

Friday, June 15, 2018

Idols

Judges 18-19

"They continued to use the idols Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh." Judges 18:31

The Israelites have moved very, very far from God. They have acted in their own strength to take a city for themselves because they wanted a place to live. They chose a spot far from protection and routed the city in their own strength, without a mention of God. While it seems that they have sought to have a priest of the LORD, they have actually chosen a priest who is presiding over idols made by a man. They steal the priest and the idols by using human reasoning and then set up a city for themselves to do as they wish. They establish a city that becomes a primary cult center, in opposition to the place that God had chosen as the place of worship for the Israelites. In effect, the city had been destroyed so that another cult could take its place. This was not at all the intent of the conquest of the land. The conquest was to be a judgment on those who worshiped false gods so that the worship of the one true God would fill the land. I must realistically understand that relying on myself and my power and my understanding will never lead me to worship of God. It will lead me to set up idols in my life and I will replace the worship of God with the worship of something I have made and accomplished. It will draw me away from my beautiful Savior.

Dear LORD, I weep as I read these chapters. It causes me to consider the ways that I am tempted to continue to use the idols that have been set up in my life. I am sure I do not even realize all of them. Please reveal them to me and help me destroy them. Amen.

Saturday, June 16, 2018

No king

Judges 20-21

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." Judges 21:25

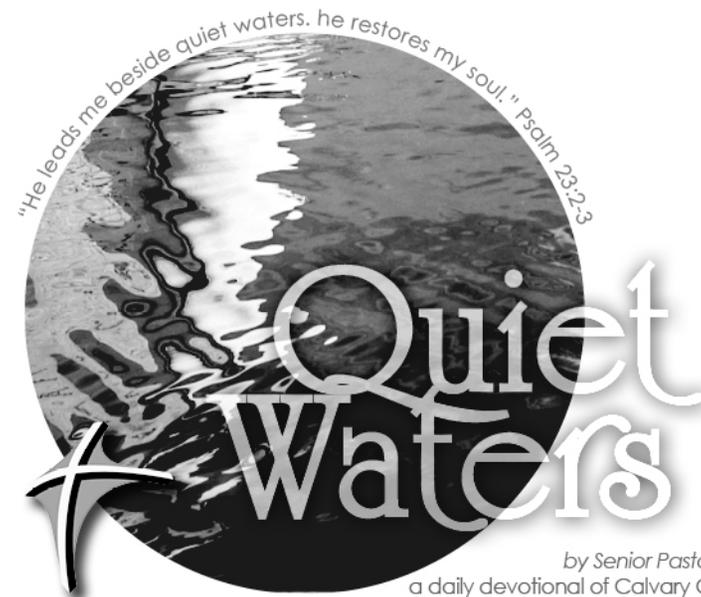
These final chapters of Judges leave me feeling empty and hollow for the people in this account. Hosea mentions this as deep corruption (Hosea 9:9). There seem to be no words to appropriately respond to this account of horrific sin by people who are chosen by God to be a light in the world. There is no king. Men are doing what men do when they reason for themselves and discard and disregard God. God is not sought for direction and surely these are not His directions for His people. These chapters are a reminder of the depth of depravity in human hearts and minds.

Israel had no king. As God the Holy Spirit inspired these words to be written and preserved, He knew that Israel had—and has—a King. God is the King; He is the perfect King for His people. But they did not recognize Him and therefore did not have Him as their King. No recognized king allows a person to do whatever he or she wants.

I have a King. Jesus is my King. He is my authority and I no longer do as I see fit. In these days, when many have no king, I must tell them of a King who loves them and longs for them to know that not following Him causes us pain.

Dear Jesus, You are my King. I want no other ultimate authority in my life. I remember what it was like when I had no King. I do not want to go back to that—ever. I long for others to be released from the pain it causes. Please use me to lead others to You. Amen.

