

JUDGES 2:11-19
THE SIN CYCLE!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 2, as we continue our study through this very tragic book and yet, very important book because there are many lessons we can learn from these stories of the children of Israel.

Let me set the stage for what we will be looking at this morning by saying this. We are told,

Attending a theater to watch a performance is usually enjoyable, which is why we go. But it can also be frustrating and confusing, especially if the performance is in a foreign language (as often with opera) or in archaic rather than contemporary English (as with Shakespeare) or in a genre with which you are not familiar (as in some kinds of music or dance) or if the story line is complex.

In these circumstances it can be very helpful to have an introduction of some kind. A good introduction can enhance your comprehension and enjoyment of what you are about to see.

To meet this need, theater companies and producers normally provide a program that is available on arrival. It is often overpriced and has more advertising than we would like, but most theater-goers accept it as indispensable to their enjoyment of the performance and a nice souvenir to keep and take home. So sales are generally strong and provide additional income for those involved in the production. Programs work well.

Of course, the book of Judges is no theater piece; it was never intended for the stage. It has a much more serious purpose than to entertain or make money. But it certainly is a drama of considerable complexity, with some exciting, tension-filled, and even humorous moments, and a host of colorful characters.

Most of them make only a temporary appearance, some for as little as one or two verses.

The scene is constantly changing, and the various acts are more or less complete in themselves, with little clear connection between them.

The variety and constant change can be bewildering. What is it all about? Fortunately, in [Judges] 2:16-3:6 the author has given us a program that answers this question for us. It gives us the broad outline of the story, without spoiling it by giving us any of the detail.

At heart, what we are about to experience is a tussle between two principal characters, the Lord Yahweh and his people Israel, who have pledged loyalty to one another, but whose relationship is in trouble.

As act follows act, scene follows scene, and each episode of the story gives way to the next, the crisis in their relationship deepens, until Yahweh is faced with a decision he had hoped to avoid. The relationship seems unsustainable. But the program has not told us everything; we are in for some surprises.

- Barry G. Webb, Judges and Ruth – God in Chaos, pp. 51-52

But why all this turmoil? Why all this confusion? Why all these problems?

Remember what we read last time in Judges 2:8-10, **“Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.”**

Joshua and that older generation have died and now it was the next generation who were taking over. And here is the sad part of all of this, because people die all the time, that is not the issue. The issue is that this next generation did not know the Lord, they did not know the things that the Lord had done for the children of Israel, how He sustained them all these years and how He brought them into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey!

As we continue on here in Judges, we are going to see in our study this morning, a kind of summary or overview of what is going to happen to the children of Israel, the pattern or cycle they will find themselves in.

And please understand that this cycle was their own doing, they were doing these things to themselves!

They did not listen to the warnings that they were given, and they ended up suffering the consequences because of that!

Way back in 1952 the Comet airliner was released. It was designed and built in Britain. And the Comet was the world's first passenger jet airliner. It revolutionized air travel and was the pride of the British aviation industry until the first of three crashes happened in March 1953.

“One fragment collected from the scene of the crash showed that a crack had developed due to metal fatigue near the radio direction finding aerial window, situated in the front of the cabin roof. The investigators found that a small weakness such as this would quickly deteriorate under pressure and would rapidly lead to a sudden and general break-up of the fuselage.”

What were the signs that the airliner had become weak in some places?

According to reports based on data collected after the crashes, investigators found signs of metal fatigue. Over time, these areas of weakness had given way and caused the planes to crash.

That is truly what we will see with the children of Israel.

Their relationship with the Lord was not good, they turned from Him and that brought fatigue, weaknesses in their spiritual lives and that gave way to them crashing!

And these lessons we see with the children of Israel are for us as well. They are warnings of what not to do and I guess, lessons of what we are to do so that we don't become fatigued, weakened in our walk with the Lord and end up crashing. Like the Israelites, our faithfulness to God can fail when we lose focus.

I have called this study: ***THE SIN CYCLE!***

And as you will see, that is exactly what happened to the children of Israel and it can happen to us as well if we do not listen to what the Lord is saying to us!

Make no mistake about it, this is a very black period for the nation of Israel. Especially when they have been so blessed by the promises of God coming to pass in their lives as a nation.

But complacency brought them into idolatry and God judged them for it. God hates sin because of what it does to people's lives!

And folk's, please understand that sin is not bad because it is forbidden. Sin is forbidden because it is bad!

You see, our Heavenly Father knows what is best for our lives and thus, He tells us. He is not some kind of cosmic killjoy, ruining all our fun. No, He is protecting us from the danger of sin that if allowed to grow in our lives will hurt us, just as He was trying to do with the children of Israel.

And the problem for Israel and for us is that many times we refuse to listen until we hit rock bottom and then we look up, then we cry out to God.

May we learn the lesson and not go down that path in the first place.

And God loves us so much that He won't give up on us either, and I am thankful for that!

I have broken these verses down like this:

SIN – JUDGES 2:11-13

SERVITUDE – JUDGES 2:14-15

SUPPLICATION – JUDGES 3:9

SALVATION – JUDGES 2:16-18

SIN – JUDGES 2:19

So with that as our background, let's pick up our study in Judges chapter 2, beginning in verse 11 as we study through the word of God and we look at this topic - ***THE SIN CYCLE!***

JUDGES 2**VERSES 11-13**

Here begins the cycle and it starts off with a bang, it starts off with *SIN!*

Think about this for a minute.

God brought together a people who were not a people. The Jews.

He made a nation out of them.

He delivered them out of the bondage they were in down in Egypt. He brought them through the Red Sea on dry land to escape from the Egyptians who were coming after them.

He sustained them forty years in the wilderness by providing bread from heaven, manna, and water for them all those years. Their shoes did not wear out, their clothes lasted a long time.

He brought them through the Jordan River into the land of Canaan.

He gave them victory after victory in the land of Canaan.

The land was divided up between the twelve tribes of Israel.

Blessing, after blessing after blessing. You might say they were living in a time of peace and prosperity!

Now we read all that and we wonder – *WHAT HAPPENED!*

Remember what we read in Joshua 2:10, after the death of Joshua, “**When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.**”

The things of God, the works of God in the lives of the children of Israel was not passed down and this next generation did not know the Lord who delivered them, they did not walk in His ways.

How can that be?

They were busy, you know, houses to build, places to go, things to do. They just did not have the time to establish that relationship with God. Prosperity lead them to forget about God, again, they were just too busy or didn't care or were distracted from God by all these other things, including the worship of these idols, these false gods!

Don't get me wrong. I am sure they celebrated the feast days, the sabbaths, they had the façade of walking with God, but God looks at the heart and it was far from Him!

The other thing that affected them was that they did not drive out the enemy, not completely. They left pockets of resistance in the land, they worked them as forced labor, but they had contact with them and this contact affected them just as the Lord warned them it would.

Remember what the Lord told them when they entered the land of Canaan, **“Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.””** Numbers 33:50-53.

That is what the Lord told them but that is not what they did, they did not obey the Lord, not completely. And a little compromise will lead to bigger and bigger compromises in your life as we see here with the children of Israel.

And please understand that God warned them what would happen if they did not obey His words to them. He said in Numbers 33:55-56, **“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.”**

So they were told what to do and what would happen if they did not obey the Lord.

What did they do?

Just what the Lord told them not to do, they left some pockets of resistance, they left some of the enemy to remain in the land. And this is a repeating theme here in Judges and we even saw it in the book of Joshua.

I will give you an example. In Judges 1:21 we are told, **“But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.”**

Again, we might be thinking, “He is making much to do about nothing!” Not at all, God does not warn us about something for no reason!

And here’s the thing. Make no mistake about it, when you play with fire you will get burned. The influence of that fire will permeate your life.

Think about it. You are just sitting around the campfire, you would not jump in, that is foolish, that would be dangerous, you know better.

But as you sit there the smoke of that fire fills your life so that when you leave the campfire, you still smell like smoke!

But you did not go into the fire itself?

Of course you didn't but the influence of the smoke permeated your life and wherever you go, you take that with you now!

That is what we see here with the children of Israel. They allowed the enemy to be around them until that lifestyle, their practices, filled the lives of the children of Israel.

They succumbed to the pressure and went and served the enemies god's! They smelled like smoke!

What was the attraction?

Baal was the god over the weather and nature for the Canaanites. Thus, Israel lived in an agricultural society and needed good weather for an abundant crop, which not only took care of their physical needs, but it brought them money or wealth also. Thus, they joined themselves to the god Baal! They smelled like smoke!

The god Ashtoreth, which the Canaanites served, was the goddess of fertility, of love, of sex. And the worship of this god involved having sex with priestesses, who were nothing more than prostitutes! And here we see Israel join themselves to Ashtoreth, it fed their fleshly desires! They smelled like smoke!

