

Judges: God's Faithfulness; Human Unfaithfulness

(this transcript has been lightly edited for readability)

Well, in Judges, we find God's people settled into the Promised Land. Now, you would think that after the awesome gift of a place, a fulfillment of God's covenant promise, and the display of God's power, that the people of Israel would get the point, and they'd say, "We were created for this One; He will provide for us everything we need. Our lives are meant to be shaped by this one thing--the worship of Him." You would think that would be the next chapter of the story, but it's not.

There's a way in which Judges should bring sadness into our hearts. I would sort of title Judges, "Faithful and Unfaithful." You begin to see just how quickly the hearts of God's people, once they have a place to live, once their lives become regular again, how quickly the hearts of God's people wander away from Him and begin to serve false gods. You see, it shouldn't surprise us because sin, in its fundamental form, is idolatrous. It's wanting, it's loving, it's desiring something more than God Himself.

And so, God's people begin to look around; they begin to be attracted to the surrounding cultures; they begin to intermarry, and they begin to worship false gods. You're always confronted in these moments with that war for the heart that's always there throughout Scripture at street level--what will we really serve?

And you see the unfaithfulness of God's people; yet you see the incredible compassion and patience and faithfulness of God. God raises up a judge, out of His grace, to lead Israel. Israel ends up rebelling against that judge. They end up being attacked by other nations.

God rescues them again; raises up another judge, and that pattern goes throughout all of Judges--the faithfulness of God; the unfaithfulness of His people; the compassion of God; the unfaithfulness of His people. That pattern goes back and forth again and again.

And what it ultimately points you to is, as much as a human judge to deliver Israel is a wonderful provision of God, it's not enough of a provision. Because the one thing that a human judge can't do is deliver Israel from Israel. You see, that's what I actually need. I don't need just to be rescued from outside temptation; I need to be rescued from me because my problem is my heart. My problem is my propensity to wander. I love the hymn that says:

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.

Judges is a cry for another judge that will come who has the power to deliver us from us because my wandering will never end until I am finally rescued from me. Israel continues to need judge after judge after judge because what they actually need, cannot be provided by a human judge. But there's a Judge to come who holds life and death in His hands and can offer us true life; true abundant life involves not just rescue from sin external, but rescue from sin internal; there's a Judge coming who can do that.

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