

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
Judges – Judges Chapter 2
Lesson 1 – Breaking the relationship Cycle with God

¹ The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you,

² and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? ³ Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be [thorns] in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you." ⁴ When the angel of the LORD had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud, ⁵ and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the LORD. ⁶ After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. ⁷ The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. ⁸ Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.

¹² They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴ In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. ¹⁵ Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress. ¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. ¹⁸ Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. ²⁰ Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and said, "Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, ²¹ I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. ²² I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD and walk in it as their forefathers did." ²³ The LORD had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua.

1. The relationship cycle between Israel and God sounds like a break up to make of sad love song.
 - a. Why does God continue to save is disobedient Israel?
 - b. What does God continuing to save Israel say to us when we betray God and break his heart?
 - c. Respond to this truth and how we can use this truth in speaking the gospel:
“There is no where we can run where God’s grace will not find us, no depth we can fall that the love of God won’t rescue us.”
2. How do you think it’s possible for 200 years of God’s miracle actions toward Israel be erased one generation after Jousha died?
 - a. How is this same action of forgetting about what God has done for us occur today? Define unchurched as it is used today?
 - b. What can we do to promote a spiritual legacy?
3. Agree or disagree: Human beings are not good by nature? explain.
4. God kept some enemies alive in order to test Israel.
 - a. What “enemies” do God leave alive in our life to keep us faithful and obedient to him?
 - b. What would it look like to mature to an “enemyless” life and do you feel you would be more faithful to God if there were less or no enemies in your life?
5. Why is it very important to look to God and not Man for deliverance?
 - a. Our pastor is not God. How does understand this truth strengthen our walk and give us more clarity in our Christian walk.
6. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

Additional Questions for self-study: How has the Lord shown compassion to you recently?
What has God used to show you an area of disobedience in your own life?

B. Israel's Repeated Cycle of a Compromising, Inconsistent Life: Sin, Chastisement, Distress, Prayer, and Deliverance, 2:1-3:6

(2:1-3:6) Introduction: Have you ever had a habit that you wanted to break? Or some condition from which you wanted to be set free? We are *creatures of conditioning, creatures of habit*. If we do something time and time again, it becomes a part of our nature or daily routine. By indulging or taking license with certain things, we can even become enslaved, held in bondage. Just think of people who have problems with...

- smoking
- alcohol or drugs
- illicit sex or pornography
- overeating or gluttony
- cursing or vulgarity
- laziness, complacency, or slothfulness
- anger, bitterness, or hatred
- coldness, indifference, or negativism
- low self-esteem or self-image
- greed or covetousness
- selfishness or hoarding
- shoplifting or other forms of stealing
- lying or deceiving

Habits are the result of repeating and repeating a behavior until it becomes a cycle in life. When the habit becomes evil or injures us, then it becomes a cycle of sin that must be broken.

How often have we been gripped by some *bad habit*, some sin that we longed to break? We struggled and struggled to break away, but failed time and again. We asked God to help us, but the very next day we returned to the sin or *bad habit*. We found ourselves caught up in a cycle, a cycle of...

- indulging in the bad habit or sin
- suffering caused by the bad habit or sin
- praying
- experiencing a brief, short-lived deliverance

This was the very experience of Israel during the period of the judges. Israel was caught up in a cycle of a compromising, inconsistent life with the worldliness of their neighbors. This is the subject of this important passage of Scripture: *Israel's Repeated Cycle of a Compromising, Inconsistent Life: Sin, Chastisement, Distress, Prayer, and Deliverance, 2:1-3:6*.

1. The charge of the Lord against His people: Disobedience—compromise and false worship (2:1-5).
2. The rise of a generation who no longer knew nor acknowledged the Lord (2:6-10).
3. The repeated cycle of a compromising, inconsistent life: sin, chastisement, distress, prayer, and deliverance (2:11-19).
4. The response of God to continued sin: He judges and tests His people (2:20-23).
5. The purpose of God in testing His people: to see who would really obey and follow Him (3:1-6).

