

Displayed in His Gracious Providence

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[0:01] Take your Bibles, turn to the book of Judges, please. Book of Judges. If you're visiting with us and need a Bible, there should be a Bible in the seat in front of you, in the little pockets underneath the seat.

Find page 190. That's where you'll find Judges chapter 12. Judges chapter 12. This morning we're going to study Judges 12.

In theory we will be done with Judges the third week of September, I think that is, third week of September, the 19th. And then I'm trying to think of some other things we'll do in the meantime, but I think after that it'll be 15 years since I preached the Gospel of John.

So I'm going to begin the Gospel of John once again. That's what I'm going to do, the Gospel of John. And this time it will be worse than it was the first time. Anyways, it's supposed to be better, right?

That's the idea. Anyways, Judges chapter 12. Let's jump in, I'll read, and then we'll see what God has to say. Thus says the Lord from His word, Then the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they crossed to Zephthan, and said to Jephthah, Why did you cross over to fight against the sons of Ammon without calling us to go with you?

[1:27] We will burn your house down on you. And Jephthah said to them, I and my people were at great strife with the sons of Ammon. When I called you, you did not deliver me from their hand.

And when I saw that you would not deliver, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the sons of Ammon, and Yahweh gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?

Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim, and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, You are fugitives, O Ephraim, O Gilead. You are fugitives of Ephraim, O Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, in the midst of Manasseh.

And the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim. And it happened when fugitives of Ephraim said, Let me cross over. The men of Gilead would say to him, Are you an Ephraimite?

And if he said no, then they would say to him, Say now, Shibboleth. But they said, Shibboleth. For he could not pronounce it correctly. And they would seize him and strike him at the fords of the Jordan.

[2:36] Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim. And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in the cities of Gilead.

Now, Ibzan, verse 8 of Bethlehem, judged Israel after him. And he had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He gave him marriage outside the clan.

And he brought in 30 daughters, 30 daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. Now, Elan the Zebulunite judged Israel after him.

And he judged Israel ten years. Then Elan the Zebulunite died and was buried in Eglon, in the land of Zebulun. Now, Abdon the son of Hillel, the Parothite, judged Israel after him.

And he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on 70 donkeys. And he judged Israel eight years. Then Abdon the son of Hillel, the Parothite, died and was buried at Paroth, in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

[3:45] I was telling my kids this some time ago, a couple weeks ago, a few weeks ago. I learned how to water ski when I was 13, about to turn 14.

In the high school ministry that I was at in San Jose, and the high school ministry had like seven or 80 high schoolers, okay?

So even more than what we have here in this crowd. That's how many high schoolers were in the youth department. They had two staff members. They were volunteers. And they owned water ski boats.

And one of them, Lloyd Kaufman, he owned a Skeenateek, I remember the name of it, Skeenateek water ski boat. And we would take a trip to Lake Arrowhead. They would do that trip almost every year.

And so that's how I learned how to water ski. But what I love more, at least I found out I love more, was tubing. Now this is the 80s, the mid 80s.

[4:41] Now down these days, you got these fancy tubes, right? With the handles and things. You put your feet up. You didn't do that in 1980s. You had a tube.

That's all you had. So, my first time, you're just holding on for dear life to that water tube. And Lloyd's just flooring it.

So you're just going. Well then what he would do is, he would go this way on the water. So he would go this way, and then he would go this way. So it would take you this way, and then it'd push you, pull you over here.

And then he would whip you, so that, you know, you have a little bit of, quite a bit of leeway on the rope, and then all of a sudden it would tighten, and then you would, you would skim across the water, and you're like, right?

That's, that was what happened. I wiped out. I biffed it hard. And then I said, let's do it again, you know, because you're 14. You know, I did that now, I'd be like in the hospital.

[5:43] You know, no, it hurt. I was like 13 years old. What fond, or maybe not so fond, memories do you have?

