

Pivotal time in Israel's history – foundational time

God doesn't want Israel to become like any other nation – his representatives, vehicle of salvation

God is in the business of forming a people who reflect him

God Demands Your Whole Heart

So God demands complete annihilation

Deuteronomy 7:1-2

7 “When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, ² and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

God wants to send a message that's no more popular today than it was then...

1. See the danger of tolerating sin

Canaanites and Baal – describe Baal worship

This is something makes Judges difficult – genocide

Why would God kill innocent people? Because there are no innocent people.

God chose them to carry out his justice

If anyone was getting treatment they didn't deserve, it was Israel

God wanted complete annihilation not only because it was the justice that was deserved but also because leaving around a few idols would be a temptation

So we enter the first chapter of Judges. God has told Israel, “The land is yours! All you have to do is a little clean up. Don't worry. I'm with you. I will give you victory.” And for a while, some were on board, took God at his word, and obeyed him.

The progression of chapter one goes something like this...

The tribe of Judah (vs 1-4) does what God has commanded and they win a mighty victory, but failed to win others.

The tribe of Benjamin (vs 21) wins Jerusalem, but because they don't drive out all the inhabitants, they only “half” win it.

The house of Joseph (vs 22-26) kicks the inhabitants out of Bethel, but because they didn't destroy them, they just went and built another city elsewhere.

And then you get to this...

Judges 1:27-36

²⁷ Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants...

²⁹ And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites...

³⁰ Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants...so the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor.

³¹ Asher did not drive out the inhabitants...

³³ Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants...Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor for them.

³⁴ The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain. ³⁵ The Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily on them, and they became subject to forced labor. ³⁶ And the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akkrabbim, from Sela and upward.

With each tribe listed, the picture gets bleaker and bleaker

Even those that won battles didn't obey the command of the Lord to annihilate them.

Why? Why did Israel disobey God? They were promised victory, blessing, peace, security, joy. Why did they just throw away what the sovereign God has promised them?

I think our author gives us an answer later in chapter 2. After he had just described how the generation of Joshua committed themselves to the Lord, he says this of the generation after Joshua died:

Judges 2:10b-13

And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

¹¹ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. ¹² And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. ¹³ They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.

He says two things: they forgot the Lord and they went after other gods.

1. They didn't know God because they had forgotten who they were and what God had done for them.

In exchange for a God who had given them everything, he demanded everything from them.

God had just become one option in a buffet of options

Sometimes the reason we deliberately sin is because we've forgotten who we are.

Paul says, "You are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body."

2. They went after other gods. They "abandoned God," "served the baals," and "bowed down" to the gods of other people.

Nobody in Israel is saying, "I'm going to deliberately disobey God. I don't care what he says. I don't care that he saved me. I'm doing what I want." Nobody is being that blatant.

They abandoned God because they went after other gods. They abandoned God because they served other idols.

Think about what it was like for the Israelites as they march into the land...

Canaan had some really attractive things going for them.

Baal appealed to their flesh. It wasn't as if the choice was between A or B, two neutral options. It was choose God over sexual immorality, over selfish pleasure, over material possessions, over the false sense of power and security that comes when you think you caused your god to give you what you wanted.

So often it's our desires that lead us away from God, not just a wooden rebellion or outright denial of God

Most of the time doctrinal error is the result of a misplaced desire that we want to justify

It's easy for us to see the foolishness of this from the outside looking in, but we often fit in this category too

We may not be out to destroy God. We want to be his people. We're glad they belong to him. We recognize that he created us and saved us, but we're stuck. In addition to loving God, we love the flashiness of the world's goods too. We love the thrill of the moment. We love the tastiness of cotton candy.

But what if God took all that away? Would he be enough?

Israel wanted God but they want a little bit of Baal too. So they conquered Canaan, but instead of annihilating God's enemies, they kept a few of them around and thought that if they just kept those few under control, it would be alright.

They obeyed God to the extent that it benefited them. As soon as sacrifice was required, they jumped ship.

But you cannot serve two masters.

So I have to ask you - are you holding onto sin? Have you only given God 50% of your heart, 75%, 99%? Is there a piece of your heart that you're not giving God? Do you love your sin too much that you just have to keep a remnant of it around. Maybe you think, "I'll just keep this little bit and as long as I keep it under control, I'll be ok."

