

Judges: Overview

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[0 : 00] Take the Bibles tonight and open them to the book of Judges.

Or sermons, if you want to call them that, through the book of Judges.

Though really this will be more of a kind of teaching approach. Though there are going to be many applications, even in our introduction.

And that's basically what we'll be looking at tonight, kind of an introduction to the book. Albeit we'll be looking at, and I'll be reading many, many parts of chapters 1 and 2.

It's not going to be really an expository approach through those chapters. But using those chapters to help us understand the book of Judges.

[1 : 09] And what is going on there. And why it is going on. And so forth. So this is kind of an introduction. And so I want to begin though by reading the very first verse of chapter 1.

And this is what it says. This is how the book of Judges begins. Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?

And the Lord said, Judah shall go up. Indeed, I have delivered the land into his hand. Now, I read that passage here at the beginning because for this purpose, just to point this out about the book.

It reads as if it is just simply a continuation of the book of Joshua. I mean, it just kind of reads on in. I mean, there's no real break in thought or break in theme.

There's no real sense that this is a new book. It almost has the feel of the next chapter in a larger book. And really, to an extent, that's true.

[2 : 20] That's very true. That the book of Judges is a continuation. It is kind of the next chapter, if not the next chapter in a larger book. Although, really, it is the next chapter or the next book.

It's also, certainly, the next chapter in the life of Israel. And, sadly, it is a terrible chapter. Terrible chapter in the history of Israel.

It's a tragic, if you want to call it a sequel to Joshua. It is a tragic sequel to the book of Joshua. And so, the book of Judges, I mean, if you've read it, and I'm sure many of you have, you've read it all the way through, probably, in the course of your own study of Scripture.

Or, maybe it's been a while since you have read any parts of Judges. You may have had it taught. Maybe you heard it preached. Parts of it and so forth. But, you don't have to read very far in the book of Judges to realize that this is a dark time for the people of Israel.

That's described in the history, the history of this book. Even though, when you think about it, this comes so very soon after a, what we might call a very glorious time.

[3 : 35] A time of conquest. A time of victory. Certainly a time of blessing. I read, and yet the book itself, when you begin to read it, is very dark.

Very tragic. Very sad. Terrible testimony to Israel's commitment to God and the covenant they had with Him.

I was reading about a pastor who, a certain pastor whose kind of tradition in their church, somewhat like ours, a tradition was to have one of the men in the church to read the sermon passage for that morning, that morning service, and then to pray.

And that's what they would do every time, every Sunday morning. Someone would read the passage, and then that person would pray. And so that was just kind of the custom, and every time, every time they did it that way.

Well, the preacher had been preaching through the book of Joshua, just like I'm starting to do tonight. And on that particular Sunday, as he was getting ready to preach, out of one of the more troubling, darker passages, portions of the book, you know, the elder was to stand and read the passage and pray.

[4 : 55] And so it was time for him to do that, and there was just silence. Just silence. And that went on for a little while. Finally, people were looking around, and there he was standing back there, and he had his Bible open.

But he was crying, had tears in his eyes. And finally, after a time, he composed himself, and he said, this time, let's pray first, and then read the passage.

And that kind of gives you the kind of the flavor of what we're going to find in this book. And Judges, again, is one of the darkest books in the Bible.

Certainly, an account of some of the darkest times in the lives of God's people. Now, yes, there are some high points. There are. And we're going to see those.

And there are some thrilling events, thrilling things that happen. And we see God doing some mighty, mighty things. And yet there is great value to God's people if they will read it.

[6 : 06] We can learn a great deal from this book. We can learn a great deal about grace from this book. The judges themselves, I think, are representative of our great judge, Christ, who is merciful and gracious to us, though we're sinners.

And so it's a dark book, yes, depicting dark times for Israel. And I want you to just think about it. You know, kind of get the context here leading up to this, you know, terrible history in the life of Israel.

God had birthed Israel, birthed them, and birthed them in the furnace, in the bondage of Israel.

That's where God birthed Israel. Israel became Israel when they came out of Egypt. And God had then delivered Israel from the horrors of bondage and slavery, the slavery of Egypt.

And not only that, but God had continued to lead them, lead them and provide for them throughout their wilderness wanderings and so forth. And then God had led them into the land, the land that He had promised to them.