Folk's, God is a jealous God and He desires our full worship of Him. You can't be joined to other gods, whatever they may be, and think you can also serve the Lord, because you can't! In fact, God won't allow it! The Bible speaks of that kind of relationship with God and these false gods as spiritual adultery!

Now here is something that we should think about, apply to our lives or evaluate where we are at. What "Canaanites" you might say, are you allowing in your life that are leading you into idolatry?

Make no mistake about it, as Israel found out, the result of not driving out these enemies is far worse than you can imagine!

Do you smell like smoke right now because you have been playing, sitting too close to the fire? Move away; repent before God before you get burned!

And maybe you don't see a problem with this. Again, you may be thinking I am making much out of nothing!

Maybe you feel that you are just following your heart and you have no problem with many of the things in this world, again, you are just following your heart.

If you feel that way, let me warn you what God has to say about that.

In Jeremiah 17:9-10 we are told, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

That is the problem, our heart is deceitful, it is wicked and thus, if we go by our hearts desire, we can be in serious trouble.

The Lord says that He searches the heart, He tests the mind, why?

Because it is evil and thus, He will show us what to do, where to walk, what to say. But we can turn God off or feel that He has given us some kind of special dispensation to do what we want, which goes against what He has said in His Word.

Let me say this, that will never happen. God will never go against His Word and thus, we are wrong, and we need to change our ways, amend our ways!

As we have seen over the last several years, there is a big push for the church to be like the world. That when you come into a church you are comfortable in that you have your Starbucks coffee, you have your gym, you have all the things that the world has except one, and that is what God desires.

I am not saying having a cup of Starbucks is wrong or going to the gym is wrong, but we come together to worship the living God, to praise His holy name, and to hear from Him as we study through His Word. And if you can't find joy in coming together to worship the Lord, hear from Him through His Word, then there is something wrong with your walk!

I know, that seems harsh, but it is true.

I can't tell you what joy I have when we gather together as a body of believers to worship God and study His Word. I don't sing very well, but I can make a joyful noise unto the Lord, praise God for that. And yes, I am teaching these studies that the Lord has given me, but even as I teach them, God is speaking to me!

I love getting together at men's study and dig into the Word and see the questions that people have, and just digging deeper into the Word of God! I find tremendous joy in that!

But, in the church, it even goes beyond that.

Now we are being told what we should teach, what would should avoid, what words to say, what topics to stay away from. And churches are buying into those lies. They are letting the enemy come right into the camp and they don't see it, or they just don't care.

Again, a little compromise will lead to more and more compromise and before you know it, you are so far away from the living God.

We also need to be careful with sin. We don't see it as a big deal, but it is. It cost our Lord and Savior His life to pay in full the penalty for our sins. Don't take that lightly. Don't play with sin because you will get burned!

Again, some don't see a problem here, but it really does not matter what you think. Sorry, but that is the reality. The main issue here is – what does God think about what the children of Israel are doing?

You see, that is important for us because what He thought back then, He feels the same way today.

We have seen – ***SIN!***

Now we move to – ***SERVITUDE!***

VERSES 14-15

As some read this, they come to the conclusion that God is not being fair. That is the farthest thing from the truth.

First of all, before they even entered the land God warned them of what they were to do.

God told them to destroy the enemy, don't live with them.

He told them that He is a jealous God and desired their worship of Him! Now some may not like that, but He is God and He deserves our worship. We were created for His good pleasure, not ours!

He warned them of what would happen if they got close to the enemy and that is exactly what happened to them.

Listen to what we are told in Leviticus chapter 26, beginning in verse 1, and I will just read some of this chapter to show you that God did warn them what would happen, long before they entered the Promise Land!

We are told, **“You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord. If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you. For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you. You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new. I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright. But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint”**

terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.” Leviticus 26:1-17. (Also see Deuteronomy 28)

And the Lord continues on here in Leviticus warning them of coming judgment if they disobey Him and the blessings if they obey.

This was not something they were unaware of; they just chose to ignore what God had said. And, maybe they were so close to their sin, so engulfed in it, that they didn't even see a problem any longer! They could not smell the smoke because they were used to it!

It is as Gary Inrig wrote, “The greatest sin a human being can commit is not murder or rape or other despicable acts of atrocity. It is to turn his back on the living God to serve man-made gods.” (Gary Inrig, Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay, p. 37).

How true that is. And I want you to also understand that God did not do this because He hated them. That is the farthest thing from the truth.

He did this because He loves them and did not want them to continue on that path that would lead to their destruction. He used this judgment to draw them back.

