

Title: **JUDGES**
 ENEMIES WITHIN

Text: Judges 2:1-23

Subject: *Warring with The Flesh*

Tape # X-48b

Readings: *Bob Pruitt and David Burge*

Introduction:

The most shocking thing I discovered as a young believer, shortly after God saved me, was the fact that the raging monster of sin in my heart had not been slain, or even tamed.

Illustrations: *High School English Teacher*
 Boy At Springfield

And the sad fact is, I am every day made increasingly aware of the depths of my depravity. Yet, I know that I have not even begun to discover the hideous enormity of my sinfulness!

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

The fact is, when God saves a sinner, he does not change his old nature. He gives us a new nature by his grace. But he does not change the flesh. Flesh is still flesh. And our flesh (our old, Adamic nature) is our worst enemy. Believers are a people at war, constant, unceasing war with themselves. *“The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”*

I know that you who are God’s understand what I am talking about here. We are forgiven of all sin in Christ. We are accepted in him, justified, sanctified, and holy before God by the blood and righteousness of our all-glorious Christ. We can honestly say with John, *“We love him because he first loved us.”* We want, in

all things, to honor our God and Savior. We delight in the law of God in the very core of our beings. Yet, when we would do good, evil is present. John Newton described this experience clearly and beautifully in one of his hymns.

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

['Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.]

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once he'd answer my request;
And, by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more, with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this?" I trembled cried;
"Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?"
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in me."

Proposition: This warfare between the flesh and the spirit in the experience of God's elect is what the Book of Judges is all about.

JOSHUA AND JUDGES

In the Book of Joshua the land of Canaan and Israel's possession of it is primarily typical of the saints' everlasting rest in heaven. But in the Book of Judges the land of Canaan is set before us as a typical representation of our experience of God's grace in this world. This world is our "*Bochim*," our valley of weeping.

VERY DIFFERENT

As you read the Book of Judges, if you are like me, you cannot avoid thinking, "This Book is not like any other Book in the Bible." You see a man named Ehud, sent of God to deliver a message to a fat King named Eglon, and the message was a long dagger shoved into his belly. A woman named Jael drives a tent stake through the temples of a man named Sisera, and then cuts his head off. Gideon has a army of 32,000 ready to go to war. But God requires him to whittle the army down to 300 men who are scared to death of their own shadows; and you think, "That's not real smart." You are astonished by Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter, and very disappointed in the weakness of Samson. Then, you find yourself shocked by the Levite cutting his wife's raped body into twelve pieces and sending it to the twelve tribes of Israel.

We read of Israel, God's covenant people, the people he brought out of Egypt by the hand of Moses and to whom he gave the land

of Canaan by covenant promise as their inheritance forever by the hand of Joshua, rebelling against God, sinking into idolatry, overcome by enemy after enemy, becoming more and more degraded. In the first verse of chapter one, they asked the Lord “*Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?*” But, by the time we get to the end of the Book (20:18), we see them asking the Lord to lead them as they go up to war against their own brethren in the tribe of Benjamin! How can we understand this Book? What happened to these people for whom the Lord God had done so much? The answer to that question is found in the very last verse of the last chapter (21:25).

(Judges 21:25) "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was right* in his own eyes."

This explanation of Israel’s great failure and God’s providential judgments upon them is given four times in these twenty-one chapters (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Notice that the Lord does not say, "Every man did what was wrong in his own eyes," but “*that which was right in his own eyes.*” They endeavored to live in the land of Canaan and endeavored to serve God being governed by their own wisdom rather than God’s revelation. They refused the counsel of wisdom and followed the counsel of folly. Rather than trusting the Lord, they leaned unto their own understanding.

(Proverbs 3:5-6) "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

As long as Joshua lived, the nation of Israel served the Lord. They continued to do so until another generation arose after them “*which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*” If you will carefully read the first two chapters of

Judges, you will see that these two chapters explain the rest of the Book.

In **chapter one** we see that though the Lord specifically commanded the children of Israel to drive out all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, they chose on several occasions not to do so completely. Instead, they subdued them and made a league with them. In **chapter two** the Lord explains why he left Israel's enemies in the land.

(Judges 2:1-5) "And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. (2) And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? (3) Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. (4) And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. (5) And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD."

(Judges 2:6-10) "And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. (7) And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. (8) And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. (9) And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. (10) And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose

another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel."

(Judges 2:11-23) "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: (12) And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. (13) And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. (14) And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. (15) Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. (16) Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. (17) And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so. (18) And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. (19) And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. (20) And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; (21) I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations

which Joshua left when he died: (22) That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. (23) Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua."

Joshua is primarily a declaration of the ultimate triumph of grace. But **Judges** is a book about failure, defeat and shame – The failure, defeat and shame we experience in this world because of our own sin, rebellion and unbelief.

THE TIME

These twenty-one chapters cover a period of 229-230 years. But it is a mistake to look at the Book of Judges the complete record of that period of Israel's history known as the time of the Judges. The last judge in Israel was not Samson, but Samuel. And though the Book of Judges ends with Israel in a sad, sad condition, brought into utter shame and degradation by her own sin, it ought to always be read in close connection with both Joshua and Ruth. The story of Ruth and Boaz takes place during this time. And, as you know, the Book of Ruth is all about Christ our Kinsman Redeemer.

- The Book of **Joshua** shows us what God is going to do with us. He is going to bring us into the land of glorious rest, the heavenly Canaan.
- The Book of **Judges** shows us in our present condition, warring with enemies within, constantly needing grace.
- The Book of **Ruth** shows us our great Judge (Deliverer), the Lord Jesus Christ (portrayed in Boaz), who has redeemed our inheritance for us, prevailed over all our enemies, and will at last drive them all out of the land and give us glorious rest in the Land of Promise.

THE MESSAGE

What is the message of this Book? Why was it written? Why does the Lord here give us the sordid details of Israel's constant failure, defeat, and sin? These things were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:10-11).

(Romans 15:4) "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

(1 Corinthians 10:11) Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

As I read the things recorded in these twenty-one chapters, the circumstances, the failures, the stubbornness, the rebellion, the sin, the battles, the sorrows, and the shamefulfulness of Israel in these chapters, it appears as though I am reading a detailed biography of my own experience.

It is as obvious as the nose on your face that the nation of Israel, though delivered from Egypt and living in the possession of Canaan, could not have survived one day in that land except for this fact – God kept them. **There you have the message of the Book of Judges.** – Though the Lord God has saved us by his almighty grace, you and I are so weak, so sinful, so unbelieving, so stubbornly rebellious that we would not last a second, if left to ourselves. We continue in grace only because our great, gracious, glorious God keeps us in grace.

THE CYCLE OF OUR LIVES

The Book of Judges displays the constant cycle of our lives in this world as men and women saved by the grace of God.

REST

The Book begins with Israel in the land of rest. They have, at last, come into the possession of the land by the hand of Joshua. For forty years they had no rest. Then, Joshua gave them rest!

That is where you and I began this thing we call salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ, our great Joshua, brought us into the blessed possession of grace, salvation, and eternal life, and gave us rest (Matt. 11:28-30).

(Matthew 11:28-30) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."

There is no rest like the rest of faith in Christ. This is our sabbath. We rest in Christ.

- His Righteousness.
- His Redemption.
- His Rule.

REBELLION

No sooner did Israel take possession of the land than they rebelled against the Lord. God told them to drive out the inhabitants of the land; but they chose to do what was right in their own eyes, and drove out most of the inhabitants.

- Some they could not drive out because they were just too strong (1:18-19).

(Judges 1:18-19) "Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. (19) And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of the mountain*; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron."

- **Others they chose not to drive out because they thought they could handle them without trouble** (1:20-36).

(v. 21) Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites.

(v. 25) The house of Joseph spared one man and his family in Beth-el.

(v. 27) Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, or Megiddo.

(v. 30) Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol.

(v. 31) Asher spared Accho, Zidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob.

(v. 33) Naphtali spared Bethshemesh and Bethanath

And (v. 34) Dan was subdued by the Amorites.

When Israel came to some of these places, instead of going to war against them, they went in and investigated the towns. When the place did not seem particularly dangerous and the people seemed to be people they could get along with, or use to their advantage, they spared them and built a town beside them. They allowed them, their gods, and their “useful” possessions and talents to stay in the land. Oh, they kept an eye on them; but they did not drive them out of the land. They did what was right in their own eyes.

Have you done that? When God saved you, you quit drinking, smoking, dancing, wearing boots to bed, howling at the moon, , eating liver on Friday, and all those other things “bad” people do. Those other things, like gossip, malice, anger, wrath and

covetousness, we do not bother with too much. We vainly imagine that we are so much better than we use to be that we do not need to worry about those things weaker people have to be concerned with. We think, "These are just small, trivial matters. Surely, the Lord is not going to make an issue out of these." We leave those inward things no one else sees (at least not all the time) alone. We even protect them. – "After all, I am of German stock. All Germans are a little stubborn." or "I am only human." Or "My whole family is like this. This is just the way I am; and you just have to accept me the way I am."

