Failure Need Not Be Fatal

Judges 1-2

Introduction:

1. Title: Judges

Not like Supreme Court judges in their black robes. They were military leaders who delivered a repentant people from the hand of their enemies.

2. Author: Samuel – Most Likely

3. Purpose: To Record the History of Israel During the Time when they had No God-appointed Leader.

4. Theme: Failure through Compromise.

Today we find that individuals and even churches prefer not to be specific about what they believe. Many churches have changed their name from a specific denominational name to a more general name. Some towns and cities have a special Sunday when leaders from one religion will swap pulpits with another so that they can learn from each other and show everyone that we are not intolerant. “We can show that there are many roads to God.” We can pick something from this one and something from that one. This concept is called pluralism. And lest you think that it is something new, we are going to look into Judges where Samuel wrote the book on “pluralism.”

Judges is a book of failure. Time and time again, Israel compromised, God delivered them and they failed again.

Question: So why did God include it in the Old Testament?

Answer: Because the Bible is honest. It reports warts and all.

Let me suggest six other reasons for the writing of this book.

I. The Description of the Period between the Patriarch and Kings

A. The Period of the Patriarchs (Well-known leaders)

 God created heaven and the earth, including man.

 Man sinned,

 God sent a flood,

God called Abraham to be the father of a special nation, Israel.

His grandson, Jacob, took the family to Egypt.

They served as slaves 450 years.

God brought them out of Egypt by Moses to take them to the land He had promised them, Canaan.

They refused to believe God and would not enter the land.

They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

 God brought the next generation into the land.

Joshua led them in and they subdued the land.

 Joshua was the last patriarch.

B. The Period of the Lesser Known Leaders - Judges

* They ruled for shorter periods of time.
* They are raised up to meet a need, and when the need is supplied they are no longer needed.
* They ruled over smaller portions of Israel. It may be as narrow as one or two tribes.

II. The Power of Godly Leadership

Judges 2:16

“Nevertheless, ﻿﻿the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them.”

* They were Godly people in a Godless society.
* They were constantly being bullied by the godless.

God uses a variety of personalities and abilities.

Better known Judges: Gideon, Samson, Deborah

Lesser known Judges: Shamgar, Ibzan, Jair

Each gets the job done in his own way.

III. The Cycle of Unbelief

Judges 3:7

“So the children of Israel did ﻿﻿evil in the sight of the Lord. They ﻿﻿forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and ﻿﻿Asherahs. ﻿Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He ﻿﻿sold them into the hand of ﻿﻿Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years. ﻿When the children of Israel ﻿﻿cried out to the Lord, the Lord ﻿﻿raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them:”

1. Israel Falls into Idolatry

2. Israel is Enslaved

3. Israel Cries out to the Lord

4. God Raises Up a Judge

5. Israel is Delivered

6. Israel Serves the Lord

IV. The Contrast Between Obedience and Disobedience

A. The Obedience of Joshua

1. Joshua’s Call – Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; ﻿﻿do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

2. God’s Command

Go in and possess the land.

Drive out all of the inhabitants.

3. Joshua’s Compliance

Joshua 24:31

“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had ﻿﻿known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.”

Judges 2:7

“So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.”

B. The Disobedience of the Next Generation

1. They had Not been Properly Taught – Judges 2:10

 “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.”

2. They Went Away from the Lord – Judges 2:12-13

 “And they ﻿﻿forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed ﻿﻿other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they ﻿﻿bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord ﻿﻿and served ﻿﻿Baal and the ﻿﻿Ashtoreths.”

3. There was No Law – no right or wrong!

Judges 17:6 (and the last verse of the book - 21:25)

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

Does that sound familiar?

With many today, there is no real truth. Truth is relative. What I think is just as true as what you think. There is no criterion of truth - That’s pluralism.

V. The Road to Spiritual Decline

In order to understand the decline of the nation Israel we must hear God’s instruction to them.

They were about to enter the land that God had promised to Abraham and his seed back in Gen. 12,13,15,17,22.

* His Instructions were Clear:

Exodus 23:23-24

“For My Angel will go before you and ﻿﻿bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will ﻿﻿cut them off. You shall not ﻿﻿bow down to their gods, nor serve them, ﻿﻿nor do according to their works; ﻿﻿but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their *sacred* pillars.”

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

“But ﻿﻿of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest ﻿﻿they teach you to do according to all their ﻿﻿abominations which they have done for their gods, and you ﻿﻿sin against the Lord your God.”

