

Judges 1 - Half-Hearted and Compromised

goal:

to be challenged by their half-hearted and compromised faith

see a half-hearted faith

what led to it

what were the consequences of it

learn our own lessons from it

what are the points I want people to identify with?

what is the journey I want to take people on?

a significant moment for me

Prayer for change.

Lets just pause for a moment and be quiet before our God, to know this moment we have together before his Holy Word.

Jesus we thank you that you are here among us right now. We thank you Jesus for your love and for your goodness to us thank you for doing that which none of us could afford to do. You took all our sin and you habve boren its guilt, its shame and you have won for us forgiveness.

Thank you so much for that freedom and life that you have given me and my brotehrrs and sisters here.

And Jesus I know I still don't live the way you want me to. I open your word and I know there is a long way between what I do and what you want me to do.

And I just don't want to live that way. It hurts you, it hurts me and it hurts those I love around me.

So please this morning , help me to listen, please, as it says in Romans 12 help us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind in your word.

Help us to see you more and more through your word. And help us to seen ew ways forward in the actions of our lives.

For your honour and glory, Jesus, Amen.

new series

Today we start a new series looking at the book of Judges and I just want to start by saying Judges is a book that God uses to answer a prayer like that.

I don't know whetehr you are like me but every now and then I am just _____??? that I am not as I should be.

I often think I am dong all right and then every now and then you catch a glimpse in the mirror and I see I am not the way I should be. I have a long way to go.

Like this past week. I have been floored this week because I have come into contact with people who are seriously following Jesus. Like this one guy who opens his home to people in need and who stay with hm. His sixth kid is on the way and yet he still has at the moment three other people. And I think that's crazy you cant do

Judges

that what about your kids? Also this other guy who has written NY best seller books earned millions of dollars but he gives it all away because he is aware that to keep it would be to compromise his walk with Jesus. I think that's just crazy! Also Pastor from Cambodia being sent to prison. These people are serious followers of Jesus! Very humbled. I have been hit full force realising I am not where I thought I was.

I thought I was doing pretty well. OK not gold. But podium. I thought I was running the race but after these encounters. I am going man I am not even competing at the Olympics. I am not even at the Commonwealth games! I am playing in the sandbox of faith.

I'm sorry I am just trying to gather myself together. I will pull my stuff together and we will resume normal paulo transmissions next week!

But then again, No. I don't want to go back to being the same. This has been a moment and I just don't want it to pass. I really think Jesus has spoken to me this week and I want to not let this moment pass. I see the life he has for me and its exciting and its crazy and I want it. I want to live for him more and more. I don't want to stay the same I want to change. And so the question is how. How do I move forward, how do I grow more and more to know and love Jesus?

And this is why I am excited about this book of Judges because Judges is a book about spiritual change and renewal and growth.

So lets get into it...

Judges is an amazing book that starts with these words:

“after the death of Joshua.”

This is a key and significant moment in OT Israel's life.

Joshua was the guy who had been chosen to fill the enormous shoes of Moses. Moses was the great servant of God who had led God's people out of their slavery in Egypt. And Joshua was the great servant of God who had begun to lead God's people into the Promised land.

But now here is this significant moment. These two great heroes of Israel's early years are now gone and the great question is - what now? How will things go in this leadership vacuum?

Will they continue to reach forward for the life that God has prepared for them?

things start looking pretty good

As you open up Judges, and you begin reading, things look pretty good.

Like the new convert to faith they are full of zeal. And they begin well they ask the Lord, “LORD What next? We are ready to be your people! Who is to go up first to fight against the Canaanites?”

So this is a good start. No Moses, no Joshua that's OK because, of course, God is our leader, he himself is our guide. That is a good start they seek his guidance.

And they are seeking to be obedient. They know that the Lord has called them into the promised land so the question is not where but who? Who should go first?

the challenge to discipleship

See The land is not empty, the land is inhabited and if they are going to inherit the land there is a job to do in moving in. God has saved them by grace, the land is a gift to them by grace, they will occupy the land through his power and and grace **but** it requires them to step out in faith to be the people God has called them to be - and will empower them to be. They can't stay the same.

And you know this don't you. In your own life. Living the Christian life requires us to step out in our faith. As he calls us to be light, as he calls us to be loving, as he call us to forgive All of that is like God calling us to walk on water, you know what you need to do ... you are going to have to step out of the boat!

As they enter the land they are going to face a people greater than them. And that will feel crazy. Militarily you don't try and go up against a force more numerically and technologically superior than you.

So this is a brave spirituality they are being called to. It is calling for a **radical** and **risk-taking** kind of discipleship.