That is what Israel did. They had been farmers and herdsmen for four hundred years in Egypt. There they were accustomed to raising their crops in well irrigated, lush fields. Things were different in Canaan. The land was terribly dry. They did not know how to use such land. Their first crops were puny excuses for crops. But the Canaanites had great harvests. So the Jews asked them, "What is your secret?" "It is very simple. We worship the gods of fertility, and they bless our crops. If you want to make it here, you will have to adjust to our ways." So the Israelites gave in. Who can argue with obvious success?

Of course, the Canaanites also told them how to plant their crops, when to plant them, where to plant them, how to fertilize the ground and how to get the moisture needed to the fields. The next spring, sure enough, after they had bowed down to the gods of the Canaanites, they found the crops were wonderful. So Israel abandoned the worship of Jehovah. Oh, they never said so. They did not cease to include God's name and ordinances in their religion. They just incorporated the worship of Baal, Ashtaroah and the gods of the land into the worship of Jehovah. But God says, "*They forsook the LORD God of their fathers and followed other gods.*"

These fertility gods were just that, sex gods, and worshipping them involved not only bowing down before dumb idols that could not speak, see, act or think, but also vile immorality. Israel's religion had become nothing but the practice of whoredom (literally and spiritually) in the name of God!

RETRIBUTION

Israel's rebellion brought divine retribution. You see, as it was with David, the Lord God ever shows his displeasure with sin, especially with his own people.

(Judges 2:12-15) "And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. (13) And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroath. (14) And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. (15) Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed."

Sin always brings retribution. I do not mean that God punishes his own for sin in a way of exacting justice and satisfaction. Thank God, he does not! He punished our sins in Christ and found satisfaction for our sins in the sacrifice of his Son (Rom. 8:1). But the Lord God does chasten his children, correcting sin in us, because he loves us (Heb. 12:5-16).

(Hebrews 12:5-16) "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not

thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: (6) For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (7) If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (8) But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. (9) Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (10) For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. (11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (12) Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; (13) And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (14) Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: (15) Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; (16) Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

RESTORATION

God's chastening is followed by and results in restoration. Blessed be his name, our great God is ever gracious to his people!

(Judges 2:16-18) "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. (17) And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers

walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so. (18) And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them."

These judges (twelve are named in these chapters) were typical of our Lord Jesus Christ, men raised up by God to deliver (save) his people from their enemies. All were saviors. All acted as kings. One (Samuel) was a prophet. And one (Eli) was a priest. The Lord Jesus Christ is our unfailing, ever faithful Savior, our Prophet, our Priest, and our King! He will (Blessed be his name forever!), He will deliver and save us from all our enemies!

The Lord God will not leave us to ourselves, and he will not leave us alone. He will not leave us; and he will not let us leave him. His covenant he will not break Jer. 32:40; Ps. 89:28-37).

(Jeremiah 32:40) "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

(Psalms 89:28-37) "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. (29) His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. (30) If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; (31) If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; (32) Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. (33) Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. (34) My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (35) Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. (36) His seed shall

endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. (37) It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah."

(2 Timothy 2:13) "If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

(2 Timothy 2:19) "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

(1 John 3:20) "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

REBELLION

Now, look at Judges 2:19. The very next thing we see is more rebellion.

(Judges 2:19) "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way."

When we get to the end of the Book, that is just where we find Israel. They just got worse, and worse, and worse throughout the Book of Judges. They sunk lower and lower and lower. Flesh is always just flesh, rotting, rotting, rotting flesh!

I blush with shame and weep bitterly to confess it, but confess it I must, my name is Israel. This is my life's story (Rom. 7:14-23). But, blessed be God, the story is not over yet. My Boaz has promised that he will do all that my soul requires.

REASON

Why did the Lord do this? Why does he leave us here, in this valley of weeping with all these inward enemies? To prove us and to teach us (Jud. 2:21-23).

(Judges 2:21-23) "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: (22) That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. (23) Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua."

"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in me."

Let us learn the lessons taught in this Book and confirmed by our experience.

- Salvation is God's work alone.
- Flesh is always flesh.
- Our only hope of salvation is Christ.
- Ever look away to Christ.

(1 John 1:7-10) "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say

that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

(1 John 2:1-2) "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world."

- Be kind, forgiving, and patient with one another!

(Galatians 6:1-2) "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (2) Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

- Our great God and Savior will not hastily drive out these enemies; but he will drive them out altogether! When our Savior brings us into the land of rest, there will be no more sin!

Amen!

¹ Danville (Tuesday 03/11/03)—Todds Road Grace Church, Lexington, KY (Wednesday 03/12/03)