

Lesson 2**Surprised *by* Grace**

- This week/ study 2 of most fascinating stories = In book of Joshua
 - discover relevance to our faith today
- Second generation = Israel = standing at edge of Promised Land
 - at border of Canaan = for / second time
- One would think = God's promise of giving land to Israelites
 - did not require any effort from them = YET
- Assurance of divine support= does not override human responsibility
- Expectations run high = but last time Israel was at border
 - and had same task = resulted in an abysmal failure
- Still = God's grace = infinite possibilities to surprise us

Memory Text: **Hebrews 11:31** "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace"

- We've all sighed, "*Why did I do this again?*"— haven't we?
- History repeats itself—and so do we
- Humanity has pattern = stumbling/ falling/ faltering
- But, in "covenant relationship w/ Christ" = our story doesn't end w/failure = always leans toward redemption

Sunday**Second Chance**

- Israel stood again at threshold of Promised Land = edge of promise
- Bitter memory of first disastrous encounter = **Numbers 13–14**
 - Spies sent to Canaan returned w/fear rebellion followed
- 40 years lost because of unbelief = 40 years of wandering
- Would this be different? Joshua determined not to repeat
- **Joshua 2:1** sent two spies from Acacia Grove [Hebrew shi-TEEM] to assess situation: defenses / morale of inhabitants / lay of the land
- God's promises were sure = but human cooperation still mattered

- Faith did not eliminate responsibility
- Trusting God meant doing their part w/prayerful diligence
- Spies went—God surprised them w/grace--found refuge in house of harlot = Rahab / whose past was a tangle of brokenness
 - By worldly standards = an unlikely candidate for grace
 - Yet Heaven saw in her = heart open to faith
 - **James / Johnny will cover her story**
- Hebrews 11:31 calls her by name among faithful = Amazing grace
- Place where spies were sent from—Shittim[**shi-TEEM**]
 - brought its own heavy memories
- **Numbers 25** It was there / Israel once fell into idolatry/ immorality = seduced by Moabite women at Balaam's cunning instigation
- At Shittim / grievously broke covenant w/God = again become place of defeat?
- Tension was real = would Israel / poised once more to enter land, repeat sins of the past? Or would grace write a new story?
- We face same tension today = How often do we, standing at the edge of new beginnings = feel haunting pull of past failures?
- How tempting to believe = forever defined by our worst moments
- Yet grace—surprising, relentless grace—says otherwise
- In Christ, every Shittim can become = stepping stone to Canaan
 - Every failure can be turned = into a testimony
- Consider Peter = brash / passionate / devoted
 - Yet = in moment of crisis = became a denier of Christ
 - Three times = he disowned the One he loved most
- **John 21:15–17** After His resurrection = Jesus met Peter w/question, not an accusation: **“Do you love Me?”**
- 3 times Peter denied--3 times Jesus invited him to reaffirm his love
- Grace not only forgave Peter—it reinstated him to ministry

- Israel's second chance / Rahab's redemption / Peter's restoration—each paints same breathtaking picture: **God is a God of NEW BEGINNINGS = second chances—and third, and fourth, and beyond.**
 - **Ephesians 2:8** “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”
 - Grace / not earned / not deserved
 - Grace = is given because of who God is / not who we are
 - **Grace = power of a New Beginning**
 - Rahab's life reminds us = no one is beyond / reach of grace
 - Israel's second march toward Canaan reminds us = nations—even spiritual communities—can be given new opportunities
 - Peter's restoration reminds us = personal failures do not have the final word over our lives
 - Beauty of grace = not only pardons / but empowers
 - Rahab did not remain Rahab the harlot
 - she became = part of Christ's lineage (Matthew 1:5).
 - Peter did not remain fearful denier
 - he became = bold preacher at Pentecost
 - Israel, thru faith/obedience = would finally inherit Promised Land
 - **Grace and Responsibility** = tempting to think because grace = gift
 - We have no role to play
 - Book of Joshua reminds us
 - **Divine assurance = doesn't eliminate = human effort**
 - God promised Israel the land=but they still had to march/ fight/trust
 - Likewise, God promises us victory over sin—but we must walk forward in obedience, empowered by His Spirit.
- 2 Peter 3:18** grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- If God has given us MULTIPLE **SECOND CHANCES**
 - what about those around us?
- Are we willing to extend same mercy to others that God has so freely given to us?
- To be recipients of grace = is to be agents of grace
 - extend invitation of new beginnings to
 - the broken / wounded / even to those who have hurt us

Conclusion: Surprised by Grace

- As we have looked at
 - Israel = poised once more at edge of promise
 - Rahab = opening her heart to new future
 - Peter = rise from ashes of denial
- REMEMBER: Grace still surprises restores / calls us forward
 - No matter how many times we have failed
 - No matter how heavy / past weighs on our shoulders
 - **God's grace is bigger**
- Right now = God's grace invites you to believe again
 - to hope again = to step forward again
- Will you trust the God of second chances?

NEXT WEEK = LESSON 3 = MEMORIALS OF GRACE