Will they trust God and his promises?

And they look like they are up to it. "Who should go first?"
And the Lord answers, "Judah. The tribe of Judah is to lead the way."

... and almost immediately the cracks begin to show

And immediately Judah fails.

The Lord says Judah you go up first. And then what does Judah do? verse 3 they go to their brother tribe the Simeonites and say, "how about you come up with us?" And you might think what's wrong with that? That's sounds like a reasonable idea. You want to make sure you have the numbers. And that is a good deal. You come up with us then we will go up with you.

Its sounds like common sense but it is faithless common sense which is really not common sense at all.

Its kind of like when Jesus says to us, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will wear. And then what do we do. We pack our lunch, buy the house, make those wise investments. Jesus goes, "I just said don't worry about it." Yeah but Jesus! C'mon. Be real. It's a big scary world out there.

Right out of the starting blocks Judah fails. Fails to obey. They haven't totally rejected God but It's a half-hearted obedience.

some success

But incredibly Still, Verse 4, The Lord grants them success. The Canaanites and the Perezites are defeated. And then in verse 5 they come across Adoni-Bezek (The Lord of Bezek).

Verse 8 They capture Jerusalem.

Verse 9 they then turn south against Hebron and Kiriath Arba. Jump to verse 18. Finally we see they also take the major cities of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron.

It's a stunning advancement. And it appears With the Lord nothing seems to stand in their way.

but then verse 19?

And if chapter 1 finished here at verse 18, it would be almost completely encouraging and bode well for the rest of the book of Judges.

But you move to verse 19 and you get the first reality check; verse 19 jars the senses: Verse 19, "The Lord was with the men of Judah, and they took possession of the hill country BUT they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had iron chariots."

Friend asked me to come and have a chat to their non-christain friend who was asking some questions about Christianity and they were just looking for some help in knowing what to say. And I said sure that would be great, I would love to do that. I had just read a couple of clever books I was feeling pretty good. Until I sat down with this guy and found out he was a student working towards his PhD in Philosophy. Then my spiritual legs turned to absolute water. And I was all goo's and ga's. Well that's what it felt like as I tried to sound intelligent and sophisticated and talk about how the gospel satisfied our truest and deepest existential realities. or something like that.

C'mon on the guy was doing his PhD in Philosophy.

And this is what the Israelites are saying. C'mon they had iron chariots. They are the iron age equivalent of the M1 Abrams Battle Tank! You feel that? Stones and slingshots! Battle tanks!

So while there is a bit of a hiccup in the plans to drive everyone out, we kind of understand. What can you do!? They had chariots! What can you do.

common-but-faithless-sense

And That is how **WE** often feel but that is not the way we are supposed to think. It doesn't matter that they have chariots. It doesn't matter he had a PhD, we have the words of eternal life, you don't have to sound clever or sophisticated. God's word is powerful, God is powerful, you just have to be clear.

Hear what verse 19 said again? "The Lord is with them" and yet they fail to drive out some of the inhabitants. That's like saying you are struggling to carry your shopping when you have Arnold Schwarzenegger showing you around the shop!

What's the problem You got arnie with you man!
(Yeah but that's an extra large box of weetbix there!)

And they have the Lord with them. What is going on?
Chariots aren't going to be a problem.
Don't they remember what the Lord did to the whole army of Egypt?

Well again what's happening is the same thing as when Judah asks the Simeonites to come along.

Common-**but-faithless**-sense is prevailing.
Which is not common-sense at all.

Judah is not trusting in God's strength. They look at them and then they look at themselves.

They look at them and they are ripped. And then they look at themselves and they are going, and they go - **“uhuh baby! not going there.”**

It feels like common-sense. But its faithless common-sense which is really not common-sense at all.

And you see what happens as a result? This Common, but faithless, sense, will now mean that they fail to take up their inheritance. It will mean the Canaanites will remain a thorn in their side for centuries to come. And so it will mean they can't worship God without compromise for centuries to come.

And you see the same thing today. Christians compromising their faith and being bound for years to come. That lie that seemed like a good idea at the time. How many guys have shipwrecked their marriages and family life, their faith for that illicit 15 minutes.

And this is the things we have to get here. It is not our lack of **strength** that prevents us from enjoying God's blessings, or from worshipping God wholeheartedly; it is our lack of **faith** in **HIS** strength.

When we rely on ourselves,
When we base our walk with God on our own common-sense instead of **simply obeying**, we find ourselves making decisions like Judah.