1. (2:1-5) Israel, Accusation against— Accusation, against Believers— Accusation, of the LORD— Compromise, with the Worldly— Repentance, Temporary or Short-lived— Chastisement, Described as: there was the charge of the LORD against His people, the Israelites. The charge or accusation was very serious. The Israelites had disobeyed God, compromising with the enemies of the promised land and engaging in their false worship. To expose the terrible evil, the angel of the LORD confronted God's people.

Who was this angel of the LORD? The word "angel" (malak) means a *messenger* sent from God such as an angel, ambassador, envoy, prophet, priest, or teacher. Was this an angel sent from the very presence of God or a special messenger such as a prophet or priest sent by God? Or was it the LORD Himself who sometimes

confronted His people? (Judges 6:22-23; 13:21-22; see DEEPER STUDY #2—Genesis 16:7; note, pt.3—Exodus 3:1-3; DEEPER STUDY #1—Joshua 5:13-15; cp. Genesis 22:11; 48:16 for more discussion.)

Most commentators feel that the angel of the LORD was the LORD Himself. The LORD was making a very special appearance to expose the sin of His people. He was charging them with committing a terrible evil against Him.

Note that the messenger of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim. What does this mean, to go up "from Gilgal to Bokim?" Keep in mind that the Tabernacle had been originally set up at Gilgal by Joshua (Joshua 4:18-20). The Tabernacle symbolized God's presence. Thus the writer is probably speaking descriptively, painting the picture of God's presence going up from the Tabernacle at Gilgal to Bokim.

Whatever the case, God went up to expose the people's sin and to charge them with apostasy, with breaking their covenant to obey Him. The charge against the people is clearly spelled out by Scripture:

1. The angel of the LORD reminded His people of three wonderful facts: it was the LORD Himself who had delivered them from Egyptian slavery and given them the promised land, the land promised to the forefathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). Moreover, the LORD was faithful to keep all His promises. This had been proven down through the years, proven by the fact that He had never broken His covenant with His people. In fact, not even one word of His promises or covenant had ever been broken.

2. But note: this was not true with the Israelites. The charge of disobedience was leveled against them. They were guilty of breaking their covenant with God. The charge was serious, very serious; the Israelites had compromised with the sinful, evil lifestyle and false worship of the worldly Canaanites (2:2). God had been clear in His instructions to the Israelites: the Canaanites were to be driven out of the promised land. Compromise was never to be allowed, for the Canaanites were a sinful, evil people—an immoral, lawless, and violent people. Their "cup of iniquity" was full, overflowing with savagery and brutality, committing atrocity after atrocity. (See DEEPER STUDY #1—Judges 1:27 for more discussion.) The Canaanites did not know the LORD, not the only living and true God. They were a religious people, very religious, but they had no knowledge of the LORD Himself. They worshipped the gods of their own creation, gods of their own ideas and imaginations, molded by their own minds.

God's people were not to become a permissive society, compromising with the sinful, evil lifestyle and false worship of the worldly. This had been God's clear commandment (Exodus 23:20-25; 34:10-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-11; Joshua 23:3-13). But the Israelites disobeyed the LORD and broke their covenant with God. They compromised with the sinful, evil lifestyle of the worldly and participated in the false worship of their worldly neighbors. This was the serious charge made against the Israelites.

3. The LORD had warned the Israelites: if they refused to drive out the Canaanites from the promised land, they would be chastised, face the discipline and judgment of God (2:3). If the Israelites desired the world and its sinful enticements, then they would have the world. They would be allowed to walk in the ways of the world with its bright lights and immoral and materialistic behavior. But by walking in the ways of the world, they would also experience the *thorns* and *snare*s of the world. By *thorns* is meant the trials of the world, and by *snare*s is meant the temptations of the world. As will be seen throughout Judges and the rest of the Old Testament, the Canaanites became thorns in the sides of the Israelites, often attacking, oppressing and enslaving them. Israel would actually seek financial wealth from trade with the Canaanites and seek after the bright lights and pleasures of the Canaanites; but their desire would result in financial loss, emptiness of soul, oppression, distress, and sometimes enslavement. If God's people desired the world, they would be disciplined, chastised by receiving the world. They would experience all the world's *thorns* (trials) and *snare*s (temptations). The world is not only full of pleasure, but also full of trials and temptations.