What memories do you have of your life? Maybe there's bad memories. Maybe there's awful memories. Maybe there's happy memories you have.

Sad, fearful, fulfilling, probably all of the above, really. All these life experiences, all of them, all of them, are directed by God's providence for us as His people.

We'll introduce you, I think we've actually done it before in the book of Judges, but I'll do it again, to this doctrine called providence. Because, you see, from the book of Judges, it's God's love, His overwhelming love, His never-ending love, His relentless love for His people.

He loves His chosen ones. He loves His own. He loves His elect. He does. And today, what we'll see, in this love, that's like a flood, is displayed, in His gracious, providence.

[7:14] His love is displayed, in His gracious, providence. If there's anything you take away from this, in Judges chapter 12, you get a glimpse of the providence of God.

And there's other things we're going to look at too, but holistically, these first seven verses, with the rest of Jephthah, and then verses 8 through 15, with these other three Judges, a glaring theme to us, is the providence of God.

His gracious providence. Here's a statement for you. God purposefully acts, providing for, sustaining, and governing the universe perfectly.

Arranging all, so that He gets all glory, and so that His chosen people, obtain Him, and His love, as their eternal reward.

That's providence. He's purposefully acting, providing, sustaining, and He governs, the whole universe, perfectly.

[8:24] everything. Everything. So that, what's the purpose? He gets all the glory, and so that, His people, whom He loves, they get Him, and His love, as their eternal reward.

that's how you can, view this chapter, and really, you can even view, the whole Bible this way. This is what God's doing.

And the way He provided, so that we may obtain Him, and His love, as our reward, is the fulfilled promise, of sending Messiah, Jesus.

Even in this little, 15 verse chapter, you see, God is being faithful, to fulfill His promise, of bringing Messiah, because He didn't wipe out Israel.

Because from Israel, would come Messiah Jesus. So everything in history, is directed towards Christ, and those that belong to Him.

[9:44] You have a little snapshot here. So that Jesus is gonna come, and God's gonna fulfill His purpose, of bringing His Son. What is God's providence, to put it succinctly, John Piper in his book, actually it's a thick book, called providence.

He defined providence, this way. Providence is, the act of purposefully, providing for, or sustaining, and governing the world. Then you kind of see, how we got our definition, for today.

And by the way, that this, I pulled this together, getting different points. That's my definition, okay.

So this is, John Piper defines it this way.

And now let me give you, if I can, if you would allow me, let me read you, different confessions, three specifically, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession, and then Bethlehem Baptist Church, when John Piper was pastoring.

Let me read to you, how they define, providence. Quote, Belgic Confession, we believe that this good God, after creating all things, did not abandon them, to chance, or fortune, but leads, and governs them, according to his will, in such a way, that nothing happens, in this world, without God's, orderly arrangement.

[11:09] The Westminster Confession says this, quote, God, the creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest, even to the least, by his most wise, and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free, and immutable counsel, of his own will, to the praise, of the glory, of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

And now, let me read to you, Bethlehem Baptist Church, when John Piper, where he pastored for, I think like 30 years, or 35 years, Bethlehem Baptist Church, quote, we believe that God, from all eternity, in order to display, the full extent of his glory, for the eternal, and ever increasing, enjoyment of all who love him, did, by the most wise, and holy counsel, of his will, freely, and unchangeably, ordain, and foreknow, whatever comes to pass.

And then they say later, we believe that God, upholds, and governs all things, all in accord with his eternal, all wise purposes, to glorify himself.

So putting all these things together, what does it mean? How do you, what do you do with that information? It's this, God is directing, everything in your life, so you love him, and all of his work in your life, is because of his love.

He will do things, and allow situations, to drive us to him, and to love him chiefly. So that's what's gonna happen, that's what God's gonna do.

[13:06] All that happened to Israel, was done to drive them to Yahweh. All that's happening here, in the book of Judges, remember the sub-theme, to the book of Judges?

