



Beginning where Joshua leaves off in the death of Joshua (Josh. 24:29), covering almost 450 years, Judges tells the story of how *spiritual compromise* turned victory (blessing) into defeat (curse). “Another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD” (2:10). Creating a world of such chaos where, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

Setting the Stage:

Fourth Oppression, Judges 6-8:32:

Sin—Departed from God

Cause—Apostasy

Punishment—Midianites for Seven years

Deliverer and Judge—Gideon

After Gideon’s great victory of the Midianites, the Israelites sought to make Gideon king. He refused. Gideon was not perfect. We find in the record some things that he should not have done (Gideon used the spoils of war to make a symbol of power—the crescent ornament used by Muslims today, v.21—and to make a gold ephod, v.27 which becomes an idol), yet he did have a faith in Yahweh that God could honor, and He gave his name a place in the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11.

Fifth Oppression, Judges 8:33-10:5:

Sin—Departed from God, Sex Immorality

Cause—Apostasy

Punishment—Civil War, etc.

Deliverer and Judge—Tola and Jair

Scripture records, “As soon as Gideon was dead... the children of Israel turned again, and went whoring after the Baals” (8:33). Gideon was one of the most successful judges to maintain order, and the country was in quietness 40 years. Yet how often the personal influence of the hero is everything while he is alive, but confusion follows on his death. No sooner was Gideon’s funeral over than discord began. There was no rightful ruler to follow. Gideon had many sons, but not one of them could take his place. One of them was Abimelech, who was unprincipled and brutal, secured the allegiance of the men at Shechem and usurped the position of king. He ruled three years in tyranny. He was then slain by a woman and period of 45 years of quietness followed under the judgeship of Tola and Jair.

Sixth Oppression, Judges 10:6-12:15:

Sin—Idolatry increased

Cause—Apostasy

Punishment—Philistines & Ammonites for Eighteen Years

Deliverer and Judge—Jephthah

In the sixth apostasy we find the people almost entirely given over to idolatry. The condition was appalling. God sent judgment this time from the Philistines for 18 years. At last, sorely distressed, they cried to God. For the first time it is recorded that He refused to hear them and reminded them of how repeatedly He had delivered them (10:13). The true attitude of Yahweh toward them is found in this statement: “His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel” (10:16 KJV).

Deliverance came through Jephthah. Over and over in Israel we see people of passionate religious fervor. They are both fierce and generous. They rise to great faith, then sink to earthly passions. We have the type in Deborah, David, Elijah and Jephthah. Jephthah’s history is full of interest. He was a man of heroic daring and impetuous foolishness.

Read the story of his vows and victories, especially the vow he made concerning his only child (Judges 11:30-40).

What does this teach us about the seriousness of vows made?

Objectives:

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, we will:

- ➔ Discover that although made holy (set-apart and dedicated) to God, Samson remained a sinner
- ➔ understand that it is in Samson's humility and weakness, not his strength, where God's grace and strength is most clearly seen
- ➔ Rejoice that God's grace through Samson is memorialized as a reminder of what God does for His people.

Read Judges 13:1-25. *What was rather incredible about Samson's birth?*

What sort of connections to other parts of Scripture do the details of Samson's birth call to mind?

In those days everything was dependent upon physical strength. That was what made a great leader. In this case, by God grace Samson is given incredible strength which God used to begin the deliverance of His people, Israel, from the Philistines.

Read Judges 15:9-20. *What could Samson do that ordinary men could not?*

For what purpose does God use Samson?

Everything should have been in Samson's favor, but he entered into an unholy alliance, which meant his downfall. The final fall occurred at Gaza (16).

Read Judges 16:1-22. *How does Samson once again demonstrate his disloyalty to God?*

How did Samson "put God to the test"?

(Which is forbidden in Deuteronomy 6:16 and repeated by Christ in Matthew 4:7)

Nothing is more pathetic than Samson, blind and bound, grinding in the house of the Philistines, when he ought to have been delivering his nation from them. (16:20-21).

Read Judges 16:23-31.

Samson's foes rejoice and mock him. Sightless, in bronze shackles and lacking the Spirit's power, Samson is only half the man he was. He has been reduced to nothing in their eyes and they think they have the victory. Yet, God has Samson where He wants him. The Philistines gather to "offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god" and thus mock Samson's God.

How does God use Samson's weakness to display His strength?

How does this correlate to Jesus?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. *How does God use weaknesses to prove His Grace and strength to save?*

"Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness, and pride of power, with its plea for the weak. Christians are doing too little to make these points clear... Christendom adjusts itself far too easily to the worship of power. Christians should give more offense and shock the world far more than they are doing now by boasting of their weakness."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer