

God's Merciful Deliverances

Book of Judges

By Ken Wimer

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Shreveport Grace Church
2970 Baird Road
Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

For the message, let's look together in Judges 2 in our Bibles and I'm going to read from verse 16 down to the end of the chapter and speak with you about "God's Merciful Deliverances." God's merciful deliverances. As we look back on our lives even prior to the LORD opening our hearts to Christ and His Precious Gospel, we can see many different times that the LORD was pleased to deliver us in spite of ourselves, in spite of our rebellions, and preserved us even unto this day, and that's certainly what we see in this portion.

Beginning with verse 16,

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

Again, Canaan, a picture of this world, Canaan, a picture of what it is to live in a world that is fallen in wickedness and needing deliverance. It says,

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. 18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; 21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: 22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their

fathers did keep it, or not. 23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

Speaking there before Joshua passed.

So the first thing I'd have us note here in verse 16 concerning God's merciful deliverances is the deliverers. I want you to see the need, the necessity of a deliverer, and in this we have a type of our LORD Jesus Christ because it says, "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." It's a reminder that were there not a deliverer stronger than our enemies, we would most certainly be overrun, overcome by those enemies. We have within us the same nature as these, so let's not read this from the standpoint of holier than thou, looking down on these and saying, "Well, how could they have abandoned the LORD? How could they have gone a whoring after other gods?" Every one of us is of the same nature. Every one of us is an idolater by nature. Not one is exempt.

So the key in this portion, I believe is right here beginning in verse 16. Simply without the judges and the word 'judge' there is an authority, a deliverer, without one to deliver, we would all perish, and certainly when we get down into verse 18, it says the key here is not when the people repented then the LORD delivered them, it says in verse 18, "when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge." Can you see a picture of representation there? That the deliverance was in the hand of the judge and was in God's blessing the judge to deliver. Without that blessing, there was no deliverance.

I certainly see parallels with the LORD Jesus Christ Whom the New Testament Scriptures call the judge of the living and the dead. He thanked the Father in His High Priestly prayer that the Father had given Him authority over all flesh, and certainly that's the picture we have here. When the LORD blessed the judges, they had authority over all these other nations, they were able to deliver the people from these nations. But remove the Judge, remove the Representative and what do you have? You have nothing but abomination and sin and deprivation. So I believe it's important for us to see here that these deliverers represent God's Mercy in raising up these for the protection and direction of the people and certainly are types and pictures of our LORD Jesus Christ. He came as that Representative. He was sent by the Father to be the Deliverer of His people.

When you look over in Hebrews 2, for example, Hebrews 2, it says in verse 14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." So just as these judges were raised up from among the people, so this Deliverer, Christ, partook of flesh and blood exactly as that people that He was sent to deliver, and yet without sin. That's important as we read on here.

But it says, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." You see, herein is where the types pale because so long as the judge was alive there was victory, but as soon as the judge died, then the people went back to their ways.

Here it says that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death. When Christ came, He was that Forerunner Who entered into that death to satisfy God's law and justice and through His death, it's not that the people were scattered but through His death reconciled, united, and that in order that He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. These enemies that were in Israel, the LORD continued to lead them in the land to chasten the people and remind them constantly of their need of deliverance, but through the death of the LORD Jesus Christ, even though these enemies exist, sin, the world, Satan, yet they have no authority over any for whom Christ has died because it says He ever liveth to intercede. These earthly judges, like the kings and priests that came and lived and died, they were but types. Christ is the sum of all of them in one person: Prophet, Priest, King and Judge.

It says here in verse 15, "And deliver them," the idea there is once for all, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Were it not for this Deliverer, we would be all our lifetimes subject to bondage but Christ has come and accomplished the work on behalf of His people and every part of His life and death answers to what we find in these judges as being temporary, Christ fulfilled.

So with regard to God's Merciful deliverances, we see these deliverers here raised up for the good and protection of the people, but as types of our LORD Jesus Christ. The second point that I would have you consider here in Judges 2:17 is the very foundation of His deliverances. Why is it that the LORD delivers any who are sinners? And the one thing we can see through this portion of Scripture is that it is His mercies. God's mercies are all the more manifest particularly when you consider man's constant rebellion. You notice in verse 17 the hardness of the hearts even with regard to the judge, and here it's speaking of lost, natural, professing. It's not talking about those in whom the Spirit of God has worked. They're made attentive. We're made attentive to the Voice of Christ.

It says here, "And yet they would not hearken unto their judges," we see the parallel with regard to Christ coming unto His own. "He came unto his own and his own received him not. The light shone into the world and the darkness comprehended it not." You wonder how dark, how depraved is the heart. I don't know if any of us even here being the LORD's could define it, could understand it. Jeremiah wrote about it, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

You know, sometimes people will flippantly say, "Well, the LORD knows my heart," as if there's something honest in that heart. You're right, the LORD does know the heart and there's nothing but stinking depravity and sin in that heart, and if the LORD were to deal with us according to our sin, like David said, "If the LORD should mark iniquity, who could stand?" And I believe that is what is manifest here in verse 17, it's because the LORD purposed to deliver His own even among all these enemies that any were saved. Apart from that, we see nothing but rebellion, depravity.

Verse 17 describes what God looks at as an abomination. You know, most people are looking at, "Well, I told a lie or this one did this or this one did that." Notice again on what basis God judges a nation, a people. It says, "they went a whoring after other gods."

That number 1 commandment which people so flippantly recite when they recite the 10 Commandments is what condemns every one of us apart from the work of the LORD Jesus Christ on our behalf, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

You say, "What does it take to go a whoring after other gods?" It's to put confidence in any other god. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have a physical object in front of you to say, "Well, I'm not an idolater like some people are." The word "idol" is "idea." All you have to do is set up in your mind some sort of rival or confidence. It could be in your flesh, it could be in any supposed good that you think that you have in you, anything. It's called here; 'whoring after other gods.' It's a prostitution. It's a denial of the One Faithful One and it is a pursuing even in your lusts, in your thinking, you don't even have to physically bow down in front of another god for this to take place, it takes place in the heart.

It says, "bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly," notice, "out of the way which their fathers walked in." This is one of the major concerns. When you look at the epistles that Paul wrote and I read this for you last time but we'll come back to it in the book of Galatians 1, look at the parallel between Judges 2:17 and Galatians 1. I know that as the LORD tenderly, in Mercy, began years ago to deal in my own heart, this was where He shed the Light upon my own lost nature, and that was that I was an idolater and didn't know it, and I had turned from the One, True Gospel.

You notice in verse 6, Galatians 1:6, these are folks to whom Paul had preached. He said, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." Now here in verse 17, what does the LORD say? "They turned quickly out of the way." A lot of people don't like the exclusiveness of the message of Scripture. They didn't just turn quickly out of the way or got out of the way. There's One Way. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." He didn't come to show the way, He didn't come to teach the truth, He didn't come to show us life. No, "I am the way, the truth, the life." He said, "No man comes unto the Father but by me."

I'm telling you, when you preach that in this day and when you make that clear and bold a statement, you're going to have enemies. You're going to have people upset because they start thinking about all their loved ones. "Well, my father didn't believe this. Are you saying he's lost? Or So-and-so doesn't believe this, are you saying they're lost?" It's not what we're saying, it's what the Word says and this is where compromise begins, when you start making justifications for people around you, pretty soon you fall into that quicksand.

Paul writing to the Galatians says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed," but he quickly says, "Which is not another." There is not another way. There is no other way to stand before a Holy God with any kind of good hope than in the blood and righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ alone. Period.

It's not even how well I perceive that. I don't know about you but there are times regardless of how long I've preached this that I'll awake and many times it's the middle of the night but your troubled within you as you begin to think about things, and that trouble is like a wind that comes and just blows over your soul. I will tell you, if I didn't have this Hope, if God hadn't given me this Confidence, especially as I age and consider what it is to stand before a Holy God, my heart would easily sweep me away and cause me to look somewhere else other than to Christ alone. It takes the Deliverer, again and again and again, and that's what Paul is saying.

There is no other sacrifice. There is no other way of satisfaction other than in the LORD Jesus Christ and what He's accomplished and that's what He says, "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." That's what this was when it says, "they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD." Every commandment of the LORD that was given was threefold: it was to show God's absolute holiness; it was to show man's absolute depravity; and it was to show Christ's absolute righteousness that was required that He should work it out. But to depart from that is nothing but condemnation.

So, "they would not hearken unto their judges." That's what condemns sinners. It's not because they did this sin or that sin, it's a heart left to itself that is hardened against the One Remedy that God has ordained for sinners. So when we talk about God's mercies and you stop and think, "Why is it that I believe? Why is it that I have hearkened? Why am I not among these that would not hearken?" There was a time when I would not but by His Grace now He has given me an ear to hear. It takes not just physical ears but it takes the Spirit of God opening this heart and eyes to see the LORD Jesus Christ alone. Apart from that we would be just like these. So the foundation of God's deliverances, it's not merit. That's the point I want you to see. We just sang about it. It's Christ's merit, it's not ours, but it's His mercy. It's His mercy that has graciously delivered us from what we would otherwise deserve in condemnation.

Now the third point that I would have you to see with regard to God's merciful deliverances down here in verse 18 and that is it is God's prerogative, we use the word "sovereignty," that means the one who rules and reigns, but it's God's prerogative to exercise His mercy in delivering when He will, where He will, and how He will. It's not an obligation.