And God does the same today.

Think about this. They wanted a life apart from God. They were doing their own thing and they were fine with it.

So God allows them to see what this kind of life is all about, what it looks like! And, as you can see, it is not pretty.

Listen again to what happens to them. We are told, **“And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.”** Judges 2:14-15.

Today the mantra or chant in Christianity is *“Love, love, love!”* And it is very true, God is a God of love. He loves us so much that He died for us so that we can live with Him.

But that is just one attribute of God. And you can’t pick and choose which ones you like and which ones you don’t like. All of God’s attributes work together and not apart from each other!

Let me show you what I mean.

Yes, there is no doubt one of the attributes of God is His love for us, unconditional love for us. I am so thankful for that love and I am sure you are as well.

And this is what many people hold onto, that God is love and He will never judge anyone, He will not send anyone to Hell!

But here is the problem. The Bible tells us that another attribute of God is that He is righteous, or He does what is right, what is perfect.

Now, imagine a judge who is sitting on the bench and before him is a murderer, someone who murdered your spouse.

And this judge is a nice guy, you might say he loves everyone!

And as the case raps up, he comes to his verdict and this is what he says.

“I have heard the evidence and yes, this man is guilty. But I love him too much to put him in jail and I would never have him put to death. Thus, you can go free!”

How would you feel if you sat in that courtroom and heard the judge say that?

You would be outraged!

But why?

Because the judge is not being fair, he is not being righteous by letting this man go free. He committed a crime and he deserves to be punished!

Now let's put this with God as the Judge, which He is!

Man is guilty, he has committed all kinds of sins in his life, besides the sin he inherited from Adam.

Now some may think, “Hey, I might not be perfect, but I am pretty good!”

Go tell that to the judge in our court system when you commit a crime and see where that will get you!

It doesn't matter how good you have been in this life because God demands perfection and unless you have the righteousness of Christ, you will be found guilty.

But what if God said, “I have heard the evidence and yes, this man is guilty. But I love him too much to put him in jail and I would never have him put to death. Thus, you can go free!”

Would that be fair? Would that be right? Would God be righteous if He did that?

Absolutely not!

God is a righteous Judge and He can't ignore sin!

Then we are all guilty before God! That is very true.

But here is the wonderful news.

God became flesh and dwelt among us. He paid in full the debt of sin we owed and thus, God can let us go free because that debt was paid. And that makes Him not just a God of love but a righteous God as well!

Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16-17, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

You see, Jesus did not come to condemn us, why? Because our sin has already condemned us.

We do not need more condemnation we need salvation and thus, Jesus has come to set us free from the bondage of sin that we were in! In this we see the love of God for sinful man and the righteousness of God as the debt of sin was paid for by Jesus!

But if we don't want to listen to what He is telling us as Christians, He will let us go, He will allow us to get into bondage so we can see how wrong we are and how right God is so that we might come back to Him!

There is this very sad story that shows how important it is for a loving God to reach out and warn us, tell us the danger and even allow us into the danger so that we might return to Him.

Back in the mid-1990s there was the story of a woman named Shannon Wilsey who was a well-known actress in pornographic films.

As a 23-year-old woman she made a lot of movies and a lot of money; yet she put a gun to her head and killed herself.

Though a success by some standards, the detective investigating her death said, “I think her whole life caused this suicide.”

Shannon bragged about doing crazy things, yet she told a close friend that she wished her mother would have stopped her.

The friend said, “She felt bad because her mother didn’t say anything about her being in the [pornography] business.”

After her suicide, an unmailed letter was found where she described about what she wished her dad would have done.

“Where were you when I was dating rock star Gregg Allman when he was twenty-five years older than me? Where were you when I was on heroin? Where were you when I started doing porno movies?”

The dad said he would have been there had she only asked.

Here’s the wonderful thing about our God, He is always there, and He is always trying to draw us back.

Look at what has happened so far, and you will see how loving our God is.

SIN separated them from God.

God allowed them to go where they wanted and they went into bondage at the hands of the enemy, **SERVITUDE**.

But now we will see them cry out to God and thus, their **SUPPLICATION** before God.

We are going to look at Judges 3:9, because, as you will see, this was what happened in this sin cycle for the children of Israel – **SIN, SERVITUDE** and then, **SUPPLICATION!**

VERSE 9 (JUDGES 3)

If you look back at the end of Judges 3:8 you will see that it took them eight long years of bondage until they finally cried out to God for help, for deliverance! And as we will see as we go through the book of Judges, this is a constant problem for them, the long delay of crying out to God, a long delay in their repentance!

