

Transcription of 17ID3017

Judges 1-2

"They Knew Not His Person Nor His Power"

July 5, 2017

Let's open our Bibles tonight to the book of Judges 1:1.

Tonight we move ahead through the Old Testament beginning here with the book of Judges which follows, chronologically, from the book of Joshua. In fact, this book will take us from Joshua's entering into the land all the way to the very first king of Israel, King Saul. If Moses took the children of Israel and brought them out of the bondage of Egypt and brought them to the borders of the Promised Land, God used Moses to give the nation a national identity. By Joshua, they possessed the land that God had promised them beginning way back with Abraham. But by the time that Joshua died, much of the land was still in the hands of the enemy. Now, God had taken care of the fact that all of the major enemies of the people - the strong thirty-one kings that were in the land - had been defeated. And by the time that Joshua is 93 years old, and the LORD tells him he's old now, and He kind of puts him out to pasture, the people were given the land, they were divided by tribe, and they were assigned the one responsibility of ridding the land of the enemy, of the Canaanites and the other "ites" who were idol worshippers, who were judged by the LORD to be worthy of judgment, and that judgment had come. And with kind of an urgent injunction from an aging Joshua, the work to clean the rest of the land was laid upon them. The book of Deuteronomy took thirty days to deliver, forty days (at the end) to mourn the death of Moses. The book of Joshua took twenty-five years to unfold; it moves you only twenty-five years forward. This book will take us 340 years into the future or will move us 340 years. In fact, it covers 410 years of rulerships, but because there is some overlapping of the two, it is only moving us about 340 years forward - from about the time of 1380 or so B.C. to the time of 1040 B.C., when King Saul would be put into power.

When we read through this book, the narrative is such that lots of years will bounce by very quickly. You will read, "And there was rest in the land for eighty years," and then you'll jump ahead eighty years. Or, "There was difficulty in the land for twenty years," and nothing will be told to you of that time. And so God takes us through, quickly, some of the years. The lessons, however, I think are life-changing. Much of the book talks about the failure of God's people to finish or to stick with that which they had started. I don't know how well you did as a young

Christian. The question I would ask you is - how are you doing today? Because it does seem like the time you should maybe have done the poorest was when you first got saved. You knew little about God, if anything. So you had a lot to learn, and that takes time. But if you've been around the Lord for a while, you know a lot. You should be doing far better than you did. Unfortunately, that's usually not the case. There's a quick start (and sometimes a very good start) only to find a kind of settled down in the middle and then kind of quitting at the end. And you do find that to be so with the children of Israel in these stories through this nearly four centuries of time.

The judges that appear are wonderful examples of what it means to be a godly leader, to be influenced by godly people, to have an influence. There were fifteen judges in all. In fact next week, when we get to chapter 3, we will bring you a chart - all the judges, their names, their rulership times and dates, who did they fight, who did they rule, what happened to them - so you'll have it for your study guide. But there were fifteen. There are thirteen in the book. The last two called judges in the Bible, Eli and Samuel, are found in the next book, 1 Samuel. Now a lot of these judges were quasi-rulers in the sense that God raises them up to deliver the people from oppression at a time of national repentance. They don't all have absolute power. Sometimes there's more than one ruling in different parts of the country, as God was making Himself known. They don't all appear on the pages of the book of Judges in chronological order, but most of them do, and we can point out to you when those things change. There are a couple of judges that we know virtually nothing of other than the few verses that we have. We are going to run into a guy next week or the week after named Shamgar. He's at the end of chapter 3, so I think we'll probably catch him next week. He is represented in one verse - chapter 3:31. But then there are folks like Deborah and Gideon and Samson that just cover the chapters. And so God will give us much to learn from these leaders and overseers about influence and about His love for a people that don't do very well; and when we repent, God's there to forgive and restore.

But tonight we just want to look at the first two chapters, and we're taking them together because they're probably the most discouraging of the chapters in the book. After that, every chapter has some hero of faith that we can look to and be encouraged by. Not so much here. These are really the chapters of cause and effect. This is the LORD giving you the introduction for 340 years of woe and why it continued to happen, laying the foundation. I think the key verse (and there're a couple of them), but one of them is found in verse 10 of chapter 2, and it is

repeated in a couple of places. But it basically says, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers," (this is Joshua's people) "another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." So there's much to be learned about finishing strong and about seeing things through to the end. How many of you have been saved thirty years? See, this is good! Look around. Check these people out. Talk to them. They're hanging in here thirty years. I ran into a guy yesterday that I haven't seen in forty-three years, and he got saved way back in the early 70's. I hadn't seen him, but I said, "How're you doin'?" He said, "I'm just walkin' with Jesus." I thought that's pretty good. That's all you really need to know, isn't it? Forty-three years later. So, we're going to look at the first two chapters tonight, get the cause and effect. This is why what follows happened and why it continued to happen.