4. The charge leveled by the LORD struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the people: they confessed and repented before the LORD. But note: their confession and repentance was only a brief, fleeting, short-lived experience. This is the very thrust of the book of Judges. This will be discussed in detail in point three of this particular chapter (2:11-19). But for now, the point to see is that the people did confess and repent before the LORD. They wept loudly and offered sacrifices to the LORD. The experience of repentance was so significant that the people changed the name of the place to Bokim which means "weeping" (2:4-5).

Thought 1. The LORD made a very serious charge against His people, that of *disobedience*. Disobeying God is a dangerous course to take. Some of the strongest warnings in Scripture are given to the disobedient man or woman.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:1-6).

2. (2:6-10) Israel, Failure of— God, Ignored— Forgetting, of God— Unbelief, of Israel— Disobedience, of Israel: there was the rise of a generation who no longer knew nor acknowledged the LORD. The generation of Joshua knew the LORD. They were the generation who first inherited the promised land, and they were faithful in obeying the LORD (2:6-9).

Note the title given to Joshua in this passage: "Joshua...the servant of the LORD" (2:8). This title was reserved only for men of great commitment, men who were totally devoted to God (Joshua 24:29). Joshua died at the ripe age of 110 and was buried in the land of his inheritance, Timnath Heres. However, his death did not mean the end of God's work among His people. The people and leaders who outlived Joshua continued to obey the LORD, to be faithful to Him. They continued to follow the LORD and to serve Him.

But the generation who followed Joshua soon began to fail God (2:10). It took just a few years for the children of Joshua's generation to ignore the instructions of their godly parents. The godly example of the parents died and was buried with the parents. The memory and instructions of godliness—the great works of God among Joshua's generation—faded in the memory of the children. They no longer knew nor acknowledged the LORD. They ignored and forgot His wonderful works.

The Hebrew word for "know" or "knew" (*yada*) means to acknowledge, understand, or become acquainted with. This new generation of Israelites did not know God: that is, they did not acknowledge, understand, nor become acquainted with God. They did not keep alive the wonderful works of God, the great salvation of their parents brought about by the power of God. They were committed not to God but to the world. The bright lights and worldliness of the Canaanites had attracted them, and they gave themselves over to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). They sought after a life of...

- indulgence and plenty
- luxury and wealth
- play and recreation
- ease and comfort
- pleasure and stimulation
- revelry and sex

Within just one generation, Israel began to fail God. Within just a few years after conquering and inheriting the promised land, this second generation no longer *knew* God. They no longer acknowledged nor had a desire to become personally acquainted with God.

Thought 1. The call of God is not to a life of worldliness, not to a life of bright lights and fleshly pleasures and stimulations. The call of God is to a life of separation from the immoral and unjust ways of the world. We are to live a life of separation from the worldliness of this world.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).

"Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

Thought 2. The parents and the priests failed to teach the Word of God. The rich customs and traditions of their faith were soon forgotten, and religion became a mere formality—a religion without power or true godliness. This was a generation who no longer knew nor acknowledged the LORD. They were religious, but their religion was just a form of godliness, a religion that denied the power of God.

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:10-11).

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" (Colossians 2:20).

"For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:16-17).

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil" (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).

Thought 3. There is a striking lesson in this point: children cannot depend on the faith of their parents to save them. Just because a parent is saved by God does not mean that a child will be saved. Having Christian parents, living in a so-called Christian nation, accepting high moral values, attending a dynamic church where the truth of God's Word is preached—none of this is assurance that a person will know God and be saved. Every individual has to receive Jesus Christ *personally* as his Savior. *Knowing God* is a personal, individual experience. Receiving Jesus Christ as one's own Savior has to be a *personal* experience. Each person comes to know God, not because of the faith of a parent or the teachings of a church, but because the person reaches out to God and calls upon God to save him.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:7-8).

