

Last week we looked at Judges 19-21 as we looked at the story of consequences of the rape and murder of a Levite's Concubine. We saw **The DEPTHS of DEPRAVITY when there is NO KING ON THE THRONE**

The DEPTHS of DEPRAVITY is CHARACTERISED by:

1. THE ABHORRENT treatment of WOMEN.

WOMEN ARE ABUSED IN SIX DIFFERENT WAYS IN THIS STORY:

1. WOMEN WERE NOT EQUAL IN MARRIAGE.
2. THE LEVITE HUSBAND MOST LIKELY DID NOT TREAT HER VERY WELL.
3. HER OWN FATHER WAS KINDER TO THE LEVITE HUSBAND THAN HIS OWN DAUGHTER.
4. THE OLD MAN WHO OFFERED HOSPITALITY AND THE LEVITE SACRIFICED THE SANCTITY OF HIS VIRGIN DAUGHTER AND HIS CONCUBINE WIFE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.
5. THE ULTIMATE VIOLATION OF THE CONCUBINE IS THE HORRENDOUS DISMEMBERMENT OF HER BODY.
6. THE STATE SANCTIONED VIOLENCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF MEN.

The DEPTHS of DEPRAVITY is CHARACTERISED by:

2. THE IMMEDIATE USE OF VIOLENCE.

THERE WAS NO KING ON THE THRONE

Today I want to look back over our study in the book of Judges and draw out some general principles we can use to guide us in our Spiritual Walk.

Introduction

We have learned many lessons from the Book of Judges. As I have reflected on this series, I felt I needed to preach one more sermon out of the book as a summary of the overall message of the Book. I have called this message:

The MERCY of GOD in SPITE of OUR SIN

1. THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF SINFUL BEHAVIOUR.

1. SIN GAINS A Foothold if we are not serious about our WALK WITH GOD.

When Joshua was about to die, he spoke to the Nation of Israel about the future. During his lifetime, he had conquered much of the territory that God had promised to the Nation. There was still some territory that needed to be defeated. Joshua said this in:

*Joshua 23:12-13 "But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, **v13 then you may be sure that the***

LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. *Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.*

What Joshua had said is exactly what happened. The Nation of Israel failed to complete the task the Lord had set before them, and soon discovered when you don't follow the commands of the Lord, you will most likely follow some other way.

That is what Joshua had encouraged in

Joshua 22:5 But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

Jesus said in

John 12:26 All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honour them.

AND in

Luke 16:13 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

2. **SIN PROSPERS WHEN PEOPLE PROSPER.**

Whenever God saved the Nation of Israel, the people prospered while the Judge was still living. However, their prosperity did not draw them closer to God, it caused them to look elsewhere for more experiences.

We read the following in:

*1 Timothy 6:6-10 Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth. v7 After all, we didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die. v8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. v9 **But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. v10 For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil.** And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

The danger of PROSPERITY is that it focuses our attention on the HERE AND NOW and not on what will be OUR ULTIMATE DESTINATION.

3. **SIN MAY BRING PLEASURE, BUT ONLY FOR A SEASON.**

Samson is such a clear example of a person who, while having the hand of the Lord on his life in every way possible, still chose a life in rebellion of God's revealed will. His sinful actions brought him pleasure for a brief moment. Each illicit relationship he entered into, ended in pain and heartbreak. While, as we will be reminded later, God redeemed his

purpose through his mercy, Samson still suffered the ultimate price for his sin, even death itself.

It is said of Moses in:

*Hebrews 11:24-25 It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. v25 **He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.***

And we are reminded again in:

James 1:14-15 ... each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. v15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

4. **SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE LEADS TO SPIRITUAL CRISIS.**

Each time the Nation of Israel compromised and followed the 'gods' of the nations they were called to destroy, they were enticed to follow those foreign 'gods'.

Let me remind you out of:

Judges 2:11-13 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. v12 They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger v13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Time and time again Israel forsook the Lord, and time and time they found themselves in difficulty.

5. **GOD DOES NOT ALLOW SIN TO GO UNPUNISHED.**

Each time Israel forsook the Lord, he allowed the Nation to reap the consequences of their own actions. I am shocked as I read through the Book of Judges how LONG the people suffered before they called out to God in despair.

And the consequences of their actions or the punishment of God was often very severe. The Bible is clear on this matter:

Proverbs 10:16 The wages of the righteous bring them life, but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.

Psalms 11:6 On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. THE RESTORATIVE NATURE OF A MERCIFUL GOD.

1. MERCY RESPONDS WHEN PEOPLE REPENT.

The Book of Judges is full of examples of the Nation of Israel realising they had sinned against God and then turning to God in repentance and confession to plead with God to redeem them from the error of their ways.

*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 had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them.***

God is always willing to forgive our sin

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

God has said in

Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

AND in

*Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. **v19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land;***

2. MERCY RESPONDS THROUGH UNUSUAL METHODS.

The ways in which God moves in the Book of Judges is many and varied. From Gideon with his trumpets and war cry to Samson pushing down the pillars of the pillars in the temple, God acts in ways we do not understand.

The way of the CROSS is still the easiest, yet most difficult, way to win salvation. For those of us that have experienced the GRACE and MERCY of GOD through the CROSS, we fully understand what God has done through the cross. For most, living a life with self as the focus, the way of GRACE does not make sense. When you are the centre of your own world, then only you can save yourself, and the ways of God don't make any sense at all.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. v19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." v20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? v21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. v22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, v23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, v24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. v25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

3. **MERCY RESPONDS BY SENDING A SAVIOUR.**

The Book of Judges is all about GOD who sent SAVIOURS to save the people from the enemy of HIS PEOPLE. GOD IS THE FOCUS. He sends the SAVIOURS.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

4. **MERCY RESPONDS WHEN FAITH IS DISPLAYED.**

Hebrews 11:32-33 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, v33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,

The hero's in the Book of Judges are recorded in the great chapter of FAITH in Hebrews 11.

Each of the Judges needed to display an extraordinary amount of FAITH in fulfilling the task given to them.

5. **MERCY RESPONDS BY DEFEATING THE ENEMY AND BRINGING PEACE.**

At the end of almost every story of each Judge, we discover the phrase, "and the land had peace for (x) number of years.

6. **EVERY GENERATION NEEDS THEIR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.**

Every generation seems not to learn from the example set by the cycle they saw for themselves happen to their parents or grandparents.

CONCLUSION

SO, WHAT NOW?

**WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FAILURES
WE NEED TO CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD
WE NEED TO PRAY THAT PEOPLE WILL
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT JESUS IS SAVIOUR & KING**