Verse 1 chapter 1, "Now after the death of Joshua," and it's a phrase that ushers in kind of the new era in Israel's history. When Joshua died - and he was certainly a powerful, dynamic leader - there was a vacuum in leadership that, unfortunately, was filled over the next couple of years by all kinds of problems. God would raise up good leaders in response to national cries for help. It would go well for a time. But the bottom line is if you don't have good leaders, you don't have a good time of it. God is interested in leadership. You can see it, I think, if you've been with us through Joshua, when Joshua, after seven and a half years, brought the children of Israel to the point where the tribes were given the land allotments. For the next seventeen and a half years, Joshua is retired. He lives from 93 to 110 years old before he dies. And God had assigned clean-up duties to all of the tribes, but very little was accomplished. And the reason was there wasn't much leadership amongst the tribes themselves. By the time you get to the book of Judges (where Joshua has died), and the next generation comes up, it's almost like you look at a nation, Israel, that has become a very permissive society. They had moral underpinnings once that guided them, but they guided them no more. It isn't something that they, as a people, looked to to see what the LORD might want for their lives. With Joshua out of the way, the leadership became kind of hard to find and, as a result, the nation kind of unraveled quickly so that by the end of the book, the nation itself is the classic example of existentialism. Everyone is doing that which is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). And it's repeated several times. Successive generations were all doing things the way that they wanted them done; and certainly one of the saddest books in the Bible as far as consequence. This is a people that knew the LORD. They walked with God. They have a rich and an amazing history. They knew of His love. They'd been delivered

time and again. Their near-term history books were filled with the pages of God's power. And yet, in a generation, they completely turn away from Him, and it just stops. If you ever thought that you can coast, this book ought to tell you you can't. Just get up every morning and seek the Lord, man. That's where you've gotta stay because that's the only place your strength can be found. And they didn't do it. They had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. They had been miraculously kept through the Red Sea. They had been watched over in their wilderness wanderings for forty years. They drank water out of rocks and ate bread falling down from heaven. They had been brought to the Land of Promise that God had, for hundreds of years, promised them. They had been given an inheritance. If you were writing a book about them, you would have entitled it "*They Have It Made In The Shade.*" They had everything they wanted and everything that you could have wanted. But instead of going forward and finishing the task, they settle in, they get tired of fighting, they leave what remains of the enemy to grow in the land, and it would eventually turn around and become a real threat to their way of life in every generation in the book of Judges, for 340 years. So, seven, eight, almost nine generations at forty years of a generation - nine generations. Every generation forgot entirely what the previous generation had learned, and it seems that that's the kind of stuff we still do today. It's a threat.

So Joshua, in 340 years, takes us from the victories and wonderful stories of the book of Joshua under General Joshua, the godly man, to the king, King Saul. And everything in between is described in that one verse at the end of chapter 21. There are no absolutes. The nation doesn't like rules. There's no right and wrong. There's no value system. There're personal rights that have become idolatry. "This is what I want to do. This is what I believe is right. This is what I would like to do. I should be left alone to do what I want." And when God is replaced by personal wants, chaos follows, eventual destruction. It's assured. And the society inevitably will fall apart. So the irony of the book is that the more freedom you have, the more in bondage you become - when you're free from God's direction. There's an old saying that says, "The more you do as you please, the less you will be pleased with what you do." And it seems to be the case here. There is great bondage in becoming your own god. But that's what they did. "Everyone did that which was right in their own eyes." It sounds a lot like our society today, doesn't it? There's no consensus anymore about right and wrong for us. There's no objective standard that we all bend towards. God's Word has been all but thrown out. We've become a law unto ourselves. There's rebellion and defiance and anarchy, and that's going to be what will prevail. It is reflective of human nature -

when God is set out of the picture. "We're like sheep, we've all gone astray; everyone has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). And we see it here in a nation - laid out historically - so we can learn from it; a nation that, like I said, came out of Egypt miraculously and was soon forgetting the miracles that brought them this far. And they complain, and they turn, and here's, now, the second, and now the third generation (the second in the land). And once they're on their own, they just leave God out of the equation, and the Canaanites - the enemies of their soul - were left to prosper. The LORD said to them, back in the book of Joshua, "Leave these guys to grow amongst you, and they'll become thorns in your sides, and they'll destroy your life" (Joshua 23:12-13). So when you read, "Now after the death of Joshua," it marks almost the end of a centralized, strong, moral, spiritual leadership, and the vacuum that needed to be filled was filled with personal wants and desires. "This is what I want. This is my life. This is the way I want to live it." Unfortunately what follows is the direct result of that.