He wants us to want him, he wanted Israel, to want him. That was just a sub-theme. He loves his people so much, and he wants them to love him.

He wants them to want him. And so he'll do everything, he will, he wills, to make that happen, even if it means he disciplines you.

So he's directing everything in your life. I mean, think about, your life, it's short, compared to eternity.

Everything is being directed in your life, so that you would love him, and all of his work in your life, is because of his love for you. He's gonna do things, and allow situations in your life, to drive you to him.

[14:08] You would love him. It also means this, he will force us, to lose our grip, on the stuff of this life, to direct us to have a God, eternal, Christ, focus, Christ, exalting perspective, and you can also add attitude.

He's gonna bring things, to force you, to lose your grip, on the stuff of this life, on the things of this life, so that way, you would have a God-centered, Christ-focused, a Christ-exalting perspective, and attitude.

Everything happens. And you see that here, with just this man, called Jephthah. And you see this here, with the tribe of Ephraim.

God's providence, sure did work, and take effect. Civil war in Israel, because of Ephraim's, arrogant jealousy. And then these three minor judges, and all of this worked out, according to God's good providence.

So I put this, into two specific points, pretty easy. First, it's God's providential act, with Ephraim. They got what was coming to them.

[15:35] Because God, in His providence, brought it about. This is not the first time, we saw Ephraim whine. Remember they did that, with Gideon?

It's a tragic story, of disunity in Israel. This is how bad, the nation had become. Remember we talked, about this before? This is how deep division, had happened within Israel.

And Ephraim was summoned, verse one. They said to Jephthah, why did you cross over, to fight against the sons of Ammon, without calling us, to go with you? Why?

Ephraim was so full of pride, they berated Jephthah, for not consulting them, when he came against Ammon. All they could do, was think about themselves.

Why didn't you ignore us? Why didn't you take the time, to call us to come with you, to fight? They're whining. We will burn your house, down on you.

[16:43] They weren't just whining. We're going to extract, things from you, we're going to, we're going to put, punish you for what you've done, Jephthah. Wow. Verse two, Jephthah said, I, my people, are a great stripe, with the sons of Ammon.

I did call you, I did summon you to come, but you didn't respond. I asked you to come help us, but you left us high and dry.

Verse three, when I saw that you would not deliver, I took my life in my hands, and crossed over against the sons of Ammon. Now, either they didn't understand, or they ignored the summon, and we don't have a record, of that summoning.

Apparently, Jephthah did, he summoned them, we were part of that. Either way, they complain. Just like he did with Ammon, he showed the justice, in his act.

There's justice, you guys weren't coming, I wasn't going to let them, keep killing us. But guess what? The end of verse three, Yahweh gave them into my hand.

[17:51] Yahweh still delivered, Ammon into my hand, even though you didn't come to help, and you acted in your emotions, or rather, you didn't act because you had your feelings hurt. It's arrogance.

And then, he says, the end of verse three, why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me? In other words, why be mad that Yahweh intervened and was so graciously and compassionately loving by delivering us from Ammon?

Why won't you rejoice with us? Oh, praise Yahweh. He came against the sons of Ammon who were extracting things and pilfering and shattering Israel.

No, it's all about you. They didn't like that one bit. Verse four, Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim.

Ephraim came against him, and Jephthah didn't take it. He fought against them. They called Gilead names, almost being racist.

[18:55] They're a bunch of fugitives, renegades, runaways. And yet notice, and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim because they said, you are fugitives of Ephraim, O Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, in the midst of Manasseh.

Jephthah struck them and struck them down bad. He struck them hard. He wouldn't let them bully him. And yet, notice how tragic it was, this division.

It's so sad. The irony, Gilead turned the tables on the Ephraimites who ended up becoming fugitives themselves.

You see that there in verse five, the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim and it happened when fugitives of Ephraim, no, who's the fugitives now? They ate some humble pie, these Ephraimites.

And then you see this password dialect game. They would say to him, say now, verse six, Shibboleth, but they, but he would say, Sibboleth.

