

Grace in the Midst of Despair

July 10, 2011

Vol. 1 Num. 9

JUDGES 2:7-19

This Week's Core

Competency:

Single-mindedness I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. (Matthew 6:33)

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

❸ EXPAND His Word

How does this FIT? Studying cross references can help expand your understanding of a passage and discover the unity in God's word.

❹ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

Introduction

September 11, 2001, is a date that I will never forget. Perhaps like me, you easily remember your exact location when you either heard about, or watched first-hand the images of the twin towers toppling at the hands of America's enemies. The events of that day led to some notable responses from the American public. First of all, there was a tremendous sense of unity and patriotism that arose as flags emerged on every street. Second, President Bush's vow to strike back at the terrorists and their base of operations was applauded by the people as with one voice. The third response was the sudden rise in church worship attendance.

During this national crisis some church's in the U.S. experienced an immediate increase in attendance of up to 50% for almost 6 months after 9/11. But after that, attendance slid back to the "normal" numbers.

Today, after almost ten years and the recent capture of Bin Laden, a sense of control and stability is apparently emerging across the country. When things are going well, people tend not to worry about spiritual things; but when things go bad, such as on 9/11, people become serious about their spiritual welfare, at least for a while.

Things have not changed much. In the Old Testament period of the judges (about 1373-1043 BC), the people ignored God when things were going well, but in times of trouble they repented and cried out to God for help. God would rise up a judge to provide the help they needed. Then the people would backslide, and a cycle of sin would begin anew.

This Week

The first two chapters of the book of Judges contain a historical summary of Israel's failure and defeat following the leadership of Joshua. Initial advances into Canaan quickly stall as the following generations gradually accommodate the Canaanites, their values, and eventually, their gods. Consequently, God's people find themselves unavoidably caught up in the judgment and discipline originally intended for God's enemies! In spite of this, discover this week God's grace in His provision of judges.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

7 The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and during the lifetimes of the elders who outlived Joshua. They had seen all the LORD's great works He had done for Israel.

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110.

9 They buried him in the territory of his inheritance, in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

10 That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works He had done for Israel.

11 The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals

12 and abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They went after other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They infuriated the LORD,

13 for they abandoned Him and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths.

14 The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and He handed them over to marauders who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies.

15 Whenever the Israelites went out, the LORD was against them and brought disaster on them, just as He had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly.

16 The LORD raised up judges, who saved them

from the power of their marauders,

17 but they did not listen to their judges. Instead, they prostituted themselves with other gods, bowing down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their fathers, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commands. They did not do as their fathers did.

18 Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, the LORD was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The LORD was moved to pity whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them.

19 Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, going after other gods to worship and bow down to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways.

20 The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and He declared, "Because this nation has violated My covenant that I made with their fathers and disobeyed Me,

21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died.

22 I did this to test Israel and to see whether they would keep the LORD's way by walking in it, as their fathers had."

23 The LORD left these nations and did not drive them out immediately. He did not hand them over to Joshua.

Notes:

(v. 10) **another generation:** That they knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel could imply a failure of the older generation to communicate God's acts to them (cf. Deut. 6:7). But the word "knew" probably has the sense of "acknowledge" (cf. Prov. 3:6), thus indicating unbelief rather than ignorance. They rejected both the Lord's grace toward them and their responsibilities toward Him. This led to the idolatrous practices cited in the verses that follow.

(vv. 11, 13) **Baal-** The word "baal," which can mean "lord" or "husband," corresponds with the analogy of idolatry as spiritual adultery (cf. v. 17). "Baal" was the Canaanite name for the Syrian god Hadad, god of storms and wars. The plural "Baals" suggests the many local varieties of the worship of Baal (cf. Baal Peor, Num. 25:3; Baal Gad, Josh. 11:17; Baal-Berith, Jud. 9:4; Baal-Zebub, 2 Kings 1:2). They were nature

gods (male and female, respectively) worshipped by the Canaanites. They were to have power to increase the fertility of soil, animals and humans.

(vv. 16, 18, 19) **Judges:** These Spirit-filled individuals had a military role (as deliverers), a religious role (as preachers of God's law; see v 17) and a legal role in settling disputes in times of peace (see 4:4-5).

(v. 22) **test Israel:** To test is the idea to reveal the quality of something. God did not need to find out something about the Israelites that he did not already know (cf. Deut. 30:1-10). With the Canaanites in the land the Israelites had the privilege of serving the Lord by driving them out by faith. These tests refine and strengthen faith to the next level in our relationship with God (cf. Heb 12:4-11).

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

1. Read Judges 1:27-36 and Deuteronomy 7:1, 17-19. What did Israel repeatedly fail to do as they went in to conquer the land? “The tribes failed to _____ the residents of Canaan.” What sorts of difficulties do you suppose they encountered that contributed to this failure?
2. Verse 10 gives two fundamental reasons for the nation’s failure. Specifically, “a generation rose up who did not _____ the Lord, or the _____ He had done for Israel.” How does the absence of each of these bring about unfaithfulness in God’s people?
3. As a result of this failure, the nation’s affections soon strayed. From vv. 11-13, describe in your own words:
 - a. The inevitable symptoms of such a loss of affection towards God-
 - b. Why you think the temptation was so powerful-
4. God’s anger was displayed when:

“He _____ them over to marauders... He _____ to the enemies around them... the Lord was _____ them and brought _____ on them...” (vv. 14, 15). In spite of this, God “raised up judges that _____ them from the power of the marauders” (v.16), because the “Lord was moved to _____ whenever they groaned... , (v.18b).

What do these passages reflect about God’s character and His attitude toward His covenant people?

③ EXPAND His Word

How does this FIT?

5. Question 4 reveals the severe consequences of Israel’s choice to abandon God. Read Exodus 23:20-24 and Joshua 5:13-14; 25:15 and explain why you think God would not just ignore or “look past” Israel’s rebellion:
6. God protected Israel from total annihilation by their enemies by periodically raising up judges to save them. Read Deut. 9:5 and Acts 14:16; 17:30-31 and explain why you think God did this:

④ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

7. Becoming a believer takes a moment of true faith. What resources has God given us in the lifelong process of becoming like Christ? Use the following scriptures to help.
 - Judges 2:10 & John 10:14
 - John 15:5
 - John 14:26
 - Psalms 1:1-3 & Hebrew 4:12
 - Matthew 6:33
 - Matthew 26:41 & Mark 1:35

8. In light of the above passages, what practical steps will you take today to strengthen your relationship with the Lord?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW...

Write about how God wants you to FEEL...

Write about what God wants you to DO...

Sermon Notes:

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.