And we end up living a half-hearted and compromised life of discipleship, and judges will show us that this leads to no discipleship that all.

seguay

And what we see here is this contagion of half-hearted and compromised obedience infects all of God's people.

and the contagion of half-hearted and compromised faith continues

As you read on from verse 21 ... you read now of the other tribes. And how they encounter the same half-hearted obedience.

Next in verse 21 is the tribe of Benjamin they fail "to dislodge the Jebusites living in Jerusalem".

In verse 22 The house of Joseph makes covenants with Canaanites, instead of trusting God's covenant promises.

In verse 27 Mannasseh fails to drive out their various inhabitants. And notice later when they **ARE** stronger, rather than pushing them out, they decide to exploit them as forced labour which they are not supposed to do. The reason implied is that it takes less effort and it made more economic sense to enslave them. Convenience trumps obedience. More common-but-faithless-sense.

And it goes on...

Verse 29 Ephraim allows the Canaanites to live among them.

Verse 30 Zebulun opts for the forced labour option too.

Verse 31 We hit a new low. The people of Asher don't allow the Canaanites to live among them, rather see what it says in verse 32? the Asherites live among the Canaanites, as does the tribe of Naphtali in verse 33.

Last of all,

is the tribe of Dan. What happens to them? Verse 34 ... They become "confined... To the hill country". What is the determining factor here is not the faith of the Danites but the superior will-power and tenacity of the Canaanites. As so finally we descend to the shameful low where the people who know God have become less brave than the people who do not know him.

A mixed story

On one hand it is a story of great conquest. Israel now lives in the promised land. Two generations ago as they worked in the brickpits of Egypt they could never have imagined this would be the lives their grandchildren lived. Free people In God promised land. This is a great story. Here are the promises of God being fulfilled right before our very eyes.

But on the other hand. They are not free. In their hearts they are still slaves. Slaves to fear, slaves to doubt.

And this has brought disobedience and failure. Half-hearted and compromised obedience.

BUT THEN GOD SPEAKS p22-23

you have disobeyed God p23

At the beginning of chapter 2 God speaks. And he makes it very clear that they have disobeyed.

just quickly just look across at the beginning of chapter 2 for me.

Because there God speaks. Chapter 2 verse 1

Read 1 to 5

Its there in the middle of chapter 2 verse 2:

"You have disobeyed me". Period.

They have disobeyed in two ways:

Firstly, you see in verse 2, "I will never break my covenant with you **AND I don't want you to make a covenant with the people of this land.**" They made covenants, they made treaties! They have agreed to live alongside the Canaanites in the land.

And secondly, see how he continues? **"You shall break down their altars."** And they have disobeyed there too. They have failed to rid this people and their idols from the land.

See its this spiritual renewal and life that God is after. That he should rid us of our idols.

This is the purpose of this whole campaign.

This campaign is not an ethnic cleansing – its not about race - we know that because Rahab the Canaanite prostitute from Jericho was allowed to stay; and also back in verse 16 we see this group of people known as the Kenites settling down with Judah. They were not Israelites. You see there they are the descendants of Moses' father in law. Midianites! And That was OK. Because its not an ethnic cleansing.

Also the campaign is not some kind of **imperialistic** conquest, a mere grab for power and territory, and we know this because no one was allowed to take plunder, they weren't meant to make slaves.

What is this campaign then? The purpose of this campaign is to cleanse the land from its idols, its sinful idolatry. In a poetic way God said the land itself was crying out for relief from the idolatry of this people. Which at its worst involved - child sacrifice to the god of Molech. God wants to Cleanse the land of this idolatrous pollution. God wants to establish a new land where Israel lives in covenant faithfulness to the Lord. Its the beginning of a new earth. Of right worship under the true God.

But because of fear, because of doubt they allow the idols to remain.

And Like buried mines, this idol worship now lies dormant in Judges, ready to explode in the spiritual lives of God's people.

Why?

And God is saying, in verse 2, **why have you done this?** What are you doing? I want you to know me and enjoy me and find your

fullness in me wholeheartedly? Why are you letting idols remain? Why are you compromising on what I have told you to do?

I told you if you **obeyed** there would be blessing upon blessing

And I told you if you **didn't obey** wholeheartedly these things would become a snare to you and a thorn in your side.

I have kept all my promises to you; you doubted that I would keep this one?

They haven't totally rejected God here. But they haven't totally obeyed him either.

For us

After the death of Joshua/Jesus!!!!

This is what happened after the death of Joshua.

A compromised and half-hearted faith.

And the question is will we learn from their mistakes.

See this is a key moment for us too.

Not because we live with them after the death of Joshua living on the edge of the promised land of Israel.

But because we live after the death of another Joshua.

See when Mary, mother of Jesus went to call her son, what name did she yell out?

