

Tough Love

Judges 2:11-19

This Week's Focus

Those who care the most about us are often the most difficult on us because they love us. While God will always be for us, that doesn't mean He won't ever oppose us. While faith in Christ forever frees us from eternal punishment, God's love compels Him to let us face the consequences of our sin. He will even sometimes purposefully inflict earthly punishment on us.

We see this pattern again and again in the Book of Judges. Israel begins worshiping idols and God punishes them through the surrounding nations. As we begin our study in the Book of Judges, we will see that the punishment God inflicts upon His people is never out of spite or revenge, but always rooted in His faithfulness and motivated by His desire for us know and love Him more.

Judges 2:11-19

Begin by reading the passage through two times.

11 The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals **12** and abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They went after other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They infuriated the LORD, **13** for they abandoned Him and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths. **14** The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and He handed them over to marauders who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies. **15** Whenever the Israelites went out, the LORD was against them and brought disaster on them, just as He had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly. **16** The LORD raised up judges, who saved them from the power of their marauders, **17** but they did not listen to their judges. Instead, they prostituted themselves with other gods, bowing down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their fathers, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commands. They did not do as their fathers did. **18** Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, the LORD was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The LORD was moved to pity whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them. **19** Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, going after other gods to worship and bow down to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways.

Share about a time you were caught clearly breaking a rule your parents set for you. What consequences did you face for doing so?

Even though we don't like rules, why are consequences necessary when we break them? What would life be like if there were no consequences for rule-breaking?

The Cycle of the Judges

There is a cycle of events in Judges that repeats itself several times. First Israel sins against God, primarily through worshipping false gods (Rebellion). Then God allows the surrounding nations to oppress Israel (Discipline). The Israelites then call out to God to deliver them (Repentance). And finally, God raises up a judge to deliver Israel (Redemption).

Judges 2:11-13

In verse 10, how did the generation after Joshua forget what God had done for them? How can we avoid a similar fate?

How do these verses characterize the spiritual unfaithfulness of the Israelites? Why is idolatry so offensive to the Lord?

Judges 2:14-15

What consequences were a result of the Israelites' unfaithfulness to God? Who was ultimately responsible for the difficulties Israel faced in these verses?

Look at the end of verse 15 (see also 2:2-3). Should the Israelites have been surprised by their suffering? What does this tell us about God?

What did the Lord want His people to understand when He handed them over to their enemies? How did He want them to respond?

Judges 2:16-19

How did the Lord respond to the Israelites' distress (vv. 16, 19)?

How does His response show the difference between punishment and discipline (see Heb. 12:3-11)?

How can we put an end to the cycle of sin, deliverance, and punishment that seems to repeat itself in our lives (see 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 7:27)?

Central Truth

God Loves His PEOPLE enough to oppose them.

Now What?

When we abandon the Lord and turn instead to something else, what are we hoping to find? How can we avoid this temptation?

What is your typical response when God points out sin in your life?
What does it take to admit our guilt instead of defending our actions or blaming others for our choices?

How might God be using your present circumstances to correct you and help you grow? How can we be more aware of God's work in our lives?

Think about some ways God tests people today. How should we respond to these tests?

Personal Challenge

Dwell: Read Joshua 2:11-19 again. As you read, consider how Israel's cycle of sin relates to your daily life. Are there any patterns of sin that you seem to keep falling back into? Ask God to break the cycle of sin in your life so that you would no longer be enslaved to it. If there are persistent cycles of sin in your life that keep coming up, consider confessing this to a trusted Christian friend or mentor and asking for accountability in fighting it.

Memorize: Judges 2:18

Pray: Are there patterns of sin in your heart and life that feel like they are almost unbreakable? Spend some time confessing these sin patterns to God, admitting your inability to overcome them on your own. Ask God to soften your heart to His Spirit so that you hate the sin that is keeping you from Him. Look to Him for the strength and grace necessary to overcome patterns of sin.



Keep on Digging

Read Hebrews 7:11-28. As you read, consider the following questions.

- How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross compare to the sacrifices of the priests?
- What made Jesus able to offer a once for all sacrifice for sin?
- How has Jesus broken the cycle of sin in our lives?
- How will you trust Jesus this week to help you overcome cycles of sin?