Verse 1, "Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, 'Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?' And the LORD said, 'Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.' So Judah said to Simeon his brother, 'Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory.' And Simeon went with him. Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. And Adoni-Bezek said, 'Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.' Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died."

Now, like I said, earlier on - seventeen years-plus ago - the LORD had given them the duty of cleaning out the land of the Canaanites, these idol worshippers who killed their own children, horrendous in their sinfulness. God had given them plenty of grace to repent. They had not done it. And God was going to use Israel to bring His judgment upon them. When Joshua died, they turned to the LORD to lead them which was a pretty good move. I mean, up until then they had someone to call upon. But now he was gone, and nobody saw a leader in their midst. And so they went to the LORD, and they asked Him, "Who should be the first one to go into

battle?" And the LORD said, "Send Judah, and I will be with him and deliver the land into his hand." So we gave you a map back in the book of Joshua. I hope you still have it. Judah had a big property, but inside Judah's property Simeon was placed. He didn't have any borders, really, to defend. He was in the land of those of Judah. Why was he sent first? I don't know. When we read of Jacob speaking of Judah (in his prophecies in Genesis 49), he talked about Judah being a lion's whelp, that he was a kingly tribe, he had prowess; and maybe he was fit for this kind of work. Needless to say (notice in verse 4), when the LORD sent this tribe to clean out its territory, the LORD promised to deliver them (the enemy) into their hands. "You're going to win. You're going to have victory." And so they went up against a very large city in the midst, Bezek. The word means lightning. It must have been a large city if you read that ten thousand men (verse 4) were killed there. But they began to do what God says, and God began to bless His own even though they were vastly outnumbered. Obedience makes up for lack, doesn't it? You can be outnumbered, out-manned, out-played, but if you're with the LORD, you're in the majority; and Israel is to learn that. They capture this king, Adoni-Bezek (the king of Bezek). And, interestingly enough, when they captured him and eventually caught him, we find that his practice over the years of cutting off the thumbs and big toes of opposing kings (which left them unable to war, from a dexterity, mobility standpoint) - Israel was already practicing the practices of the heathen. And so they do to him what he had done to others. And so they emulate him. But he faces, now, the similar fate.

There is certainly a basic law of God that says you're going to reap what you sow. When Eliphaz said to Job, early on (Job 4:8), he said, "Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." It's just something that's the case, isn't it, from God's point of view. You're going to reap what you sow. That can be a joy to know.....or a terror. How are you livin' your life? What are you puttin' in the ground? What crop is going to come up because of your way of life? Hosea said it in chapter 8:7. He said, "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." A couple of chapters later Hosea said (in chapter 10:12), "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground" of your heart so something has the time to grow. Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." I hang on to that as a promise, don't you? Well, it's not just a general truth. It's a promise of God. You reap what you sow. Solomon wrote that. Paul would say to the Corinthians, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Paul said to the Galatians, "Do not be

deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8). I find it interesting sometimes, in counseling, that when you tell people that, somehow they don't believe that it applies to them. "Oh, that's a nice principle, but I'm okay." And because they haven't seen anything happen in terms of, "I've been livin' the wrong way, but there's been no consequence," they write it off as an untruth. Or somehow they take the patience of God for approval. It's not approval. It's patience. And, in the end, you reap what you sow.

So here's a guy that had hurt seventy kings and realized that he was going to reap what he sowed. And, like I said, that can be a great blessing to you. You're in church during the week - sowing to your Spirit. That's good for you. Right? God waters it, and it grows, and out comes life and peace and longsuffering and joy.

We read, in verse 8, "Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland. Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba). And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher). Then Caleb said, 'Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.' " Now the children of Judah were sent first, by the LORD, throughout the territories, and what you have here is a progression. They go from Bezek to Jerusalem to Hebron then to Debir. And if you track all of those, it's an interesting picture because you go from Bezek to Jerusalem south to Hebron, eleven miles west. So they really worked their territory, if you will, being obedient to the LORD in going forward.

