



COURAGEOUS #2: From Outcast to Family

Text: Joshua 2:1-24, 6:25

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The Bible is a book of real people, real life. And even more of a marvel is how God takes the broken messiness of our lives and brings unimaginable good from it all. That's what we're going to see in the broken, messy life of Rahab from Joshua 2.

1. Have you ever struggled with the idea that God wants you and can do amazing things through you for His purposes? Describe that experience. What is it that makes you doubt your worth to God?
2. **Read Joshua 2:1-24 & 6:25, Hebrews 11:31, and Matthew 1:1-16.** Rahab was used by God to protect the Israelite spies. Later she was grafted into the family of God and she is even a part of Jesus' family tree! What is your reaction to see a prostitute like Rahab used by God? What does this teach us about God's love?
3. In what ways do you relate to Rahab's story? How have you seen God's inclusion displayed in your life? What does God's grace mean for *you*? (See Study Deeper for more on God's amazing grace.)
4. Dan talked about how the spies were used by God to show that God was interested in Rahab. How can we be those people? Brainstorm a list of at least three ideas for each of the following categories, and then commit to at least one that you are going to put into practice:
 - a. Yourself as an individual –
 - b. Your home (your family, your spouse, your kids, your roommates, etc.) –
 - c. Your Grow Group -

Challenge: True faith involves *action*. What step do you need to take to *show* that your trust God?

Prayer: Pair up with someone in your Grow Group and share and pray for each of the following points:

- What is causing you to doubt God's love and care for you and/or that you can be used for God's purposes? *Pray for belief in the truth of God's love, as evidenced by Rahab's story.*
- Who is a person or a people group "on the fringes" you feel called to reach out to, and what can you do show them God's love? *Pray for obedience and follow through.*
- What step do you need to take to demonstrate your trust in God? *Pray for an active faith.*

STUDY DEEPER

Does Grace Still Amaze You?

Years ago, I spoke at a large event where the vocalist sang one of my favorite songs, “Amazing Grace.” But I was taken aback when I heard the first line: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a soul like me.” The word soul was substituted for the word wretch. Why? Because the word wretch is considered by some to be demeaning to human beings.

I couldn't help but think of John Newton, the writer of the song. He was an immoral slave trader and blasphemer — a man who knew he was a wretch and who had wept over the depth of his sins. Only because he understood that fact so profoundly could he then understand why God's grace to him was so utterly amazing. And hence the immortal song he bequeathed to all of us.

Grace doesn't minimize or ignore the awful reality of our sin. Grace emphasizes the depths of sin by virtue of the unthinkable price paid to redeem us from it. Paul said if men were good enough, “then Christ died for no purpose” (Galatians 2:21). If we don't come to grips with the hideous reality of our own sin, God's grace won't ever seem amazing.

His Call to Sinners

God's word tells us that Christ died for utterly unworthy people (Romans 5:7–8). The fact that he died for us is never given in Scripture as a proof of our value as wonderful people. Rather, it is a demonstration of his unfathomable and unearned love. So unfathomable that he would die for rotten people, wretches like you and me, to free us from our sin.

Because grace is so incomprehensible to us, we instinctively smuggle in conditions so we won't look so bad and God's offer won't seem so counterintuitive. By the time we're done qualifying the gospel, we're no longer unworthy and powerless. We're no longer wretches. And grace is no longer grace.

The worst thing we can teach people is that they're good without Jesus. The truth is, God doesn't offer grace to good people, any more than doctors offer lifesaving surgery to healthy people. Jesus said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32).

Our Lord also said, “To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment” (Revelation 21:6). Without cost to us, but at unimaginable cost to himself — a cost that will be visible for eternity as we behold his nail-scarred hands and feet (John 20:24–29). Bonhoeffer was right: grace is free, but it is not cheap.

Life-Changing Grace

You and I weren't merely sick in our sins; we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1). That means I'm not just unworthy of salvation; I'm utterly incapable of earning it. Corpses can't raise themselves from the grave. What a relief to realize that my salvation is completely the result of God's grace. It cannot be earned by good works.

True grace recognizes and deals with sin in the most radical and painful way: Christ's redemption. There's only one requirement for enjoying God's grace: being broken and knowing it. That's why Jesus said, "Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!" (Matthew 5:3, GNT)

Our justification by faith in Christ satisfies the demands of God's holiness by exchanging our sins for Christ's righteousness (Romans 3:21–26). When Jesus saves us, we become new creatures in him (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now we can draw upon God's power to overcome evil. We start seeing sin for what it really is: bondage, not freedom.

The old summary is correct: God's children have been saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, and we will be saved from the presence of sin. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are all grounded solidly in exactly the same place: God's grace.

God's Grace Hunts Sin

The grace of Jesus isn't an add-on or makeover that enhances our lives. It causes a radical transformation – from being sin-enslaved to being righteousness-liberated. Paul writes of the life-transforming and sin-overcoming power of grace: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives" (Titus 2:11–12).

Don't ever tell yourself you may as well go ahead and sin since God will forgive you. This cheapens grace. Grace that trivializes sin is not true grace. Paul makes that clear: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1–2).

John Piper says, "Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin. Grace is power, not just pardon." So while God forgives when we sincerely confess (1 John 1:9), we prove that sincerity by taking necessary steps to avoid temptation. As Jesus said, "You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act" (Matthew 7:16, NLT).

No sin is small that crucified Christ. Sin matters, yet grace has power over sin, offering not only forgiveness but also transformed character (Galatians 5:22–23). Every sin pales in comparison to God's grace to us in Christ (Romans 5:20–21).

Proclaiming God's Offer of Grace

There is one sense in which God's grace is unconditional – we don't deserve it. Yet in his kindness he offers it to us. But in another sense it is conditional, in that in order to receive it we must repent, ask forgiveness, and place our faith in him. This is a paradox – an apparent (but not actual) contradiction. If we see God as the one who does the work of convicting us and drawing us to repentance, this helps. We did not merit salvation.

But even if we fail to understand this paradox of conditional and unconditional grace, I think God calls upon us to believe it and live in it. Sinclair Ferguson says, "The spiritual life is lived between two

polarities: our sin and God's grace. The discovery of the former brings us to seek the latter; the work of the latter illuminates the depths of the former and causes us to seek yet more grace."

When we're acutely aware of our own sins, we'll proclaim and exemplify God's "good news of happiness" (Isaiah 52:7). We'll do so not with a spirit of superiority but with the contagious excitement of a sinner saved by grace – one person rescued from starvation sharing bountiful food and drink with others. We'll face each day and each person we see with humility, knowing that we too still desperately need God's grace – every bit as much as those we're offering it to.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/does-grace-still-amaze-you>