[7 : 25] And He had conquered their enemies in the land of promise. And God had blessed and blessed and blessed over and over and over again His people.

Now think of it this way. God had given Israel Himself. You see, we think about Israel being God's people.

But He was their God. God had given Himself to them as His unique people. And so, He gave them the Lord.

He gave them the Lord of heaven and earth. That's a privilege. And not only that, but God had, again, led Israel into Canaan, into the promised land.

So, He gave them a land. He gave them the Lord. He gave them the land. And God had entrusted Israel with His commandments. So, God gave them the law.

[8 : 26] God gave them all those things that really, together, together, defined them as the unique, special people of God. He gave them Himself.

He gave them the Lord. He gave them the land. He gave them the law. And what did Israel do with it? Well, that's described in this book. And not just in Judges, but in other places throughout the Old Testament.

What did they do? Well, they denied the Lord. God had given them the Lord. But if they denied the Lord, they defiled the land through sin.

And they had defied the law. That's what they did with those three wonderful things that God had graciously given to them. All right, so that is at the heart of the book of Judges.

And so we also, as we look at the book, we're also going to find grace and mercy. The grace and mercy of the Lord. I mean, you're going to see that repeated over and over again.

[9 : 31] And God's grace and mercy rises far above Israel's sin and Israel's rebellion and rejection of God.

So we're going to find the grace of God. We're going to find the longsuffering of God in the book of Judges. I mean, it stands as an incredible testimony to the patience and longsuffering of God toward a people who just keep sinning and sinning and sinning.

Can I get a witness? And so we're going to have that in the book of Judges. In fact, I think it is the grace of God that shines through the great darkness of this book.

The grace of God. All right, now before we get into the book itself, let's just consider a few preliminary things. Since we're going to study through the book, let's just talk a little bit about the title of it.

The title of it. And it's important, I think, to know these things, note these things. And it isn't anything really all that complicated about the title of the book of Judges.

[10:44] Its title is completely appropriate. Judges. And the title, of course, simply refers to a series of unique leaders that God raised up from among the people of Israel, many of them totally insignificant people, little people, many of them, people who just common, everyday kind of people.

And God raised them up throughout the book of Judges for a wonderful purpose. And that leads us then to the question, what is a judge?

I mean, to us, it's a bit complicated because a judge means one thing to us, and it meant something almost entirely different in the context in which this book was written, in the Hebrew way of thinking. In the case of Israel, in this period of their history, a judge was not primarily a person that, you know, tried certain cases in a court of law, you know, that stood as judge to settle certain disputes and so forth.

And so these judges, for the most part, did not do that. They did not settle civil, you know, disputes, though there might be one exception with Deborah. And we'll get to Deborah later when we get to chapter 4.

[12:12] All right, so these are not judges in any regular sense, any common sense of the word, at least how we would use it today in our context of life. And also, these judges were not kings.

They were not even the forerunners of the kings. They didn't fit that scenario in any shape or form. They were not in any sense kings.

Some of these judges led armies. They did. They led armies of Israel. Not all of them. But some of them did. But these were select armies, you know, among the tribes.

And not the entire army. Not any one of the judges led the entire army of Israel. So they were not kings in that sense either.

These judges did not have any kind of administrative functions as a king would. They did not hold any royal position among the people.

[13:16] They wore no crown. They sat on no throne. They were not succeeded by a dynasty, you know, a family dynasty. There weren't judges in any of these senses.

So who were they? Well, they were simply deliverers. In fact, we could substitute the word that's used here, that is translated in nearly every version, translated judges.

We could substitute the word deliverer. And that's basically the meaning of shaphat. Shaphat is a deliverer. In fact, we could even translate it savior.

Savior. That's why, not just for that reason, but other reasons too. We see a glimpse of Christ in this book. He's the judge overall.

But he's a savior. He's a deliverer. And so the judges were individually raised up by God. Many of them obscure people. No one in Israel went out looking for them.

[14:20] No one in Israel, you know, put a vote in a ballot box to elect any of the judges. They did not call them to be judges. They wouldn't even know, they would not have even known they existed unless God had uniquely called them and raised them up to do what?

To be a deliverer. To deliver God's people from their enemies. Those that were oppressing them. And so that's what a judge is. And in all, God raised up 14 judges.

14, if you count Eli and Samuel. Now you have to go on into 1 Samuel to read about those guys. But 14 in all, deliverers, judges over Israel.

Samuel being the last of the judges. Because after Samuel, came who? Saul, the first king of Israel. You know, God's people said, we want to have a king just like every other nation.

And that's exactly what they got. Saul. Wicked king. But anyway, so, judges. Now, let's think just for a moment about the author.

[15:29] The author and maybe even the date just for your general information. As to the author, on the face of it, no author is credited for writing this book.

I mean, you don't have it written. It's not signed. There are a number of books in the Bible that are signed. In the sense that they open up with, you know, open up with the name of the author. But, that's not the case with judges.

And so, there has to be somewhat of a speculation about that if that's even really important. The book is technically anonymous. And, and so we have to say, conclusively, we don't have any idea. Well, we have maybe a possible idea and I'll suggest that to you. This kind of comes from a consensus among conservative Bible scholars, those who take the Bible literally and take the Bible seriously.

And, and among conservative scholars, usually Samuel is the one that is named as the author of the book. And, they point to 1 Samuel 10, 25 as possible evidence.

[16:38] and there the Bible says, then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord.

So, Samuel wrote a book, gave it to the Lord and, so the idea is it showed up in, in the inspired word of God that maybe Samuel wrote the book.

Alright, you can decide that. The only other option is a series of people over, you know, a number of years kind of pieced together what we have as judges now from different documents and accounts and so forth and oral traditions and so forth.

So, you can pick that side or you can just say, well, I guess maybe Samuel wrote it. Be okay, you're not going to be a heretic if you believe that. Now, as for the date of the book, the author makes several remarks about Israel having no king.

In fact, three times. There is this statement about Israel not having a king which suggests then by implication that the author knew of a time when Israel did have a king.

[17:48] Okay? I mean, you don't talk about Israel in a time when they did not have a king if you've never known Israel to have a king. So, it had to have been written before the kings, before the very first king.

And, for example, Judges 17.6, in those days there was no king in Israel. In those days, looking back, in those days, we have a king now but in those days Israel had no king.

I mean, if you lived in the period of the Judges and you're writing this or maybe shortly after the book of Judges you write down this account and you would have to assume that Israel would never have a king because that was not in the vision.

It was only later that Israel demanded to have a king and they kept asking for it and Samuel finally relented because God told him to. But, if you're living in that time you're assuming that God will always be our king and that we will not have an earthly king.

And so, the author had to have lived at a time possibly shortly after the very first king and the first king of course was Saul about 1043 B.C.

[18:57] So, if you want to write down a date probably sometime after 1043 B.C. Sometime early on possibly in the kingship of Saul.

And, that's why again or maybe another support for Samuel being the author the last of the Judges. Alright, now, what is the key to understanding the book of Judges?

That's what we want to get to here tonight. The key to understanding what's going on, the dynamic of this, what's happening here, why is it happening, what's the key to understanding this?

And, the answer to that first of all is to understand that the book of Judges, to understand the book of Judges we must understand the covenant of God, the covenant God had with Israel, the covenant given through Moses, the Mosaic, covenant.

And, Deuteronomy 28, I mean, it's given to us in Leviticus as well, but in Deuteronomy 28, 1 and 2, listen to the details of the blessings of the covenant.

[20:07] That is, those who keep the covenant. Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all His commandments, see, they had been given God's law, so they knew what God wanted, diligently, carefully, observe all of these commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you because you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

So this is covenant speech here, this is covenant talk, and he's talking about his covenant, his unique covenant with Israel, and he's talking about a blessing of the covenant if they will keep it. But then in verse 15 of that same chapter in Deuteronomy 28, you have details of the curses if you don't keep it, if Israel did not keep it, and Judges is all about them not keeping the covenant, violating the covenant.

Now God didn't violate it, they did. And here's what verse 15 says, But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all his commandments and his statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city. Cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall you shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

[21 : 38] Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land. The increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in and cursed shall you be when you go out.

Alright, so there's a blessing of the covenant, there's the curse of the covenant and by the way we'll not go back and read it because we studied this passage or at least looked through it back in Joshua.