I want to point out a couple of things to you. Number one - verse 8 tells us that they "fought against Jerusalem and took it." You should know that they didn't hold on to it very long. In fact, Joshua will write (back in chapter 15:63) that the Jebusites, who lived in Jerusalem at the time, the children of Judah could not drive them out so that the Jebusites remained in that city even till the days of David, who moved the capital to Jerusalem by wiping out these Jebusites. So they had some initial victory against this very tough enemy - Judah did - but it didn't last very long at all. In fact, the LORD had told them very clearly that it wouldn't

last. It was back in chapter 23:11-13 where the LORD talks to them about, "If you don't take these nations out, they're going to be snares and traps and scourges to you," and it was certainly the case when it came to Jerusalem. So, here're some guys serving the LORD who are very close to victory - fell short of it, weren't able to accomplish it. But they were moving forward and in some aspects were being faithful more so than we'll read in the rest of the chapter. When they got to Debir, it was Caleb (you remember Caleb) who made a promise that anyone who would overthrow that city would get his daughter as wife. And so verse 13 tells us, "And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. Now it happened, when she came to him, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, 'What do you wish?' So she said to him, 'Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.' And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs." So here in the midst of these battles, we run into Othniel, and you've got to remember Othniel - he's going to become the first judge in chapter 3. He's going to be the first guy that God is going to raise up to bring deliverance to the people. He's a relative to Caleb. He was his nephew. He would soon become his son-in-law. And one of the things that you find in Caleb's life is faith. Right? It seems like everyone around this man is attracted to faith. And so you'll find, in Caleb's family, that there's this wonderful kind of influence to trust God; which tells me that wherever you're at - even in the worst of days, like this book - Caleb has great influence on his family, on his children, on those who serve. And you don't want to miss out on being that kind of an influence. Not only does faith run in Caleb's family, it does appear like boldness does as well. When his daughter gets married to Othniel, she says to Othniel, "Ask my dad for some springs." But before he can open his mouth, she's already working him. She jumps off the donkey, "Hey, dad, hey. I want the springs." "I was going to talk to him about that." But Caleb, when they were dividing the land - before they ever got to divide it, interrupted everybody and said, "Hey, I want the land that God has promised to me." So, like dad, like daughter. There was this urgency and this drive, if you will, and dad blessed her. He's not going to keep from his daughter what she wants, and he gives her the upper and lower springs of that area around Debir.

Well, then we read in verse 16, "Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms" (which is Jericho) "with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which lies in the South near Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they

attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zaphath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron." Now, the descendants (verse 16) of Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, if you remember - they are called Kenites. They stayed with Moses and traveled with him from Jericho to the wilderness of the Dead Sea area to a new dwelling place called Arad. And after Jethro comes a guy named Hobab. Who bad? I am. Oh, Hobab. But he leads these Kenites who, in the Bible, are pretty good folks. They seem to be a godly tribe. There are some bad guys we're going to run into as we go, especially when Deborah comes to rule - some traitors. But notice that this ally of Israel - and they're tied to them through Moses - was looking for a new place to dwell after Jericho had been leveled. They stayed, then, in the wilderness area. And then we're told (in verses 17 and 18) that the Philistine areas (which we'll talk about in greater detail much later) that Simeon and Judah took - those coastal cities of Gaza and all - they're still in that same kind of a place, until they came up into the mountains where they had a difficult time driving the inhabitants, as they descended, out of the lower areas, the lowlands, and it says "because they had chariots of iron."

Now, I want you to read that statement in light of what you've known before because the strength of the enemy has never once been an issue to the LORD. In other words, wherever God has sent His people, He didn't say, "Oh, yeah, but they're strong. Maybe we won't fight them." In other words, it wasn't God's concern. They had His leadership. He had called them to completely cleanse the land of these enemies. So it isn't the issue - at least not to the LORD - that they had chariots of iron. That was an issue for the people. They ran into a blockage to their faith. They were doing good, and then they saw chariots and went, "Oh, I guess this is as far as we're going," and they put the brakes on to themselves, if you like. You might remember, in chapter 1 of the book of Joshua, after Moses was dead, the LORD said to Joshua, "Every place that you put your feet, that belongs to you - from the wilderness to Lebanon, from the great river of the Euphrates to the land of the Hittites, all the way to the Great Sea." There was no place that they could go that they couldn't win. And God had made them a promise. "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you. I won't leave you. I won't forsake you. Just go get it." So the issue here - written from the standpoint of the children of Judah - was

they got to somewhere where their faith let them down. "God was moving, we had been winning, the LORD has been blessing, but now we ran into something that we don't know what to do with." I mean, chariots of iron would be a great advantage when you were fighting troops. It's like having a tank when everybody else is walking. I mean, you'd be sufficiently outnumbered; give them a distinct advantage. But that's not the reason that they weren't going further. It was a lack of faith.

