

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

Judges 2:16-23

"He Hears Our Cries"

Today in the Teaching Room, from last week:

Judges 2:15

(KJV) Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

(NIV) 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.

We left the Israelites last week in great distress! Well, God has allowed hardship into their lives to help bring them back to right relationship and obedience to Him. Beloved, God also wants us to know that He loves His children—the Israelites, you and I—and hears their cries. He hears your cries today too.

Let's check in to Judges 2:16-23.

Judges 2:16

(KJV) Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

(NIV) Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.

Plunderers, pillagers, and robbers—let's call them raiders—invade Israelite camps and tents, terrify the inhabitants, and steal and destroy their food and valuables. Suddenly, the Israelites remember Who their God is—their strong tower and Deliverer!

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Looking back on your walk with God, what have been some of the "raiders" or enemies/difficulties that have repeatedly caused you to turn back and run into your Heavenly Father's arms? How did He use these difficulties to get your attention? How did He minister to you once you were in His care again?

Let me interject here with an application moment. Whether you are a follower of Jesus or not, truth is truth. The many idols of the world in Biblical times, throughout history, and now in 2024 are useless in rescuing us when we cry out to them. That is why, in His Word, that God directs us not to worship them:

Exodus 20:4-5

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Instead, He directs us to Himself—the One True Living God who saves:

Isaiah 17:7-8

In that day people will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, and they will have no regard for the Asherah poles and the incense altars their fingers have made.

Acts 17:22-25

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

Whatever our opinions may be, and wherever we stand with God, please know that He is holy, powerful, unchanging, and “gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”

*STUDY POINT: Please know, beloved, that living as we are in an idolatrous, Christ-rejecting world, we can too easily forget Who gave us the breath of life—and everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Conduct a personal Bible study, and find in the New and Old Testaments verses and/or passages that are clear declarations of the attributes of God. Write down beside the Scriptures why a person—created in God’s image—should specifically know and care about the One, True, Living God.

These judges/deliverers that God raises up are not angelic but very human—flaws and all. And what makes them instruments of God’s mercy toward His people is His temporary anointing upon them to deliver the Israelites out of enemy hands.

Judges 2:17

(KJV) And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

(NIV) Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the LORD's commands.

They would not listen. This is a sure symptom of rebellion, which is as witchcraft in God's eyes (1 Samuel 15:23). Rebellion begins with spiritual ears that have been deafened by a hardened heart (Hebrews 3:12-13). People in this reprobate state are proud, unteachable, and headed for destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Enter this new generation of Israelites who remembered nothing of the obedience of their ancestors. They quickly turned away.

Now lest we lament the bad behaviour of the Israelites, and maybe see a shadow of ourselves in them, we also take encouragement in God's unfailing love, long suffering, and covenantal commitment to His people. We see these attributes of God most clearly in the major cycles of the Book of Judges that will comprise the rest of the book.

Remember the acronym DORD:

D-disobedience
O-oppression
R-repentance
D-deliverance

Remember this repeating cycle as I read today's passage all the way through with just a bit of commentary along the way:

Judges 2:16

Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.

Judges are not only deliberators but also saviours and deliverers.

Judges 2:17

Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the LORD's commands.

Their idolatry was especially offensive to God as they loved the carnal, sensual nature of these many idols attuned to their flesh and their true Father watched while they literally prostituted themselves with these idols and practices.

Judges 2:18

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 relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Note well that God did not repent of His perfect punishment of His kids, however, He did hear their cries and was compassionate towards them.

Judges 2:19

But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

Sin begets sin. It never gets better but worse. We need not only to drive sin out of our camp, but replace it right away with declaration of and obedience to God's Word (see Matthew 12:43-45).

Judges 2:20

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and said, "Because this nation has violated the covenant I ordained for their ancestors and has not listened to me,

A healthy fear of God's wrath and parental discipline is not a bad thing, for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

Judges 2:21

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

Note God's sovereignty here. Even under Joshua's leadership, God left some foreign enemy tribes in the promised land to test His children as to their faithfulness. Listen to these last two verses:

Judges 2:22

I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD and walk in it as their ancestors did."

Judges 2:23

The LORD had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Considering the Israelites' repeating D-O-R-D cycle, why do you think humankind is so predictable with regard to falling into the same sequence of behaviour? Recall how you originally came to Christ. Have you experienced a bit of this repeating DORD cycle also along the way to present day?

*STUDY POINT: Search the Scriptures and find six Sword verses/passages that may help rescue you from falling into besetting sin/repent patterns in your walk with Christ and that would encourage your heart. Why not commit these words to memory?

So what's our takeaway from today's lesson?

He hears our cries. No matter the toil, trouble, or testing that You are in. Unlike the Evil One, who tricks and torments the children of disobedience (Colossians 3:6), God is a perfect parent Who will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

~ Reverend Darren McClelland