



“Finding God’s Grace through His Discipline”
Judges 2:11-3:6

Idea: Discipline is the teaching tool God uses to correct sinful ways and protect you from the dangerous consequences of sin.

Intro: “This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.” You might have heard your parent make that statement when you were a child, or perhaps you have even said it to your children. It’s kind of hard to see how the punishment being delivered would hurt the one giving it more than the one receiving it. In fact the whole concept of discipline raises a very important question: “What is the purpose of discipline?”

In order to understand the purpose for something, you first must know its definition. We can define discipline as “the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.” So then the purpose of discipline would be to bring correction to the error in a person’s life.

Can discipline be given as an act of love?

12 *for the Lord reproveth him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.* – Proverbs 3:12

6 *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*" – Heb 12:6

19 *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.* – Rev 3:19

The teaching of God's Word is clear. God disciplines His children; He disciplines the ones He loves. We see His discipline to Israel throughout Judges.

Read Judges 2:11-3:6.

Inquiry: We began our study of Judges by discovering that this tragic period of apostasy in Israel's history is a story of redemption in the face of rebellion. The history of almost two centuries is summarized in the first two chapters, indicating the principles behind the Lord's dealings with Israel. During this period there was a recurring cycle of four phases: apostasy, servitude, supplication, and deliverance. It is this pattern, which is illustrated, in the succeeding chapters. The nation forsook the Lord, a crime that involved disloyalty to their forefathers and a willful overlooking of the mighty works of God on their behalf, especially the deliverance from Egypt. All the evidence of their traditions ought to have ensured their faithfulness, but instead they turned to the gods of the people into whose midst they had come, whose religion seemed more directly concerned with their own prosperity.

Surrounded by the diverse elements of nations and pagan worship, Israel was unable to maintain her purity of race and religion. Instead of remaining faithful to the Lord there was a casual acceptance of the nature gods of the land, and the corrupt practices associated with them. Israel's resolutions and protestations of loyalty to her covenant-God disappeared swiftly when confronted with the forces of expediency and

sensual attraction. They became Canaanized. Rather than being and doing what God had set forth, they chose to do what they wanted. They said, "I'll have it my way."

For this reason, we are justifiably surprised to see Yahweh intervene on Israel's behalf. If this nation emerges at the end of this period with any sort of national self-consciousness and any sense of significance in history, it is due to no credit of their own. It is attributable entirely to the gracious heart of their covenant Sovereign. He deals mercifully with them, not because they deserve it in any way but because of His long-range mission of mercy for the world. God has chosen this nation to be the instrument of blessing, and He cannot let her die or disappear among the conglomerate populations of the ancient Near East. At times Israel appears determined to destroy herself, but each time He rescues her.

Israel was a rebellious people, but the recurring cycle reveals to us the redemptive and gracious heart of God. Judges is a story of redemption in the face of rebellion. It is a story of God's grace. In the same way, your story and my story are stories of redemption in the face of rebellion. They are stories of God's grace. Today, as we look at the summary of these rebellious cycles, I want you to find God's grace through His discipline.

I want to share three truths with you in regards to finding God's grace through His discipline.

1. God's discipline is His gracious way to teach you what is right and wrong. (2:11-15)

Recently, I heard a man share how he was able to teach his son an important life lesson. The boy had carelessly broken something around the house when the parents weren't home. When dad got home and discovered what had happened, he told his son that he needed to replace it. The man knew his son didn't have enough money to replace the item, so he quickly called his friend, who was a member of their church, and set up a

job opportunity. The following Saturday, the dad and his son went over to their friend's house, and the boy picked up sticks and raked leaves all morning while the two men sat on the deck and talked.

Finally, after about 4 hours, the boy finished the yard and was paid \$40. The dad immediately issued his bill of \$40 to the boy. That was the cost of the item that was broken. The boy thanked their friend for the job and left to load up his tools. The dad returned the money to his friend, shook hands, and then left.

The item that was broken wasn't expensive. It wasn't an heirloom or hard to replace. This, however, was a great opportunity for the dad to teach his son a life lesson. It was a way to teach him the value of things.

Last Sunday, I made a statement that needs to be reiterated: "When people lose sight of God's grace, they lose sight of God and the sense of any obligation to Him." Israel forgot their obligation to God. They forgot what was right and what was wrong. They forgot God and chased after the Baals and the Ashtaroth of the Canaanites. As a result the anger of the Lord was kindled. Literally, his nostrils began to burn. Divine anger led to divine action. He punished the Israelites sin by giving them over to the nations they loved. Not only did God give them over to the nations, His hand was against them when they fought those nations. God warred against Israel rather than for them.

Why and how could a good, loving, and gracious God war against the very people He said He loves? God's discipline was His gracious way to teach Israel right from wrong.

24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. – Proverbs 13:24

Illust: How would you respond if you found your small child this morning playing out in the road in front of the church? Your anger would flare up. Your voice would be raised. And your child would experience some sort of discipline. Why? It's not because you hate your child. The child would be disciplined because you love him...to teach the danger of playing in the road.

Appl: If you are a child of God, He disciplines you not because He hates you. He disciplines you not because He is mean and vindictive. God disciplines you because He is gracious. It is the only way to teach you the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

2. God's discipline is His gracious way to test your faithfulness to Him. (2:20-23)

Verse 19 depicts Israel as becoming increasingly Canaanized, spiraling downward into worse and worse apostasy. The rulers or judges raised by God represented stop-gap measures in an apparently irresistible, irreversible, and inevitable process of Canaanization. Instead of effecting fundamental repairs on this deteriorating dike, they plugged the holes with their fingers. As soon as the finger was removed, the water gushed through with increasing force.

Thus, the Lord declared that He would no longer drive out the nations that were left in the land (vs. 21). In essence God placed a moratorium on His involvement in the execution of the holy war against the Canaanites. And as we examine the battles throughout the rest of Judges, this will be confirmed. None of the conflicts will result in the conquest of new territory. Each battle is concerned only with throwing off the yoke of the oppressor.

Why did God place the moratorium on His involvement? Why were the nations allowed to remain in the land? Unlike 2:3 where the angel declared that the nations would remain in order to become a snare, here the nations' purpose is expressed as probationary: to test the fidelity of Israel.

God left the nations in order to test the apostasy of Israel. Apostasy means abandoning the Lord in favor of other gods. It means claiming to be the people of God while acting as if one belongs to Baal. God does not and will not tolerate rivals. He demands exclusive allegiance and worship. Sadly, chapter 2 contains no hint of repentance.

God removed His involvement in the conquest. Thus the nations were left as His discipline upon Israel. That discipline though was His gracious way to test their faithfulness.

Illust: Every one of us has some sort of besetting sin that we wish would no longer be a temptation. You have asked the Lord to remove it. You begged for freedom from it, yet its still before you. Why is that? Its partly the result of the sin you've sown (Gal 6:7). It's also a way for the Lord to test your faithfulness. Don't misunderstand this. God's not allowing the sinful thing to hang around in order for you to fall prey to it. On the contrary, it's there to test whether you will trust Him or not.

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. – 1 Cor 10:13

Appl: In much the same way, God disciplines you in order to test your faithfulness to Him. It is His gracious

way to determine your devotion to Him. May we learn from His gracious discipline and turn from our rebellion to His way.

3. God's discipline is His gracious way to prepare you for future battles. (3:1-6)

This discipline was not only a punishment, or an opportunity to test Israel's faithfulness; it was also to provide them with experience in the art of warfare. God's primary concern was not that Israel would learn how to conduct war but that they would learn the nature and significance of the war.

Israel had entered the land as God's covenant people with the mandate to drive out the Canaanites and to claim it as His gift to them. The continued presence of the Canaanites represents a test whether or not they will accept Yahweh as their sovereign and their responsibilities in fulfilling His agenda. God had declared that when He drove out the nations from before them, then they were to completely destroy every aspect of their society, culture, and worship (Deut 7:1-5). They were to have no dealings with them. This generation needed to learn that they had been called to a holy war, that the Lord is the commander-in-chief, and that the enemy is to be totally exterminated.

Appl: In much the same way, God disciplines you when you disobey so that you will learn that there is a war being waged over your life. For whatever reason, we have a tendency to forget that there is a battle taking place. We are duped into thinking that because we are Christ-followers life is suddenly going to become easier and better. The truth is, life usually becomes more difficult after a person becomes a believer.

Oh, how we wish it were easy! We wish the mail would bring a monthly lottery type check that we didn't

even request. We wish that sickness and cancer would never touch our bodies or our families. We wish that all our relationships were wonderful and stress-free. We wish that our homes were free of anxiety, worry, and depression. We wish that our children we always safe and secure from harm. We wish that life were easy and devoid of hardships.

That, however, is not the reality of the world we live in today. Jesus said, *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Paul described this fight as one that is against the devil and the schemes he has set up (Eph 6:10-20).

The gracious discipline of God exercised in your life when you sin is the Lord’s reminder that you are engaged in a cosmic, spiritual war. It is God’s way to cause you to run to Him (Eph 6:10). It is His way to cause you to recognize the fight, and, therefore, to fight God’s way (Eph 6:11-12). The gracious discipline of the Lord prepares and develops you so that you will be able to stand firm in future battles. Rather than passing over your sin and rebellion, God graciously disciplines you for it in order that you might learn from it. His resistance against you develops your strength in Him, which results in your increased holiness.

Conclusion: Is it possible to find grace while experiencing discipline? Absolutely! Discipline is grace. It is the teaching tool God uses to correct sinful ways and protect you from the dangerous consequences of sin. It’s not His wrath because that is poured out on those who have rejected the Son. God’s wrath was exercised against the Canaanites who had rejected Him. God’s discipline was exercised against Israel who had put their faith in Him. When you experience the disciplining hand of God, know that God loves you and is gracious toward you.