Do you remember back in Joshua 17 where Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph's sons) came and asked Joshua for more land? And they said, "We're a really big tribe. We need more land." And Joshua said, "You've got plenty of land," and they said, "We don't." And he said, "Well, go down there and clean out the giants. Go into the forests and get rid of those Canaanites that are dwelling there." And they said, "Oh, no, they're too strong for us. We need land that isn't inhabited with the enemy." And Joshua said, "Your problem is not that you don't have enough land. The problem is you haven't gone and possessed the land." And he sent them back with a promise, "Look, God will clear the forest of the giants. The only thing you're lacking is faith." But they were arguing that they were outgunned. And this is the same issue that Judah runs into here. They did fine for a while, but then their God became smaller than their enemy, and so they freeze. Right? The question of faith is always - how big is your God? If you read the Bible from the standpoint of God's people, they were always at a disadvantage. You will very rarely read, "And they had far more people than their enemies," or, "they overwhelmed them with their presence." It was always this issue of fighting from a distinct disadvantage so that you would know, and they would know, that God would get the glory. But faith can be stopped with fear, and when the enemy is bigger than the confidence that you have in your LORD, then you fall short of what God wanted to do. And so their conclusion was pretty simple right here, and the conclusion was, "Yeah, we've taken all that we can. This is as far as we can go." And so they leave the enemy in their strength at a position where they're going to grow and turn on them in the years that follow, and it's going to harm them in their spiritual lives. They had fought, by the way (you were with us in Joshua), two huge kings on the other side of the Jordan that they had absolutely annihilated - not because they were strong but because God was blessing them. They had plenty of arguments to say, "Well, we took Jericho. I'm pretty sure these iron chariots aren't going to have anything on us." But they stopped.

And I see this as such an example of we can do well with faith until we run into the very things that are difficult, and then right away we give up. People that have

habits that they have to break, and it's been hard, and, "I give up." Or they're looking for a job, and they can't find one, and, "It's just more than my faith can handle, and I give up." Or, "I'm looking for a wife or a husband. I've been looking for years. I don't know where else to look. And I give up." And my faith kind of gives out, and I stop. And it isn't the challenge. It's just that God is now smaller than your challenge. And it happened here to the children of Judah. They were doing well, they were making progress, but they hit a big blockade. God can be trusted. Faith is real. But you have to apply it to discover His best.

Now there were others like Caleb (notice in verse 20), "And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak" (all of the giants). Where they were breeding was in Hebron. And this is an old dude who's really seen his best years from the standpoint of strength. And yet, on the one hand, you have (in verse 19) a whole tribe of folks - who've done well and seen God bless - who stop because there's a challenge. And there's this old guy who's known the LORD all of his life (Caleb) who goes after the enemies that were invading his land, and he wanted to rid himself of them. Tremendous acts of faith against overwhelming odds, if you will. So different to what you see in verse 19. I read someone once wrote, "The past should be a springboard to go forward, not a sofa to lay down on." And that certainly was true of Caleb. Caleb would always take what he learned and just move forward. But a lot of these tribes would look back and say, "Well, God's always taken care of us," and lay down because it wasn't happening.

Well then, beginning in verse 21, we begin to read some really discouraging things (well, verse 19 as well - they couldn't get rid of them). "But," verse 21, "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz). And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, 'Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy.' So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day." So here come the recorded failures - verse 19, failure; verse 21, failure. The only person who doesn't fail in this story is Joseph, and notice he comes to this place of battle, and, obediently, he looks for a way into the city. Cities under siege

oftentimes hid the entrances to their city. If you go to Israel with us ever, there's a city called Megiddo, and it has a hidden entryway. In the city of Jerusalem, Hezekiah built a 1700-foot underground tunnel. He built it from the Gihon Springs outside the city walls to the Pool of Siloam inside - just to keep water for his people while they were surrounded by the enemy. So Joseph was wisely able, with spies, to find out who they were. He went in, and he destroyed the city. But he left the people who ratted it out to be able to live. He showed wisdom, if you will, and he had victory.

But, notice verse 27, "However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages." Let's just say he didn't do it. Verse 27 at the end, "for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land." They were determined enemies. "And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute. Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute. Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward."

