

# Judges

## A Cautionary Tale

Judges 21:25

September 10, 2016

### Today

It is not fashionable these days to read the Old Testament. It's "Old Fashioned", "Out of Touch", "Full of Judgment, and Little to No Grace", "Full of weird Prophecies and Dreams" .....

- **John 5:39** - You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;
- **Luke 24:27** - And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
- **JC RYLE:** Read the Bible with CHRIST constantly in view. The whole Bible is about Him. Look for Him on every page. He is there. If you fail to see Him there, you need to read that page again.

There is information in the Old Testament that is important for our understanding of God and sin and if we choose to ignore the Old Testament, we miss those precious truths.

**Judges is one of those books we just simply pass over.**

Judges is full of Judgment, but it is also full of grace, that's right, GRACE.

**Definition:** Free and unmerited favor. Get something that you don't deserve.

- **Ellen White {AG 10.2}:** By disobeying the commands of God, man fell under the condemnation of His law. This fall called for the grace of God to appear in behalf of sinners. We should never have learned the meaning of this word "grace" had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service, and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon everyone who hungers for it. To everyone He presents terms of mercy, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

Before we actually dive into Judges there are a few of questions we need to ask.

Why is there so much judgment?

Where is the grace?

To answer these questions, we must start at the beginning. Many years prior to the events in the book of Judges, the Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They had little hope of a life other than that of grinding slavery.

- **Exodus 6:6-8** - Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

With His mighty outstretched hand God proved the gods of Egypt to be impotent against Him. The Israelites were delivered in a spectacular way.

At the beginning of the journey, God gave the civil, moral and ceremonial laws that were to govern this new nation.

Their leader would be God:

- **Leviticus 26:12** - I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.
- **Leviticus 11:45** - I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

The people promised to obey:

- **Exodus 19:7-8** - So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. <sup>8</sup> The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

- **Exodus 24:3** - When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do."
- **Exodus 24:7** - Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

They were not particularly successful.

- **Ellen White {CC – chapter 88}**: God had promised to be their God, to take them to Himself as a people, and to lead them to a large and good land; but they were ready to faint at every obstacle encountered in the way to that land. . . . They **forgot** their bitter service in Egypt. They **forgot** the goodness and power of God displayed in their behalf in their deliverance from bondage. They **forgot** how their children had been spared when the destroying angel slew all the first-born of Egypt. They **forgot** the grand exhibition of divine power at the Red Sea. They **forgot** that while they had crossed safely in the path that had been opened for them, the armies of their enemies, attempting to follow them, had been overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. They saw and felt only their present inconveniences and trials; and instead of saying, "God has done great things for us; whereas we were slaves, He is making of us a great nation," they talked of the hardness of the way, and wondered when their weary pilgrimage would end.

God had to remind the people not to forget. He gave them emblems and instructions in order to keep Him – their **Redeemer and Sustainer** - first and foremost in their minds.

- **Numbers 15:38– 41** - Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. <sup>39</sup> You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. <sup>40</sup> Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. <sup>41</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.'
- **Deuteronomy 4:9** - Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.
- **Deuteronomy 8:11-14** - Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

**In Moses final speech to the people – who are just on the other side of Jordan – He reminds them again of the promises they had made to be faithful to God and their status as a special possession to God.**

- **Deuteronomy 26:16-18** - The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>17</sup> You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands.

The book of Joshua is the recounting of the conquest of Canaan and of God fighting on behalf of His people.

We read at the end of Joshua:

- **Joshua 24:13-18** - So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.' <sup>14</sup> "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." <sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! <sup>17</sup> It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

When Joshua died, Israel's connection to God died as well – at the very least it was on life support.... They rejected God as their leader, defender, sustainer, etc. They committed spiritual adultery by pursuing the gods of the nations around them.

- **Judges 2:10** - 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.
- **Proverbs 14:12** - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.
- **Jeremiah 17:9** - The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

When God respected their wishes and withdrew His protection from them (handed them over – See Romans 1:20-24). Bad things happened.

