

God's Preserving Grace

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Date: 11 July 2021

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Judges, Judges chapter 20. If you're visiting with us, the black Bible in the chair in front of you, you can pull that out, start in Genesis, and find from Genesis, page 1 or page 2, find page 196, excuse me, in the black Bible, 196, Judges chapter 20.

In Judges chapter 20, we're actually gonna study the two chapters, 20 and 21 this morning. Please be praying for Jane as you're turning to your Bibles.

Jane is gone, she's our piano player. She's gone for this next week, she'll be back Saturday. She went to visit family in Colorado, so you can be praying for her. She'll enjoy her time, be able to rest and relax.

Judges chapter 20, start reading chapter 20 verse 1, through chapter 21, so 20 and 21. We're gonna do that this morning, these two chapters, so here we go.

This is fun. There's supposed to be like, how many people are in here? Like a bunch of amens. This is fun.

[1 : 15] Yeah, see? Come on, what's the matter with you people? Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out. And the congregation assembled as one man to Yahweh at Mizpah.

And the chiefs of all the people of all the tribes of Israel took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword. Now, the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.

And the sons of Israel said, tell us, how did this wickedness take place? Verse 4, so the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin.

But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me. Instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died. And I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the land of Israel's inheritance.

For they committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. Behold, all you sons of Israel, give your advice and counsel here. Verse 8, then all the people rose as one man, saying, Not one of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us return to his house.

[2 : 23] But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah. We will go against it by lots. We will take 10 men out of 100 throughout the tribes of Israel and 100 out of 1,000 and 1,000 out of 10,000 to supply food for the people.

And when they come to Gibeah, Benjamin, they may punish them for the disgraceful acts that they've committed in Israel. Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man. And the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, What is this wickedness that has taken place among you?

And then deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove this wickedness from Israel. But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel. And the sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the sons of Israel.

And from the cities on that day, the sons of Benjamin were numbered. 26,000 men who draw the sword besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered. 700 choice men out of all these people.

700 choice men were left-handed. Each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. Then the men of Israel besides Benjamin were numbered. 400,000 men who draw the sword.

[3 : 29] All these were men of war. Now the sons of Israel rose, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God and said, Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin? Then Yahweh said, Judah first.

So the sons of Israel rose in the morning and camped against Gibeah. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin. And the men of Israel arrayed for battle against them at Gibeah. Then the sons of Benjamin came out to Gibeah and destroyed to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel.

But the people, the men of Israel encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day. And the sons of Israel went up and wept before Yahweh until evening and inquired of Yahweh, saying, Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?

And Yahweh said, Go up against them. Verse 24. And the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and destroyed to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel.

All these drew the sword. Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept. Thus they remained there before Yahweh and fasted that day until evening.

[4 : 34] And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh. The sons of Israel were inquired of the Lord for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to minister in those days, saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother or shall I stop?

And Yahweh said, Go up for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand. Verse 29. So Israel sent men in ambush around Gibeah. And the sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as at other times.

And the sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city. And they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times on the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah in the field, about 30 men of Israel.

And the sons of Benjamin said, Oh, they're struck down before us as at the first time. But the sons of Israel said, Let us flee that we may draw them away from the city to the highways. And all the men of Israel rose from their place and arrayed themselves at Baal Tamar.

And the men of Israel in ambush broke out of their place, even out of Ma'areg, Geba. When 10,000 choice men from all Israel came out against Gibeah, the battle became fierce, but Benjamin did not know that the disaster was close to them.

[5 : 48] And Yahweh struck Benjamin before Israel, so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day, all who draw the sword, verse 36. So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated.

When the men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the men in ambush whom they set against Gibeah, the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gibeah. The men in ambush also deployed and struck all the city with the edge of the sword.

Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they should make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city. Then the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about 30 men of Israel, for they said, Surely they are defeated before us as in the first battle.

But when the cloud began to rise from the city and the column of smoke, Benjamin looked around them, and behold, the whole city was going up to heaven. Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were terrified, and they saw that disaster was close to them.

Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them, while those who came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst of them. They surrounded Benjamin, pursued them without rest, trod them down opposite Gibeah towards the east.