Joshua repeats these warnings in one of his kind of, his two part farewell to Israel because he's soon going to be dying and his leadership will come to an end and so you can jot this down Joshua 23, 9 to 16 Joshua also details, repeats these warnings of the covenant.

So God has made a covenant with Israel and judges then is all about Israel not keeping it. God keeping it and God then responding in the way he said he would if they did not keep it.

And so Israel did not keep the covenant with God and God did judge them. Now, with that kind of as the foundation, our understanding of why this is happening, why God is sending enemies and oppressors upon Israel and then delivering them and then sending them and delivering them, we can trace what happened here.

[23 : 09] We can trace Israel's downfall through the first few chapters of this book, primarily chapters 1 and 2. And I'll read some of that along the way but let's just kind of put this in our mind in terms of steps.

They took steps away from God and God took steps to bring them back. And so here's step number one. an unsuccessful conquering.

There was an unsuccessful conquering of the enemies of God. That's how this all got started. Now what did God commanded Israel to do in the land of promise? Conquer it.

To destroy the people. They were not only being given a land, a land of promise but because of the over the top wickedness and perversion of the Canaanite people, God was using Israel to judge them.

And it was not just simply a spanking. They were to be removed from the face of the earth. And so God had commanded them to conquer the land, not just part of it but all of it.

[24 : 16] And yes, Israel had great victories and early on some very astounding victories. Joshua, I mean Jericho and Ai.

But they didn't finish the job. And chapters 1 and 2 detail that pretty clearly. Some victories and yet partial success.

For example, verse 19. So the Lord, this is in chapter 1, so the Lord was with Judah and they drove out the mountaineers. That's not a car by the way. But they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland.

They could not drive them out because they had chariots of iron. Now, they had a walled city called Jericho but that stopped them. Now, they were trusting God and so there is an implication here that they didn't carry it all the way through.

They were not trusting God and so this is the step one to their downfall. We have it again in verse 21. That was Judah in verse 19. Now in verse 21, we have Benjamin.

[25 : 22] But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem. So the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

That is the day when this was written. And actually they inhabited Jerusalem long after this book was written. Verse 27, 28, Manasseh.

Now we have Manasseh, the tribe of Manasseh. They did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and its villages or Ta'anak and its villages or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages and on and on and on and on.

You can go throughout those two verses but did not completely, it ends with did not completely drive them out. So Judah didn't finish the job, their job, didn't conquer their land.

Benjamin didn't do it. Manasseh didn't do it. Verse 29, Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gizher. So the Canaanites dwelt in Gizher among them.

[26 : 24] So they lived right there with the Canaanites. Alright, and that'll play into another step a little bit later. Verse 30, Nor did Zebulun, that's another tribe of Israel, nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitran or the inhabitants of Naharlal, however you pronounce that.

So the Canaanites dwelt among them and were put under tribute. So at least they taxed them but they let them live and they dwelt among them. Verse 31, Nor did Asher, there's another tribe of

Israel, nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Akko or the inhabitants of Sidon or of, and then you can just read that for yourself.

They did not drive them out. And you're getting the message, right? Getting the point? The same was true of Naphtali in verse 33, same was true of Dan in verses 34 and 35.

Partial victory over the Canaanites meant living with the Canaanites. That's the bottom line. They allowed them to live completely against God's command of Israel when they were to go in and possess the land.

And so the Canaanites they lived, they lived among the Canaanites which eventually for Israel and I think very rapidly led to the next downward step away from God.

[27 : 47] So here's step two. It's very logical. And you can begin to read through the book and you can see these steps unfolding. Step two, an unhealthy coexistence.

An unhealthy coexistence with whom? The enemies of God. The Canaanites. And so, and we've already seen this a couple of times in those passages I read a moment ago repeatedly in chapter one, you have this phrase or something similar to it, they dwelt among the Canaanites.

They coexisted with the wicked, vile, idolatrous Canaanites. So step one then, an unsuccessful conquering of the land.

step two, an unhealthy coexistence with the people of the land. And then third, the third step, an unholy cooperation with the people of the land.

An unholy cooperation. They not only allowed them to live there and, you know, coexisted with them, but they also entered into some partnerships with them.

[29 : 03] there was an unholy cooperation with these who were the enemies. Not only of Israel, but of God.

And so also repeatedly we have indications that Israel entered into agreements with the people of the Canaanites, slavery agreements, tribute agreements, taxation agreements, coexist, some kind of civil coexistent agreements, formal associations and so forth.

Now, what did God think about this? Well, we don't have to wonder or we don't have to even look beyond somewhere else other than Judges. In Judges chapter 2, 1 through 3, look at it.

Then the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bacchim and said, I led you up from Egypt. By the way, the angel of the Lord, I think, is a pre-incarnate, pre-appearance of Christ.

Anyway, I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you. You can count on that. I'll never break my covenant with you.

[30 : 10] You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You shall tear down their altars. Did Israel do that? No. You shall tear down their altars, but you have not obeyed my voice.

Why have you done this? Therefore, I also said, I will not drive them out before you. So you're on your own here. But they will be thorns in your side.

And listen to this, and their gods shall be a snare to you. This is God's judgment. Israel's getting exactly what they asked for.

God by allowing this cooperation to persist between them and the Canaanites.

God, again, had commanded that the Canaanites were to be destroyed. But to cooperate with them, which is what Israel did with many of them, to cooperate with them through formal agreements, that gave them legitimacy in the land.

[31 : 19] that gave them a certain amount of confidence and a certain amount of security in the land, which led then to step number four. And step number four has everything to do with the last thing I read in verse three of Judges two, and their gods shall be a snare to you.

So here's step number four, an unavoidable corruption of Israel. A corruption. They were corrupted by the people. It was unavoidable. See, they allowed them to coexist with the Israelites, and then they entered into some level of cooperation with the Canaanites, and so it was unavoidable that their religion, their paganism and idolatry would corrupt Israel, and that's exactly what happened. Look at Judges chapter 2, starting with verse 6. Judges 2, 6, and when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel.

now Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was 110 years old, and they buried him within the border of his inheritance of Timnath Hares in the mountains of Ephraim on the

north side of the Mount Gash.

[33 : 00] When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord, nor the work which he had done for Israel, then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

The Baals, the gods of the Canaanites. It was unavoidable. Step by step by step, they are moving in that direction and so now they're caught.

Israel did exactly what God warned them not to do. God had warned them over and over again, yet his warning went unheeded. And, you know, really, this is, quite honestly, so typical of God's people then and now.

It's typical of us. That the very thing that God tells us not to do, that's exactly what we want to do and often do. And so, here's the scenario.

First, they tolerated sin and then they imitated sin. First, they tolerated the Canaanites and their false worship. They tolerated it.

[34 : 10] just lauded to coexist with them and then they imitated it. It became a part of them, a part of their religion.

How sad. What a sad story. So, step by step, they're moving away from God. God had sent Israel to judge the Canaanites for their gross sinfulness.

I mean, the Canaanites, their sinfulness provoked the full wrath of God. Yet now, Israel had embraced that very sin. And so, quite naturally then, we come to step number five.

God's And that is an unstoppable condemnation. The unstoppable condemnation of God. And He did it through Israel's enemies.

Did it through them. Judges 2, 14. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. That's quite a statement right there. So, He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who spoiled them.

[35 : 16] And He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies, as they could stand against them. Whenever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said.

And as the Lord had sworn to them. He said, this is what I'll do. They didn't believe Him. God is the God of His Word.

And they were greatly distressed. And that's putting it mildly. But then we have, with the next step, we have the mercy of God. This is where God's mercy begins to shine.

Step six, the unmerited compassion of God. I say unmerited because Israel did not deserve it. And so, it's God's compassion that He poured out upon Israel.

Unmerited, undeserved. Really, in many cases, unsought for. And God had compassion upon them. Verse 16, Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

[36 : 36] Skip down to verse 18. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.

For the Lord was moved to pity, pity, by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

I guess they're just saying, oh, woe is me, poor, pitiful me. And God responds with compassion. He certainly did not have to. There was nothing in Israel that compelled Him to.

It was all within the heart and purposes and grace and mercy of God. And so, repeatedly, then, throughout the book of Judges, we have Israel crying out in misery and in many cases crying out for the Lord's help.

