

5-19-24 The Book of Judges

Judges 2:10–23.

Topics: Sin, Compromise, Heart

Big Idea of the Message: Israel's cycle of sin is a bad habit that Jesus died to end.

Application Point: To avoid getting stuck in a cycle of sin, keep your eyes fixed on the cross.

Today in the book of Judges, we will look at two important themes that repeat throughout the book. The first is the shape of the cycle of sin; the other is the person and role of the judge. The cycle begins with Israel serving God. Then they fall into sin and idolatry. From there, they become enslaved to the people they failed to vanquish in **chapter 1**.

After some time in slavery, Israel cries to God for deliverance. God responds to the cries of Israel in mercy and raises up a judge. The judge, in turn, delivers Israel from their captivity and sets them free. Israel is renewed in their spiritual life and serves the Lord again until they fall back into sin and idolatry...and the cycle repeats itself.

If you recall from last week, Israel was in the midst of conquering the promised land. Part of God's instructions on conquering this land involved driving out all the people who were already living in the land. Israel started out strong, but then they encountered resistance, so they gave up and just made do. God, rightly, is not pleased with the Israelite's compromise of his will.

This is where we will pick up the story. **Judges 2:10-23**.

When one generation compromises their faith, that is, they concede elements of their faith to unbelief and tell God they think he is wrong, it isn't very surprising when the next generation ceases to care about God or the faith of their fathers.

What we see here is a generation that has been given a compromised faith. They know a little bit about God, but they don't know him or the stories of his deliverance. They see obedience as optional. And so, they are much more willing to entertain sinful ways of living.

Two words that describe the book of Judges are **compromise** and **complacency**. They compromised on God's command and became spiritually complacent. Spiritual apathy leads to apostasy. God is being squeezed out of their lives. Allowing the enemies to co-exist means that Israel is being introduced to the Canaanite gods and their practices.

Read Judges 2:10. What a sad commentary.

What were the results of compromise and complacency?

Read verses 11-13.

Look at the contrast between **verse 7**, "served the LORD all the days of Joshua...." And **verse 11**, "did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals...."

They served the Lord because they **“who had seen all the great works (things) of the Lord which He had done for Israel” (2:7)**. And switched to the other gods because they **“did not know the LORD nor the work (things) which He had done for Israel” (2:10)**.

People need to know and be reminded. Without God, Israel has lost their one true reference point: it's due north. When that happens, Judges tells us **“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6, 21:25)** When people do what is right in their own eyes it leads to doing evil in the sight of God.

Recurrent expression in this book **(2:11, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1)**: **“The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord”**. What they thought was right was wrong, and what God says was wrong, they thought was right. At each Passover, the Israelites are supposed to tell the story of their deliverance all over again.

I. Keep God in sight, tell His stories.

- We want to talk about what God has done and is doing today. We want people to know how God saved us, how He provided for us, and how He led us.
- In our context, we say it because THIS generation desperately needs it. We are living in a time just like the times of Judges. People do what is right in their own eyes.
- There are no absolutes, no black-and-white wrong or right. It all depends on what a certain person thinks is right or wrong. When we have no reference point (God) – singular, the source of truth, we define everything but what we feel and believe is truth.
- Can I tell you something exciting? The youth today want to know about God. They are tired of hearing about your truth, my truth, some celebrities' truth. They are hungry for THE truth. Statistics show it, and I have witnessed it. I sense today's youth are on the cusp of a great revival, a reawaking, a rededication to God. Psalm 78 generation!

We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; 6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, 7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; 8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God. Psalm 78:4-8

II. Keep God in sight, teach HIS Word.

- Joshua's generation had the privilege of growing up under Moses' tutelage. They heard the Word of God through him.
- Moses spent time with the Lord in the tabernacle and came out delivering God's Word to the people, many times and with repetitions.
- That kept them on their toes. Despite the occasional lapses, overall, they knew God, heard Him, and feared Him.
- God directed Moses to tell the people the need to teach His Word - **Deut 6:1-2, 4-9**.