[20:03] Ephraim couldn't say, Sibboleth. They would say, Sibboleth. I have a friend who pastors a church in California. He's originally from Philadelphia, Johnny Richard. I said, Johnny, what's going on?

Let's go get some water. Yeah, Jim, you want some witter? I said, what? He said, you want some witter? I said, John, it's water. No, it's witter.

No, no. John, W-A-T-E-R, water. Jimmy, you're saying it wrong. It's witter. There's no arguing with that guy, okay? So anyways, there's the dialect game.

So that's what they're doing. But then notice, it's sad. You know, we're laughing about this and yet it's sad that this tribe fostered this disunion in Israel because of their arrogance and jealousy but then they would seize them and strike them down at the fords of Jordan.

Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim. It seems to us like Jephthah kind of went too far. He probably didn't need to wipe out 42,000 Ephraimites.

[21:12] Did they have to take the Jordan and then do this password dialect game? It seems to be extreme. You know, what's sad too, how come no one asked the Lord what to do?

Do you see that? Or rather, I should say, ask, do you not see that? Nobody appealed to Yahweh to help decide what to do regarding Ephraim. No one asked Yahweh and Ephraim wasn't asking either.

What a huge warning to us about our pride and the need for unity among us as a church. You know, and it's, it's definitely an appropriate passage for the Lord's Supper this morning, isn't it? we are one body. We remember God's grace and give each other that same grace. What happened to rejoice with those who rejoice?

What happened to saying, wow, look what God has done with him and praise Yahweh for what he's done, how he's delivered his people. This is our time to reflect on God's gracious love toward us and his son and it challenges us to display that same kind of love toward each other.

[22:32] Right? Right? Victory over Ammon was overshadowed by this weak faith by Jephthah and now it's overshadowed by the foolish arrogance of this tribe and yet at the same time in the midst of this step back and you see the providence of God because remember Ephraim did this before.

Remember they did this with Gideon. Their arrogance caught up with them. They got away with it then but not now. God orchestrates all things for his great glory.

God would use this to drive his people to him. Don't miss that. In the midst of the arrogance and the pride God is still directing everything so that we would obtain him as our reward and his love as our eternal reward.

But in verse 7 if you would please and Jephthah judged Israel six years and Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in the cities of Gilead. He judged Israel only six years and he died.

Yahweh used this weak man for his glory to display his great love for his people. We see the display of the gracious providence of God all for his glory. Here's God's providential act with Ephraim.

[23:55] And then the second point is pretty easy as well. You see God's providential act with Ibsun, Elon, and Abdon. Three minor judges. Why are they minor?

Because there's not a lot of information about them. Which is the first question we ask. Why don't we know more about these guys? I don't know.

I have no idea. The only response we can have is what? God's providence. He gave more info about Jephthah, less about these guys, yet he still delivered his people.

And that's the, one writer put it like this, the enigma of God's providence. One decreases while the other increases all according to God's sovereign will.

But then I want you to notice something. Look at verse 8. Ibsun of Bethlehem judged Israel after him. Look at verse 9. And he had 30 sons and 30 daughters.

[24:58] He gave in marriage outside the clan. It's outside the clan of the family. And he brought in 30 daughters from outside for his sons. Do you notice something here?

You know, it's the number of daughters Ibsun had. There's only two places in the book of Judges, throughout the whole book of Judges, where daughters are mentioned.

Here and Jephthah. And what did Jephthah do to his daughter? We looked at it last week and we came to the conclusion he sacrificed her.

The former had one daughter who was sacrificed. How foolish. The next guy after him had 30 daughters. And then he gained 30 more from her sons.

She had 60 daughters, 30 from his own, and then 30 daughters-in-law. One, 60. What is this going on here?

[26:06] Obviously, this underscores, it tells us about the very providence of God. Why does God allow this to happen with this person yet not that person?

