

Judges

1. Compromise that leads to failure

12/1/2005

A. INTRODUCTION

Some of the Books of the Old Testament gives impressions that even though the texts were written in many thousands years ago, it describes about the current situations so much that it is down right scary. But then again, that is the reason why the Bible is the Living Word of God. It is so relevant to our lives.

The Book of Judges takes its title from the twelve men and one woman who served as judges during the period from Joshua's death to the time of Samuel. It is possible that it was written by Samuel, but the actual writer is unknown.

All the judges were limited in their capabilities by themselves. In fact, each one seemed to have some defects and handicaps which was not a hindrance but became a positive asset under the sovereign direction of God. None of them were national leaders who appealed to the total nation as Moses and Joshua had done.

Backsliding and the amazing grace of God in recovering and restoring is the theme of Judges. There is another aspect which this book emphasizes: disappointment.

What a contrast they are to the closing chapters of the Book of Joshua, where we see a nation resting from war and enjoying the riches God had given them in the Promised Land. However, the nation of Israel quickly decayed after a new generation took over, a generation that knew neither Joshua nor Joshua's God.

One of the key verses in the Book of Judges is 21:25:

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

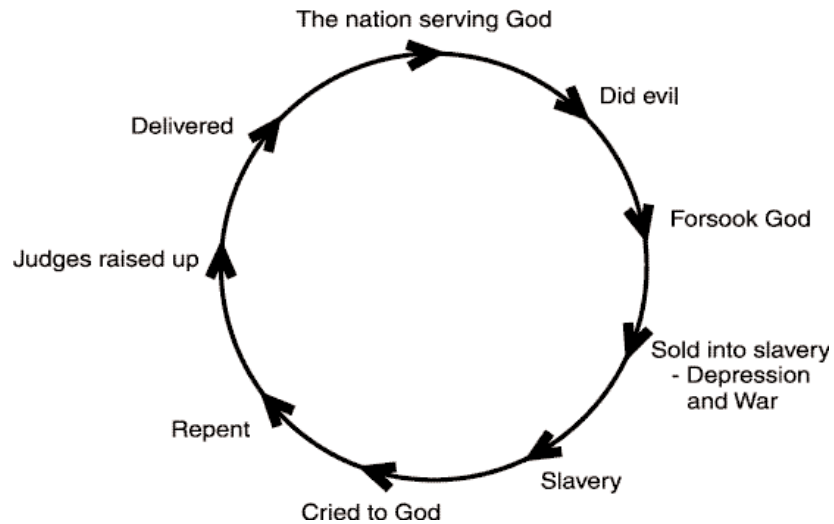
At Mt. Sinai, the Lord told Israel to be His "kingdom of priests," declaring that He alone would reign over them. Unfortunately, the new generation failed in each of those responsibilities. The people didn't want to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness". They would rather experiment with the idolatry of the godless nations around them. As a result, Israel plunged into moral, spiritual and political disaster.

Historically the Book of Judges records the history of the nation from the death of Joshua to Samuel, who was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. It bridges the gap between Joshua and the rise of the monarchy of Israel.

Morally it is the time of the big disaster of the people as they turned away from God, the unseen Leader and descended to the lowest level. This should have been an era of glowing progress, but it was a dark day of repeated failure.

During the time of their fathers in the wilderness, their fathers were bunch of whining immature believers of God. They were happy when their tummies were filled and stroked. If they don't get what they wanted they got ticked and rebelled against God and Moses. Don't you think that they were much like us? No kidding!

Now, their descendants were about to settle in the Promised Land, they are facing formidable obstacles. They were surrounded by people who lived in the most terrible immorality and idolatry. They became constant dangers to their walking with God. The lives of the Canaanites who lived around Israel were focused mainly on three things: money, sex and having a relationship with God on their terms instead of God's terms.



This vicious history cycle of Israel repeated over and over throughout the entire Old Testament. Come to think of it, this cycle is still repeating in modern day history.

When the spiritual apostasy happens in the hearts of believers, moral lapse and decay would occur. That would lead nations to political and economical decline and deterioration.

B. THE CONTINUING CONQUEST OF CANAAN

Judges 1:1-8 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?" 2 And the Lord said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand." 3 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. 4 Then Judah went up and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. 5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 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. 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.

Since Leah had given birth to Judah and Simeon, these tribes were blood brothers. Incidentally, Simeon actually had its inheritance within the tribe of Judah.

The obvious reason for cutting off thumbs and big toes is to prevent a person to run easily or use a weapon successfully. It was a cruel and humiliating way to treat enemy.

Jerusalem was Israel's next trophy. But even though the Israelites conquered the city, they didn't occupy it. That wasn't done until the time of David.

Judges 1:9-20 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. 10 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. 11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.) 12 Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." 13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. 14 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?" 15 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. 16 Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms 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. 17 And Judah went with his brother Simeon and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. 18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. 19 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. 20 And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak.

The town Debir was a center of culture for the Canaanite people. It is called the "town of books."

When the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land, they were subject to the influence and temptations of the Canaanite religion. It was a degrading religion and they soon lapsed into idolatry and apostasy.

C. COMPROMISE THAT LEADS TO FAILURE

From v21 to v36, we find that all the other tribes of Israel also chose to ignore the commands of God that was to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. If they wanted they could have, but they compromised which led them to failure and they would experience defeat after defeat in future.

This is the Promised Land. God had given it to them! Yet not one tribe, apparently, was able to possess the land that God had given to it. How tragic!

According to the Bible we are supposed to be victors in our lives, not losers. Does it mean that we will never struggle against temptations? No, it is one thing to struggle and fight against them, but it is a completely different story for us to give into temptations every time it shows up in our lives.

The first step the new generation took toward defeat and slavery was neglecting the Word of God and generations ever since have made that same mistake.

2 Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

I fear that too many believers today are trying to live on religious fast-food dispensed for easy consumption – no chewing necessary – by entertaining teachers who give people what they want, not what they need. Is it any wonder many churches aren't experiencing God's power at work in their ministries?

I am not as upset with occult and cult teachers as much as so-called Bible teachers who would water down the Word of God to entertain and appease those who don't want solid truth.

Wasn't it cruel and unjust for God to command Israel to exterminate the nations in Canaan? Not in the least! To begin with, the Lord had been patient with these nations for centuries and had mercifully withheld His judgment for over 400 years. Their society and especially their religion, was unspeakably wicked and should have been wiped out years before Israel appeared on the scene. God didn't want the filth of the Canaanite society and religion to contaminate His people Israel.

The main deity in Canaan was Baal, god of rainfall and fertility and Ashtoreth was his spouse. If you wanted to have fruitful orchards and vineyards, flourishing crops and increasing flocks and herds, you worshiped Baal by visiting a temple prostitute. This combination of idolatry, immorality and agricultural success was difficult for men to resist, which explains why God told Israel to wipe out the Canaanite religion completely.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Once we satisfy ourselves with less than God's best for us, we will never be what God wants us to be.

What will we be satisfied with in our Christian life? For Israel, in Judges 1, they were satisfied with far less than what God wanted them to have and far less than what God had provided for them. These Israelites didn't say "let's forsake God." They simply decided that they would be satisfied with less.

2) A partial obedience is as terrible as a complete disobedience in the sight of God.