June 11 - 16, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, June 11, 2018

Bear

Judges 10-11

But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer. Judges 10:15-16

At first blush, this appears to be another time when Israel repented and God rescued. But careful reading shows that it is not. This is an account of false repentance. It is attempted manipulation. God told them to go to the gods they were worshiping to save them. So the Israelites appeared to turn, but their request shows they do not truly seek the LORD. "Do whatever you think is best"—that means "you rescue us." They looked in the past to see that if they turned to God He would save. They expected it from Him now. They did not realize that God had suspended rightful judgment by continually providing grace. God would be right to mete out justice, but His grace is what they needed to appeal to. The way to appeal to the grace of God is through repentance. The word "bear" is actually better understood as "impatient." It is an expression of frustration and even exasperation because of something that is intolerable. In other words, the Lord is impatient that the Israelites continue to bring misery upon themselves by worshiping false gods. Any areas of my life in which I give priority to something over God will bring misery to me. God longs for me to repent and be free of that hold. Yet it requires my heart repenting and turning.

Dear God, I am sorry for the times that I choose to reject You by focusing on the things that are harmful to me. Please forgive me. Change me! Amen.

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

See to it

Judges 12-13

"Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

Judges 13:4-5

Samson's mother was chosen by God for a very special purpose. She was to conceive a Nazirite. A Nazirite was one who took a special vow (see Numbers 6:1-8). It was a voluntary vow that a person would take as a simple act of dedication to God for a limited period of time. The Nazirite vow for Samson is much different. It is divinely imposed for a lifetime. It will begin at conception and continue until death. It is not voluntary; rather, it is bestowed by God. In order for the vow to be fulfilled, the mother (who remains nameless) must keep the vow for the unborn child. It is clear from this passage that God views life as beginning at conception. The mother must see to it that she keeps the Nazirite vow of the son she carries so that he does not break the vow. The woman gave birth to the boy. She saw to it that she fulfilled the role given to her by the LORD. I must see to it that I do what the LORD asks of me. I must be ready to see to it that my life is given over to serving Him wholeheartedly.

Dear LORD, please work in my heart to help me see to it that I am fulfilling the role You have for me. Help me, like this woman whose name is known by You, to be ready to sacrifice for Your purposes. Amen.

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

Carcass

Judges 14-15

"Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they too ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion's carcass."

Judges 14:8-9

There were three abstentions for one who was under a Nazirite vow: not to drink wine or fermented drinks, not to have a haircut, and not to have contact with a corpse. While Samson's mother apparently kept all these abstentions, Samson was not so careful. As the account of his life unfolds, one can't help but see that he does not seem to walk closely with the LORD or take his special call and vow very seriously. Additionally, he caused his parents to be involved in the defilement as well, since contact with a corpse renders any object unclean in God's eyes (Leviticus 11:24-25, 39). The nonchalant attitude that he has (taking honey from a corpse and eating it as he walks along) toward the requirements of his vow indicates that he is not seeing the need to remain sanctified and undefiled. Notice also, this happens in a vineyard (verse 5). What was Samson doing there, since the fruit of the vine was forbidden to him? Why did he separate from his parents to go there? I must see how important it is to be intentional about keeping the vow that I have made to the Lord in all I do and say.

Dear Lord, please help me take very seriously the vow I made to You when I said that I would turn from serving me to serving You. Help me keep that vow. Amen.

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Worship

Judges 16-17

Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

Judges 16:20

Samson's life continues to amaze the reader. A man who had been selected and set apart has done just about everything conceivable to sabotage that call. He now sees what happens when the LORD leaves him. A man who has the LORD in his life, every moment of his life, is so out of touch with the LORD that when the LORD leaves him, he does not even realize it. This is one of the saddest verses in Scripture. And yet, I must constantly be asking myself, am I abiding in Christ and am I aware that He is abiding in me? Do I realize that apart from Him I can do nothing?

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). Since Christ's ascension, the Spirit is given as a deposit and a seal. He will not leave the child of God. Yet I must continually ask myself if I am so aware of His presence that I would know if He left. I cannot worship that which I do not embrace. I cannot worship that which I ignore or despise. Worshiping God is possible because of His presence in my life.

O God, I love Your presence. I thirst for Your Spirit in my life and in my heart. Help me always to remain in You, my dear Jesus. Thank You for remaining in me. Amen.