[7 : 01] Thus, verse 44, 18,000 men of Benjamin fell. All these were valiant warriors. The rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Ramon, and they caught 5,000 of them on the highways and overtook them at Gedom and killed 2,000 of them.

So all of Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men who draw the sword. All these were valiant warriors. But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Ramon, and they remained at the rock of Ramon four months.

The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin, excuse me, and struck them with the edge of the sword, for both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found, and they also set on fire all the city which they found.

Chapter 21. Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mishpah, saying, None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage. So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly.

And they said, Why, O Yahweh God of Israel, has this come about in Israel so that one tribe should be missing today in Israel? And it came about the next day that the people rose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

[8 : 11] Then the sons of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up in the assembly to Yahweh? They had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the Lord at Mishpah, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, One tribe is cut off from Israel today. What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by Yahweh not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?

For they said, And they said, Verse 8, What one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Yahweh at Mishpah? And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly.

For when the people were numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there and commanded them, saying, Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones.

And this is the thing that you shall do. You shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who's lain with a man. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him.

[9 : 14] And they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. Then the whole congregation, verse 13, sent word and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Meron and proclaimed peace to them.

And Benjamin returned at that time and they gave them the women whom they kept alive from the women of Jabesh Gilead. Yet they were not enough for them. And the people were very sorry for Benjamin because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

And the elders of the congregation said, What shall we do for wives for those who are left since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? And they said, There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin that a tribe may not be blotted out from Israel.

But we cannot give them wives of our daughters for the sons of Israel had sworn, saying, Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin. Verse 19. So they said, Behold, there's a feast of the Lord from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethlehem, excuse me, from Bethel to Shechem and on the south side of Lebanon.

And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie and wait in the vineyards and watch. And behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each one of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin.

[10 : 27] Shall come about when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us that we shall say to them, Give them to us voluntarily because we did not take for each man of Benjamin a wife in battle, nor did you give them to them else you would now be guilty.

And the sons of Benjamin did so and took wives according to their number from those who danced whom they carried away and they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the cities and lived in them.

And the sons of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went out from there to his inheritance. Verse 25, In those days there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Verse 25, Very rarely do my kids fight.

Yeah, you're supposed to be laughing. Very rarely. Happens. Once. A day. Maybe 50 times a day.

[11 : 33] So anyways, so there's two kids that are gonna be fighting. As far as I'm concerned, they're both in trouble. And they're both gonna be disciplined. Because most likely, they're both wrong.

Now, even though one was probably more wrong than the other, I mean, that's usually the case. Mm-hmm. But I'm not able to sort through who was who in the disaster that took place.

Because in those instances, someone is lying. And they're not fessing up, right? You know, it's a good thing, it's a really, really good thing that God knows all and sees all.

He's perfect in His judgment. And He's so kind to us through His grace. The theme in Judges is the overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love of God for His people.

And today, you're gonna see this love played out specifically in His preserving grace. How do we title these two chapters God's preserving grace or the preserving grace of God?

[12 : 55] God's preserving grace. Let me put it to you in a statement.

God, by His grace, preserves His people to the end in His overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love because His goal is to dwell with them unhindered and to show He is a gracious, loving, merciful God.

That's how you can sum up these two chapters in a sentence. God, by His grace, He preserves His people. He preserves them in His overwhelming love, His never-ending love, His relentless love.

He does it to the end because His goal is to dwell with us unhindered and also His goal is to show that He's gracious, merciful, kind, He's compassionate, He's full of grace.

Amid our sinful stupidity, God will still preserve us as His people because He's purchased us with His Son's blood.

[14 : 16] Because of your sinful stupidity, friend, that's why Jesus had to die. You do a lot of stupid things, don't you?

We say a lot of stupid things, don't we? And yet, God's grace still preserves His people. He'll do whatever it takes to have us reflect the very image of His Son.

and only He can change our hearts to love Him, to trust Him, and to, remember, He wants us to want Him.

Only He can change our hearts to do that so that we will love, trust, and want Him the way He commands us to love, trust, and want Him. That's a good thing, isn't it?

We're going through these last few chapters in Judges. We stopped after chapter 9 and we jumped over to chapter 17, chapter 17 through 21. Why?

[15 : 22] Remember, chapter 17 through 21 is an illustration. This is how bad Israel had become. And remember, this isn't the end of the book of Judges.