God will have all of your heart or he will have none of your heart

If you try to serve two masters, the one master that will eventually win out will not be God. It will be your idol. The rest of Judges is the testimony of this. Do not play around with sin. If you're holding onto sin, repent before it's too late.

Because there are consequences...

Judges 2:1-3

2 Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, ² and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? ³ So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you."

2. Fear the results of tolerating sin

God is saying, "I'm going to give my people what they want." Sometimes he lets us hang ourselves.

Let me speak to the men in this room for a second. I have to believe that there's more than one man in this room who has been sinning sexually for a long time – maybe it's porn, maybe it's an affair – and the fact that you haven't been caught yet leads you to feel some sense of security, or even worse, that it's acceptable. But did it ever occur to you that perhaps the fact that you haven't been caught is itself the judgment? Did it ever occur to you that instead of delivering you from that sin, God has chosen to discipline you by allowing you to continue down the road you have chosen with all of the addiction, heartbreak, broken relationships, twisted desires, messed up synapses in the brain, regret, guilt, depression, damage that cannot be repaired, etc.

Sin has its own consequences and they're not just "God's gonna punish you"

We have to see sin like cancer - all we need is a tiny bit and it will infect the whole body

What was once an isolated problem will come to affect every area

View acceptable sins like irreconciled relationships, worry, anger, impatience, etc. not as sins you've learned to cope with, but as diseases that are destroying you

Israel thought they could manage their enemies. They thought that by acting strong and superior they could handle it.

1 Corinthians 10:12

¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

God wants all of your heart, not just some of it, not just 99% of it. Giving God 100% comes with benefits and promises that Israel missed out on.

Let me put this in positive terms

Baal promised the same things. The world promises the same things. But they lie.

Do not believe the lie that free, promiscuous, erotic sex is going to fulfill you.

Don't believe the lie that dressing a certain way and hanging out with certain people is going bring along the kind of guy that's going to make you happy.

Don't believe the lie that you'll be happier with more money.

Don't believe the lie that freedom is found in...

God's demand that you be intolerable toward sin and love him alone is not his being a dominating dictator. It is a demonstration of immeasurable love toward you, that he would spare you from the destruction you're blind to and help you find what your soul really needs.

God is the only one who when worshipped doesn't leave you feeling disgusting or with a trail of regret or a set of side effects

And then, as if that wasn't enough, God in his inexhaustible grace, doesn't expect to clean house on our own. God doesn't say, "Clean up your act and then you can be my follower." He says, "Follow me and I'll clean up your act."

Judges 2:16-19

¹⁶Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. ¹⁸Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from 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 afflicted and oppressed them.¹⁹ But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

3. Trust in the consummate Savior-Judge to deliver you from sin

Though his people didn't deserve it, God still delivered them time and time again

These mini saviors are called judges. It is these people – 12 total – whom the book is centered around. Each one is raised up specifically by God for the purpose of rescuing Israel from the messes they keep getting themselves into. These judges are not super godly people. In fact many are pretty carnal. But for some reason, they are the people God chooses to use to bring justice on Israel's enemies and save his people from bondage.

In chapter 3, we have the stories of Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Othniel led Israel into battle against their captor Cushan-rishathaim. Ehud is the guy who delivered Israel by stabbing the fat king Eglon. Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with a cattle prod. These colorful stories demonstrate a God who is always faithful to bring justice to his enemies and deliver his people at just the right time in just the right way.

But the unfortunate thing about these judges is that their deliverance was never permanent.

Israel needed a savior-judge who could permanently deliver her from her enemies because none of the savior-judges in the book Judges could do it.

No person could fix Israel's problem. No person can fix our problems. We need a permanent Savior-Judge.

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Here's what Jesus – our permanent Savior-Judge – has done for us.

- He raised dead men to life
- He paid the debt
- He disarmed the power of sin

The pattern of Israel's sin under the judges is strikingly similar to us - we do well for a while and then we sin again. But we have something qualitatively different than what

Israel had - a Savior-Judge who's come to save us from the inside out, not just from external problems.

And when he calls us to drive out the old inhabitants of our heart, he does so with the promise that our Savior-Judge goes with us

If Jesus is big enough to overcome the grave, he's big enough to overcome your sin

If you've got a piece of your heart that you've kept to yourself (50%, 1%, 100%) and the thought of giving it up seems impossible, do what God called his people to do.

When you drive out sin in your heart, replace it with seeking the Lord with all your heart (opposite is legalism)