God and God is merciful. The great mercy of God. Now, I wish that were the end of it. I wish that we just kind of would end on a high note.

[37 : 43] But then we go to step seven. Step seven, and it's kind of descriptive of a vicious cycle that Israel is going to find themselves in throughout the book of Judges.

And step seven is an unbelievable contempt for God. And that's the only way I could describe it. Verse 19 is unbelievable. It's unfathomable how contemptible Israel had become toward their Lord and Savior.

Think about what God had done. I mean, they were the ones who moved away from God. They're the ones who turned their back upon Him. They are the ones who rebelled and defiled the land and they defied the law of God, which was the very basis of their covenant.

They had said no to all of that and God judged them rightfully so and He said that He would. And they were oppressed and in misery and so forth and they cry out and God is merciful to deliver them.

Just a matter of His grace. He delivered them and then look at it. And it came to pass when the judge was dead.

[39 : 02] So we have a judge that is raised up by God to be a strong deliverer for the people, to bring them, deliver them from the oppressor, but He only lives a certain amount of time.

And so when the time came and the judge was dead, guess what? They reverted and behaved not just corruptly, but more corruptly.

Even more than before. Things were not the same, just like it was before. No, they were worse. More corruptly than their fathers. By following other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, they did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

what a testimony. And you know, if I were God, and I'm certainly not, and it's a good thing, if I were God, I'd say, forget you.

In fact, I might even just take my big thumb and go, you're gone, you're out of here. But this is just kind of the beginning of a cycle, because God will then send another oppressor.

[40 : 16] not just to punish them, but to bring them to the reality of themselves and the seriousness of their condition so that they would cry out and maybe even many would repent and then God would send a judge again to deliver them graciously, mercifully.

And then, after the judge dies, right back, not just like it was, but worse. I mean, if I were God, I wouldn't put up with that. God is so faithful.

He's so faithful and so, you know, kind of in closing tonight, you know, I got to thinking about this. You know what is the most astounding word in these first two chapters of Judges that really are kind of descriptive of how the whole book is going to go?

You know what the most amazing word is? A word that shines bright in this dark history, this dark description of Israel. It's found in the 16th verse of chapter 2.

And, you know, it's the word nevertheless. In some versions, it's then. I like nevertheless better. It's a little bit more climactic. But, nevertheless, that's an astounding word.

[41 : 35] Because that comes right after Israel's rebellion and sin and then, nevertheless. and it introduces God's deliverance. Delivering them from the depth of their sinfulness.

And that means a lot to us. Because every one of us are rebellious people. Maybe not on the scale of Israel. You know, you haven't possibly, you know, quit the church here and joined the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses or some other even more weird cult out there.

You know, you're not then setting up idols in your living room and bowing down to them and lighting candles to them and sacrificing people to them. Maybe that is not as drastic.

And yet, we all have that measure of rebellion in us. that even God is so gracious and merciful and yet we still sin, still disobey Him.

And I mean willfully disobey Him. We struggle with that all the time and nevertheless, nevertheless, God is still faithful and merciful and gracious.

[42 : 55] Now, nevertheless, it's not an excuse for sin. I mean, at no time should we ever be thinking in our mind, well, I know I shouldn't do this, but God will forgive me. Nevertheless, it's not an excuse for rebellion or for sin.

Nevertheless, it's not some justification for willful rebellion against God, but it is a statement of God's mercy, His faithfulness, His grace.

So, no matter, and here's the point, no matter how deep you, maybe right now, no matter how deep you are in some sin or no matter how far you have drifted from God and communion with Him, you can still run to Him.

You can still go to Him and not fear being rejected. He's merciful. He's gracious. He's ready to forgive. give. You don't merit His mercy.

We didn't merit His grace and salvation. We don't continue in some meritorious type of relationship with Him. We don't merit anything from God.

[44 : 12] And never will we. It's not that you deserve it or merit or have earned His mercy or His grace. So we don't merit it, but neither should we think that we somehow must merit it before God will deliver.

Israel cried out and the Lord unconditionally delivered them. And that's what He has done for every one of us in our salvation.

And that is what He continues to do every time. We run to Him. He forgives and He restores and He delivers.

So that's the lesson out of the first two chapters. The Judges.