And we look at that and think, “What fools! Why did they wait so long? They should have just cried out immediately!”

Now if any of you feel that way, and I think we all do to some extent because we all think we would do better, I want you to do something.

We need to look in a mirror because God is also speaking to us regarding this issue.

How long are we in bondage because we don't want to admit we were wrong!

How long are we in bondage because we don't think God will take us back!

Remember the story of the prodigal son who asked for his inheritance from his father before his father died. And the father gave it to him, and he spent it on prodigal living, and spent it all.

And then he had nothing. He was broke!

In fact, he was so poor that he was feeding pigs, not a kosher thing to do for a Jew, and they were eating better than he was!

And in Luke 15:17-24 we are told, **“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’” And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.”**

Notice that when he came to his senses, he saw his sin, and he returned home to his father who was waiting for him to return with open arms!

That is a picture of our loving God. He waits for us to come to our senses, to repent of our sin and to come home to Him and He will receive us with open arms.

Please understand this. There is hope for those, for anyone who calls out to God!

Let me give you a few examples from the Scriptures to show you what I mean.

In Jeremiah 33:3 we are told, **“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”**

Can God deliver us from the bondage we are in? You bet He can. I am not saying it is always easy, but He will give you the strength to be delivered. Just call out to Him!

In Psalm 50:15 we are told, **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”**

I think that some feel that when they are in trouble, they just don't think they have the right to call upon the Lord. But the Psalmist is telling us that is exactly when we should be calling upon Him!

And remember Jonah who was on the run from God and a large fish swallowed Jonah up. And keep in mind, here in Jonah 2:1-2, Jonah has been in the belly of this great fish for three days and it is now that we are told, **“Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly. And he said: ‘I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.’”**

I don't know about you, but I am thrown overboard, and I am crying out to God. But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh, and he rebelled against God and it took three days in the belly of the great fish before he cried out to the Lord. And I love that the Lord heard his voice, the Lord did not ignore Jonah. Jonah was ready to go to Nineveh, not happy about it, but he was ready!

And in Romans 10:13 we are told, **“whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

I love that. I don't have to jump through any hoops, I don't have to do this or that, I just need to repent of my sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of my life and I am a child of God, my sins are forgiven!

But sadly, for many, it often takes several years of bondage and calamity before they look away from self, and look unto God, call out to God, cry out to Him!

Their *SIN* separated them from God!

And that *SIN* brought them into *SERVITUDE* as God allowed the enemies of Israel to place them in bondage.

And now, after several years in bondage we see their *SUPPLICATION* before God!

And, as we read on here in Judges chapter 2, we will see the *SALVATION* that the Lord will bring to them.

VERSES 16-18

Look at God's great love for His people. They are in bondage because of their sin. They cry out to God and God raises up judges, leaders to deliver them, to rescue them from the calamity that they were in, the bondage that they were in!

Now let me ask you this. Did Israel deserve to be delivered?

Are you kidding me! Of course they did not deserve to be delivered!

You see that even in these verses that they kept going back to their idols, playing the harlot and going after other gods!

Then why did God deliver them?

Because of His great love for them and as they cried out to Him, He heard their hearts cry!

I am so thankful that the God we serve loves me like that, loves you like that. We don't deserve anything but death and eternal separation from Him! But, because of His great love for us, He gives us life and eternity with Him through Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Judge you might say!

What is interesting here is that we are told in Judges 2:17, "**Yet they would not listen to their judges but they played the harlot with other gods and bowed down to them. . .**"

They wanted these judges to deliver them from the bondage they were in but did not want a spiritual leader. They did what they wanted, and, in the end, it will hurt them as we will see.

Trapp makes this point and it is a hard one to swallow, but true. He wrote regarding this idea of playing the harlot, that this was “Carried on by a spirit of fornication, a strong inclination, a vehement impetus to whoredom; so that they care not how they waste all upon it, and will not be reclaimed: so idolaters.”

Now let me also say this because this happens in our own lives as well.

When did the children of Israel cry out to God?

When they were in bondage, when they were in trouble. Otherwise they were fine!

And God answered their cries because of His great love for them as I have said.

And for many Christians, that is how they live out their lives, from one crisis to another but there is no drawing close to God, only deliverance from the situation and then back to their old ways until trouble comes again!

And I think that does explain why some people are in a constant state of crisis; God knows that is the only way they can be kept trusting in Him.

Instead, God’s desire is that we be in a constant relationship of dependence on Him.