So, awful thing to read, but the testimony is pretty much nobody did what God said. "We couldn't get rid of them. The enemy was determined. The fight was difficult. The battle was uphill." And the whole book of Judges records, constantly, the failure of the people to go forward. Verse 19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34. Incomplete victories. And God said, "Destroy them." Because you can't coexist with the flesh. As a Christian, a life of compromise is one you lose every time. Right? You've got to try. Oh, nobody's saying it's easy. Living in this world is not an easy place to live. I don't doubt that the children of Israel saw it

very differently when you read this because you keep reading this: when they got stronger, rather than get rid of them, destroy them, they said, "Yeah, you're going to be paying us taxes. They put them out as slaves, as servants. They used them. They argued, "Hey, they're no longer a threat to us militarily. They are an asset, not a liability. We can make money off their backs. We can use them as slaves." And it might look good on paper. It's just really wrong in God's book. Because obedience brings blessing, and thinking that you can do something against the will of God and that you have a better idea than God does, that it's to your best interest to do something other than what He says, it's crazy. And we get this all the time in counseling. People come in, they'll say, "What does the Bible say?" "It's very clear this is what the Bible says." And they'll go, "Oh, yeah. I can't do that. That doesn't apply to my circumstances." And then they want to tell you why. But the bottom line is God's ways are relevant, and they're the best. If we disobey in our smug little know-it-better attitudes, in the long run sin will bind us and catch us and overrun us and overwhelm us and steal life from us. If we'll just do things His way, it's a smart way to go. I'll use, maybe, the most primary example. If you say to somebody, "I really want to grow in the Lord," and you say to them, "Go to church, come every week, bring your Bible, take notes, study chapter upon chapter. Let God speak to you. And get up every morning and pray. And hang around with Christians rather than those people that you're hanging around with in the world. And make yourself accountable to someone. And when you start to grow, cut some time out of your schedule to serve the Lord. Let God use you. Share your faith with someone." They'll look at you like you've lost your mind. "No. I want to eat something I can be really spiritual. Is there something on the lunch menu? I don't want to do all that stuff. I just want to grow." And you tell them, "This is the only way I know to grow," then they'll ask to speak to somebody else, "Can I talk to somebody else here?" But God tells us what we should do for our own good, and He gives us books on what happens when we refuse.

So the direction from the LORD to the people was, "Utterly destroy the Canaanites. Utterly destroy them. No mercy. It's judgment day." And spiritually, that's always been the case for us. If we walk in the Spirit, we don't fulfill the lust of the flesh because it wars against the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). One or the other. That's what you get. Right? You don't get both. There's this constant battle, even tonight, for the mastery of your life and of mine. And if I let the Holy Spirit work in my life, I can live for the Lord and possess the land, and the enemy will have no place to grab hold of me. But if I just let it go, and I leave little things in my life go, and, "Oh, Lord, you've got the bedrooms, why do You need the closet? You've

got the closet, get out of the backyard. I give You my house, except for the backyard." Right? Then you're going to lose the battle. And you can't say with resignation, at some point, "Well, I've always had a bad temper. So that's just the way I am. I can't change." That's not true. Go possess the land. "God, help me. Let me walk the life and live the life that You want." But you can't do it with compromise. And here's the compromise. This is why these first two chapters are so - I don't like 'em - blatantly, "I didn't do the right thing." And what follows is - when you don't do the right thing, here's what happens. But God is good when you're sorry and when you cry out - to come and get you a thousand times, one after the other. So, the book of Judges reports 338 years total (340 is good) of turmoil because there is this disaster of not really being obedient to the LORD. You just get pretty close, and then that's good enough. I settle in.

Notice in the last three verses here (before we get to chapter two), verses 34-36, Dan (you might remember, we mentioned to you) was given land in the south, in Philistine territory, where Gaza is today if you know any modern maps in your head. But so hassled was Dan that they came to Joshua and said, "We'd like to move," and they moved completely up north by a place called Laish. In fact, when we go to Israel, we'll go to a place called Tel Dan. Tell Dan what? Tell him to go back south. No. Tel Dan is the place where they settled. So, chapter 1 just says nobody bothered to follow up. Judah did for a time, and then they ran into trouble. Joseph seemed to complete, in his faithfulness, the things that God had set before him. But literally everyone else is mentioned as either not doing what God said or trying to tax the people, coming up with a different idea than God had, and it will be destructive to them, and it'll always be destructive to us.

Well then in chapter 2, "Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said:" (to the people) "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, "I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars." But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, "I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you." ' So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. Then they called the name of that place Bochim," (weeping) "and they sacrificed there to the LORD. And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land."

