

October 1, 2023

“The LORD’s Tenacious Grace”  
Judges 21:1-25

FCF: Self-assured dependence

**PROPOSITION:** (magnet) The LORD loves us with a tenacious grace.  
(anchor) We are to follow Him wherever He leads.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

It’s a common theme in no few stories with a master and a younger protege - Harry Potter and Dumbledore, Robin and Batman, Spider-Man and Iron Man, Sabine and Ahsoka. The protege becomes impatient, over-confident in their abilities. So against the orders of the master, they prematurely charge into a danger, get into trouble, and end up needing rescue themselves.

We’ve all been there. So self-assured, self-dependent, that we don’t have the ability to listen and learn. We can’t so we don’t. Which is what we see with Israel in our text. We’ve come to the end of our series on Judges, this time period between the settlement of the land and the establishment of the monarchy. These last chapters are an epilogue, an insight to the whole.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Judges 21:1-25**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Experience tells us that unqualified obedience can lead to trouble. A recent headline ([READ](#)), “Family sues Google alleging its Maps app led father to drive off collapsed bridge.”

Google has been sued by the family of a North Carolina man claiming the company’s Maps application last year led him to drive off a collapsed bridge and fall about 20 feet to his death, according to the lawsuit.

Philip Paxson was following Google Maps directions while driving home late at night in September 2022 from his daughter’s 9th birthday party when the navigation system directed him to go over an unmarked and unbarricaded bridge that had collapsed years prior, the suit filed Tuesday states.

Paxson drove off the unbarricaded edge of the bridge in Hickory, North Carolina, and drowned, the suit says. The lawsuit claims neighbors had expressed concern Google Maps had led drivers over the bridge, which allegedly has not been repaired since its partial collapse in 2013.

Experience tells us that unqualified obedience can lead to trouble. This was a tragic example.

The principle applies across the board - to the fields of law, medicine, academia, politics, and technology. We have good reason to be suspicious. The only way to be assured that such trust is well-founded is with someone who is unfailingly loving, aware, and powerful. Only then is our trust truly well-founded. Where do we find such a thing? Our text shows us. The LORD loves us with tenacious grace (that’s a phrase I read in a commentary this past week that stuck). And because He loves us with a tenacious grace, we can follow Him wherever He leads.

How do we see such grace in this passage? In two ways. First, in this unfolding mess. And second, in His unfolding plan. We clearly see the LORD’s tenacious grace in both ways.

**I. THEIR UNFOLDING MESS**

First, in the unfolding mess. Keep in mind the key verse of this section ([READ Judges 21:25](#)). Assertion - there was no king in those days. Analysis - they desperately needed one.

*A) The Immediate Events*

Consider the immediate events as recorded in Judges 21, the aftermath to Judges 19-20.

### 1. The problems they perceived

How did they perceive the problems before them? The tribe of Benjamin was near extinction. The population was decimated. The towns burned. Only 600 men were left. And then there was this vow. The rest of Israel had vowed not to allow any intermarriage with the Benjamites.

### 2. The solutions they pursued

That's what they could perceive in terms of the problems. What solutions would they pursue? They decided to fix the wife vow with the war vow. That is, those who had not been with them would be seen as against them. Jabesh-gilead would be destroyed except for their young women. They would be given to the men of Benjamin. Not enough? Then simply kidnap some more women from a festival, from their own people. And not to worry. Technically, it was all legal. This was insane. Imagine the horror and trauma. Tim Keller noted in his commentary ([READ](#)):

An assembly which had gathered to do justice for a single raped and murdered woman ends up planning and promoting the murder of a whole town, and the abduction and rape of the girls of two Israelite towns.

### *B) The Larger Picture*

But pull back and get a macro view. It gets even worse when you see how big this is.

### 1. The epilogue

Go back to chapter 19. A host in the ANE offers the protection of his house but then also his daughter and the wife of his guest. A Levite sacrifices his concubine to the mob and selectively tells his tale to hide his guilt. A tribe stubbornly refuses to work for justice and fights for just the opposite. And then the whole nation resorts to these insane proposals to meet their desired ends.

### 2. Their history

It's shocking. But this is the story of this people. You can see it in Acts 7 as Stephen put forward the theme of the rebellion of the people all along ([READ Acts 7:51-53](#)). They killed him for this.

The LORD's tenacious grace is seen in this unfolding mess - in His knowing what He knows of them (of us) and, despite all that, still somehow taking them (taking us) into His arms.

### *Illustration:*

It's said there are two groups of folks - those who run from a fire and those who run to it.

### *Application:*

The LORD is running to it. He is running towards us and our mess - and all that it will mean to redeem, restore, and rescue us. Christian, like Israel, you are chosen but not choice. We were picked but not "the pick of the litter." He chose us despite all He saw. Not because of it.

That is incredibly humbling. But so assuring. For the grounds of His choosing was never in us. It's always been in Him. He loves us with a tenacious grace. We can trust such love.

## **II. HIS UNFOLDING PLAN**

We see this in the unfolding mess. And then in His unfolding plan. Again, at the macro.

### *A) What We See*

### 1. The bigger problem

What do we see here? What is the bigger problem? It was never the oppressors and invaders on the outside. They were a symptom. They were a severe mercy from the LORD sent to get the attention of His people. Which is all the more obvious in these last chapters in which the issues were never external but internal, within their very ranks. Israel was its own worst problem.

## 2. The bigger solution

This bigger problem needed a bigger solution. Another judge wouldn't fix it. At best, anything they ever did was incomplete and temporary. Deborah, Gideon, Samson - none was enough.

### *B) Who We Need*

This bigger problem and the bigger solution needed a king. That's hinted at repeatedly.

#### 1. A king

A king to deliver and defend, to save and secure, to protect and provide. Someone else.

#### 2. The King

It had to be someone else. But not just anyone else. It has to be someone able to do more than they could imagine (**READ Psalm 96:11-13**). The whole Bible tells us this to prepare us.

This is the unfolding plan. This powerfully demonstrates the LORD's tenacious grace.

### *Illustration:*

The trouble taken is proportionate to the love felt. I think of one of my parents' visits. My mom noted Sarah's work and preparations. And she said, "You've gone to such trouble!" Not as criticism but appreciation. She was moved by the trouble taken. It reflected the love felt.

### *Application:*

Christian, the centuries of history show the trouble taken for us, for you. Beginning with a promise in the Garden of Eden and building to what Jesus faced in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the troubles you suffer, consider the troubles He has taken. Be assured. You are not cut off. Don't let the dismay of a few bad days eclipse the sight of His labors over centuries.

The LORD loves us with a tenacious grace. We can see that in His unfolding plan.

## **CONCLUSION:**

But isn't such a love subject to abuse? It sounds so unconditional, so free. Are you saying we are obligated to do right, obey, and heed God's demands despite this unshakeable love? No. Not despite such love but because of it. God's unshakable love for us is not an excuse to do as we please but the reason to do as He pleases. There's not cause for abuse at all.

Look at what He has done for us. It is set before us in this sacrament. Jesus' body was broken. His blood was shed. Why? For us. In our stead. On our behalf. He lived the life we should have lived. And He died the death we deserved to die. Such is (not was) His love for us.

Such is His love. It is demonstrated in what was accomplished. And it is such that He wants to keep pressing it into our hearts. He want us to know. Think of it. He wants us to know.

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