It's at the end of the book, but it's not the end in terms of the time period. These chapters happen earlier on in Israel's history, the history of the Judges, as a matter of fact, it's quite possible some of it happened even before Joshua died.

And as we observed last week, when our love for and trust in Christ is rivaled, rival love, rival trust, mass pandemonium happens.

When we love our Lord and we trust Him, we'll love our neighbors ourselves. That should have happened here. Just the opposite takes place. But in the midst of their stupidity and sinfulness, God's grace.

God's grace. And there I go but the grace of God. There you go but the grace of God in your life. There I go without the grace of God.

[16 : 37] I mean, should we love Him? Should we trust Him? Of course we. But He still shows us His grace. Both are given God's grace.

Both are given Yahweh's grace here. And what we have to do when we come to these chapters, we have to be in balance. We have to guard ourselves from being too hard on Israel in this section.

What a bunch of absolute morons. But then we have to be careful we're not going too soft on the sons of Benjamin. Oh, all those poor people who like to rape women and defend the guilty.

You see, you gotta be careful. Don't be too hard on Israel but don't be too soft on Benjamin. But realize what's glorified here is the grace of God.

I mean, summarizing this, you see Israel's soldiers come against Benjamin. They gathered, spoke of war.

[17 : 45] Benjamin says, we're not gonna have this. Israel faced two defeats. Finally, the third defeat, they ransacked Benjamin and Yahweh assured them a victory.

But they eradicated all of them except for 600 of them. They weep over a lost tribe. Then they strike down Jabez Gilead, everyone except for virgins.

And then they took those virgins' daughters, gave them to the, those last 600 men and then they went to the daughters of Shiloh and told them, grab wives from them. This is, this is what's going on.

So, so what is God wanting to teach us from these chapters? God by his grace preserves us as his people in the midst of what in our lives?

Amid what? And I'm gonna have six of them. Amid, amid, amid, amid means in the midst of. So you don't have to write so much in the midst of, in the midst of, in the, just amid.

[18 : 44] It's easier. So God by his grace preserves us as a people amid what? Amid our disunity. Or you put lack of unity if you want to put that.

Amid our lack of unity or our disunity. You see though, chapter 20, verse 1 through 3, there's actual unity. Israel unified against Benjamin. And yet you see, I mean you see, as one man, as one man, as one, three times, and yet you see as well, unified against their brothers.

Verse 13, their brothers. Verse 23, their brothers. Verse 28, their brothers. This is great. But it's tragic.

Why? Why couldn't they unite like this against the nations of Canaan? Why couldn't they unite against idolatry?

Why couldn't they unite against that? Why couldn't they unite against that? Churches are known for their disunity. Who's the real enemy?

[19 : 59] And I'm not saying that we should condone sin. Benjamin was in sin. I'm not saying that. God's grace is just so sad. But you still see God's grace as just so sad and you still see God's grace in the midst of the ripping apart of the nation, of the people of God.

God's still gonna show His grace. Second, God shows His grace amid our falsity or our lack of truth. Verse 4 through 7, well, verse 3 actually, tell us how this wickedness took place.

Verse 4, the Levite, husband of woman, is murdered. Came to my concubine and spent the night. Verse 5, the men of Gade rose up against me, surrounded the house at night. Because of me, they intend to kill me.

They ravaged my concubine. So she died. Wait, wait, wait, what? That's not how we read things happened. You remember last week? Wait a minute, wait a second, buddy.

That's not what really happened. He placed himself in the best light possible and expected the men of Gibeah to be dealt with swift, severe punishment from Israel.

[21 : 18] He didn't tell them he was a coward. He didn't tell them he gave them his concubine, did he? And yet, still, you're gonna do some really dumb things in your life and yet God is still gonna show us His grace, isn't He?

Amid our disunity, amid our falsity, amid our inequity, and I mean inequity in terms of a lack of justice or lack of doing right, not this culture, racial inequity.

I'm not talking about that. White supremacists, that's not what I mean by that. It's what the word actually really means, which means a lack of justice. And you see that with Benjamin. There's a lack of justice.

because Benjamin defended these clowns. In verse 13, deliver up the men to worthless fellows in Gibeah, but the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers there in verse 13.

