

“Grace Undervalued”
Judges 10:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, May 3, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out, the Book of Judges is divided between six minor judges and six major judges, the primary distinction being the amount of space given to them in the book. This can also be seen with the distinction between the Minor Prophets and the Major Prophets. It has nothing to do with the importance of the judges but only with regard to the amount of ink devoted to them.
2. So far we’ve seen only one of the six minor judges—Shamgar in **Chapter 3**. A single verse is devoted to his leadership in Israel.
As we enter **Chapter 10** we find two more minor judges—Tola and Jair. Between them they cover only five verses. Although only three verses are devoted to Jair we read that he had 30 sons who ruled over 30 cities. He would have been a major player during this period.
3. Sometimes we see a stylistic flair in the narratives of Judges. Jair had 30 sons who rode 30 donkeys and ruled over 30 cities. It reads like an old nursery rhyme:
There was a crooked man and he walked a crooked mile,
He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile.
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse.
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.
4. We’ve seen that the Book of Judges is a history of Israel in decline. The repeating pattern was Israel would sin and fall into idolatry, God would judge them by raising up an enemy to oppress them, they would cry out for mercy, and God would raise up a judge to deliver them.
5. With the early judges we would find Israel being delivered and entering into a season of peace.
Othniel - Judges 3:11 NAU - "Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died."
Ehud - Judges 3:30 NAU - " So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years."
Deborah - Judges 5:31NAU - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years. "
Gideon - Judges 8:28 NAU - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon."
6. No judge after Gideon has this distinction. Israel is falling more and more into sin and God is removing more and more of His grace.
 - a. Grace is the wonderful display of God’s goodness upon His creation. It is unmerited and undeserved. We can see it displayed in the Book of Judges. Peace and rest in this world are all by grace—completely undeserved.

- b. Another wonderful display of God’s grace is what we call “restraining grace.” This is God restraining our wicked hearts from displaying the full measure of the depravity of which we are capable. Israel is experiencing the removal of God’s restraining grace.
 - c. While in this passage there is no mention of an outward enemy oppressing them, there is also no mention of peace. Their enemy is the enemy within—and God is more and more leaving them to the corruption of their hearts.
7. Tonight I want us to consider carefully the danger of undervaluing God’s grace, taking it for granted and not praising God for it. I’m going to take some liberty with these two minor judges. We know very little about them and yet we can see a pattern that should cause us to rise up and take notice.
- I. We can see God’s grace displayed in Tola
- A. Israel had sinned and God judged them with Abimelech
 - 1. They had forgotten God and fallen into idolatry
Judges 8:33-34 NAU - "Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. ³⁴ Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side"
 - 2. Abimelech was a token of God’s judgment.
 God then turned the Shechemites and Abimelech against one another and they destroyed one another.
Judges 9:56-57 NAU - "Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father in killing his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them."
 - 3. What then? We read nothing of Israel enjoying a season of peace. To the contrary their misery was continuing.
 - B. Tola was raised up as Israel’s savior
Judges 10:1 NAU - "Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel"
 - 1. We don’t know much about Tola. We are told that he was of the tribe of Issachar but dwelled in a city of Ephraim.
 - 2. More important we find he was raised up as Israel’s savior.
עָשָׂה *yasha* – It is often translated save or rescue
Exodus 14:29-30 NAU - "But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore."
 - 3. But as we’ve seen, Israel’s enemy was not an external army. Their enemy was their own wicked hearts. They needed deliverance from God’s judgment upon them due to their wicked hearts.

- a. We aren't told how Tola saved Israel. There is no indication of a military campaign as with most of the judges. Was it through excellent leadership and good administration? Did he begin reforms? We aren't told.
 - b. Matthew Poole – "*He saved Israel*. . .not by fighting against and overthrowing their enemies, but by a prudent and pious government of them, whereby he kept them from sedition, and oppression, and tyranny, as also from idolatry, which if not restrained and purged out, would have brought certain ruin upon them."
4. It would seem that Tola was a token of God's grace upon a wicked people. The contrast between Abimelech and Tola seems great. It would seem that God was delivering them from their own undoing.
 5. This is the nature of our own salvation. God saves us from our own wicked heart which is leading us to certain ruin. God sought us when we had no desire for Him. Our salvation is a glorious demonstration of God's grace. **Romans 5:8-10 NAU** - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." **Romans 5:20-21 KJV** - "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: ²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."
 6. God has sent forth His Son and yet men despise His grace. Most people greatly undervalue God's grace. They will not have Christ. They will not receive God's wonderful gift of grace.
- C. Tola judged Israel for 23 years
1. We aren't told that they entered into a season of peace. In fact, it appears that Israel was still in decline. Their hearts remained unchanged. No earthly deliverer shall ever be able to change the human heart.
 2. Israel was guilty of undervaluing God's grace. It was by God's wonderful goodness and pity that He raised up Tola instead of another Abimilech, and yet we don't find evidence that Israel returned to covenant faithfulness. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NAU** - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

