

Don't Judge Me, Lead Me: The Book Of Judges

Judges 1:22-26

"The Lord Is With You"

Well, I have some good news and some bad news.

The good news is that the Lord is with you:

Hebrews 13:5-6

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

There you go. God will never, ever leave you nor forsake you—He is your Provider. He is also your Hope and Helper in times of trouble when you feel cornered by enemy forces.

Now the bad news. We are not always with the Lord. In other words, in every instance of disobedience, partial obedience, distraction or sin, we move another step away from God in our hearts, then our minds, then our walk. Whether it is long-time spiritual blind spots we don't see or presumptuous sins we wickedly conceive (Jeremiah 17:9), the accumulative result of years of hardening our hearts in this way is apostasy. Now you know why the Evil One expends so much energy and demon power tempting us (see Genesis 3:1-24; Matthew 4:1-11).

Today in the Teaching Room, we receive a progress report on how the Israelites are doing with regards to their walk with God—the God Whose unconditional covenant stands firm (Genesis 15:18-21) and the God Whose conditional covenants allow difficult circumstances to test their hearts.

Proverbs 17:3

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.

Judges 1:22

(KJV) And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them.

(NIV) Now the tribes of Joseph attacked Bethel, and the LORD was with them.

So how is Israel's tidying up of their promised land going? We see here the house of Joseph—referring to Ephraim and Manasseh—have sojourned twelve miles north of Jerusalem to attack Bethel (formally called Luz). Bethel (modern day Beitin), was strategically located on a crossroads north of Jerusalem, was targeted by Israelites and

also later conquerors. Its significance as a sanctuary is prominent in the biblical narrative, with excavations revealing a Middle Bronze cultic installation. Eventually, it became one of the two major cultic centers during the divided monarchy. Interestingly, excavations have shown a significant destruction dating back to the late thirteenth century B.C. So Bethel (then called “the city of God”) is then under siege by God-powered, unstoppable Israelite forces. A guaranteed win! Beloved, let’s mark this victory down, because more compromise is on the way!

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** How do you personally reconcile all the disobedience and failure recorded in the Scriptures? And how then do you reconcile your own past sin and failure to obey God’s clear commands in His Word?

***STUDY POINT:** Search out six New Testament Scriptures that you may call “My Evidence That I Am Reconciled To God.” Perhaps you may want to commit them to memory as part of your spiritual armour (Ephesians 6:17).

Judges 1:23

(KJV) And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.)

(NIV) When they sent men to spy out Bethel (formerly called Luz),

Judges 1:24

(KJV) And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

(NIV) the spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, "Show us how to get into the city and we will see that you are treated well."

Here we have some wise and strategic military planning on the part of the Israelites—that is, sending undercover spies into Bethel to get some pre-invasion intel. The Israelites offered mercy to individuals like this man, as seen in Joshua 2:12-14, possibly contingent on embracing their religion or leaving the country. If he resisted, they certainly wouldn't have coerced him with promises or threats. If he was willing to help them, they might have promised to spare him.

Perhaps you’ve experienced blessings or met people when you just knew God was with you. He just wanted to show you His goodness! Whether the Israelites thought they were masterful invaders or recipients of yet another divine intervention—we don’t know—but meeting this man from the city and sparing the life of himself and his family in exchange for a secret breach in the city wall is clearly God’s divine favour.

Judges 1:25

(KJV) And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

(NIV) So he showed them, and they put the city to the sword but spared the man and his whole family.

So the Israelites take Bethel and spare the man and his family as promised. Check!
Another God-ordered victory!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Can you recall a time when you felt like God was holding up score cards with regard to your spiritual victories and defeats? How much truth is there to that scenario?

*STUDY POINT: Compile from both the Old and New Testaments a list of three verses/passages that seem to support the idea that God “keeps score” of our good deeds while we’re here on earth. And compile another three verses that support the truth that God’s favour and grace are ours regardless of our spiritual performance.

Judges 1:26

(KJV) And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

(NIV) He then went to the land of the Hittites, where he built a city and called it Luz, which is its name to this day.

Because the Israelites extended mercy to this man—possibly himself a Hittite immigrant—he was able to establish a city in the land of the Hittites—perhaps Northern Syria, beyond the Orontes River. So, was this act of mercy a blessing or a curse to the Israelites? Yes, the man was integral to their successful takedown of Bethel. But he also helped to further occupy and populate the promised land!

Beloved, The Lord is with you. And aren’t you grateful that He is. Perhaps each of us—like the Israelites—should remember God’s favour and love the next time we are tempted to follow our own wisdom or fall into sin.

Let me encourage you with this verse:

John 15:7-8

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Blessings!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland