

# Using the Unusable

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Modern society gives us the ability to discard things that we see as flawed. If we bring a new item home from the store, say a new grill or a piece of clothing, only to discover that there is a blemish or imperfection of some kind, we simply return it to the store and replace it with one to our liking. Never mind that the item may still be useful, we want it to be perfect! It is one thing to function this way in regard to things but quite another to do so in regard to people. Yet sometimes our yearning for flawlessness in things carries over to our expectations of people, and sometimes it can cause a person to reflect on his past and wonder whether God can use him in His service. Perhaps we read about the great men and women of faith, then we look at our own lives and wonder how we could every be as they were, or how God could ever love or use someone who is so flawed. But it is imperative to remember that the heroes of faith were still humans and, like us, were imperfect. Yet God still loved them and used them in His service. There are four such people listed for us in the first section of Matthews's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-6).

Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. God promised to bless him with a son and subsequently bless all of humankind through that son (Gen. 12:1-4). Through Abraham's lineage came Christ, and all of those who are Christians are his spiritual descendants (Gal. 3:29). Paul even devoted an entire chapter to his life and presented him as exhibit "A" of what true biblical faith looks like (Rom. 4). However, Abraham was not a perfect man. Immediately after God's instructions to him in Genesis 12, he traveled into Egypt and lied to Pharaoh about Sarah (Gen. 13), and he did the same thing in Genesis 20 to Abimelech. In Genesis 16 he cooperated with his wife in a plan to violate the sanctity of their home by lying with Hagar in order to try and help God's plan to have a son. That decision would reap negative fruit for generations to come.

Rahab was instrumental in the victory that God's people had over Jericho. She hid the spies on the roof of her house in order to save their lives. In the New Testament she is described as a woman of faith—"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:31), and an example of an obedient faith—"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works." (Jas. 2:25). Yet this woman was involved in what most people consider one of the most heinous sins imaginable—she was a harlot.

Ruth is the great example of loyalty that we see in the book bearing her name. She refused to leave her mother in law after the death of her husband but instead reaffirmed her faithfulness to her (Ruth 1:16). She would later marry her kinsman redeemer, Boaz, and would be the great-grandmother of the sweet singer of Israel, David. But Ruth was a Moabite, and Deuteronomy 23:3 forbade Moabites from even coming near the temple of the Lord.

David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). As a young man he killed the giant, Goliath. He was the greatest king that Israel ever knew, he wrote numerous psalms, and it was through his lineage that God promised the Messiah would come and would sit upon his throne forever (2 Sam. 7). Nevertheless, as great a man as David was, one of the most memorable occasions of his life was committing adultery with Bathsheba and subsequently arranging the murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Sam. 11-12).

The bible speaks highly of each of these individuals. It tells us about their faithfulness to God and their willingness to spend and be spent for His cause. But it also tells us that, just like us, they were human and were flawed. But that did not mean that God could not use them. Rather, He was patient with them as they worked to overcome their deficiencies to His glory. Abraham lied to Pharaoh because of fear but later offered Isaac upon the altar with full confidence that God would resurrect him (Heb. 11:19). David sinned greatly but his greatness is measured in that he dealt with his sins properly (Ps. 51). Rahab was a harlot, and Ruth was a gentile, but both are known for their faithfulness and, like Abraham and David, have a place in the genealogy of the Lord. Each of these serves as an excellent example to us that regardless of the past God loves all people (John 3:16), and through obedience to His will He can use anyone in His service to His glory. No one is unusable.