

Truth and Reason

Speaking the Words of Truth and Reason ♦ Acts 26:25

Volume I

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Number 7

The Course of This World

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

AS THEY TRAVEL THROUGH life, many people, the majority in fact according to the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14, choose to walk "according to the course of this world." It is not the path to follow, though, if one would please God and have the right to spend eternity with Him. Therefore, those who want eternal life and a heavenly home need to

avoid, at all costs, "the course of this world." In order to avoid it, one must know exactly what it is. What is "the course of this world" and what are its defining characteristics?

A Course of Darkness (Ephesians 4:18)

The Bible presents that which is opposed to the will of God as darkness (Psalm 119: 130, 105). Christians are those who have been "delivered from the power of darkness" (Col. 1:13) and who "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7). On the other hand, Satan, the prince of darkness (Eph. 6:12) and the god of this world (John 12:31), is determined that all should stay in darkness (2 Cor. 4:3-4). One who walks in darkness on "the course of this world" will eventually wind up where Satan will be—in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:28).

A Course of Human Wisdom (Ephesians 2:3)

The wisdom of men is "foolishness" to God (1 Cor. 1:20-25). Man does not have within him either the ability or right to direct his own way (Rom. 10:1-3; Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12). Yet, the wisdom of the world is so revered by people that even much of the teaching in the religious world is based on human wisdom—the doctrines, creeds, and commandments of men. Sadly, therefore, many people who think they are walking the way of God are actually following "the course of this world." One's faith must stand, not in the wisdom and teachings of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

A Course of Disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)

Those who "walked according to the course of this world" were considered "sons of disobedience." Anyone who

desires salvation must be obedient to the word of God (Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21). God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), so He provided a way to life through His Son (John 14:6). But one must obediently follow that way, submitting to the will of God in all things. Those who fail to obey the gospel will have to suffer the "vengeance" of Christ when He returns: "...you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..." (2 Thes. 1:7-9).

A Course of Conformity (Romans 12:1-2)

Conformity is popular (Matt. 7:13-14) because it is the easiest way to go through life. God would have His people to be different from those who are the children of the god of this world (Titus 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3) and that takes great effort and dedication.

A Course of Pleasure (Hebrews 11:25)

No one would deny there is a certain kind of pleasure in

following "the course of this world." Even in the "works of the flesh" listed in Galatians 5:19-21 there are pleasures but they are only "passing" (Heb. 11:25). There are many people who are willing to exchange their soul and the eternal bliss they can have in heaven for a few fleeting pleasures "the course of this world" has to offer. Jesus, in Matthew 16:26, said that even if one amassed all the wealth of the world it would not begin to compare with the worth of one's soul. What on earth can be so pleasurable that it is worth forfeiting eternal life? Only those who are walking "the course of this world" can answer that question.

A Course of Neglect (Luke 12:21)

The one who travels "the course of this world" makes no provision for his eternal soul (Luke 12:16-21). Jesus referred to the person who lives only for the "here and now" as a "fool" (Luke 12:20). While one is living on earth is the time to lay up "treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-21).

A Course Ending in Hell

It is not wise to travel a course when you do not know where it is heading. It is much worse, though, to travel a way that has eternal agony as its end (Rev. 21:8). Those living in sin are alienated from God (Eph.

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2:12). Sadly, their plight is worse after death for then they will be eternally separated from Him with no hope of reconciliation.

Conclusion: A Course of Choice

The only people traveling "the course of this world" are those who choose to walk it. Two courses in this life are set before every person (Matt. 7:13-14). We make the choice as to which one we will follow.

If you are walking "the course of this world," it is not too late to leave it and begin walking the way which leads to life. If, in humble obedience, you will faithfully walk in the light of God (1 John 1:7), you will live eternally with Him in the life to come. But if you continue on "the course of this world," eternal torment is all you can anticipate. I urge you to make the right choice. I urge you to make that choice today. 🙏

- Gene Taylor



Book of the Month

A Study of the Books of the Bible from Truth and Reason

Judges

I. General Data

A. Name: Judges.

1. The book's name is from its contents which are devoted to the period of Israel's judges.
2. "'Judges' takes its name from the twelve Spirit-anointed military leaders the Lord raised up to deliver the nation." (*Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 168)

B. Author.

1. The authorship of the book of Judges is unknown.
2. Jewish tradition attributes it to Samuel, the last of the judges. He was evidently the leader of a prophetic school which he had begun to prepare prophets for the people of God. (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:20, 24)

C. The judges.

1. The judges were not judicial officials who presided over Israel's courts.
 - a. They had no civil authority but acted with spiritual authority as agents of God.
 - b. During this period the government of the people consisted of the elders having authority in their respective tribes.
2. The judges were deliverers (3:9) who were directed by the power of the Spirit of God, whom God raised up to lead Israel to freedom from the oppression of opposing nations (3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).
3. In comparison with the righteous leaders of Israel's early history (Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, etc.), the character of the judges is much lower, their shortcomings more obvious, and even a delight, it seems, in their less reputable exploits.
 - a. They were men who lived in an age of low moral standards and their lives reflect that fact.
 - 1) Ehud was an assassin. (3:15-30)
 - 2) Jael was praised for a treacherous act of cruel murder. (4:17-24)
 - 3) Jephthah was a bandit with a vindictive streak. (11:1-3)
 - 4) Samson was a Nazarite, yet was irresponsible, indulging himself in illicit acts with Philistines and disreputable women.
 - b. God made them a channel of His power and the means of His revelation without necessarily any direct influence on their moral character.

D. Time span: From the death of Joshua to the death of Samson.

1. The period of Judges from Othniel to Samuel lasted about 350 years. (cf. 11:26)
2. This is the period of the Theocratic regime in which God Himself is Israel's King. (1 Sam. 8:7)

E. Setting of the book.

1. The generation contemporary with Joshua was courageous, faithful, and, for the most part, free from the obstinacy and doubt which had dishonored their fathers (2:7). But as each tribe received its portion of the land, though, they became engrossed in establishing and cultivating it thus becoming self-centered.
2. Living among idolaters, whom they had failed to drive out, the Israelites copied their example, intermarried with them, and became contaminated by their abominations and idolatry. (2:10-13)
3. The people abandoned God and became their own standard of conduct. (17:6)
4. The old inhabitants of the land of Canaan, left alone, gathered strength to fight against Israel.
5. Surrounding nations such as Syria, Philistia, Moab, and Midian took advantage of Israel's ease and began to plunder them. (2:14-15; 3:7-8)
6. "'In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes' (Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:25)...Each tribe took thought for itself how best to serve and maintain an adequate territory, so that separate interests of all sorts soon became prevalent, and regard for general welfare was more and more forgotten. This separation of the parts of the nation was

aided by the early disunion and jealousies of the several tribes, no one of which held the preeminence ..Then, too, the ancient inhabitants still retained their hold on large tracts, or on important positions throughout the country. The neighboring powers still looked upon the newcomers as an easy prey to incursion and devastation, if not to actual subjugation. Nor did Israel escape the pernicious influence of idolatry, both of Canaan and the surrounding countries." (Unger, 617-618)

F. Theme: "Failure."

1. "The book of Judges is one of the saddest parts of the Bible, humanly speaking. Some have called it the 'Book of Failure.' The last chapter of the preceding book, Joshua, anticipates continued blessing upon God's people in the rest land of their inheritance (Joshua 24:19-28). But one does not proceed far into the account of Judges before he senses that all is not well." (*Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 152)
2. Israel failed to:
 - a. Complete the task they were given to do— drive out the other nations.
 - b. Carry through with the lessons they learned in their reform.
 - 1) When God raised up judges to deliver them, the people only responded so far as it served their selfish ends of the moment.
 - 2) They did not sincerely love God nor did they serve Him from the heart. When things got somewhat tolerable for them again they would swiftly abandon Him and go back to their old ways.
 - c. Deal with a family, national, or community problem. They were so self-centered that they did not seek solutions to their problems until they were desperate.
3. The three-fold reasons for their failures.
 - a. Ease.
 - 1) Finally at rest in the land of promise they became engrossed with their possessions and land.
 - 2) Ease poses a constant threat to those who would live properly.
 - b. Selfishness. (17:6)
 - 1) There was no concern for others in any way. Each did what he thought was right.
 - 2) Self is at the center of all sin.
 - c. Compromise.
 - 1) The compromise began when the two and a half tribes chose to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan rather than to enter the land.
 - 2) The compromise continued when the other tribes failed to drive out the pagan peoples of the land.
 - 3) Compromising in religion and an incomplete turning from sin result in constant trouble and final defeat.
4. Within the lives of the judges there is failure but there is also faith.
 - a. Through them insight is gained into the grace and long-suffering of God.
 - b. These were men whom God could use in spite of themselves and help them develop a faith that could transcend their shortcomings.
 - c. Many of the examples of faith found in Hebrews 11 come from the book of Judges. (Heb. 11:32ff)

