

“God’s Faithful To Flawed People”

Judges 2:10-19

October 11, 2020

Good morning and welcome to Brewster Baptist Church. We are so honored that you have joined us, whether you are in the sanctuary, in fellowship hall or watching online today from home. It is great to have you here.

My name is David Pranga. I am one of the pastors here at BBC. Pastor Doug and Jill are up in Maine this Columbus weekend, for much-needed rest and relaxation.

Illustration:

One of the roles that pastor has is the opportunity to officiate weddings. One of the most important aspects of any wedding is the giving of the ring (*picture*).

Wedding rings are symbols of a covenant that both parties will honor, love, and cherish each other. The bride and groom will often repeat a wedding vow that goes something like...

"I, take thee, __, to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.

We say these wedding vows to show our love and commitment for our spouse. It is also showing a responsibility to take care of and stand by our spouses. *In good times, in poor times, in sickness and in health.* The husband and wife have a mutual responsibility to care for and honor each other. There is a partnership and covenant between two people that is binding.

Just as we see two people making a covenant to each other in marriage, we see God choose to make a covenant with His people, the Israelites, in the Bible.

This morning, I am kicking off a new series on the book of Judges. The book of Judges is found in the Old Testament. It is located near the beginning of your Bible. It is the 7th book in the Bible, and it is right after book of Joshua and before the books of Ruth & 1st 2nd Samuel.

Before we get into the story of Judges, I want to share with you some important background information leading up to and setting the stage for the book of Judges.

How many of you remember a man name Moses? Some of you may think of the movie “The 10 Commandments”. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and to the Promised Land, just as God promised.

After Moses, God brought another leader named, Joshua. Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land.

Joshua was known as a leader who was “strong and courageous” as he fought other nations. Joshua was more of military leader. (*You may remember a Sunday School song about Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho and the “walls came tumbling down”.*)

As Joshua comes to the end of his life, he reminds the people of their covenant they had made with God. This covenant was two sided. Each side has a part to play. First, we will look at Israel's responsibility...

Joshua leaves the people with this important command... This is from **Joshua 23:6-8**

⁶ "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.

Joshua tells the people of Israel to remember the "Covenant" that the people have with God.

- 1) Obey His Commands
- 2) Do not associate with the nations (and their evil practices)
- 3) Don't worship other gods
- 4) Follow the Lord

Joshua warns the people as we read further... Joshua 23:12-13

¹² "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, ¹³ 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 happens if they did not obey God's commands...

- 1) The Lord Your God will no longer drive out these nations before you.
- 2) The Lord will give you over to these nations.

What was God's responsibility? If the people obey the commands and follow him. God promises to set them high above all the nations on earth and continually bless them. God would protect them from their enemies and they would prosper.

What did leaders and people do at the end of book of Joshua?

All the people stood up and agreed with this. They said to God, we are your people. We will be obedient. We will follow you. We will separate ourselves and trust in you.

Which brings us to the book of Judges.

I am not sure how many of you are familiar with "The Bible Project". "The Bible Project" is a great resource to help understand the books of the bible or themes of the bible. These videos are usually 10 minutes in length. I want to show you the first two minutes, from the book of Judges. Let's begin with the video. Show video 2:15 minutes

When you read the word “Judge” it has a different meaning than how we use it today. Normally, when we use the word “Judge”, we think of a person in a black robe. A person presiding over a court.

The term “judge” is associated with the meaning – “to save, to rescue”.

In the book of Judges, it is referring to a military leader. God would raise a leader or a “judge” to deliver the Israelites from the nation that was oppressing them. These were ordinary people that God would raise up from different tribes, to help the people of Israel. Some of these judges obey God and did what was right and there were judges that did not.

In the future weeks, you will get to meet some of these judges: Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.

The book of Judges opens and the leader of Israel, Joshua, dies....

The first two chapters of Judges, we see the people begin to step away from God.

- They failed to drive out the remaining nations from the land
- Instead they began associating with the other nations.
- They begin to worship the gods of these other nations and adopt their evil practices such as child sacrifice.
- The people of Israel forgot the covenant they made with God. They no longer kept the Lord’s commandments.