“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Deut. 6:1-2 ESV

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord 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 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Duet. 6:4-9

- It starts at home. Parents are children's FIRST line of teachers. Children are seated in the front row; they hear everything and see everything.
- The sense here is that we are to do everything we can – to impress, to talk about it - at home or outside, to write them down and tie them as symbols, bind them on foreheads, and on doorframes - as constant reminders. It is a lifestyle of imparting spiritual knowledge.
- It is not just something we do for 2 hours during our worship time, Sunday School, YG, or BK. It is a lifestyle of imparting God's truth. It is deliberate and intentional. It cannot happen by chance.
- Are you learning from the Word? If you are not, start today so that we don't fail the younger generation. Let's make it our duty to empower and influence the next generation.
- We cannot give to others what we do not have. Get in the Word of God. Be serious about learning God's Word. They are safeguards to your soul and life.
- Study the Word and keep God in sight by talking about it. It takes effort!
- If you are not going to work at it, you are not going to have a garden. You cannot automate everything in life. Your relationship with God is one of them! The responsibility lies with us. We want to know God and that happens by knowing His Word, putting that knowing into action and continuously practicing what it says. And then we can share it with others and be a blessing.
- The context in **Deut 6** is the home and sometimes such passages put parents under a lot of pressure. Always remember this, we cannot change lives, only God can.
- We are responsible to TEACH the Word of God. Everyone is responsible, eventually, for his or her own choices before God.
- We cannot take credit for the godly choices they make, neither are we responsible for the foolish choices they make. We teach and pray for God's grace to come upon them.
- When we teach the truth, it does not guarantee success. But when we don't, it is guaranteed to fail.
- This is OUR calling. Not just for parents, or pastors, or leaders, it is for all believers.
- Jesus says in the great commission (**Matt 28:19-20**) - **go and make disciples, by teaching them to “obey everything I have commanded you.”** He was not talking to parents or pastors but every believer. We cannot ignore or reassign this responsibility. Everyone who is a serious follower of Christ teaches others to obey Christ. God expects that from us

because we know Him, and we know and are in the pursuit of knowing and obeying His Word. How can we help others take the next step in their walk with Jesus if we aren't doing this?

- How do we know that we are one of His, one of His born again? We continually seek to know Him and be obedient to His word.

III. Keep God in sight, guard your heart.

- Joshua's generation fought to get this land and they experienced God's help.
- The new generation "inherited" this rest and comfort. They had nothing to fight for. They began to feel they do not need God.
- They do their own things and they suffered. And each time they were oppressed, they came back to God crying. God responded each time and raised up judges to deliver them.
- This cycle repeats itself throughout the book of Judges.
- This is a reminder to us. The previous generations fought hard to give us what we have. In a sense, as 2nd or 3rd generation believers, we enter their blessings and enjoy the comfort of their struggles.
- TREASURE this and guard your heart. Remember God's blessings. There is nothing wrong with an easy life but with that kind of comfort, if we are not careful, we can drift from God. We can begin to fall for the lie that we don't really "need" Him.
- We can become indifferent to God's call; we can become oblivious to the plight of men. We are enjoying our own lives.
- Guard your heart. Remember that we have a calling. We are to tell the world WHO God and WHAT He has done for us.
- KEEP GOD IN SIGHT – tell His stories, teach His Word, and guard your heart.

Conclusion

Read Judges 2:14-23.

Because the Israelites had the same loving God that we have, God gave them the opportunity to change. God gave them the opportunity to be blessed with the blessings of promise He had given to Abraham and his descendants. God wanted them to be successful as a nation; but they had to do it His way.

1. God raised up judges.

- God knew what they needed. God knew that this cycle would not stop unless there were some leaders who knew who God was and what He expected. So, God gave them leaders. Let me tell you right now, we need godly leaders in our church. God knows that we need godly leaders and because He loves us and wants us to be successful; He is raising up leaders right now. They may not all be here right now, but maybe you are one of the leaders God is raising up. Will you let Him use you?

2. God gave them an opportunity to change their ways.

- The people could no longer say that they did not know who God was or what He expected. God's people, you may not like how I preach or what I preach; but you cannot say that you have not been told of who God is and what He expects. The Bible says that once you know, then you are accountable for that.

God is the perfect description and example of patience, but as **Galatians 6:7** tells us; there is a time that God says, "That's it!" **"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."**

God is patience and doesn't desire any to perish, but all of us face a closing window. We have no idea when our final breath has been taken.

Challenge: Let's make sure we keep telling God's stories. Let's make sure we keep teaching His word. Let us be in an active state of guarding our hearts. Our hearts can easily be deceived.

Jeremiah 17:9-10, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Not too many of us like or like pop quizzes. But life is full of pop quizzes, to see where we are, what we are made of, who and where are faith is in, and whether we trust in God or ourselves.

Let us make it our mission that the next generation knows who God is, His stories, and His teachings. Let us continue to carry the torch. Let us be the ones that guard our hearts and be ready to help those that forgot to or didn't know to guard their hearts.

Let us be the ones that help others take their next step in their walk with Jesus. Who is with me? It will take commitment, and we have to be aware of growing weary. We will have to be in the fight, not standing on the sidelines. Even though it is hard work it is worth it all! (Look around, look at the faces, they are worth it!)