

God's Overwhelming, Never-Ending, Relentless Love for His People

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[0:00] If you would, please take your Bible and turn to the book of Judges. In the Bible, there's a Bible in the pocket in front of you.

Start at the beginning of Genesis and go to page 181. You'll find the book of Judges, 181 in that black Bible in the chair in front of you. Go to Judges and if you would, actually let's start in chapter 2, verse 10.

Judges chapter 2, so if you're there in that black Bible, find page 181 and find chapter 2, the 10th verse. We're going to start there. It's actually a different verse I'm going to read through this morning.

I mean, very rarely do I do an overview of a book at the initial start of starting a book. I usually just jump right in, but given the weight of the book of Judges, I thought it would be wise to kind of do an introduction to the book of Judges just to kind of get us on the right footing.

And we're going to be in the book of Judges for 20 weeks. I listed out 20 weeks, and that includes today's message. It's going to be 20 weeks in the book of Judges walking through this interesting Old Testament book, which most of us are pretty unfamiliar with, except when it comes to like Samson.

[1:29] Look at chapter 2, verse 10. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers, and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

Thanks, Doug. I appreciate you doing that. Go to verse 17, if you would. Verse 17. In the same chapter, verse 17. And yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them.

They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commands of Yahweh. They did not do as their fathers did. Now, in chapter 2, go to chapter 17 in the book of Judges.

Chapter 17. Chapter 17, verse 6.

Chapter 17 in the book of Judges. Look at verse 6 with me. In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

[2:55] And then last verse I want to give you. The last chapter, chapter 21. Go to chapter 21. Chapter 21, verse 25, which is verbatim, practically, from chapter 17, verse 6.

21, verse 25. In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. This year, my wife and I are going to celebrate 29 years of being married.

I know. You should be clapping for her. And we've known each other for... What's 49 minus 12? 37? It's a 37, right? So we've known each other for 37 years. So I met her when I was 12.

Dreamweaver. Who's that girl?

So let's say, May 16th, that's your anniversary. It's a big day.

[4:18] You should be writing that down. You should be sending me stuff. Just kidding. It's a big day. I get... Hey, quiet now. I asked you to speak. You're not supposed to speak.

It's rhetorical. Anyways, I get flowers. I get balloons. She's all, yeah. Wait, wait a second.

I'm excited. Get a special meeting place. We get sushi. No. Get a great dinner together. So I have the balloons.

Got the card. Got the flowers. Nice dinner together. Get the setting right. Okay. And I express my love and devotion to her and her alone.

It's a delightful evening together. And so she's confident of my allegiance to her. Now, let's change things up a little bit.

[5:27] Same scenario. Flowers, card balloons, meeting place. I'm expressing my love, my devotion to her. Another woman walks by. I go, oh. Hi.

Oh, she... Expressing my love and devotion to her. Another woman walks by. I say, hi, how you doing? I see. Expressing my love and devotion to her.

Another woman walks by. Hi, how you doing? Call me. Now, would she be confident of my love for her?

her. And yet, that's exactly how we treat our Savior. Our Lord wants you to want Him solely.

He wants to be number one in our lives. and he'll do whatever it takes to make that happen he'll discipline you in the process so that you'll want him that's his great love for his people for his elect chosen ones I told you the theme for the book of Judges here's the theme God's overwhelming, never-ending not reckless that song is bad theology and that word reckless you know the song I'm talking about 90.9 his love is not reckless but it's relentless

[7:25] God's overwhelming, never-ending relentless love for his people and I'll put it up there on the screen again so you can write it down he wants us to solely want him and that's what this book is all about he wanted Israel to solely want him it's a book about God disciplining his people so they would want him was it successful?

was it successful? the people rebelled and acted this way needing a king to direct them to love Yahweh and it would be Yahweh himself who needed to change the hearts of his people to love him and to have a king with a capital K who would rule them perfectly that's our Lord Jesus we need God to change our hearts to love him because in and of ourselves we won't do it Judges focuses on Israel's sin God's gracious discipline for their sin and his deliverance from his discipline that's what the book of Judges is about too I'm trying to give you different sub-themes to this

God's never-ending overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love for his people the people were quick to defect away from loving and focusing upon God I mean did you see the number of times as you were reading through three different times you see how they played the harlot played the harlot played the harlot one time it says they forgot the Lord five times they forsook the Lord seven times it said they did evil on the side of the Lord and three different times it talks about the testing of the Lord he tested them and yet amid their faithlessness God remained patiently faithful he will always keep his promises being faithful, gracious and long-suffering so that we would love, admire and desire him alone he's going to be relentless at this for those that belong to him the Lord knows those who are his 2 Timothy chapter 2 and let the one who named the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness and he'll make sure that happens by disciplining you so here it is the theme in a long statement of the book of Judges

God's overwhelming never-ending relentless love for his people he wants us to solely want him and he will discipline us to make that happen he disciplines us so that we he would be our one and only love how much do you love him how much do you want him this is the basis of Christianity this is really Christianity in a nutshell it's it's loving and wanting God I had a friend of mine who as a lesbian and said well I can't help not loving women and and that's just the way it is and I said you know what Christianity is not you becoming a heterosexual Christianity is about you loving and worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ that's what it's about that's the focus see this is the solution to struggles with sex or porn drugs alcohol same sex attraction pleasure food health diet exercise safety a pain free life if these things reign then Christ is not first and foremost

I know it he'll discipline you when he sees that you want those things more than him scripture is filled with this Psalm 37 for delight yourself in the Lord Psalm 34 18 taste and see that the Lord is good Psalm 42 as a deer pants for water so my soul longs my soul longs after you Psalm 43 you are my exceeding joy Psalm 63 my soul yearns for you John chapter 6 Jesus says unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part with me you must want me like you want food like you have to have food you can't go without eating you're looking at your watches is it almost lunch time is he done yet no I'm not done yet you need food you need sustenance to live and Jesus says you need me to live you should want me like you want food and of course

[13:16] Philippians chapter 3 when Paul says my endeavor to just know you it's throughout the Bible as as C.S.

Lewis said is God your all satisfying object the book of Judges is about this the book of Judges is that in between time between the time Moses and Joshua and Israel's kings kings and it showed

Yahweh's trajectory for his people for the nation of Israel God is deeply involved and specifically sovereign at work in our lives preserving us disciplining us and overruling all things to work for his good and our good and he works out all things so he will have a people who want him above all else do you when it came to Israel and her history she was under God's special direction from day one nothing happened without

Yahweh God's total control and consent and through them he will work out his divine plan to save the world not just Jews Gentiles and judges is part of that process God saw fit to include this period of Israel's history in his word and it serves as a particular purpose in his particular plan to save humanity though it's a book with which we are very unfamiliar I mean most of us are familiar with the stories about Samson or Jephthah those types of things when we actually read through it when we read through it twice you almost get depressed it can weigh on you and you think what in the world is this book all about why in the world is this guy even preaching through it let alone reading it's well if

God saw fit for this to be in his word then it's fit for us to study it questions arise and we're going to do our best to answer these questions over the next now 19 weeks what was the purpose in God's plan for all these years and what was he trying to accomplish what kind of leaders were these judges and why did God use them what was life like for the average Israelite what were the nations like that surrounded them and brought oppression upon them what really caused them to ask for a king some of those answers we'll look at them today and I'll tell you Leon Wood the distressing days of the judges it's a small little book I mean small that book is unbelievably awesome so I would encourage you if you want to do more study on your own get that the distressing days of the judges by Leon Wood it's a great book I've read the first 150 pages or so of that book great introduction it's very helpful

God raised up these judges he had a specific purpose in raising them up and it was for a definite time period that's what we'll see and you'll see as we go through this book a cycle of events first the people sinned grievously then time of punishment for their sin came in the form of foreign oppression then he would raise up the judge to deliver his people when they would repent you'd see that so there's there's a cycle of events people sin punishment a judge to deliver and I put those four words excuse me one two three four five words to kind of you can helps to see the cycle of events you can write that down or just make a note to yourself as you're reading through the book and as we're studying the book rebellion retribution repentance restoration rest that's what you see throughout the book and you see it happen again again and again and again