Why did God do this? Why does he give here and take there? It's so hard because at times we can begin to compare our lives with each other.

We were talking about in the first hour how we're called to fix our eyes on Jesus and the evil one wants us so easily, he can so easily do this, evil one wants us to get our eyes focused this way.

Why is this person like this and why is that person like that? Why does God answer one prayer but not another like that? Why does God give here but take over there?

Why does another church seem to flourish in so many ways where we have struggled for 15 years? One church does things right, nothing.

[27 : 21] Another church does things right, you have so to speak greatness. Why? It's not wrong to ask that question why, but understand that the answer is the providence of God.

Okay, well how do we respond to that though? See, this is where true faith in God and His great love is seen. True faith and this is by one writer I gave you a quote here.

True faith quote is willing if need be to be baffled to bow and worship in the dark end quote. Look at the New Testament.

You go to Acts chapter 12. Peter, James, and John. What happens to James? Get his head chopped off.

And then Peter, he gets delivered. He gets rescued out of prison by an angel. But then what happens to Peter? He's crucified upside down, but John, he lasts until he's like 90, 95 years old.

[28 : 37] Beheaded, rescued, crucified upside down, lives until he's like 90, 95 years old. This comes down to what?

Stay faithful to Christ. What should be our response? Lord, I'm just going to trust you. I mean, when you really think about it, when you really think about this, this teaching of providence, we shouldn't say, you know, people use that phrase, and I'm not going to say it because I'm not going to say it, but you know what it means when people say GDI.

God, why? Because they're mad about what happens, right? And when you think about it, should we ever get mad about anything that happens in our lives?

you know, I don't like it when God does this to me. He wants me to actually practice when I'm preaching. Why does he want me to do that?

I don't like that. Would you like that? You know, something happened yesterday or Friday, and I'm like, oh man, I get mad, and then I'm reminded of my message, and I'm like, oh.

[29 : 57] So I'm walking over here, and the computer was giving me fits, and I remember I was walking over here, and I was coming back, I'm like, oh, Providence. No way. And then there's something else, I'm walking over here, Providence.

And something else happened in Friday, Providence. You know, like yesterday, I was doing something, something happened, I'm like, Providence. I just kept saying that to myself. Because when you think about it, we shouldn't get mad about anything.

We shouldn't complain about anything, right? I mean, do you really, do we really believe that everything that God is doing in your life is for His glory?

So that you would obtain Him, and that you would get His love as your reward? Do you really believe that? Because if you did, if I did, we wouldn't complain.

Right? Anything that happens, I'll get off your toes. Let's look some more at the passage here.

[31 : 02] Just gonna tighten up some loose ends and then we'll close this off. Ibsen, he was the first judge in Judah. He was rich, he had many wives. This is a very kingly act, by the way.

He judged Israel seven years, then Ibsen died and was buried in Bethlehem. verse 11. Elam, the Zebulunite, judged Israel after him, buried in Ejelon, in the land of Zebulun. And then you have Abdon, he judged eight years.

These three were probably contemporaries, probably around the same time were they judging. Abdon was also wealthy. He had prestige being indicated by the number of cults.

Forty sons, thirty grandsons, rode seventy donkeys. That's a very kingly act as well. And I, I want to point this out to you, different aspects that we pointed out, and here's another aspect I want to point out to you again, I point out to you in the past, and here it is to us again and again and again and again in the book of Judges, you see the need for a king, a good king, who would be faithful to Yahweh and his covenant.

They needed a king who would stop their sinful waywardness, who would stop their pragmatism, who would stop their syncretism, and one who would direct God's people to love him solely and chiefly.

[32 : 23] You see that need. And there's just longing for a king with Ibsen, with all these daughters, which means he had many wives.

You see there's Abdon, he had many sons and grandsons, he has all these donkeys, they're grabbing at this king because you see this need for the king.