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

DEEPER STUDY #1 (Judges 2:6-10) Chart, of Israel— History, of Israel, In the Promised Land

3. (2:11-19) Compromise, Cycle of— Inconsistent, Cycle of— Worship of, Thoughts— Idolatry— Religion, False— Adultery, Spiritual— Israel, Failure of— Cycle, of an Inconsistent Life: there was the repeated cycle of a compromising, inconsistent life: sin, chastisement, distress, prayer, and deliverance. Joshua and his generation followed the LORD, but the next generation forsook God. It took only one generation for the Israelites to turn away from God. And once they deserted Him, they began a cycle of compromise, of worldly, *carnal failure* that lasted for about 300 years. Compromise, inconsistency, disobedience—a life of worldly, *carnal failure*—became the dominant mark of the Israelites. As stated, for about 300 years the nation as a whole lived a compromising, inconsistent life. They lived an inconsistent life right up to the establishment of the monarchy, the reign of the kings of Israel. The cycle is clearly seen in the Scripture and outline:

1. Terrible sin was the first mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, the nation's *carnal failure* (2:11-12). Israel forsook the LORD. He had saved their fathers and delivered the nation from enslavement to Egypt (a symbol of the world). But the new generation "forsook" (azab) the LORD. The idea is they turned away, left, abandoned, deserted, rejected, and lost all interest, thought, or contact with the LORD. They refused to commit themselves to Him. Therefore, they reached a point when they no longer knew nor acknowledged Him (2:10).

But the Israelites not only forsook *the LORD*, they also did the most base, corruptible evil imaginable. They engaged in false worship. They turned to the false religion of their neighbors and served their false gods, the images of Baal (see DEEPER STUDY #2—Judges 2:12-15 for more discussion). They changed their allegiance, turned away from the LORD and turned to false gods. They followed their neighbors to their false religions instead of following God and His Word. They engaged in false worship instead of worshipping the only living and true God. Note how the terrible sin of the Israelites is stressed:

- ⇒ They did evil in the sight of the LORD (2:11).
- ⇒ They served the false gods (Baalim) (2:12).
- ⇒ They followed other gods (2:12).
- ⇒ They bowed and worshipped them (2:12).
- ⇒ They forsook the LORD (2:13).
- ⇒ They served the false gods of Baal and the Ashtoreths (2:13).

Note also the statement, "they did evil in the sight of the LORD" (2:11). This blunt fact is stated six times in Judges (3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). It is found over fifty times in the Old Testament (as an example, see Numbers 32:13; Deuteronomy 4:25; 9:18; 17:2; 31:29).

2. Chastisement—the LORD's judgment and discipline—was the second mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, their *carnal failure* (2:12-15). As always, sin cut the heart of God and provoked His anger against Israel. His fury and righteous judgment were aroused. His just anger burned against their terrible sin.

Keep in mind why: because of Israel's apostasy and false worship. The people had turned away from the LORD and were actually engaging in the false worship and religions of their neighbors, serving the false gods of Baal and the Ashtoreths (see DEEPER STUDY #2—Judges 2:12-15 for discussion).

What was the specific chastisement suffered by the Israelites? They had wanted to live in the world of their neighbors, the Canaanites, so God gave them up to what is called "spiritual abandonment" or "the judicial judgment of God" (see outline—' Romans 1:24-32 and notes—' Romans 1:24-32; also see DEEPER STUDY #1—John 12:39-41 for more discussion.) This means that God acted in perfect justice: He gave Israel up to the world of its neighbors—a world of immorality, greed, lawlessness, oppression, violence, and enslavement. God turned the people over to just what they wanted: the ways of the Canaanites. The result was tragic: they reaped what they had sown. They suffered the ways of the world. The enemies of the promised land plundered and robbed them, stealing and confiscating their crops and wealth; destroyed their property, oppressing and enslaving them; and assaulted and killed many in attack after attack.

But this was not the only chastisement the Israelites suffered. They no longer knew nor acknowledged God; therefore, God sold them—gave them over to the Canaanites. They had rejected the presence and power of God; consequently, they no longer had the presence and power of God. When they faced a conflict with some enemy, they stood all alone and the enemy defeated them. God's warning came to pass in just one generation. His warning became a tragic reality in the life of the Israelites:

"The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:25, see Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

3. Great distress was the third mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, their *carnal failure* (2:15). Terrible suffering was the result of living among the worldly Canaanites. The Israelites suffered...