It wasn't Jesus. Jesus is the greek form of his Hebrew name. that's

the name written down for us in the Greek New Testament and which is kept in translation in our English Bibles, What is the Hebrew name Mary would have used?

Joshua. or Jeshua. It's the same name. It means, "The Lord saves".

After the death of Joshua, we live in a time where God has saved us by grace, and he has given us a new home by his grace and we will occupy that new home through his power and grace **but** it requires us right now to step out in faith to be the people God has called us to be - and will empower us to be.

The New Testament always looks back on these times and asks us to learn from them. In Hebrews chapter 3 in particular it looks back at this period and says:

[SLIDE] Don't be like them ... "See to it brothers and sisters that none of you has a sinful and unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." Hebrews 3

can't or wont p24

And from Judges 1 the question that we need to ask ourselves is this - [SLIDE] is it really "I can't" or is it really "I won't"?

Can't or won't?

See for the Israelites back in chapter 1 verse 19, we read the Israelites say, "**they were unable. What could we do**" But God's word in chapter 2 verse 2 flatly contradicts this. The Israelites said: **we could not**. But God says: **you would not**.

And it's important in our discipleship to ask ourselves:

where am I saying **I can't**
but God is saying **you wont**

Israel's failure to obey was based on what they saw as good reasons – they had chariots, it makes more sense to make treaties, it makes more economic sense to enslave them. But God reveals them as flimsy excuses that end up bringing a compromised and half-hearted worship.

They forget the Lord was with them.

And we need to know God is with us too.

Or as it says to us in 1 Corinthians [SLIDE]:

"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" 1 Corinthians 10:13.

In other words God will never put us in a position where we cannot obey him. There is never a real "**I can't**" moment.

So these verses of Judges are very searching and challenging to apply to ourselves. There may be all sorts of things in our lives which we think we are unable to do, but which actually we are refusing to do.

So for example one place we often do this is

Firstly: in the area of forgiveness: We often say, I can't forgive him or her. I just can't. But Jesus commands to forgive others in Matthew 18:35. So we can in fact determine to soften our hearts with the knowledge of the gospel of grace that we ourselves have received, and we can decide to act as though the wrong had not happened. When we say we can't, we really mean we won't; we are

saying we want to hang on to our anger, and bitterness, our right to “get even”, under the excuse of being unable.

Secondly, we often say we can't in the area of difficult truth telling. Someone needs to know the truth about something but we say we can't. It will hurt their feelings, it will destroy them. It will upset things too much. But again God tells us in Ephesians 4) to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15,25). And so when we say we can't we are really saying we won't. And we are often thinking of not what is best for them, but really what is comfortable for us. They might be upset with me and I won't risk that cost – I would rather disobey.

A third area we often say we can't is in the area of temptation.: I can't resist doing this, though I know it's wrong. We do need to be careful as we say this, because sin does have an addictive power to it – it is true that we may not be able, through sheer willpower, to stop doing something by ourselves. But we can get help, admit our problem, humble ourselves, cry out to God for mercy and transformation, and become accountable. 1 Corinthians 10 again says God always provides us a way out – so no sinful thought or action is inevitable and irresistible. If we do keep sinning, it's likely that we really just want to and we are just using “can't” as an excuse.

A failure to remember

And also In the end what God sees here in Judges with their **WONTS** and what God sees in our lives in our **won'ts** is a failure to remember. The Lord is with you is what his word proclaims

the Lord is with you. He's got your back.

And that is what I want you to hear this morning and to see through this series.

The Lord is with you. He is the faithful promise keeping God. And he is faithful and he is powerful. He is with you and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. You can step out of the boat, and you can live the life he has called you to live.

you can forgive,
you can tell the truth,
you can resist temptation.

what we will see in Judges

Judges itself is a bit of a depressing book. Judges doesn't end well. really what we will see is this continuing downward spiral from bad to worse for the Israelites.

The Israelites in Judges never find the way out of this half-hearted compromise.

But this need not be the case for us. BEcause alongside this
downspiral

God, in his amazing grace gives them again and again and again a
way out. He will in his utter patience show us a way. Unfortunately
in Judges They just don't take it.

But we can. We can learn from them and see no matter how bad it
feels, no matter how scary it looks, with the Lord, with his power
and grace we can find a way to live, not a life of compromise, but a
life of confidence.

the lord is with you!

Because of this - AFTER THE DEATH OF JESUS.

What are the final words of Jesus to us in Matthew's gospel after
he has said commanded us to go and obey?

“Lo I am with you untiul the end of the age.”

All authority and power has been given to him.

And he is with us.