They needed a king, they needed a king Jesus really. We need king Jesus to save us. Notice how this directs us to the gospel, how we need the king who will direct our hearts back to God. We need the king who sends his spirit to direct us to worship him. We need king Jesus. Even in this chapter, it points us to the need for the gospel, for Messiah to come, to direct us back to God, who calls us to repent, who came and lived and died on our behalf and says repent and trust me and I will save you, I will deliver you.

Even here you see the need for the gospel. If you're here, you're not a Christian, you don't know the Lord Jesus, you should repent and trust Christ. Come, repent, trust Christ and he will save you.

[33:40] Come to the king. But here we see how God is directing everything so that we would love him. Once again, that principle.

God is directing everything in your life so that you would love him and all of his work in your life is because of his love. He will do things and allow situations to drive us to him and to love him chiefly. So what's happening in your life right now? It's work. Spouse, kids, parents, situations going on. Do we really believe that God is directing everything? Or ask yourself that question. Do I really believe God is directing everything in my life so that I love him and all of his work in my life is because of his love for me?

I really believe that. Because remember, he will force you, he will force us to lose our grip on the stuff of this life, direct us to have a God eternal, Christ focused, Christ exalting perspective.

[35:03] And what's our response? Trust him. Trust him even in the dark. trust him even in the world.

God purposely acts, providing for, sustaining, and governing the universe perfectly, arranging everything, all, so he gets all the glory.

glory. Because he is, he's passionate for his glory. And so that his chosen people, they would obtain him as their eternal reward and his love as their eternal reward.

That's why we sang, what love my God. Of course, the way he provided so we can attain him, the way he provided so we get his love as our reward, is what?

The fulfilled promise of Sonny Messiah Jesus. Everything in history is directed towards Christ. How appropriate as we partake of the Lord's Supper.

[36:13] Everything is directed towards Jesus. Everything is directed towards his gospel truth. So if you're here, a member of this church, partake of the Lord's Supper. If you're here, you're not a member of this church, but hey, you come from a church of light, faith, and practice, we would probably prefer that you would be baptized by immersion.

Partake of the Lord's Supper with us. If you don't know Jesus, this is not for you. This is a sign, this is a symbol, a display of the gospel, where you can actually touch it and taste it.

And the idea is, as you consume the bread, you consume the juice, the idea is, you are consuming Christ and he becomes a part of you.

You assimilate him in part of your life. He's not just a little compartmentalized here that you deal with him here. He's everything. You can't live without food, you can't live without Christ.

So think of it that way. As we prepare our hearts, examine our hearts, confess our sins, and so thankful that he forgives us of all our sins, let's do that as first prayer.

[37:24] we do pray, Father, thanks, we pray with such grateful hearts that everything that's happened in our lives would direct us back to you, that you would get all the glory.

But that's hard because there's lots of things in our lives we don't like. There's lots of things in our lives we would rather not have to deal with.

And it's probably very true for some of our Afghan brethren who are stuck there and they're trying to deal with what they're supposed to do. There's lots in their life they don't want to have to deal with. help us by your spirit remember the gospel trust you even in the dark things just don't seem to make sense.

give us a heart of trust. And we ask that you father by your spirit prepare us as we partake of this, of these elements.

[38:58] Remind us that we drink you Jesus. You are a part. You are everything in our lives. just a little part but everything.

We can't go without food so we can't go without you. We remind ourselves of forgiveness, grace, compassion.

We remind ourselves that you all hell was unleashed upon you on our behalf as our substitute so that it flows to us blessing and grace and mercy.

For me the Savior stands holding forth his wounded hands. We're set free. Ponder to think to meditate upon these gospel truths.

This will be our time of silence where we'll have a moment of silence and let this few moments, it's like a couple minutes where you can think and ponder, fill your mind with the truth of the gospel.

[40 : 37] It's time to pray, reflect on the truths, different aspects of the gospel. These next minute or two and we'll sing.

It's time to reflect on these gospel truths. Do that now. Do that now. Thank you.