- the plunder of their crops and goods
- the destruction of their homes and property
- the assault and murder of their husbands, wives, and children
- the savagery of constant oppression
- the brutality of enslavement

Because of their terrible sin—desiring to live like their worldly neighbors—the Israelites reaped what they had sown. They reaped the results of greed, covetousness, and lust—reaped a lawless, immoral, and unjust society. Life became unhappy, miserable, stressful, even unbearable for the Israelites. They lived in constant fear of oppression and assault and of some brutal and savage attack.

4. Prayer—crying out to God for deliverance—was the fourth mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, their *carnal failure* (2:15; also see 2:18; 3:9, 15, 4:3). God used the distress of the Israelites to drive them to their knees. In their terrible distress they cried out to God. Their *crying out to God* is not explicitly mentioned here, but it is mentioned in 2:18 and elsewhere (3:9, 15; 4:3). The word "groaning" (*neaqah*, 2:18) means to groan just as a dying man groans; to cry out under the heaviest affliction. Under the heaviest distress imaginable the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance. (See outline—' Exodus 3:7-8 and note—' Exodus 3:7-8 for more discussion.)

5. The LORD heard the cry of His people and He delivered them. The deliverance by God is the fifth mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, the fifth mark of the nation's *carnal failure* (2:16). God had to constantly deliver His people from their distress and carnal living. How? By raising up "judges" or "deliverers" to save them.

The word "judges" or "deliverers" (*sopet*) refers to a person who saves, delivers, or rescues. Note that the word is used six times in verses 16 through 19, but this is the only place the word is used in the Book of Judges. Simply stated, the judges were raised up by God to deliver His people from their distress and oppression. They were chosen from all walks of life and from different tribes—all used by God to save His people from their enemies. They served as military leaders and in some cases as judges who settled disputes among the people (4:4-5; Exodus 18:16).

Only eight people are actually called *judges*, but it is clear that God raised up twelve persons to deliver His people during the period of the judges (thirteen if Barak is counted). God then raised up two other judges (Eli

and Samuel) right before the selection of Saul to be king, that is, right before the establishment of the monarchy. The judges were:

- ⇒ Othniel (Judges 3:7-11)
- ⇒ Ehud (3:12-30)
- ⇒ Shamgar (3:31)
- ⇒ Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)
- ⇒ Gideon (6:1-8:35)
- ⇒ Tola (10:1-2)
- ⇒ Jair (10:3-5)
- ⇒ Jephthah (10:6-11:40)
- ⇒ Ibzan (12:8-10)
- ⇒ Elon (12:11-12)
- ⇒ Abdon (12:13-15)
- ⇒ Samson (13:1-16:31)
- ⇒ Eli (1 Samuel 1:1f)
- ⇒ Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1f)

6. Repeating their evil was the sixth mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, their *carnal failure* (2:17). Once the enemy had been defeated, the Israelites settled down to live in their new-found peace and freedom. But tragically, they became spiritually lax and complacent just as they had done before.

- a. In their complacency, the Israelites refused to listen to the counsel of their judges. They soon began to rejoin their neighbors in their community socials and festivals of worship.
- b. In God's eyes, the Israelites committed *spiritual adultery*. They played the harlot, prostituting and giving themselves over to false gods. They had professed to love the LORD and had made a covenant to live for the LORD and for Him alone. But here they were once again playing the harlot. Just as before, they were engaging in false worship, giving themselves over to false gods.
- c. Note when the people committed spiritual adultery against the LORD: shockingly, right after God's deliverance. Almost immediately—right after God delivered the people—they "quickly" turned away and disobeyed God's commandments (2:17).

d. But again, God repeated His deliverance. He always raised up another judge to deliver His people from their enemies (2:18). Why would God continue to deliver His people when they cut Him heart so deeply, time and again? Note what Scripture says: because of His compassion. His heart reached out in compassion to help those who *groaned* or *cried out* to Him for deliverance.