3. God is removing His grace. We see it progressing with the next judge, Jair

II. After Tola Jair became Israel's judge

- A. We find in this judge an old familiar tune. He reminds us greatly of Gideon
 1. After Gideon's victory we found him falling deeper and deeper into sin.
 - a. This is always the danger of sin residing in the human heart.
God told Cain:
Genesis 4:7 NAU - "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."
 - b. Led by the passion of greed, Gideon requested from each of the people of Israel an earring of gold. The sum totaled 1700 shekels.
 - c. He fell into idolatry, making an ephod establishing an alternative place of worship.
 - d. And he married many wives
Judges 8:30-31 NAU - "Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives. ³¹ His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech."
 2. We find no commentary condemning Gideon's many wives but we know this was never God's way.
Proverbs 5:18-19 NAU - "Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love."
 - a. We know that Abimilech was the fruit of one of Gideon's concubines.
 - b. We also find the consistent result of multiple wives in Scripture. This was also the downfall of Solomon.
1 Kings 11:3-4 NAU - "He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*."
 - c. The absence of stated condemnation does not signify approval.
 3. We find no commentary with Jair as well.
 - A. The Bible doesn't tell us that there was anything wrong with Jair's rule. The Bible only tells us the size of his family—30 sons, and the extent of his rule – 30 cities.
 - B. There isn't anything wrong with 30 sons. In fact, they were a blessing from God.
 - C. But as we consider his 30 sons besides any daughters there is the clear implication that he had several wives.
 4. Where Tola appears to have ruled without pomp or pageantry Jair must have been a man of considerable influence and power. His sons rode donkeys, a sign of influence—and they ruled over 30 cities. Like Gideon, it would appear that he was setting up a dynasty.

5. What we see is Israel continuing to slip into sin.
 - a. While we have no indication that Israel enjoyed that same blessing under Jair as they did under Tola (He isn't referred to as Israel's savior), still, Jair was a judge. Our leaders are a blessing.
 - b. Israel failed to appreciate God's rich grace. With the death of Jair, despising God's grace, Israel quickly followed their wicked hearts.
Judges 10:6 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD"
6. This shouldn't surprise us. We've seen this pattern over and over. Israel falls into sin, God judges them, they cry out to God, and He delivers them. But this is where the pattern ends.
Judges 10:10-14 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals." ¹¹ The LORD said to the sons of Israel, "*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines? ¹² "Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands. ¹³ "Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you. ¹⁴ "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress."
7. Israel is a nation in decline. Yet, God would not utterly forsake His people. **Verse 16** - "He could bear the misery of Israel no longer."

Conclusion:

1. This is the story of mankind. We have always undervalued God's grace
 - A. God grants us time by His grace – grace undervalued.
 1. Since the fall of Adam each second of time has been by God's grace
 2. Each second is a gift – we must be wise stewards
 3. Each of us are allotted his particular number of days
 4. The lost man does not realize he is on borrowed time.
 - B. God grants us mercy by His grace – grace undervalued
 1. There is a fine distinction between mercy and grace
Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve – a glorious token of His goodness.
Mercy is God NOT giving us what we do deserve
 2. It is to be understood that we deserve only judgment and hell.
 3. God's mercy is granted only by His divine good pleasure – His wonderful grace.
 - C. God sets all of creation before us and we worship the creature rather than the Creator.
2. We are all debtors of God's rich grace.
 - A. Every blessing upon this earth is by God's grace
 1. The warmth of the sun, the food we enjoy, the beauty we behold, good health, friendship and love – all acts of God's grace
 2. God restrains evil, by His grace

- B. But there is no greater grace than God sending forth His Son. The Gospel is the revelation of God's grace.
- John 1:16 NAU** - "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace."
1. May we not be among those who undervalue God's grace.
 2. May we be like John Newton who never ceased marveling over God's amazing grace.
3. If you are here this evening and have not turned from your sin and trusted Christ you must make it your highest priority. Don't undervalue God's grace. God commands you to turn from your sin and trust Christ.