

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

### **Renewed faith that can be a witness (23)**

*A witness as a child of light who displays the fruit of truth (Eph 5:8-10)*

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.

*A witness of God's truth as we understand God's grace (Col 1:4-6)*

4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

*A witness as one who rightly divides the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15)*

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

*A witness to the truth so that those who oppose God will repent and come to know God (2 Tim 2:25)*

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

### **Renewed faith through deliverance (24)**

*Faith through deliverance that has been proven (2 Cor 1:10)*

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

*Faith that trusts God and His deliverance (Ps 78:21-22)*

21 When the Lord heard them, he was very angry; his fire broke out against Jacob, and his wrath rose against Israel, 22 for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.

*Faith through deliverance so that we can comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

*Faith through deliverance that is part of the new covenant (Heb 9:15)*

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

*Faith through deliverance that leads to sonship (Rom 8:15)*

15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

*Faith through deliverance to receive answered prayers (Matt 21:21-22)*

21 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

The introductory comments about a remarkable event in George Washington's early career stimulate other questions. Why were some troops killed and some spared? That question has no definitive answer. Could God have spared all of them? To ask this question is to answer it: he could have! Habakkuk was told that the just shall live by faith, regardless of what happens. Paul repeats this (Romans 1:17). It is not always essential to understand, but it is always necessary to trust God. What about headlines that tell of Christians who are killed by religious extremists, or the Christian couple brutally murdered in their home, or Christian aid workers who are raped and murdered, or the fact that (according to tradition) all the apostles but John suffered death as martyrs? The Bible does not give explanations for such questions. We may only evaluate the situations and then give opinions. First, there is nothing wrong with waking up in Heaven. Second, it does seem that in some circumstances God moves to bring about his desired results by preserving some lives but not others at specific points in history. Third, it is observed that the levels of faith for the people involved differ and may not be the determining factor. Even so, may we all have the faith of Rahab!

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

Joshua and the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan in the sense of gaining control over the entire region and its inhabitants. This week's text confirms the same truth in words spoken to Joshua. We can hear the excitement in the speakers' voices as they reported to their commander, "All the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." Who would not be thrilled to offer such a report on a successful military campaign? Hold on just a moment! an alert reader may be thinking. These words were not part of a summary report of just completed actions. When they were uttered, the campaign had not yet taken place; it still lay before Joshua and his people in its entirety! The declaration of the speakers here was not a review of accomplished fact. It was a statement of faith. It was indeed a summary, but it was a summary of what was about to take place under the sovereign control of the Lord. These words, of course, were spoken by the two men whom Joshua had sent into Jericho on a reconnaissance mission some three days earlier (Josh. 2:1; cf. vs. 22). The experiences of these two on their mission are covered in the exposition; what we are focusing on here is the evaluation they expressed upon their return. It was a wholehearted endorsement of the campaign, a rock-solid declaration of faith in what God had promised. It had to have been a tremendous boost to the nation's morale. But why had Joshua felt the need to send in spies in the first place? He already had the

unambiguous promise from the Lord that the land would be given to them. Was that not enough? Not only that, but he himself had been part of a similar spy mission thirty-eight years earlier that had ended in disaster for the nation. He had been joined by only one other in opposing the utterly defeatist and disheartening majority report of the ten spies, a report that drained the people of their courage and faith and kept a whole generation from seeing their inheritance. Why risk potentially repeating the debacle? Space prohibits looking into the many possible reasons, but one may be especially noteworthy. We must keep in mind that the first spy mission was God's idea; He commanded Moses to send the twelve spies (Num. 13:1-3). Why? What purpose might God have had in doing this? Just as with Joshua, the Lord had already promised Moses and the Israelites that He would give them the land. They had His many declarations on that point. One of the things He may have been after in sending the twelve spies was to give key individuals the opportunity to affirm faith in His promises. The spies would see the obstacles, but they might also see the enormous potential for seeing God's promises fulfilled through them. Sadly, only two saw the latter, and the nation refused to see anything but looming catastrophe. Their lack of faith was revealed in the starkest terms. Before the conquest began, God may have wanted to provide another opportunity for men to express faith and encourage it. This time the spies rose to the challenge and gave their people a ringing testimony of faith and encouragement. Will we do the same?

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. Little escapes others' knowledge; and nothing escapes God's knowledge (Josh. 2:3)
2. Even immature faith, if it is true faith, is willing to take risks for God (vs. 4)
3. God can protect and reward those who put themselves in jeopardy for His sake (vs. 5-6)
4. God is at work, even among our enemies (vs. 7-9)
5. God has placed us exactly where He wants us so that He can use us for His glory (vs. 15-16)
6. God uses people to accomplish His purposes, but our greatest gratitude always belongs to Him (vs. 22-24)

### ***Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

Even though the Lord had promised Joshua and Israel success in taking possession of the land of Canaan, they still had to carry out the military campaign. And this required some preparation. The first obstacle in the way was the city of Jericho, just beyond the Jordan River. It was a fortified city ruled by a king, and it stood in central Canaan at the entrance to the Judean hills. Joshua considered it important for military purposes to acquire greater knowledge of Jericho; so he sent two spies secretly into the city.

#### **Divine protection (Josh. 2:3-9, 15-16)**

The two spies entered Jericho and went into the house of Rahab, a harlot (vs. 1). This might seem an odd place to go for men sent on a mission for God's people, but it was one place they would be welcomed and would not raise undue suspicion. Suspicion arose, nonetheless, as the king heard of their presence (Josh. 2:2). It soon became clear that God had providentially led them to Rahab for their own protection. When the king's men arrived seeking the spies, Rahab told them the men had been there but had left already. The truth was that she had hidden them under stalks of flax she had laid on her roof (vss. 4-6). On the basis of her story, the soldiers left Jericho in pursuit of the spies. Much has been said about Rahab's lie and whether it was justified. We must remember that having been raised in a pagan culture, she probably did not think twice about lying. It is her faith, not her lie, that is commended in the New Testament (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). While Rahab's knowledge of God was limited, it is clear she had some faith. This became even more evident when she later joined herself to the Hebrew people (Josh. 6:25). At this point, she was convinced by what she had seen and heard that the Lord had given the land to Israel (2:9). The terror of Israel had fallen on "all the inhabitants of the land" in fulfillment of God's promise (cf. Deut. 2:25; 11:25). In light of this, Rahab sent the spies out secretly, telling them where to hide until their pursuers gave up the hunt (Josh. 2:15-16).

**Divine assurance (Josh. 2:22-24)**

Had the two spies failed to return, it might have brought great fear upon the Israelites. But God had seen to it, through the providential encounter with Rahab, that they did return to Joshua. The report of the spies to Joshua makes it clear that God had another reason for leading them to Rahab. Her words had brought them encouragement that they now passed on to Joshua. Her words assured Israel that the Lord had prepared the way by bringing terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan. God's promises should be enough for us, but He knows our weaknesses. He often brings us assurances and reassurances that He is working to fulfill His promises. Years before, the Israelites had been terror-stricken when they heard of the might of the Canaanites. Now God had graciously shown them that the Canaanites trembled in fear before them. The name of the Lord had made them tremble. They had heard about all His mighty works on Israel's behalf.