Verse 14, sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah to go out against the sons of Israel in battle. We'll show you blood is thicker than grace for them, but shouldn't grace be thicker than blood?

[22 : 43] Shouldn't grace be thicker than blood? Shouldn't they have seen that this is sin and dealt with it in justice and equity? Instead, they protected these guilty men.

The implication, here's the implication. And you see this from verse 25. No one took sin seriously, including Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Benjamin had an elite squad. And this team took out a bunch of soldiers from Israel. Twice! We'll show you, sons of Israel.

Now, why would God do this? Don't you think it's kind of odd? Wait a minute. Lord, sons of Israel, they're doing judgments, and yet they were defeated twice.

Why would you do that? I don't know. Remember, Samuel is just, he's telling you what happened. He doesn't necessarily give you, he gives you some little tidbits of theological implications, but not too much.

[23 : 56] You really gotta sort through this. I mean, obviously you're thinking, Lord, why did you do this? Maybe it was to humble Israel? I mean, another prediction from Jacob's prophecy came true, Genesis chapter 49 verse 27.

Benjamin, they were ruthless warriors. Jacob prophesied of that. I mean, Israel lost 10% of their army. That's a big deal. Notice what happens too.

Down in verse 26, after these two defeats, then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up, came to Bethel, wept, they remained there before the Lord, fasted, they offered burnt offerings, peace offerings, they inquired of the Lord, they wept, they fasted, they sacrificed, they prayed, they were broken.

Here's Phineas, he's the high priest, Aaron's grandson, they moved the ark of the covenant there to Bethel. But it seems like Israel had assumed they should go up against Benjamin until this third time because notice what it says at the end of verse 28, shall I yet go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin or shall I stop?

They didn't ask that before. You see, Benjamin became cocky, taking the bait for the third campaign, you see that happen in verse 29 all the way to verse 48.

[25 : 26] And by the way, you see it, verse 36 into verse 48, it actually recaps the events of verses 29 and 35. What Samuel does, he just gives you more details.

That's what he does. That's why you're like, didn't we just read this? Yeah, it's because Samuel is giving you more details about what happened, what they decided to do. But notice, Benjamin escaped into the wilderness hiding in the rocks.

The 600, they stayed there for four months. Benjamin should have stood for what was right and true. But in the midst of that, God still showed his grace.

600 guys were saved. In the midst of our disunity, lack of truth, and in the midst of our lack of doing what's right, a fourth one, amid our brutality, inequity, disunity, falsity, and now brutality, or you can put down the lack of grace.

You have these 600 men, but look at verse 48 of chapter 20. The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found.

[26 : 49] They also set on fire all the cities which they found. All the women, all the children. Talk about brutal.

That's extreme. And yet, in spite of the problems and setbacks, Yahweh showed them his grace. He gave them guidance to Phinehas. That's true.

They struck them down. Yes, they struck down Benjamin, but they totally annihilated them. They burned everything to the ground. Was Israel right in doing this? Sort of.

Look at verse 35. And Yahweh struck Benjamin before Israel. The Lord struck Benjamin, so the Lord's acting here, but he was never asked or inquired about wiping out everyone, was he?

It was Yahweh's judgment on Benjamin that's true, but it seems to be more like vengeance than justice. But in the midst of the time when we lack grace for each other, God still shows us his grace.

[27 : 54] Doesn't he? Amid our disunity, falsity, inequity, brutality, and now amid our frivolity, or frivolity, or lack of wisdom.

Look what happens in chapter 21, verses 1 through 12. Go there. Chapter 21. They swore in a misva, we're not going to give our daughters. Sorrow pervades this chapter, as one writer says.

They said, oh, we're not going to do this. There's such excessive slaughter that takes place, but they make this vow, we're not going to do it. And yet, they're the ones who brought this about in the first place. They were between a rock and a hard place.

They placed themselves under this oath. No one can marry anyone from Benjamin because of their sin. And now they're stuck. What do we do? Look at verse 8.

And they said, what one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the Lord of Mishpah? No one from Jabesh Gilead. Verse 10. The congregation sent 12,000 valiant warriors go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword with the women and the little ones.