Now, the Angel of the LORD (we've told you before, and we will get into it much more so in a couple of chapters) is an Old Testament reference to Jesus. He's called the Angel of the LORD. It is the pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, the LORD, in the Old Testament. Those appearances stop when Jesus is born because He is now appeared. That is certainly true here as, notice, the Angel of the LORD speaks in the first person and says, "I've led you, I've delivered you, I've sworn to you, you haven't obeyed My voice." This isn't an angel. This is the LORD Himself. "Why have you done this? Why have you left them in the land? You have failed to obey Me, so now I can't do anything for you. I can't get rid of them. They're going to continue to irritate you. They're going to hurt your life. I'll make a covenant with you, and I won't break it." And I think wherever you turn in the Bible, when it comes to terms of agreements (with God) being violated, it's never on His side of the table. It's not where He's put His signature. It's always where we've put ours. Right? When the flesh gets the upper hand, God can't bless you. It'll rip you off, not edify you. It'll destroy you, it won't build you up. You'll lose, you won't win. God can't bless. He won't bless. You teach your kids, and you tell them a hundred times, you finally say, "All right. You're not going this week. You're not getting your allowance. You're not driving the car." (Whining), "I don't get it." "It's because there's consequence." God can't bless. It isn't that He doesn't want to. He's chosen not to.

So the people, verses 4 and 5, begin to weep. And the problem is they start to weep, but they don't change. (Pastor Jack starts whining), "I want the car. I want to play Nintendo. I want to stay up late." Weeping because there's a loss. Weeping is not repentance. It might accompany repentance. Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 7:9, "I'm not happy that I made you sorrow into tears but that those tears were evidence of repentance, and I'm not sorry about that at all." But a lot of people cry. People in jail are sorry that they're there, not necessarily what got them there, that they got caught. By definition, repentance is when you turn from sin and self and turn yourself to walk in God's way. That's repentance, right? I'm going Your way. That's repentance. You don't find that here. This is a weeping that falls under the form of godliness picture. Jeremiah, in chapter 2, was sent to this nation, and he said to them (verses 10-12), "I want you to send all around the world and ask the same question. Go to the coasts of Cyprus, go to Kedar. Check everywhere you look, and see if you've ever found that a nation could change its gods and turn in its true God for gods that aren't any gods at all. The heavens should be astonished at the choices you're making." That's what the LORD said to this people. Yet they're very sad here. But now they are

left to their own devices without the help of the LORD. And so they wept, and they sacrificed, and they even named the place, "This is where we cried." Everybody went home.

"So," general verse (verse 7), "the people served the LORD at the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers," (when that influence of that godly nation had gone away) "another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." As long as the people that led with Joshua were around, the church did well. Why? Because they had leaders who knew God, had stories to tell and experiences to point to. The people thrived under their leadership. They did well. But the minute you pull out the elders, the older, the experienced, those who had zeal and commitment for the LORD, all of a sudden that whole thing stops. Which is a pretty scary reality. And if you've read anything about church revivals over the years (and there're plenty of them that you can study), there is literally one out of a hundred that will last past forty years. Most revivals stop after one generation. Most churches grow and then die over two generations. They come, and they're gone. There is this growth, and then it's gone. Watch in the New Testament. Right? The early church, and people getting saved by the thousands, and yet you get to the end of the 1st century, and the Lord writes a letter to the Ephesians, and He says, "You've left your first love" (Revelation 2:4). They were reduced already, although it was a huge influential church, to going through the motions without any emotion. There was no heart for God anymore. And there was a generation - a second, a third generation - they didn't know the LORD personally, and they didn't know about His power. They just came in, and they experienced what God had done from kind of an arm's-length away. Whose fault is that? Well a couple of things. I think number one - parents have got to tell their kids about the Lord. They've got to model for them the relationship, and they've got to bring them to a place where their experience with the Lord is firsthand. It's firsthand. It's first person. You can tell your kids what the Lord has done, but then they've got to go and find Him and pray and watch Him work in their own lives. In just a few years, this generation that followed didn't know the LORD personally, didn't know His power, and the light eventually went out, quickly went out. Now God gave to Israel (like He gives to us some things to help