This is exactly how Jesus lived, as He said in John 5:19, “**. . . ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.’**”

May we follow the Lord all the days of our lives.

And yes, we are going to blow it, we are going to make mistakes, we are going to sin and sometimes what we do places us in bondage. But don’t be angry with God, He is doing this so that you may look up and cry out to Him so that He can deliver you and get you back on track!

But if you want to run, well, it is as this story tells us,

A Boston shoplifter was caught in a comical way.

He had stolen a hat in a department store and ran with it to the escalators; but instead of boarding the one going down, in his haste he took the ascending stairway.

He tried hard to run down, but was confronted by the ascending passengers, while all the time the merciless steps were rising.

Finally, in spite of his frantic efforts, he was borne back to the head of the stairs again, where he found a policeman awaiting him.

This is just a picture of the difficult ways of sinners. They try to escape with their loot, but they find all the ways of providence running against them. Everything conspires to their discovery.

“Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num 32:23). The sinner is his own detective. If there is no policeman at hand, he will arrest himself. If the police-wagon is out of commission, he will run to the courtroom. Remorse is more stern than any judge, and a guilty conscience is more terrible than any prison.

Be certain of this: If you sin, the entire universe will become an escalator, going the wrong way!

- Heartwarming Bible Illustrations

How true that is!

And look at where we came from and where we are at. We went from *SIN* to *SERVITUDE* and then to *SUPPLICATION* and God brought *SALVATION* to the situation and during that time of peace and prosperity, guess what happened?

Yes, they moved away from God again and thus, the cyclical pattern of *SIN*, *SERVITUDE*, *SUPPLICATION* and *SALVATION* begins once again!

As Morgan wrote, “This connection of sin, punishment, and deliverance really forms the keynote to the historical movement recorded in the whole of the Book.”

Look at what we read in Judges 2:19 and you will see the sad story begin all over again!

VERSE 19

As I have said, this is the tragic cycle we see over and over again in the book of Judges.

As things were going well for them, they did not need the Lord and thus they turned from the Lord.

And as time went by, they worshiped the gods of the pagan nations, those people that they did not drive out from the land.

It was then that God brought judgment upon them.

And this judgment was that their enemies captured them and placed them in bondage. It was not an easy thing, and as the years went by, they finally gave up and cried out to the Lord to deliver them.

And God is gracious, He is merciful, and as they cried out unto the Lord, he raised up a Judge to deliver them.

And during those years the Judge was alive, they had a time of peace and prosperity.

But the problem was that they did not cultivate a relationship with God during that time, they just enjoyed the time of peace and prosperity.

How do I know that?

Because, once the Judge died, they went back to their idolatry, and the cycle begins again.

Thus, we see here a brief summary of the book of Judges.

Interestingly enough, that Hebrew word for “**stubborn**” is KAWSHEH, and it speaks of being hard, being severe and how true that is.

When we are stubborn with the Lord, when we refuse to listen to Him, it is a hard road to travel!

May we learn the lesson!

Way back in 1954, William Golding wrote a novel where a group of well-educated, well-behaved English schoolboys crash into the paradise of a deserted island with no adult survivors.

The book, *Lord of the Flies*, posed the question as to what would happen to these young adults. Would they use their privileged upbringing and knowledge to create a new society of peace, or would something else occur?

As the story progresses, we see that instead of creating harmony and peace, these little boys fight for power, hunt and kill each other, and even cut off the head of a pig and sacrifice it to an imaginary and yet utterly real “beast” on the island.

Golding uses this beast as a symbol for the evil in the heart of every person, even children, and ultimately shows the consequences of what the world would look like if all rule and authority were removed and rejected.

Golding’s book, selling more than 15 million copies, is popular not because it’s so unbelievable but because it’s so terrifyingly possible. The underlying moral logic of the story is an imaginary outworking of the truth about the nature and condition of our own hearts.

We are a people who constantly reject God’s rule and authority over our lives, while going through life and making decisions based on what we, as individuals, believe to be right and wrong.

For the children of Israel, it was always wrong, and it brought them into bondage!

And the same is true for us.

We need to follow the Lord, step by step, day by day because He has what is best for us. He wants us to love Him and the basis for that love is that He first loved us. And we see that in the cross of Calvary.

Don't fall prey to this cyclical pattern of *SIN, SERVITUDE, SUPPLICATION, SALVATION*, and then back to *SIN* again!

This really is a summation of the book of Judges, but within those stories are some very valuable lessons for us to follow, to learn from.