[17 : 48] I think it was about six seven times the cycle of events rebellion retribution repentance restoration and then a time of rest rest now there were fourteen judges eight major and six minor a major judge was one who brought military deliverance and an extensive time in the book of judges you'll see that but a judge would perform service as a leader he or she centered in the disposal of administrative duties necessary to leadership that's what a judge would do and actually there's two judges that are given outside the book of judges Eli and Samuel Samuel was the last judge so the time period was about about 1390 BC to about 1050 BC so you have about 340 years and you have judges that overlap in their time

Jephthah Samson Eli and Samuel overlap with Ebron Elon and Abdon but Yahweh's goal for these judges was to have his chosen people ruled by a theocratic form of government not a monarchy then your question is what's a theocracy a theocracy is God is the supreme ruler this is the goal for all of human history the goal the end goal what's going to be in the end is a theocracy that's the direction God's going to restore what was lost in the garden a theocracy where he is the supreme ruler and he expected his people Israel to look to him for leadership and to obey him one writer says this quote he should be the central interest of his people the focal point of their lives the highest object of their attention well that sounds like

Christianity doesn't it and as a theocratic ruler he needed to set up communication between himself and his people Israel for them to know what he required and how they could communicate with him thus the priest the priest only they offered sacrifices only they were the mediators between God and his people it was the priests who were the mediators and the Levites helped the Levites were not priests the Levites were assistants which is why you have that problem take place in chapter 17 if you've been reading the book of Judges you see this guy was a Levite and he makes himself a priest it's like what the heck are you doing you're an idiot you shouldn't be doing that not only would the priests offer the sacrifices but they along with the Levites were called to teach the people the

requirements of God's law this was their major function so the priest and the Levites were supposed to teach the people the people had ample opportunities to be taught by priests and Levites it was all designed to keep Yahweh central why did it change from a theocracy to a monarchy because of the sinfulness of the people they had refused this theocratic form of government so God gave them a second best form as one writer put it but God in his will of decree was perfect in this because there would be a king a king a God man king who would rule you see that take place in the future Messiah would come that's Jesus God knew what he was doing so why did God have to use judges because sin abounded and the people needed supervision if you have children you know what I'm talking about you leave them alone for about five minutes they run amok right sin abounded the people needed supervision once there was no one policing them and when they did not obey voluntarily there was disobedience once the people were brought to obedience by the discipline of the oppressing nation the judge form of rule would come to an end and the theocracy in its pure form could be reinstated so the judge was not elected he wasn't humanly appointed and it was temporary it wasn't continuous that's why to be a judge he raises up and that's it

God gave the judge authority to lead the people and bring the proper response to trust and obey Yahweh and yet the people refused him being their king to reign over them but why did God wait so on to give them the second choice why does God do this why does God wait 340 years why would he do this do you think it's kind of ridiculous why would you okay right I mean it makes more sense God God God graciously desire to give his people the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the theocracy Deuteronomy chapter 28 or to put it another way because God is remarkably astonishingly and graciously patient I mean he's patient with all of you he's very patient with me so he was willing to wait and work through discipline to bring about this rule so that means every foreign oppression was evidence of God's grace to his people to discipline them to submit to his rule over them every foreign oppression that was evidence of his grace it was disciplining them to submit to his rule those hard times those times of struggle those times of trials those adversities that we face those are times where God is stripping things away from you so that he would be first and foremost not the thing or the person that you want what do you want more than

[24:53] God what do I want more than him you see what I mean this is what the book of judges is going to do it's going to bring this out in us and what's really at the heart of our own idolatry God's covenant faithfulness and gracious deliverance of his people you're going to see it contrasted with Israel's idolatry immorality and brutality you see this these three idolatry immorality and brutality in those last chapters chapter 17 through 21 and when you look at chapter 17 through 21 you're like oh it ends on a bad note those are actually illustrations I believe Samuel wrote the book of judges and as Samuel wrote the book of judges he puts chapter 17 through 21 at the end as illustrations to show you this is how bad it was but that those chapters 17 through 21 actually were taking place earlier on in the history of Israel not later it wasn't later in the time period of the judges no it wasn't he just put at the end as illustrations of what life was like but it's really happening in the beginning times in the book of judges this is what life was like this is how