F. Summaries of the book.

1. The book is divinely summarized in 2:7-19.
 - a. During the rule of Joshua Israel served God. (vv. 7-9)
 - b. After the death of Joshua a generation arose who did not know the Lord nor what He had done for Israel, therefore, they did evil kindling the anger of the Lord against them. (vv. 10-14a)
 - c. God, therefore, delivered them to enemies who were victorious over them causing them to be greatly distressed. (vv. 14b-15)
 - d. God raised up judges to deliver them and they would have peace. (v. 16)
 - e. When the judge would die the people would revert back to their old ways and forsake the way of God. (vv.17-19)
 2. "The book is fragmentary and unchronological in its arrangement. The events recorded are
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- largely local and tribal instead of national, but are of great value as showing the condition and character of the people...It gives an account of seven apostacies, seven servitudes to the seven heathen nations, and seven deliverances. It furnishes an explanation of the ups and downs, and is not merely a record of historical events but an interpretation of those events." (J.B. Tidwell, *The Bible Book by Book*, p. 68)
3. The book of Judges can be summed up in two passages—2:7-19; 19:6). Problems began for Israel when they failed to complete the task God gave them, namely, driving out the enemy and keeping themselves separate from the nations (1:21,27-29,31; 2:1-6; 3:5-6; cf. Ex. 23:31-33). Israel turned from God so God then sent other nations to afflict them. Israel would cry to God in repentance and He would raise up a judge to deliver them. That would bring peace and rest for a few years until the people turned away from God again and the whole process would begin all over.
 4. Jeremiah 2:7-8 divinely summarizes conditions identical to the book of Judges.

II. An Outline of Judges

- A. Introduction to the Period of the Judges. (1:1 - 3:6)
- B. The Judges and Their Work. (3:7 - 16:31)
 1. Othniel's deliverance from Mesopotamia. (3:7-11)
 2. Ehud's deliverance from Moab. (3:12-30)
 3. Shamgar's deliverance from Philistia. (3:31)
 4. Deborah's deliverance from the Canaanites. (ch. 4-5)
 5. Gideon's deliverance from Midian. (ch. 6-9)
 6. Tola delivered Israel. (10:1-2)
 7. Jair judged Israel. (10:3-5)
 8. Jephthah's deliverance from Ammon. (10:6 - 12:7)
 9. Ibzan judged Israel. (12:8-10)
 10. Elon judged Israel. (12:11-12)
 11. Abdon judged Israel. (12:13-15)
 12. Samson's deliverance from Philistia. (ch. 13-16)
- C. Consequences of Their Corruption Illustrated. (ch. 17-21)
 1. The Danites adopted the idols made by Micah. (ch. 17-18)
 2. The depth of moral corruption to which Israel had fallen. (ch. 19-20)
 - a. The perversion of the people of Gibeah. (ch. 19)
 - b. Brethren at war. (ch. 20)
 3. The men of Benjamin were left without wives. (ch. 21)

III. The Lessons of Judges

- A. Compromise leads to defeat. As Israel suffered because they compromised with enemy nations, if we compromise with the world, sin, and Satan, we will suffer defeat.
- B. There is an absolute standard of right— God's.
 1. Doing that which was right in their own eyes caused Israel to be led to do evil for which they were judged. (17:6)
 2. The word of God is still the standard of righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17), and when people fail to live by it they will also be judged.
- C. Sin must be completely quit.
 1. When Israel failed to drive out the presence of sin in the land, the evil nations, they were affected by it to do evil themselves.
 2. One who would live pleasing to God must completely forsake sin and become dead to it or he will be adversely affected by it. (Rom. 6:1-4)
- D. Faith can overcome personal failure.
 1. The failures, weaknesses, and shortcomings of the judges have already been seen, yet, many of them are held forth to us as examples to follow because they trusted in God and allowed Him to rule in their lives.
 2. Christians must be people of faith to be able to overcome their personal weaknesses and sins and gain victory in Christ. (Phil. 4:13)