you remember) - all of the Feast Days, all of the practices, the commemoration, the rites, the songs were all designed to communicate or to transmit to God's people about God. "When your children ask you of these things" - now you'll read that in more than one place - when they begin to question, you have an answer for them. But then let them come to know the Lord personally. You know that old line about, "God doesn't have any grandkids," it's only because you can't keep a relationship at that kind of a distance. So there was no passing along of relationship to where the next generation could have a personal relationship with the LORD. And second of all, there was no ongoing experience with God's power. Right? In other words, I remember when (thirty years ago) we were sitting in a house in Whittier, saying, "I wonder where we can meet." And the two or three dozen people that were there watching God open a door for us to go to the school over here (when we'd knocked on literally every door), we were all set to move into a tire place on Whittier Boulevard that collapsed in the earthquake and said, "Thank You, Lord, for not putting us there," and ending up in a school, those thirty or forty people would have said to you, "God was good!" And their prayers the next times were with great faith because they'd watched God work. Now there were plenty of people that showed up after that who just sat in a pew and went, "Well, this is all right. I wish it was a little cooler, a little brighter. I wish it was a little bit more comfortable." They had complaints about what they had, where the guy sitting next to them went, "Man, you wouldn't believe how we got here!" The one experienced the work of God, the other just benefited from it. And if that isn't experienced every year to the point where you're not living in the past, but what is God doing right now, then it'll never find itself to continue down the road. Because my faith is not sufficient for my kids until I communicate with them, "Here's how you can find the Lord yourself. Now you go find Him and walk with Him." And then they can tell their own story. And unfortunately we live in a western culture where most kids come from affluent enough situations where they don't (like the rest of the world) have to pray and trust the Lord for food or shoes or housing. I mean, most of the world doesn't live like we live. So we have an even more difficult challenge, and you'll find that most revivals don't happen in the west because we just have too much. We don't need God. We never get put in a position where we really cry out - not so much individually but in a corporate standpoint. So, we have to teach and remind of faith. We have to live it out now and be dependent upon God to teach us, and He will.

But verse 10 is tragic. It just stopped. And we want to believe (I want to believe), after thirty-two years as a church, that our best years are tomorrow. I can tell

you great stories about how God got us through lots of things - paid bills, healed lives - it's cool stuff, never want to forget. But I don't want to lean on that except to be a springboard to tomorrow. Right? We don't want to live in the past. We want God to do some things in the future, which sometimes means shaking yourself loose from the things you're so used to. Because the older you are, the less you're likely to like change. The older you get, change. We'll do louder songs, and we'll have old people go, "Oh, did you hear the music? Oh, my God, I don't know if I can handle it." Oh, you'll be all right. It's worship. Get over it. Move on. When I was a kid, being a hippie (in the 60's when I got saved-in the early 70's), our whole culture was just dropping out. It wasn't school. I mean, I went to school, but none of my buddies did. They all smoked dope and hung around the corner. They went to concerts with The Grateful Dead for weeks at a time. That's what they did. Now we've got kids - they're not like that anymore. They go to school, they want to learn. Education is important to them. Church has got to keep up, man. But that doesn't change the gospel. But we've got to stay in touch, and it's important that we do. So, I don't know. Come on, Lord. Let's get some things done. We don't want to be verse 10 - ever. I pray every day we never get so settled in that God can't use us anymore. I'd rather just change with the times and let the Lord go, "Those things aren't so important." I'd grow my hair out if I had it, but I don't have it. (Laughing) So this is the new look, right here, for me.

Verse 11, "Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD," (now remember they just wailed, "Oh....." yeah) "and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Astoreths" (which is the female equivalent of Baal). "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel." Why should that surprise you? "So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies." They were weakened and dominated. "Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them." God promised to deal with them. "And they were greatly distressed. Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do

so. And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, 'Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not.' Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua."

Or, here's the problem, and here's the outline for Judges - this cycle of sin. You can call it sin-drome. Sin-drome. And, at every time of rest, when things were going good, the people quickly slid into idolatry. And then the raids came, and the enemy came, and defeat came, and loss came, and God deals severely with waywardness because He doesn't want you to run. He wants you to stay. Eventually the people will cry out in repentance. God sends a judge. He restores them. And then they have rest. And guess what happens? The sin-drome starts all over again. There're seven cycles of them set into this book. Out of the fifteen that we know took place, seven of them are described in detail so that you have lots to learn from. But here's the cycle (and we'll stop with this) over the 300 years: there's rest (it's an "R" word); and with rest comes rebellion; with rebellion (because God loves you) comes retribution; over time retribution will lead them to repentance; repentance will bring from God restoration; restoration will provide rest; and then we do it all over again. Pretty stupid. Sounds like us, doesn't it?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
July 10, 2017