



“Breaking the Cycle with Grace”

Lesson 6: Salvation of a Patient God (Part 5) and the Confusion of a Depraved People

February 11

Introduction



Agree/Disagree: There is always a reason for sin and therefore we can make sense of why someone behaves the way they do.

Tim Hawkins Song

“Two Minute” Talks

Chapter 15

1. (15:1-13) Judah’s slogan was “*It’s always been this way – how can we expect to change anything?*” When it comes to evil and sin, what are examples of how we have/could adopt this same attitude (personally and as a church)?
2. (15:14-20) This is the first time we hear of Samson explicitly crying out to God in weakness. What lessons must we take (both as a church and personally) before walking away from these verses?

Chapter 16

3. (16:1-22) What do we learn about God's judgment and his faithfulness from these verses?
4. (16:23-31) Samson is a paradigm of Israel and of our lives: one raised up out of nothing, richly gifted, who panders around with other loves and yet, apparently, always expects to "have" the LORD. First, how are we richly gifted? Then, what are we (and Israel for that matter) meant to take away from the end of the Samson story?

Chapter 18

5. (18:24) We read this chapter and rightly conclude: False religion is so dumb! We read verse 24 and wonder if Micah really just heard the words that came out of his mouth! Yet, we think it doesn't fit us. Perhaps we think that because we don't see the forms that *our* false religions take. God says, "*Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.*" Think of what that means and consider what false religious ideas we can easily fall into by considering the following statements – what false religion do you see at play?
 - "I **always** go to church on Sunday."
 - "I always go to church on **Sunday**."
 - "I got my child baptized, so we're good."
 - "Yeah, I know I should go to church more, but I know what Jesus did for me."
 - "I always hear the same thing in church – it's so boring!"
 - "Faith is a matter between me and God."
 - "Church needs to have more..."

Conclusion and "Homework"

So the book of Judges ends with a miracle. How after chapters 19-21 (or 1-21!), can you account for the fact that there is still an Israel? It can only be because the LORD wished to dwell in the midst of his people in spite of its sin. It can only be because the LORD's grace is far more tenacious than his people's depravity and insists on still holding them fast even in their sinfulness and their stupidity. Nor is he finished raising up saviors for them (Acts 13:23 – "*From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.*"). In the words of Micah: "*Who is a God like you, a God who saves?*" In other words you cannot invent this God! This is the grace that holds us: When he ought to destroy, he delivers; when he has every right to shatter, he nevertheless prepares to save. Such a great salvation! Such a great Savior! May we always see to do as our King sees fit! The King who breaks the cycle with grace!

- The next two sheets (labeled "addendum") contain a summary of the remaining chapters and a few guiding notes. Please devotionally read through the remaining chapters on your own. Thank you so much for studying God's Word with me!

Addendum

Notes Chapters 17-21 (The Confusion of a Depraved People)

- From chapter 17 to the end, no more judges are listed (the last “judges” are Eli, Samuel and Samuel’s 2 incompetent sons). We have depicted a description of the times: a typical family (17), a typical tribe (18), a typical event (19), a typical episode (20-21). Here, the problem is clearly not the enemy without, but sadly the cancer within.

Chapter 17 (Israel makes its own gods: part 1)

- **Summary:** A man named Micah steals silver from his mom. Micah makes an idol out of the silver and hires a priest for his own house, who had forsaken his own divinely assigned village.
- **Note:** One thing that strikes you about this chapter (and 18) is the author’s seemingly non-chalant approach to recording this gross apostasy. It’s all descriptive. There are no moral applications or religious judgments that we’ve become accustomed to. Yet, he tips his hand in verse 6: ***“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”*** As if to say, *“Had there been a king back then, he would have obviously put a stop to Micah’s godless nonsense.”* What a soul draining statement!

Chapter 18 (Israel makes its own gods: part 2)

- **Summary:** Here we see how the tribe of Dan re-located sinfully to the northernmost part of Israel from next to the tribe of Judah. They stole Micah’s “gods,” they stole Micah’s priest, and they stole a city that couldn’t be defended.
- **Note:** See Jacob’s prophetic description of the tribe of Dan (Genesis 49:17): ***“Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horses’ heels so that its rider tumbles backward.”*** Interestingly, in Revelation 17:5-8, in listing the 12 tribes and 144,000 sealed for eternity, Dan is absent! As an apostate tribe, Dan doesn’t fit into John’s symbolic intent.

Chapter 19 (Israel destroys its own people: The Guilt of Benjamin)

- **Summary:** A Levite's concubine was unfaithful and went to dad's house. The Levite goes to get her but gets a late start on the road back. They stay overnight at a nice man's house who takes them in. Wicked men from the town want to have sex with the Levite. They send out the concubine instead to be raped and abused all night until she died! The Levite takes her home and cuts her up into 12 parts and sends a part to each tribe of Israel!
- **Notes:** This is "Sodom in the land of Israel." The similarity between Genesis 19:1-11 and Judges 19:22-26 is unmistakable. And deliberate. As if the author is saying, "Yes, *that's right!* It sounds exactly like Genesis 19!"

Chapter 20 (Israel destroys its own people: The Destruction of Benjamin)

- **Summary:** The Israelites summoned 400,000 soldiers from all over Israel to fight against Benjaminites (the tribe responsible for the raping of the concubine). Long story short, all but 600 Benjaminite men are killed.
- **Notes:** Now why couldn't Israel get that united against the Canaanites or Midianites or Ammonites or Philistines? Why is the only time against...themselves!? Verse 27 is incredible! In spite of her problems, in spite of her setbacks, Israel has access to divine guidance through the High Priest. Theologically speaking, Israel still has the means of grace.

Chapter 21 (Israel destroys its own people: The Sorrow for Benjamin)

- **Summary:** The Israelites vow not to give their own daughters to the remaining 600 Benjaminites, then lament that one tribe will be wiped out. So they hatched a plan. Jabesh Gilead didn't send any fighting men, so they murdered all the men and stole the virgin girls. Then they told the Benjaminites to steal the girls while they were out dancing for a festival – that way they wouldn't be guilty of breaking their vow not to "give" their daughters to Benjamin – Benjamin stole them! Fittingly the chapter and book ends, "***In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.***"
- **Notes:** Chapter 21 is a "What have we done?!" moment. The death of one woman (a concubine at that!) precipitated the deaths of 65,000 men on both sides (plus women and children and animals). Yet verse 4 illustrates one of the marvels of divine grace that the LORD forgives even the most horrible of sins.