

My Favorite Thing About JUDGES

Judges 2:16-18

April 17, 2021

JC RYLE: Read the Bible with CHRIST constantly in view. The whole Book is about Him. Look for Him on every page. He is there. If you fail to see Him there, you need to read that page again.

Today we find ourselves in the book of Judges. We tend to ignore Judges for the same reason we ignore Numbers..... There's lots of bloodshed and judgment, but it's also full of grace, that's right, **GRACE**.

And that's my favorite thing about the book of **JUDGES** --- **GRACE** – the free and unmerited favor of God.

- **Ellen White {AG 10.2}:** We should never have learned the meaning of this word "**grace**" had we not fallen.... Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us.... Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

Before we dive into my favorite thing, we have a question to ask: Why is there so much judgment in Judges?

We must start with the wilderness wandering. At the beginning of the journey, God had declared that He would be their God and they would be His people:

- **Exodus 6:7** - I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

AND the people promised to obey:

- **Exodus 24:7** - Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "**We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.**"

They were not particularly successful.

Remember Ellen Whites comments {PP 292-293}: They **forgot** --- They **forgot** --- They **forgot** --- They **forgot** --- They **forgot!!!**

God gave instructions and emblems to keep Him – their **Redeemer** and **Sustainer** – first and foremost in their minds and at the end of Joshua we read:

- **Joshua 24:14-18** - "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.... ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."
- ¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

HOWEVER, when Joshua died, Israel's connection to God went on life support.... They rejected Him as their **redeemer, leader, defender, sustainer, etc.** They committed spiritual adultery by pursuing the gods of the nations around them.

- **Judges 2:10** - After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

They had failed to "**tell it to their children.**"

There are 4 verses scattered throughout Judges that give us an indication of the things to come:

- **Judges 17:6** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
- **Judges 18:1** - In those days Israel had no king.
- **Judges 19:1** - In those days Israel had no king.
- **Judges 21:25** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

The people willingly chose to worship other gods. They willingly chose to no longer serve God and did what was right in their own eyes. They didn't want Him anymore --- He had outlived His usefulness --- so, God respected their wishes and stepped aside – withdrawing His protection - {See Romans 1:20-24}, AND BAD THINGS HAPPENED.

Judges 2:10-18

- Israel did evil
- God withdrew His protection.
- Israel was oppressed and eventually begged God to deliver them.
- God raised up a judge – **EVERYTIME**.
- When the judge died, the people went back to worshipping other gods.

Practically the entire book is a tale of Rebellion – Withdrawal – Crying – Redemption {wash-rinse-repeat} and that's where **GRACE** comes in:

Judges 3:7-9 (Othniel)

- The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
- He sold them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia (8 years)
- The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
- The Lord raised up **Othniel** to deliver them (40 years of peace) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Judges 3:12-30 (Ehud)

- The sons of Israel once again did evil in the sight of the Lord
- The Lord strengthened Eglon King of Moab (18 years)
- The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
- The Lord raised up **Ehud** to deliver them (80 years of peace) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Judges 4:1-5:31 (Deborah & Barak)

- The sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord
- The Lord gave them into the hand of Jabin, King of Canaan (20 years)
- The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
- The Lord raised up **Deborah and Barak** to deliver them (40 years of peace) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Judges 6:1-8:28 (Gideon)

- The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
- The Lord gave them into the hands of Midian (7 years)
- Sons of Israel cried to the Lord:

Judges 6:7-10 - When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian, ⁸ he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹ I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."

- The Lord raised up **Gideon** to deliver them (40 years of peace) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Judges 8:22-34 - ... Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.... No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god and ³⁴ did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.

Judges 10:6-11:33 (Jephthah)

- The sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord
 - They forsook God and served Baal & Ashtaroth and the gods of: Aram, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, Philistines
- The Lord sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon (18 years)

- The sons of Israel cried to the Lord:

Judges 10:10-16 -Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals." ¹¹ The LORD replied, "When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹² the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands? ¹³ But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!" ¹⁵ But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." ¹⁶ Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.

- The Lord raised up a **Jephthah** to deliver them (31 years of peace between 4 judges) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Now we come to the story of Samson - Judges 13:1-16:31 – which is really a parable regarding Israel itself:

- The sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord
- The Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years
- The Lord raised up **Samson** who judged for 20 years (not the shiniest penny) = **GRACE** – unmerited favor

Samson was set aside by God even before his birth {Judges 13} and he had everything he needed to accomplish the task God had given him and he was not someone to be messed with:

- **Judges 14:5-6** - He killed a lion with his bare hands.
- **Judges 15:14-15** - He wiped out 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey
- **Judges 16:2-3** - He uprooted a city gate, carrying it nearly 40 miles away.

Samson was unique, distinctive, special. Israel **NEEDED** a hero and God intended to use Samson, as He did Gideon and Jephthah and Deborah and Barak, to liberate Israel from the Philistines. Samson's strength was not intended to be used for his own purposes, but for the deliverance of Israel and for the glory of God. However:

- He took what he wanted
- He was controlled by lust
- When denied he exacted revenge, leaving carnage and death in his path.
- He broke his vows to God

He believed that he was untouchable and that he could do whatever he wanted without consequence **BECAUSE** he was special – **BECAUSE** he was set apart – and that became his downfall.

Judges 16:20 - He awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

Samson now found himself in unfamiliar territory – he was weak. He lost his hair and his eyesight and his freedom and his pride was shattered.

What he had refused to learn in plenty he would learn in hardship.

What's amazing about Samson's story is that in spite of his colossal failure, **when he repented, God restored him AND his strength = GRACE – unmerited favor.**

He finally did, at the end of his life, what God had intended for him to do all through his life, break the hold of the Philistines.

This would have been a hopelessly tragic story if it had ended there – but it didn't because **Samson is mentioned among the heroes of the faith!**

Hebrews 11:32-34 - And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, **Samson**, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Why is Samson in the faith chapter? Because he put his faith in God's faithfulness. He leaned in to the Grace of God.

The book of Judges is a lesson in **GRACE**. Even though Israel **REPEATEDLY** rejected God, **EVERYTIME** they cried to Him, He responded by sending a deliverer – **EVERY----TIME!**

Just like the Israelites, just like Samson, we often stray intentionally from God – we do what is right in our own eyes – and bad things happen. Yet, God is there, waiting for His prodigals to turn around and come back to Him. He is eager to once again redeem and sustain = **GRACE – unmerited favor**.

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