Please join with me as I read you today’s text: Judges 2:10 – 19

¹⁰ After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹² They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD’s anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths ¹⁴ In his anger against Israel the LORD gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges,^[a] who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. 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. 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. 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.

These verses set the tone for the rest of the book of Judges. What we see in these verses is a sin cycle. This cycle takes place repeatedly from chapter 3 through 16. (Picture)

The pattern begins with the sin of Israel towards the Lord.

1) **People did evil...**

- Scripture will say, The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord... key phrase...
- We see this take place in chapter 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, and 13:1.
- Israel would turn to other gods and worship them

2) **Next stage was - Oppression**

- God would hand Israel over to their enemies. God would allow other nations to rule over the people of Israel. God allowed oppression to happen. That may seem strange to us. God said, this would happen if they did not follow Him and his commands.

3) **Which takes us to third stage - Repentance**

- When things get bad enough, the people drop to their knees. They begin to cry out to God for help. They ask God for forgiveness.

4) **God's response - Deliverance**

- God would hear their prayers of repentance. God would raise up a deliverer; one of these "Judges" you will meet in future weeks to save the people of Israel.

5) **Peace came upon the people** – this would be for many years upon the land, until the people sinned again. Then the cycle would repeat itself.

The good news about the book of Judges is that it is not only about the record of the Israelite's failures; it is also a record of God's perfect faithfulness. God was faithful despite the sinfulness of the people.

In this passage, I see three observations that I believe is still relevant today.

1) Every generation needs to follow God....

Joshua and the generation with him followed God. They kept his commandments and were obedient to him. The people shared stories of how God led them out of Egypt, the supernatural miracles, and the many times God provided for them. They sang songs reciting and remembering the covenant God had made with them.

Yet, something happened to the future generation. What was common knowledge disappeared. I want to reread vs 10...

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel... v.10

Somewhere along the line, generation after generation failed in teaching the next generation the things of God and the importance of keeping the covenant.

This saddens me. When I think of the church today, it could easily happen in the United States as well. As a church, we are only 1 or 2 generations of being the same way.

Let me ask you a question, Who had the greatest impact on your faith? Who was your godly role models? Who played a major role in your faith journey? Who taught you to love God and follow him?

For some it might have been your pastor. Others may say a parent, grandparent, or a spouse. Some may say a youth pastor, small group leader or good friend. Can everyone think of a person or two that impacted their faith journey?

For me it was a group of college friends at a secular state school. In college, I belonged to a Christian group called IVCF. It was through college friends and a small group that I really grew in my Christian faith. The group helped me to read and understand the Bible. The upper classman would challenge me to spend time in prayer, we did mission projects together, they took their faith seriously, and lived it out.

Who is that person in your life? Do you have somebody in your life today that is helping you to grow in your faith?

If you don't have someone helping you grow in your faith, you need to find someone. It may mean you ask God to bring someone. It may mean you join a bible study here at church. It may mean you go up someone and ask them if they would consider mentoring you. Everyone needs a person or group of people to help them grow in their faith.

Let me ask you another questions, "What are you doing to teach and pass on your faith to others?"

When I was in college, I had this senior guy, that invited me over for breakfast every Thursday morning. He did most of the talking. He would share his faith, what he was struggling with, and what he was learning from the Bible. He would pray for my needs and his own.

As a church family, it is our responsibility to pass our faith on to the next generation, our children and grandchildren. It is our responsibility to help the next generation grow, trust, and follow God. I believe God wants to use you.

2.) God is an active God - God hears our prayers...

...for the LORD relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them"

- Judges 2:18b

As we read earlier, the Israelites did evil in God's sight. The people stepped away from the covenant they had agreed to. They began to do their own thing. They started living life for themselves and the Lord God was not a part of it. They began to worship other gods. Their lifestyle changed and the choices they made drew them away from God and they rejected Him.

We see that God takes his hand of blessing off Israel. When the people went their own way, we see that as a result they are oppressed by their enemies. Things get bad.

What do the people of Israel do when things get miserable? The people of Israel fall on their knees and repent. They needed God's forgiveness most of all.

What we see in the scriptures is that God hears the prayers of repentance. As we will see in book of Judges, God continually forgives the people of Israel over and over again.