You notice it says, "And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge," it says, "for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." Now when you see "it repented the LORD," this is human language. We know that God does not change, that's clear in Scripture over in Numbers 23:19, and I believe these verses are put in here to be a snare to many, a stone of stumbling, if you will, because they'll look at it and say, "Okay, well then I can influence God." They have that idea. You've heard the expression prayer changes things, well, that's not what's being said here and I'll show you that in a minute. One Scripture does not contradict another and here in Numbers 23, and interestingly enough, it was

Baalim, an unregenerate charlatan, that was made, by God's sovereignty, to express this and he says in verse 19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" So the point I want you to see there is just because it says over here in Judges 2:18, "it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them," they could not take any one of them credit for having influenced God to change His mind.

You see, that's the idea a lot of people have today and it's part of their idolatry, "If we just get enough people crying unto the LORD, He's going to do what we ask." Think about it as a parent. Imagine that your child begs you for mercy for a certain punishment or correction that you're going to give them and you said you would give them, and they cry and you change your mind in that instance, imagine that child saying, going off and saying, "Hehehe, see what I did? I got him to change his mind." What would you think of that situation? You would come back even harder.

So the point here is not to say that if we can just get enough people crying unto the LORD that He is going to change His mind. There is one reason why God ever delivers any sinner and that is what we're looking at here. The foundation is His mercy but it's God exercising His mercy as He will, when He will.

If you look in Malachi 3, go all the way to Matthew and then just go back a book to get to Malachi 3, this is the one reason it could be said that the LORD repented, in other words, it's human language. He withheld His hand at that particular time from doing what He said He would do, does that make Him a liar? No more than if you, in mercy, determine not to chasten your child, that child is not going to come back to you because you withheld your hand at that time and say, "Well, you lied then because you said you were going to chasten me and you didn't." You can imagine what that would be like.

Here in Malachi 3:6 it gives us the reason, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It's just to say, as it says in the book of Romans and we'll look at that here in a second, "I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy and whom I will, I'll harden." This is God's prerogative to show mercy when, where and how He will even when He purposes to withhold His hand for a while having pronounced threatenings. What comes to mind is Jonah. That was the very reason why Jonah was running hard the other way, because He knew that if He went and preached to that city of Nineveh repentance unto God and faith toward the LORD Jesus Christ, that God would grant that repentance. He knew that He was a merciful God.

It's just to say that we know that God's a merciful God but we cannot presume upon His mercies anymore than we can insist that anybody that just before their death, one of these bedside confessions, prays and confesses the LORD that the LORD has to save them, just because there's an example of a thief on a cross. Some people like to look at that as the reason to perform the last rites and do something or say something to get people into Heaven. That, dear friends, is presuming upon God's mercy. There is one reason why God spared that thief on the cross and it was His mercy, it was because God had purposed to

put his sin to Christ's account. That's it. That's it. As one writer said, there's only one example in Scripture of that and it's the one lest any presume, but there's one lest any despair, and that's what I believe we see here with regard to even these that the LORD was pleased to deliver.

Look in Romans 9, here is God's prerogative in the exercising of His deliverances. The time, the place, the manner, it's not an obligation but it's according to His own will and purpose. We read in verse 13 of Romans 9, "As it is written," and this is in the same book of Malachi that we just looked at, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" You see, I'm thinking back to the time of the judges, there were some that were spared during those times when at other times He delivered them over to the enemy. You say, "Well, is there unrighteousness with God for sparing these and not these?" "God forbid." That's a strong word. "May it never be so" is the way that would literally be translated. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

That's how we're to understand this when it says it repented God hearing their cries. You know, it's the LORD that gives the cry and if He delivers, it's not because our cries or our groaning trumped what He was going to do anyway, but it's that He caused those cries, He caused those groaning. That's how He uses oppression; to hedge in our way and bring us to look to Him alone, and so God is sovereign in the exercise of His deliverances. There's more there you could read in Romans 9, but let's come back to our text and look at a couple more points here.

In verses 19 to 21 here in Judges 2, we see that God's deliverances were because of the judge. We saw that in verse 18, "when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge." Again, I'm thankful that there is One Judge of His people which is Christ Who has satisfied law and justice, but what we see here is that apart from the Judge, there is no deliverance. Apart from the Judge there is no other way of deliverance; that many of God's deliverances of these unjust, even unjust reprobates. That's the point I want you to see. There are times when God will be longsuffering, is what it says in the book of Romans, longsuffering toward the vessels of wrath for the elect's sake, He'll be merciful, He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust but none should, for that reason, because of these kindnesses of God. That's what mercy is, it's God withholding from a sinner what he justly deserves and that's the difference between mercy and grace. We're talking about mercy here, that for a time God does not bring His wrath to bear upon even the vessels of wrath, but what is certain is that without the Judge, without the Deliverer, without the Representative, verses 19 through 21 show us what remains.