[29 : 10] They struck down everyone from Jabesh Gilead. Talk about being fickle. You were just weeping over destroying this whole tribe and now you're wiping out somebody else.

First, oh no, Benjamin. Then they strike down Jabesh Gilead. So fickle. And yet, God still shows His grace.

Here's the next one. Last one. Number six. Amid our inconsistency, our lack of consistency, God still shows His grace. Then you shake your head, scratch your head, and you go, how in the world did they come up with these wives?

First, they kill off all these people from Jabesh Gilead except for the virgin. They say, okay, here's your wives. Well, there's not enough. Wait a minute. The same people who were outraged at the men of Gibeah raping this woman in chapter 19.

Remember that? Now they ask these men of Shiloh to accept the raping of their daughters. These virgins who worshiped at Shiloh talk about something that's highly unorthodox, so inconsistent, so fickle.

[30 : 39] So they told them, notice verse 22, it shall come about when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us. They say, just be quiet.

You should, blah, blah, blah, blah. See? Oh, what did you do? Well, wait, we're supposed to get a dowry. We're supposed to get, no, no, no, no. You be quiet now. Was Israel wrong for doing this?

Seems like it to me. You know, others, commentators, they say, well, Israel obeyed Scripture. Deuteronomy 13, 12 through 18. This is kind of far-fetched.

Were they wrong? Yes. Was Benjamin wrong? Yes. They both needed to be disciplined. All is fair in love and war. No, it's not.

They were both wrong. Did Benjamin deserve to be punished? Yeah. But was the nation in a pure moral and spiritual state themselves?

[31 : 38] Hardly. You saw chapter 17. You saw chapter 18. We went through chapters 1 and 2. You know, it's a good thing that Yahweh, through the means of others, he's actually the judge and the preserver of his people.

They both were given Yahweh's grace. Both of them. Neither one of them deserve it. Remember, we have to, when we go through this, you have to guard between being too hard on Israel, oh, what a bunch of morons, and being too soft on Benjamin.

Oh, those poor people who rape women. Come on. I mean, really? Don't be soft on them, but don't be too hard on them either. Now, let's really pull this together and bring this home.

One writer said this, quote, there is a certain rightness and a certain wrongness about what Israel does. They annihilated Benjamin.

And did you notice they practically blame God for it? I take it here, verse 15, and the people were sorry for Benjamin because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

- [32 : 57] It's almost like the idea is they're blaming God for this. They were the ones that did it. Then they judged Jabesh Gilead with, as one writer put it, unjustifiable severity.
- They kept to their wife oath, oh, don't give our wives, but then they excused the trampling of the rights of others. And as quickly as they wanted to eradicate Benjamin, did they want to preserve Benjamin?
- Talk about fickleness. So what does God want to teach us this morning? What does He want you to see? One writer, he puts it like this.
- This is great. It's a miracle of God's grace Israel survived because God preserves His people. It's a miracle of God's grace that this church has survived.
- That any church survives. That any Bible teaching, Christ-centered, gospel-focused church survives, it's only the grace of God.
- [34 : 08] Because we can act like such idiots. We, including your pastor, oh, the times when you have brought about disunity, oh, the times when I've said untruthful things, wasn't doing what's right.
- I didn't show grace. We didn't show any wisdom. And yet, that's why Jesus had to die, isn't it? God is very gracious and merciful to us.
- Even in the midst of our stupidity, God's grace always shines through for His own. That's how much He loves His people, a love for the cost of His Son.
- One writer said this, quote, it is of Yahweh's mercies that we are not consumed. Even in wrath, Yahweh remembered mercy. Isn't that so true?
- I mean, thank you, Lord, for showing us such grace. Thank you, Lord, for preserving us as your people and your grace.
- [35 : 32] Oh, that we would treat each other with that same grace. Oh, Spirit, help us as your church to treat each other with that type of grace.
- Wouldn't that be wonderful? In my study, one writer quotes from another guy and I want to read this to you because this really sums up everything in chapters 20 and 21.
- Listen to this, quote, by these actions the tribe of Benjamin was preserved. But the Israelites had tackled the problem in a cocky, conceited, high-handed way.
- How estranged from the Lord's service Israel had become. How little did it live by His light. It is a miracle that anything came of that people, that justice was practiced, that the fellowship of the tribes was preserved.
- There's no other explanation for this miracle than that of God in His grace in the Christ wished to dwell in the midst of that people in spite of its sin.
- [37 : 04] End quote. The last verse says it to you, doesn't it? In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- There it is the fourth time. Just to make sure, just to make sure you understand. For the fourth time, Samuel reminds you, here's the problem.
- Had there been a good king, this would not have happened in Israel. Instead, every person did what was right in his own eyes. And what's the result?
- Idolatry, anarchy, immorality, brutality. No, they needed a king that would stop their sinful waywardness.
- They needed a king that would stop their pragmatism. They needed a good king that would stop their syncretism. Who would direct God's people to love him chiefly, solely.
- [38 : 11] A king who would call them to holiness. A good king would be faithful to Yahweh in his covenant. A good king would tell them, let's rise and let's trust in our Lord and move forward as our God.