I can very much relate to Israel's sin cycle from the picture I had up earlier. I do things that I am not proud of. I make mistakes and choices that take me away from God.

I can look at my life wondering, why I will spend 3 hours watching a movie, sports game, or multiple tv shows. Then wonder why I did not spend time with God in the Bible or prayer. and not meet with God and have a quiet time.

If I'm really honest with myself; I have idols in my life that I put in front of God.

Can anybody relate to the sin patterns of Israel? We may not worship other gods but do we put other things in front of God?

Let me share some good news. When we find ourselves far away from God, what does God want us to do?

I am reminded of 2 Chronicles 7:14

“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

God wants us to humble ourselves. Seek after God in prayer. We need to repent and ask God for forgiveness. God then delivers the people out of bondage of sin. We see again that God honors His covenant when the people of Israel sought God.

3) God is faithful even though we are not

There is a Spanish story of a father and son who had been estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find his son, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper.

The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father.

On Saturday, 800+ Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

When we run away from God, we desperately want forgiveness but can be afraid to ask. But God like this father is actively pursuing us and is offering forgiveness.

Just like these “Pacos”, we just need to turn back to Him. We need to get on our knees in prayer.

Do you remember earlier when we talked about the word “covenant” at the beginning of the sermon. I talked about the wedding rings and marriage. In marriage we make a covenant to our spouse. Both parties have a responsibility to honor, love, and cherish each other.

God made a covenant with his people. God always keeps His covenant and promises. He is always faithful even when the people are not faithful to him.

When the people repented and turned back to God, what did God do...

“Then the LORD raised up judges,^[a] who saved them out of the hands of these raiders”

- Judges 2:16

How does this passage apply to us today....

Even before God made the covenant with the people of Israel. God knew the people would fail. Just as God knows we will fail him over and over as well. God knows we will often go our own way.

In the book of Judges, God raised up judges to bring peace and stop the oppression of the people.

God knows that covenant could never be filled human “judge”. That is why God had a new plan, for a new covenant. God plan was sending his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus came as perfect and final “Judge”, as our Deliver for our life.

Jesus is our Savior. Jesus lived a perfect life. He took on all the sins, the sin of mankind, on the cross. Jesus was punished in our place on the cross. We know that three days later, Jesus rose from grave and conquered death, for all those who believe in His name and accepted him.

God knew we could not keep all the commands and covenant. Jesus came and completed our side of the covenant for us. All we have to do is repent and say, we are sorry for going our own way. We want to follow you, Jesus.

God, will forgive you us of all our sins. Whatever you may be struggling with. God forgives it all. No matter what you have done or are currently doing. God loves you and want to forgive you, but like the Pacos in the story. We need to accept the invitation to come to Jesus. We have to make decision for ourselves. We have to ask Jesus into our heart and make him Lord over our life.

Remember this key idea from today - “God is faithful even though we are not.” God still loves us despite our flaws.

I want to close us with this key verse to show how much God loves us. Romans 8:38-39

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[a] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Amen. Let’s pray...

Questions:

1. What is one or two pieces of advice would you give to the next generation?
2. Joshua gives a farewell address to everyone in Israel (elders, leaders, judges, and officials). What did Joshua share with the people of Israel? What did Joshua most want to communicate to the next generation? How did Joshua feel about the future for Israel?
3. Early in the book of Judges, Joshua dies. What do you suppose was the national mood in the days following the death of Joshua? How did the people respond to the covenant with God?
4. In many ways, Judges 2:10-23 serves as a prologue to the rest of Judges, giving the reader an overview of what is to follow. What repeat themes and cycles of behavior can we expect to be seen in future chapters? Can you relate to this cycle in your own spiritual life?
5. What does this passage reveal about the justice and mercy of God? When Israel sins, how did they approach God? How do you see God's faithfulness to the Israelites? Are you surprised by God's loving faithfulness?
6. Every generation needs to follow God. Who is one person that helped you in your faith journey? Who is one person you are helping in their faith journey?
7. Each one of us has flaws as people. We continue to drop the ball in following God and being obedient. Yet, God still honors his covenant with his people. God is faithful and loving. God continues to love us despite the flaws in our life. How does that make you feel? How does this give you hope for the future?