It says that, "when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them." It's a picture of God taking His restraining hand off of sinners, and if there's not that Representative in the LORD Jesus Christ to represent them before the Father, they can only wax worse and worse. And we

saw this in our study last week, without a vision, people perish; without the revelation of Christ, people perish; without the Shepherd, sinners languish; where there is no Intercessor, there is nothing but waywardness; and certainly that's what we see here.

When God is pleased to leave sinners to themselves and not grant deliverance, how great then is the manifestation of that sin, look in verse 19. There is a description of free will. People say, "Well, don't you believe in free will?" Well, what do you mean by free will? Do you mean God letting you do what you want to do? Well, yeah, the Scripture says a lot about that. Here it is, "they ceased not from their own doings," but look at how it's related, "nor from their stubborn way." I'll tell you what, I don't want God leaving me to my will. "Not my will but thine be done." And what does it do? "The anger of the LORD was hot against Israel." All it does is heap up wrath against the day of wrath.

Look in Romans 2. Every time we meet together to hear the Gospel, I don't know who's the LORD's and who isn't, I just know that I need God to give me an ear. I'm not worried about who's hearing and who isn't. I used to. I used to really kind of focus on these things and then as the LORD has taught me, I've realized that whether anybody hears or not, I need to hear. I need my heart tendered once again lest I be left to myself and fall the way of all flesh.

But when it says here the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, look in Romans 2, beginning with verse 3, "thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering." You know, just because God hasn't manifested that wrath on you yet, don't think you've escaped it. If Christ hasn't paid your debt, if there's not that Judge, that Deliverer, that Representative, it says, "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" If any repent, it's God's goodness that led them to repentance. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds." That's talking about those that don't have a Representative, don't have a Deliverer. God will render unto them according to their deeds and when you consider that even our best righteousnesses are filthy rags before Him, what hope is there? There is only condemnation and as it says here in verse 20 wrath, "Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant."

You say, "How do you transgress his covenant?" Not giving Christ all the glory. You know, His covenant is with His Son. That's where His grace is, is with His Son, and to trample underfoot, to come and sit and listen to the Gospel that gives His Son all the glory and His work all our salvation, and yet to pursue other ways or other means is to transgress His covenant and heap wrath against the day of wrath. So God's deliverances are in the Deliverer, His Son. Apart from that, there is nothing but wrath.

The final point that I'd have you to consider is in verse 22 and 23 here of our chapter and that is that God always will prove men and give them warnings concerning His judgments. Even that is a mercy. A lot of people don't see it but it's a deliverance. It's a

mercy even for us to come and sit and listen to this tonight and consider how it is that God has brought us here to warn us, to give us these heedings.

You say, "Why does he prove us? Why does he bring these enemies to mind and heart and such oppressions?" Well, it says here, "That through them," in other words, these enemies, "I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily." I think about the sin that the LORD exposes every day more and more even in my own heart and thinking. I was standing outside today and I had a few moments just to stop and reflect and I thought what a mercy that the LORD would so expose my own sin in me and show me what I am lest I go to my grave somehow in a presumption that there was any good in me.

It says the LORD shows you your sinfulness and it might be something as simple as how you react to another person, somebody else, that anger, where did that come from and the cursing, where did that come from? You know, everything is calm, this heart appears to be calm, but it's anything but. It's as much a viper, a snake ready to strike and you say, "Well, why doesn't the LORD just take it away?" Well, it's a reminder again of His mercy. It's a reminder, not of my merit, not of anything that I've done that should give me a standing before Him. I'd rather go to my grave knowing myself to be what I am, a sinner, and crying unto the LORD like the thief on the cross, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," than to go as a presumptuous, self-righteous Pharisee and presume that somehow I had somewhat to present myself before God.

Do you know that old hymn they sing, "Must I go in empty-handed?" The whole purpose of the hymn is to say, "You'd better come with something!" Well, I'll tell you what, our hands better be empty! When it comes to anything that we think we have, and I don't even say we'd better come holding the Lamb. No, it's Him holding us. I've got nothing to represent or present myself before a Holy God except for He be my Keeper, He be the One Who delivers me.

So I say it's a good thing. Some people look at it as an evil thing but when it says, "Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua," could the LORD not just take this all away? He will someday but for now, as we live in this life, it's a reminder of just the horrible mark of sin, not only out here but in our heart and, again, to cause us to cry unto the LORD for mercy. And I'm thankful that word "groanings" there in verse 18, "it repented the LORD because of their groanings," what does it say? "The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Again, when we become so oppressed with our sin or with who we are, the LORD is pleased to show us our wretchedness, I say that's a mercy because those are the groanings that He causes us to look outside ourselves to our One Righteousness, the LORD Jesus Christ.