Judges Study Questions

1. How was the conquest of the land of Canaan incomplete? (1:1-36)
2. How did Israel disobey God? What would be the consequence of this disobedience? (2:1-5; Compare with Deut. 7:1-5 and Josh. 23:1-16)
3. What is said of the people during the time of Joshua? What happened to them after his death? Why do you think this happened? (2:6-10)
4. Since the generation after Joshua did not know God, what filled the void left by that lack of knowledge? What was the consequence of this departure from God? (2:11-15)
5. Who were the judges? What was the attitude of the people toward them? (2:16-19)
6. Using the information given in 2:6 through 3:6, explain the cycle of events that was to recur all through the period of the judges.
7. What caused Israel's troubles during the period of the judges? What brought them into such close connection with heathen peoples? (2:20 - 3:6)
8. Who was Deborah? (4:1-24)
9. According to 4:4-5, what two functions did the judges have? (See also Judg. 2:16 with 3:9, 15)
10. How did the Midianites oppress Israel? Describe or illustrate the low condition to which Israel was reduced. (6:1-6)
11. Who does God raise up to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites? (6:11-32)
12. Why did Gideon find it hard to believe that God was with him? What assurance did he request? What sign convinced him that it was God who was speaking to him? (6:11-32)
13. What did Gideon have to do before carrying out the task to which he was called? (6:11-32)
14. How did God assure Gideon of His presence? (6:36-40)
15. Why did God want to reduce the size of Gideon's army? How many were in the army of the enemy? What lesson was taught by this battle? (7:1-8)
16. How does God provide Gideon with assurance of victory? What is the purpose of this assurance? (7:9-14)
17. Describe Gideon's battle strategy. (7:15-23)
18. What was Gideon's life like after the defeat of the Midianites? What happened to Israel "as soon as Gideon was dead?" (8:22-35)
19. Who was Jephthah? What vow did he make? Do you think he really offered his daughter as a sacrifice or was the vow fulfilled in another way? Explain. (11:1-40)
20. Who was Samson? Why was he raised up by God? (13:1-25)
21. What does Samson's choice of a wife reveal about him? How was God able to use this marriage to serve His own purpose? What became of Samson's wife? (14:1-20)
22. What was Samson's grievance against the Philistines? How did he retaliate? Describe his great victory over them? To whom did he give credit for the victory? (15:1-20)
23. How did the Philistines try to trap Samson? How did he mock them? (16:1-31)
24. How did Samson's love for Delilah lead to his downfall? What character flaw led to his downfall? (16:1-31)
25. Describe the death of Samson. What reason did he give for killing the Philistines?

Sin and Righteousness

THE TOPICS OF SIN AND righteousness are dealt with from the earliest of God's inspired record to the very last words of His revelation. They are important concepts which every person needs to understand.

Sin

Sin, as defined in the Bible, is "all unrighteousness" (1 John 5:17). It is "lawlessness" or "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). There are really only two ways in which we can transgress the law of God—by sins of commission or sins of omission.

A sin of commission is when God says "don't" but we **do**. An example of a sin of commission is the sin of Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had told her not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but she, being influenced by the serpent, ate of it anyway (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6).

A sin of omission is when God says "do" but we **do not**. King Saul is an example of this type of sin. God had told him to utterly slay the Amalekites because of their sins when Israel was journeying from Egypt. Even though Saul said he carried out the command

of the Lord, he did not obey that which God had commanded (1 Sam. 5:3,9). He sinned by omitting to do that which God had demanded of him.

Contrary to the opinion of many, sin is not inherited (Ezek. 18:20; Matt. 18:3), neither is it measured in degrees (Rev. 21:8), nor is it determined by our "attitude." Sins of a willful nature, those done in ignorance, and those caused by weakness all carry a similar condemnation.

What are the consequences of sin? In this life, tragic suffering as seen in the case of King David and his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10, 13). In eternity, eternal punishment and alienation from God (Matt. 13:49,50; Luke 16:24).

Righteousness

Righteousness is the quality of being right or being in a state or condition acceptable to God. It is something we **do** to be accepted by God (Acts 10:34-35). It is that for which we must hunger and thirst (Matt. 5:6).

Righteousness is not from others (Ezek. 18:5,9,20; 2 Cor. 5:10). Our righteousness is not Christ's personal

righteousness (1 John 2:29; 3:7). It is not established by our own standard (Rom. 10:1-3; Phil. 3:9) but rather by the standard God has given in the gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:16-17).

The rewards of righteousness are many. In this life, all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 6:17-18; I Pet. 3:12) along with physical blessings (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19). In eternity, a life of never-ending joy and bliss in the presence of God (2 Tim. 4:6-8; Matt. 25:46).

Conclusion

Understanding the terrible consequences of sin and the great rewards of righteousness, let us seek to have Philippians 3:8-9 applied to us—"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." 🍀

- Gene Taylor



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