Israel acted that's pretty scary their idolatry their immorality brutality I mean you see this blatant in chapters 20 and 21 what in the world were they thinking every time they repented God would patiently forgive them because he was working his plan to bring the salvation salvation to the world but why was it so important that God be the ruler of Israel because Israel was to be the model nation to the whole world to which the other nations may look for inspiration direction and eventually to worship the one true God and through them would come Jesus Christ the Messiah that's the point of Israel's land you know that little strip of land when you're looking on the globe you see that it's like about the size of half of your fingernail and you're kind of like where's

Israel oh there it is it's that little portion it's like why is it such a big deal and so many people fight over that stupid piece of land right like why are they fighting over this thing you understand if you look at a map this is all of northern area Turkey's here north area Russia's up here and over here India and down south you know Africa's down over here and all the Middle East that was the main spot of that time period you would go this way to go into Europe from the Mediterranean Sea all the tribes would go from south to north you would have to go through that route right through Israel if you go north to south to do trade where would you go right through Israel if you're going to go west you go this way where would you lead right to Israel if you have to go east you'll be able to get things from the east from India where would you go right to Israel it's all right there that small little

piece of property that was the point and Israel didn't get it

God wanted his people to prosper and be admired by the world so that he would end up getting the glory so they would come they'd be like why are you guys not working on the Sabbath that's really dumb why are you guys doing these rituals and stuff like that that's really weird because we worship Yahweh God him and him alone but Israel had to obey him and him alone they had to want him and him alone and that's the problem they didn't the people decided to go their own way and forsook Yahweh to make him first foremost and central forsaken his ways the theocracy failed due to their lack of faith and obedience you'll see that they worship Baal and other sins followed too Ashtoreth you know what's interesting for the first 271 years of this time period you only had five judges then during the next 69 years nine judges ruled total of 340 years why is that the case because would you end up seeing there was actually an increase in the sin among the people the sin continued to increase plus Yahweh was trying to show the need for the monarchy due to the people's sinful response towards him he was not first and foremost so the task of the judge was to curtail sin and to deliver from foreign oppression which was

God's form of discipline on his people because he wanted them to solely love want and adore him if you miss anything today or miss anything over the next 20 weeks so you go through the book of judges don't miss that because you can see this happening in your own life we'll be reading as a congregation we read out loud we'll be reading the next part of Hebrews chapter 12 where it says God disciplines his children he does that because he loves us why because he wants us to want him and he'll strip things away from you so that way he'll be made known to you that you want that thing you want that person you want more than God so judges it majors on the people's sin [31 : 25] God's discipline for their sin and deliverance from his discipline it records the people's sin and how they quickly defected from God's requirements it shows Israel's persistent apostasy and yet God's patient gracious response I was reading and one writer put it like this quote Israel's survival was a miracle of God's grace end quote as just a miracle that they actually are still in existence today that's just God's grace and if you want to see in the book of Judges kind of like a mini me a mini Israel Samson he's probably a perfect display of Israel and his passions his lust his foolishness his faithlessness and yet still there was faith that was there says the book of

Hebrews right a faithless people and yet you actually see a faithful God God's overwhelming never ending relentless love for his people he wants us to solely want him and he will discipline us to make that happen he disciplines us so that he would be our one and only love how much do you love him how much do you want him this this is a solution what are you struggling with some struggle with sex and porn drugs alcohol pleasure food health diet exercise safety a pain free life what is it that you're putting in a place of God and you want that you hunger for that more than you hunger for God you desire that more than you desire

God if these things reign then Christ is not first and foremost you know what God will graciously patiently and lovingly squeeze he'll discipline you because he wants his people as it says in Romans chapter 8 verse 29 to reflect and be conformed to the image of his son right as I was studying and working through things this past week what clicked in my brain was John Piper's book Desiring God if you haven't read that book you should it was that first chapter where he brings up the confessional the catechism what is the chief end of man is to glorify God and Piper changes the word glorify God by enjoying him forever and he came up with the phrase

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied with him how is God glorified most in you when you want him the most when you desire him more and more I pray this book will direct us towards that me you all of us we want him more solely want him would you pray with me■■■24 nice to give us Barbara who