* Joshua Obeyed

Joshua 10:40

“So Joshua conquered all the land: the ﻿﻿mountain country and the ﻿﻿South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and ﻿﻿all their kings; he left none remaining, but ﻿﻿utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded.”

* That brings Up a Question.

How could a loving God command such a thing?

1. Because of their Iniquity.

Genesis 15:16

“But ﻿﻿in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity ﻿﻿of the Amorites ﻿﻿*is* not yet complete.”

2. Because of their Religion.

 The Canaanites engaged in

 Temple prostitution

 Fertility rites

 Drunken sex orgies

 Idolatry

 Snake worship

 Homosexuality

 Human sacrifice

 Sacrificing babies

It was bad everywhere, but in Canaan it was in its worst form.

It was the antithesis of the religion of the Israelites. There was no way the two could co-exist. But now there is a generation that does not want to obey God.

What caused their rapid spiritual decline?

A. Acceptance

Judges 1:21

 ﻿﻿“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. “

Joseph spared a man and his family.

Judges 1:27

﻿“Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants* ﻿ [they] did not completely drive them out.”

Judges 1:30

“Nor did ﻿﻿Zebulun drive out the inhabitants, Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitant the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains,”

Judges 1:33

“Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants”

They accepted the Canaanites – They tolerated them, much as we are expected to tolerate other religions today.

B. Integration

Judges 1:27

“for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.”

Judges 1:29

“so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.”

Judges 1:32

“So the Asherites ﻿﻿dwelt among the Canaanites

﻿

Judges 3:5

“Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”

Remember what Jesus said to the disciples? “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, they are not of the world,” (John 17:15)

Like:

Boat in the water- Good

Water in the boat – Bad

The Church in the world – Good

The world in the church – Bad

C. Imitation

Judges 2:12

“And they ﻿﻿forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed ﻿﻿other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they ﻿﻿bowed down to them;

They are no longer taking God seriously.

They are worshipping the gods of the land.

They are amalgamating themselves with the people of the land until you can tell one from the other.

They accepted what God had forbidden. They integrated what they accepted.

They amalgamated with the culture around them. They were in the world, now they were of the world.

This led to total rejection of God.

D. Rejection

They didn’t start out to reject God.

Backsliding is usually gradual, one silly little mili - meter at a time.

This is the way pluralism works, a little at a time. They were trying to marry Jehovah to the gods of the Canaanites. We will keep Jehovah and add the idols of the Canaanites. They finally forsook Jehovah altogether.

In Matthew 4:10 Jesus said,

*‘You shall worship the Lord* your God, and Him only you shall serve.’

But Israel through the process of:

Acceptance,

 Integration,

 Imitation,

finds itself in total rejection of Lord, practicing intermarriage with the Canaanites, bowing down to their gods; and, therefore God sends judgment,

Then they cry out to God,

Then God sends a deliverer, (one of the judges),

He delivers them, sets them on the right path and it looks like everything is all right.

But, within a few years the process starts all over again and Israel descends into the same pit of pluralism.

VI. The Revelation of God’s Mercy and Forgiveness

If you were God what would you do to Israel? - Shame on you! God would not do that!

God is a God of mercy! - Time and time again God forgave Israel and delivered them. After a dismal litany of Israel’s failure, we find a refreshing litany of God’s forgiveness.

The book teaches us that God is,

 a God of forgiveness,

 a God of mercy,

 a God of grace.

No matter how far you have strayed,

 No matter what you have done,

 Or how often you have done it,

 God stands ready to forgive.

Whenever any believer will confess his sin, He is faithful to forgive the sin and to cleanse from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

Whenever any unbeliever believer believes on Jesus, He receives eternal life. And along with eternal life, forgiveness of sin and

Conclusion:

God’s Truth Will Never Change, otherwise, how could it be truth in both forms?

Whatever we change in our method of worship, our place of worship or our time of worship, the one constant has to be the Word of God.

If we want to be relevant, that’s good. We need to get the truth out to our generation. If that requires a change in some phases of our ministry, so be it!

But we will not do it at the expense of the Word of God.

There are two major areas in which the pluralists will call out for change:

* Our Savior – We must allow for other ways to God.

 We will stand firm on the Words of Jesus:

John 14:6

﻿ “I am ﻿﻿the way, ﻿﻿the truth, and ﻿﻿the life. ﻿﻿No one comes to the Father ﻿﻿except through Me.”

* Our Salvation – we must allow people the dignity to do something, to give something in order to earn their salvation.

It is too degrading for them to have to accept something free. (John 3:16)

John 6:47﻿

“Most assuredly, I say to you, ﻿﻿he who believes ﻿﻿in Me has everlasting life.”