**Judges 2:11-17**

1. The sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord

- Served Baal
- Forsook the Lord

- Followed other gods
2. He gave them into the hands of plunderers – they could no longer stand before their enemies.
  3. They were severely distressed – would return to God and beg for deliverance.
  4. The Lord raised up judges to deliver them – EVERYTIME.
  5. They did not listen to the judges – when the judges died the people would turn back and follow other gods – they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.
    - They played the harlot
    - Bowed down to other gods
    - They turned aside quickly

#### **Judges 3:7-9 (Othniel)**

1. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
  - They forgot the Lord
  - Served Baal and Asheroth
2. He sold them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia (8 years)
3. The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
4. The Lord raised up **Othniel** to deliver them (40 years of peace)

#### **Judges 3:12-30 (Ehud)**

1. The sons of Israel once again did evil in the sight of the Lord
2. The Lord strengthened Eglon King of Moab (18 years)
3. The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
4. The Lord raised up **Ehud** to deliver them (80 years of peace)

#### **Judges 4:1-5:31 (Deborah & Barak)**

1. The sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord
2. The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan (20 years)
3. The sons of Israel cried to the Lord
4. The Lord raised up **Deborah and Barak** to deliver them (40 years of peace).

#### **Judges 6:1-8:28 (Gideon)**

1. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
2. The Lord gave them into the hands of Midian (7 years)
3. Sons of Israel cried to the Lord: **Judges 6:7-10** - When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian, <sup>8</sup> he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>9</sup> I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. <sup>10</sup> I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."
4. The Lord raises up **Gideon** to deliver them (40 years of peace).

- **Judges 8:22-27** - The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us-- you, your son and your grandson-- because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian." <sup>23</sup> But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you." <sup>24</sup> And he said, "I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder." (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) <sup>25</sup> They answered, "We'll be glad to give them." So they spread out a garment, and each man threw a ring from his plunder onto it. <sup>26</sup> The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels' necks. <sup>27</sup> Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.
- **Judges 8:33-34** - No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god and <sup>34</sup> did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.

### **Judges 10:6-11:33 (Jephthah)**

1. The sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord
  - Served Baal & Ashtaroth
  - The gods of Aram
  - The gods of Sidon
  - The gods of Moab
  - The gods of Ammon
  - The gods of the Philistines
  - They forsook God and did not serve Him
2. The Lord sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon (18 years)
3. The sons of Israel cried to the Lord: **Judges 10:10-16** -Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals." <sup>11</sup> The LORD replied, "When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, <sup>12</sup> the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands? <sup>13</sup> But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. <sup>14</sup> Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!" <sup>15</sup> But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." <sup>16</sup> Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.
4. The Lord raises up a **Jephthah** to deliver them (31 years of peace between 4 judges).

### **Judges 13:1-16:31 (Samson)**

1. The sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord
2. The Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years
3. The Lord raised up **Samson** who judged for 20 years (not the shiniest penny)

**Judges 17:6** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

**Judges 18:1** - In those days Israel had no king.

**Judges 19:1** - In those days Israel had no king.

The rest of the book is filled with more disaster and forgetfulness and strife and murder and civil war.

**The book closes with these words:**

**In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit (Judges 21:25).**

The book of Judges is a cautionary tale of what happens when the people of God willfully live outside of His authority. Judges is not about the nations surrounding Israel it is about Israel itself (that chosen nation, that special possession) and what happens when "there was no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes." They rejected God as their leader (1 Sam 8:7) and became a law unto themselves.

**Why is Judges filled with judgment?** – Because the people willingly chose to follow after other gods. They willingly chose to no longer serve God – They did what was right in their own eyes. Because God is a gentleman. They didn't want Him, so He stepped aside.

**Where is the grace?** – All over the place. Even though they rejected Him, EVERYTIME they cried to Him, He responded by sending a deliverer.

## Take Away

When you take the title “Christian” you are in fact saying:

- “You will be my God and I will be your person”.
- “I will do all that you have commanded me”.

Just like the Israelites, we forget and often stray intentionally from God. Sometimes as a result, bad things happen.

- Maybe we blame God failing to realize the part we have played.
- Maybe we turn to God. We cry to Him, pleading for protection, redemption, and power from on high. We study a little more, pray a little more, make promises..... However, the minute things begin to turn around, we study a little less, pray a little less, forget our promises and return to life as usual. We are distracted by shiny baubles and slowly but surely, things begin to replace God.

And yet, there He is.... waiting for us to come back. He is ready to once again redeem and sustain.

I am reminded today that I am not much better than the Children of Israel. There are consequences to my choices. Yes, God is willing and able to step in to my life and redeem and restore me even when I intentionally run away, but how much better it would be to not runaway at all.

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that **all** Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Thank God for scripture – ALL OF IT.