What does his word say? notice it's pointing to the king because 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. Friends, chapters 20 and 21 is what happens when we spurn the authority of God over our lives.

we must let his word, his truth, the king direct us not ourselves. It's amazing that we come to the end of this book which is not really the end of the book but Samson's is the end but you know what I mean.

It's amazing that Israel still existed. They didn't self-destruct. Why? Because Yahweh desired to dwell in the midst of his people in spite of their sin and he was going to preserve them by his grace.

[39 : 30] Why? He would dwell with them by acting in a very drastic way he himself would take on human flesh and die on their behalf.

That's the gospel. You should be condemned. You should be judged. Somebody asked me in Jerome do you think I'm supposed to go to hell? I said everyone should go to hell. But Jesus came.

He died on behalf of sinners. He rose from the dead. Repent and trust Christ. If you're here you're not a Christian you should repent and trust Christ. You should trust in him.

You should turn from your sin and go run to Jesus. He'll welcome you. That's the gospel. The gospel of grace. I mean isn't it refreshing as you read through these two chapters isn't it refreshing God's grace is more relentless than your sin?

Isn't it so good that he still holds us in spite of our utter stupidity and rebellion? man I've said some stupid things to my wife.

[40 : 48] Man I've said some dumb things to her. Man I've done some dumb things to my kids and so have you. but God is so gracious isn't he?

Praise God for his grace. Praise God he changes hearts and lives to love and trust and want him the way he commands to love and trust and want him and this gives you hope because you look back over your life in the past and you go man I just I messed up there and I messed up there and I messed up there and I messed up there.

How about you say you know what there's God's grace there's God's grace there's God's grace there's God's grace there's God's grace God's by his grace preserves his people to the end in his overwhelming never ending relentless love because what's his goal to dwell with us unhindered and he's going to show that he's a gracious merciful compassionate loving God he's going to show that to you and he'll do whatever it takes to have us reflect the image of Christ even in the midst of our sinful stupidity God will still preserve us as his people because he's purchased us with his son's blood if you miss anything don't miss that God's preserving grace did you pray with me our father thank you that you can change our hearts to love trust and want you the way you command us to love trust and want you many of us have so many regrets some more than others some less than others and you call us to love you you call us to trust you and yet you love your people so much you will squeeze and your grace will preserve us to the very end your grace is unmeasured thank you may we have such hope in the midst of the sinful ways we've responded the stupid things we've done the foolish things we've said and we're going to do it again and yet that's why you had to die

Jesus because we're sinners and yet you're still filled with grace grace grace God's grace grace that will pardon and cleanse within grace grace God's grace grace that is greater than all my sin by grace I am redeemed by grace I am restored and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord I encourage you in this time to fill your mind with truth fill your mind with the grace of God here's a challenge for you if you can handle it might be kind of hard look back over those times in your life you know what I'm talking about where you've really messed up and the challenge is for you to look back at that and maybe start today and say

Lord help me to start viewing that as a way as a time when you showed me your grace grace that'd be hard it's a challenge I know let your mind fill with grace let your mind fill with grace which means unmerited undeserved favor from God you deserve nothing but judgment but he shows grace in Christ Jesus so fill your mind with truth and do that over the next few minutes we do that sing some songs pray let this be a time where you can fill your mind with the preserving grace of

[46 : 30] God please do that now in