

Circle of Sin

Judges Overview

(preached Pine Grove 2/15/15; Sunday PM)

Introduction

In 1986, I was playing a lot of golf, and I had one golfer that I really admired.

His name was Greg Norman.

He was from Australia. I had a life-sized picture of him in my room.

That year, I was able to take my only trip to Augusta National Golf Course for a practice round for the Masters golf tournament.

We walked all over the course, but I eventually made my way to the tee of the 16th hole.

Where I would stand for the next few hours, waiting on Greg Norman to arrive.

As players come off the 15th green and head to the 16th hole, they are forced to come by the gallery of people there.

As a young kid, I forced my way right up to the edge of the rope.

When Norman came walking by, I had my pen and hat ready.

I held it out and he simply walked right past, even brushing aside all the other people wanting an autograph.

I was obviously disappointed.

Though it isn't fair to judge him by my one experience, I learned a valuable lesson.

Sometimes, it isn't a good idea to meet your heroes.

More than likely, you will be disappointed with what you see.

Because the truth about celebrity actors and athletes is that they are just like you.

They are sinners who also need a Savior.

The truth is that TV and distance often hide faults, and we raise men up to a pedestal that no one can stand upon.

And when we meet these people, we realize that they aren't that kind or loving after all.

We have arrived at the book of Judges, and if I have to pick one lesson that the book of Judges taught Israel, it would be this...

No leader will be perfect until God gives you a righteous King.

No one will truly deliver Israel except the perfect Deliverer arrives.

No one will rescue Israel until the true Savior comes.

Judges was meant to show Israel that they needed a true king and a savior, but instead, Israel began to fall more in love with the idea of an earthly king.

Let me illustrate it this way...

I turned 41 last Wednesday.

My eyes are getting worse and my belt is getting bigger.

I don't have the energy level that I once had.

In sum, my body is falling apart...

And you know what that should do?

IT should make me long for the new body that will be perfect in every way.

However, some folks get to 40 and fall in love with their body and make an idol of it trying to preserve it.

Israel in in the land and God is going to give them a series of less than perfect leaders to guide them..

But instead of them longing for a perfect king, they began to fall in love with the idea of an earthly ruler.

Remember what God promised to Abraham obeyed and followed Him?

He told Abraham that he would be a great nation...

He told Abraham that he would give him a land for his people.

And then he told Abraham that he would eventually make Abraham a blessing to all the families of the earth.

So, I ask you what is the greatest blessing that the world could be given?

How does the world need to be blessed?

What is the greatest need of the world?

Is it the need to have a righteous ruler?

Is it the need to have their sins forgiven?

Well, the world needs a righteous ruler who can also forgive sins.

And Jesus is going to fill both roles.

The blessing that Jesus is going to be to this world is enormous.

For one, he is going to succeed where Adam failed to rule the world.

He is going to withstand the temptation that Adam gave in to.

He is going to live a righteous life that Adam failed to have.

But also, Jesus is going to forgive the sin that Adam committed and passed on to every person that came after him.

When God told Abraham that he was going to be a blessing to the world,....

He was referring to the fact that Jesus would come from Abraham's descendants...

And he would come to rule and forgive sin.

Now, here is the problem for Israel.

They eventually forget their need of forgiveness of sin.

And why do they do that?

Well, their religion eventually becomes a religion of good works...

And so they get fooled into thinking that they no longer need forgiveness.

So, their minds become focused on the need for a righteous king.

And by the time that Jesus actually arrives on the scene...

They only want to make him their king.

Even the disciples had that intention.

They were ready to fight and overthrow the Roman Empire if Jesus simply gave the order.

And because Jesus refused to be king, they would reject him and eventually kill Him.

However, when they did that, they accomplished the plan of God who had sent Jesus to forgive sin...

Before He ruled as king.

The nation of Israel never quite understood the concept of Jesus as the forgiver of sin.

And it is isn't like God never tried to teach them of their need to have their sins forgiven.

The Passover lamb in Exodus.

The sacrificial system of the book of Leviticus.

God was trying to show Israel the idea that they needed forgiveness of sin.

Yet, Israel failed to understand.

So, where did they go off track?

I tend to think the beginning of it began right here in the book of Judges.

Understand this, they are in the land.

They have taken down other nations to get into the land.

Yet, instead of realizing that God was the one responsible for the victories...

They began to think that they had accomplished all of it.

And when they did that, they lost sight of who God was.

And that would lead to further problems.

I think the story of Israel from this point on is that they want to be like the other nations of the world.

They want a king.

They want power.

They want fame.

And all of that put together is a recipe for disaster.

And that is exactly what happens to Israel throughout the rest of the OT.

God had established this nation to be different from the rest of the nations of the world,....

But Israel's problem was that they wanted to be like nations of the world..

And I think we see a shift in this attitude in the book of Judges now that they have a land..

Which is a great lesson for us...

When you think that you have arrived, that is when you are most vulnerable to sin.

When you think you got things all under control, that is when the enemy attacks.

10 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock

was ^[a]Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. ⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them ^[b]did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them ^[c]did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them ^[d]did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall

Personally, I think Israel in the book of Judges is thinking that they are standing on their own two feet.

And we are going to watch them fall as a warning to all of us..

The book of Judges is a rather simple outline...

I. Israel’s Decline (1:1 – 3:6)

II. God’s Deliverance (3:7 – 16:31)

III. Israel’s Delinquency (17-21)

I. Israel's Decline (1:1 – 3:6)

As Judges opens, we need to discuss the idea of sins of commission and omission.

If you have been in church, you have probably heard those terms before.

And it is the idea that sin is not just we do, sin can also be what we don't do.

Well, Israel had been given clear instruction to drive out the inhabitants of the land.

That was God's instruction to them in Deuteronomy 7:2...

Yet, if you look in Judges 1, you will find a list of people that Israel failed to drive completely out of the land.

And we see God's response to that in Judges 2...

2 Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you,'² and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not ^[a]obeyed Me; what is this you have done?³ Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them

out before you; but they will^[b] become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.”

Simply put, this was a sin of omission on Israel’s part...

They failed to do what they had been told to do...

And it was very serious in God’s eyes...

Now, you may say “what’s the big deal? They have the land. So, is it really that big of a deal that they didn’t rid the land of all these people?”

Well, here’s the big deal...

Sin has a way of finding its way back to you in the smallest of cracks.

They say that a mouse can get in a house through a crack that is only the width of a pencil.

Well, sin is much better than that.

It only need a tiny crack to get back into your life.

People who struggle with the same sin for years are usually guilty of making allowances for that sin in their life.

If you are struggling with a certain sin, cut all ties with it.

Crucifying sin is the word that the Bible uses over and over...

Fleeing sin is another important concept..

Refusing to make provisions for the flesh is what the Bible talks about.

Stay out of situations that lead to temptation.

All these ideas are key to overcoming a recurring sin in your life.

Yet, the problem is we never quite let go of these sin.

We open our hands and give them to the Lord, but we keep our pinkie on part of it.

God knew the heart of Israel.

He knew they would be drawn to the foreign gods of the people.

So, he told Israel to drive out all the people.

But they refused and then we see a critical verse in the book of Judges...

Judges 2:11...

¹¹ Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and ^[e]served the Baals, ¹² and they

forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.¹³ So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

You know the outcome of leaving sin just laying around your life?

You eventually pick it up again.

Israel had followed God into the land, but they left him at the border.

Its like going to the dance with your date but dancing with someone else the entire time you are there...

What's the saying?

You need to dance with the one who brought you.

Yet, Israel was led by God to the promised land, but began dancing with foreign gods once they got there.

Which reveals an important truth..

The human heart finds sin faster and quicker than it finds righteousness.

You need to stay on guard in every situation.

The thought is often that you will be a good influence on the unbeliever.

But the reality is the unbeliever will be a worse influence upon you.

Guard your heart and guard your life from the sin that crouches at your door.

Israel didn't and it lead to trouble.

In chapters 3 -16, Israel is plunged into a cycle of sin and rebellion against God.

Which eventually leads to

II. God's Deliverance (3:7 – 16:31)

Let's read Judges 3:7...

⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the ^[i]Asheroth. ⁸ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of ^[i]Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of ^[k]Mesopotamia into his hand, so that ^[i]he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

¹² Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord

The water cycle is a simple pattern that we all understand....

IT begins like this....

IT rains...

Then it collects in the oceans...

Where it evaporates, condenses in the clouds and then does what?

It rains....it collects in the oceans...it evaporates...it condenses in the clouds...and it rains...

Well for the next few chapters, this is the cycle of Israel's existence...

Look at verse 7....

Israel does evil....

Verse 8...

God is angered and he sends judgment.....

Verse 9...

Israel cries for help and God delivers a judge who delivers....

Verse 12....

Israel does evil...

And it all starts over....

This is the cycle all the way to chapter 16....

Disobedience---Judgement---Repentance---
Deliverance---Disobedience....

And as we move through these chapters, we meet the judges, or deliverers, that the Lord sends to rescue Israel...

Chapter 4 is the story of Deborah and Barak...

Chapter 6 is the story of Gideon...

He is a name that we know from Sunday School class...

And he is an example of what we will see in these judges...

Though God uses them, they are not the greatest examples of men...

Gideon did not have the greatest view of God.

He was fearful and a man of little faith at times..

Yet, God used him to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Then, the cycle begins again when Israel worships Baal in Judges 8:33...

And there comes judgment and oppression followed by deliverance...

All this continues and eventually leads the story of Samson in chapters 13-16....

Simply put, Samson was a person of great strength and equally great weaknesses.

And that is really a description that could be said about all the judges.

They were imperfect leaders but they were used by the Lord to protect his people.

And you know that is a reminder to us that the Lord isn't looking for the perfect person to use, he is looking for the obedient one to use.

Simply put, if the Lord only used perfect people, he would only have One to choose from.

But He doesn't, and that means that we are all eligible to serve him even today.

That is great encouragement to us all.

And then the final section of Judges occurs in chapter 17-21....

It is a collection of sinful practices that illustrate...

III. Israel's Delinquency (17-21)

I won't drag you through each example of depraved activity....

But I will have you turn to the final verse of the final chapter of Judges...

Judges 21:25...

²⁵ ***In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.***

That is a sad day for Israel; that is a sad day for any nation..

When the people do what is right in their own eyes, I can assure you it will be wrong in God's eyes.

And how do we know that?

Because the human heart is wicked.

Left to their own ways, men will turn to sin again and again..

That is certainly the pattern in the book of Judges and even the pattern of the current world.

Do you remember how the book of Joshua ended?

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

That is what Joshua declared and that is what the people of Israel declared.

Yet, by the end of Judges, that needs to be changed to...

As for me and my house, we will serve ourselves.

We will do what we think is right in our own eyes.

And let me tell you this, that always leads to death.

And this verse really leads to a truth about trying to share the gospel with people...

Most people have created a god who seems right in their own eyes.

If they live in sin, they imagine a god who is nothing but love without judgment.

If they are superstitious, they create a god who likes ritual and mystical practices.

If they are atheist, they imagine no god and no accountability.

People usually invent a god that suits their needs and lifestyle.

So, it is always important to ask people who they think God is when you are trying to share the gospel with them.

And when they respond with who they think God is,
ask them this...

Where do you get your information?

And most of the time, the answer is...

I just think that is the way that God is.

How do we know who God is.

He revealed it in the Bible through His own words.

So, when we describe God and what he requires of
man..

We speak with confidence because we speak what
God said about Himself....

Its never good to simply rely upon what you think
should be true about God...

Because it may not be true.

Conclusion

As Judges comes to a close, God is trying to show Israel that they need a deliverer from sin.

He is trying to show them the depths of the human heart...

And the incredible power that sin has over them.

IT should have made Israel long for a real deliverer.

Unfortunately, it makes them long to have an earthly king....

And that is going to lead to more problems.

But we will have to wait on that.