7. A continued cycle of progressive sin and failure—of progressive corruption and degeneration—was the seventh mark of Israel's *inconsistent life*, their *carnal failure* (2:19). God's deliverance should have stirred the people to obey and serve Him more faithfully than before. But their commitment to God was short-lived. The people's cry and confession to God was only a temporary, brief, fleeting repentance. As soon as a judge died and passed from the scene, the people returned to their sinful, evil ways. And note: with each act of turning, they became more corrupt than ever before. Their sin became progressively worse, their evil increasing more and more, becoming more degenerate and depraved, adding corruption upon corruption and sin upon sin.

Note what Scripture says. The Israelites followed, served, and worshiped false gods. They committed two gross evils: they became enslaved to false worship, and they refused to give up their evil practices and sinful ways. They wanted to do what they wanted, when they wanted, as they wanted. And they refused to change.

The result: their hearts became more and more hardened, progressively more stubborn against God. Sin and evil grew more deeply rooted in their lives and behavior

Thought 1. Now and then, as we walk day by day throughout life, some of us slip and fall into some sin. The attractiveness, enticement, and seduction of the sin *looks good*. Once we partake of the sin, it *tastes good* and *feels good*. Thus, we continue to engage in the sin, and often the result is tragic: we become enslaved to the sin. We know it is wrong, and we want to break its power over us. The sin may be...

- loving money or some possession
- coveting some person, place, or thing
- seeking position, power, or fame
- being a glutton—simply eating more than we should time and again
- being addicted to alcohol or drugs
- indulging in comfort and slothfulness
- being indifferent and cold toward a spouse
- abusing a child or spouse, physically or verbally
- committing adultery or some other immoral act
- looking at pornography

Whatever the sin, there is a desire within us to break it. We know the sin is wrong, so much so that we often confess it and determine to forsake it. We become sick, disgusted over living an up-and-down, compromising, inconsistent life. But before long, the seduction of the sin attacks us again, and we slip and fall right back into the indulgence of the sin. We find that we are once again entrapped in the clutch of its pleasure and cannot break loose. Even the Tempter, Satan himself, tells us this: "You cannot break the habit, the sin. It is too strong. Why quit it anyway? It is not all that bad, not that great a sin. And it is so enjoyable. Anyway, it is not hurting anyone—just so others don't know about it. God can't object too much. He will not cut you off because of the sin. You are eternally secure. You aren't going to lose your salvation over the sin. You know that, don't you?"

The present passage deals only with the cycle of sin in the believer's life, not with the power to break the cycle. But because of the importance of conquering sin in the believer's life, the subject is being dealt with in this present thought.

Once the believer has slipped and fallen into sin—once he is continuing in sin, committing some sin day by day—what can he do? How can he break the grasp, the power of sin upon his life?

- 1) The believer must heed the teaching of Scripture: he is not to continue in sin. This is the strong teaching of Romans 6:11-13. Because of its importance, both the Scripture and outline are given here.
- 2) The believer must flee and abstain from all sin.

a) He must flee, abstain from all sinful, fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

b) He must flee, abstain even from the appearance of evil.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

c) He must flee from idolatry—all forms of false worship.

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

d) He must flee from immorality.

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

"For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

- e) He must flee from youthful lusts.

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

- f) He must flee from greed and the love of money and pursue the things of God.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Timothy 6:10-11).

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

- 3) The believer must heed the strong warnings of Scripture. Just a few follow:
a) There is the warning against trusting works to make us acceptable to God.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

- b) There is the warning against trusting our confession to make us acceptable to God.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

- c) There is the warning against returning to the world and its entanglements.

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20-21).

- d) There is the warning against being a castaway, disqualified.

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

- e) There is the warning against neglecting our salvation, against drifting away from salvation.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:1-3).

- f) There is the warning against unbelief, against hardening one's heart.

"So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:11-12).

"And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:18-19; see 3:7-19).

- g) There is the warning against missing God's rest.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1; see 4:2-13).

- h) There is the warning against falling away.

"For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

- i) There is the warning against sinning deliberately, willfully—against withdrawing from Christ and committing apostasy.

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27).

- j) There is the warning against being closed-minded, refusing to hear Jesus Christ.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven....For our God *is a consuming fire*" (Hebrews 12:25, 29).

Thought 2. God does chastise or discipline His people when they continue to sin. He chastises the believer when he goes on and on in sin, committing the same sin day after day. But chastisement is for a very specific purpose: to drive the believer to his knees, arousing him to turn back to God. It is the

suffering of chastisement that shows a believer the error of his way, that drives him to cry out to God for deliverance. And when a believer cries out to God in sincerity and repentance, God delivers him. This is the clear teaching of Scripture:

1) God chastises or disciplines the believer.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

"For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).

2) God hears the sincere prayer of a person who repents and cries out to Him for help.

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

Thought 3. Warren Wiersbe gives an excellent description on the cycle of sin that grips the believer: *The Jews eventually became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn't seem sinful any more. The Jews then became interested in how their neighbors worshiped, until finally Israel started to live like their enemies and imitate their ways. For believers today, the first step away from the Lord is "friendship with the world" (James 4:4, NKJV), which then leads to our being spotted by the world (1:27). The next step is to "love the world" (1 John 2:15) and gradually become "conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2). This can lead to being "condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32), the kind of judgment that came to Lot (Genesis 19), Samson (Judges 16), and Saul (1 Samuel 15, 31).*

To help the reader, the steps are outlined below:

THE STEPS TO FORSAKING THE LORD

1. The first step to forsaking the LORD is friendship with the world.

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

2. The second step to forsaking the LORD is being spotted by the world.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

3. The third step to forsaking the LORD is loving the world.

"Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

4. The fourth step to forsaking the LORD is being conformed to this world.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

5. The fifth step to forsaking the LORD is being condemned with the world.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32).

- a. Lot was condemned with the world (Genesis 19).
- b. Samson was condemned with the world (Judges 16).
- c. Saul was condemned with the world (1 Samuel 15, 31).

DEEPER STUDY #2 (2:11-19) Chart, Cycle of Israel's Inconsistency— Inconsistent Life, Cycle of— History, of Israel in the Promised Land— Israel, Failure of— Israel, Repeated Cycle of Inconsistency

4. (2:20-23) Judgment, Basis and Cause of— Tests, Purpose of— God, Response to Sin— Sin, Result of— Israel, Judgment of: there was the response of God to continued sin. God judged and tested His people. Note that a hard, stubborn heart that refuses to give up sin angers the LORD, arouses His fury and judgment. This fact is so important that it is stressed three times in this passage (2:12, 14, 20). God took three actions against sinful, corrupt Israel:

1. God leveled two strong charges against the Israelites. First, they had broken their covenant with Him. They had made a covenant to love, obey, and serve God. But they had played the harlot. They had prostituted themselves, turning away from Him to false gods.

Second, they had not listened to Him. They had willfully, deliberately disobeyed God. They had broken His commandments.

2. God pronounced the judgment to be executed against His people. They had rejected Him, turned away from Him to the world; therefore, they would have the world. They could no longer have His presence and guidance with them. God's help would no longer be present to drive out the enemies who confronted them. They would have to face their enemies all alone. No more victories would be achieved; no more of the promised land would be conquered. The victorious life would no longer be experienced by the Israelites.

3. Note why God pronounced this particular judgment upon Israel: to test His people, to prove who the real believers were (2:22-23). The constant oppression of enemies...

- would drive true believers to turn to God in faith and hope, crying out to Him.
- would cause false believers and professed unbelievers to expose their self-sufficiency and hardness of heart.

Thought 1. God tests us. If we continue in some sin—continue to walk and live in some sin—God will chastise us and use the chastisement to test us. He will test our faith and commitment, see if we really mean what we profess. God will make sure we really believe in Him, that our confession is genuine.

- 1) God will test us in order to prove that our faith in Christ is genuine and that our faith will be to His praise.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

- 2) God will test us to expose any wickedness in us.

"Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing; I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress" (Psalms 17:3).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

3) God will test us in order to purge and purify us.

And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:3).

4) God will test us in order to humble us and prove whether or not we will keep His commandments.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

5) God will test us in order to expose every work or deed we have done.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

6) God will test us in order to prove just how much we love Him.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:1-2).

7) God will test us in order to strengthen our endurance and perseverance.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2-3).

8) God will test us in order to prove our faith in miracles.

"When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6).

9) God will test us in order to refine us, to make us stronger witnesses for Him.

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD *is* my God" (Zechariah 13:9).

5. (3:1-6) Test, Purpose of— Israel, Sins of— Israel, Judgment of— Israel, Sins of— Failure, of Israel: there was the clearly stated purpose of God in testing His people. God tested His people to see who would really obey and follow Him. This passage spells out four significant points:

1. The Israelites who were to be tested were identified as those who had not yet experienced fighting against the enemy, who had not yet conquered any of the promised land. This refers to all generations of Israelites who succeeded Joshua, all who had not learned to fight in the conquest of the promised land. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says this:

These new generations of Israelites had not participated in Joshua's wars of occupation and needed to learn how to fight (3:2). Israel would one day confront major powers like Egypt and Assyria; so the smaller wars against the nations of Canaan provided valuable training. David, for example, not only fought against the Philistines but lived among them and learned their military skills.

It seems strange to find God using the Canaanites both to punish and to teach Israel. Yet this was part of His sovereign action....The Canaanite presence in the land also kept the Israelites from being overrun with wild animals (Exod 23:29-30).

The New American Commentary says:

This generation needs to learn that they have been called to a holy war; that Yahweh is the commander-in-chief, and that the enemy is to be totally exterminated.

2. The enemies who were to test God's people are listed (3:3). They included the five rulers of the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites (3:3).

3. The purpose of God in testing His people is repeated here. God tested His people to prove who would really obey His commandments (3:4).

4. The result of God's test was most tragic: the Israelites failed and disobeyed God (3:5-6). They committed three very serious evils:

- a. The Israelites lived among the worldly (3:5). They refused to drive out the enemies of the promised land. Instead, they coveted the lifestyles and ways of their neighbors. They coveted the pleasures and wealth of the Canaanites; consequently, they sought to engage in fellowship and trade with them. The Israelites disobeyed God: they refused to live a life of separation from the worldly of the earth, a life devoted to God and His righteousness. Note that the Israelites lived among six nations scattered all over Israel. This emphasizes the fact that *all the Israelite tribes* were guilty of this very serious offense against God.
- b. The Israelites compromised with the worldly by intermarrying with the Canaanites (3:6). God had clearly and forcefully forbidden intermarriage:

"When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly" (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

Why had God been so forceful in forbidding intermarriage? Because the effect of intermarriage is serious: through intermarriage, two distinct people or races become one people (Genesis 34:16).

If the Israelites intermarried with the Canaanites, they would lose their identity. They would no longer be the distinct people of God...

- chosen to live holy lives of righteousness
- chosen to be His witnesses to the lost of the world, proclaiming that He is the LORD, the only living and true God

Some of the Israelites failed God—miserably failed Him. They married worldly wives and husbands, the women and men of the Canaanites. The result was tragic, as is seen throughout the book of Judges (8:29-9:57; 11:1f; 14:1-16:31).

- c. The Israelites engaged in false worship and idolatry (3:6). (See outline—'Judges 2:1-5; outline—'2:11-19 and notes—'Judges 2:1-5; notes—'2:11-19 for more discussion.)

Thought 1. God tested the Israelites in order to see just who would obey and follow Him. Obedience is what God is after. God longs for a people who will obey Him. Why? Because obedience is the evidence of love, not profession. If a person says that he follows God but does not obey Him, this person does not love God. He is making a false profession. But if a person obeys God—does what God says—this person loves God. This is true even in human relationships. If we truly love a person, we gladly do what they ask.

For this reason God tested His people to prove who loved Him. The Israelites had to be shown who really trusted and obeyed God. They had to see the error (sin) of their way and confess it and change (repent) before they could ever become acceptable to God.

So it is with us. We prove our love for God, prove that we really know Him as our Savior and LORD, by our obedience. This is the strong declaration of Scripture.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Judges, Ruth.