

{Un}Faithful

Intro and Judges 2:6 - 3:31

Today we begin a new series. After a topical series we thought it would be good to go through a book of the bible and the fact that I hadn't done an OT book for a while got us thinking; what about Judges? Judges has some fascinating characters and has this underlying theme "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" and isn't that where we as a culture are at.

This series is not for the faint hearted. It's fitting that we have just looked at the issue of violence in the OT. (Check that out online) The book of Judges is probably one of the most disturbing narratives in Scripture, recounting some of the most provocative people, doing some of the most violent things imaginable (This is probably why most churches choose not to preach it).

On its own the book is a bit of a nightmare, but we need to remember that the book of Judges is just one part of the bigger God story, the story of God on a mission to gather a community of worshippers from within a rebellious world.

The repetitive theme of, "everyone did what was right in their own eyes," and sets the tone for the culture Judges was written in, but if we actually stop to think about we are no different. We are equally unfaithful and fully convinced of our own "rightness". When we read about the ever-rebellious Israel with its misguided leaders, we see ancient versions of our own present-day idolatry.

These stories, as violent as we find them, are ultimately about God's grace. By grace, God accomplishes His mission, not despite sinful men and women, but through them.

We have called the series {un}faithful. One of the Bible's main themes is that God is faithful, though we are not. As we go through Judges see the people of God swing from faithfulness to unfaithfulness time and time again.

Ok enough of an intro let's look at the first block of passages.

Judges 2:7-11

And the Israelites served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel...

A Faithful Generation v7

Judges starts off at the end of Joshua's leadership, the nation at this stage

were primarily a generation of warriors, and an army of eyewitnesses to God's power. This generation had watched God work the impossible right before their eyes.

- They had seen the waters of the Jordan part.
- They had watched the walls of Jericho fall to the ground.
- They had seen fiery hailstones fly from the sky in battle.
- They had experienced hornets driving out their enemies.
- They had observed city after city, village after village, king after king fall before their God.

For approximately 40 years, Joshua led Israel as their general. He was strong and courageous—careful to do all that God had commanded—and the men who served him were equally faithful. Though their parents had proven unfaithful and had died in the wilderness, these children proved to be a faithful generation.

Amnesia & an Unfaithful Generation v. 10-11

...¹⁰ After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.

"The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight and served the images of Baal.

Eventually, all of Joshua's lieutenants, all the elders, all of the fathers and mothers, an entire generation of people who knew God died. And then another generation arose who did not know the Lord or remember the work he had done. Instead of remembering to do what God had said was right, they did what was right in their own eyes. They denied the one true God and followed the most appealing false one—the one that met their own felt needs and desires.

We may ask; how could a faithful generation who experiences the great victories and mighty works of God give rise to generation who does not know Him?

I don't know! We know that they passed on the memories, but maybe they did not pass on the promises and the consequences of not following God's laws. Possibly also, the faithful generation, though committed to God's mission

in God's land, did not see the mission as beginning in their own homes. They had fought to get 'God in the land', but they had not fought to get 'God in their families'. This new generation heard about God, even knew a lot about God, but they did not know him personally.

WHAT & HOW were they supposed to REMEMBER?

In Deuteronomy 6 we are told that parents were responsible to ensure God's Law was kept for at least three generations—their own, their children, and their grandchildren. This was not the responsibility of the churches family pastor or youth pastor, but the parents.

WE have spoken about tis many times at church

"Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. ⁵And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. ⁶And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ⁸Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. ⁹Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

They were to teach that there was one God—not many gods. They were to teach their children to love God with everything they had—not that there were some things that were spiritual and other things not spiritual. They were to teach God's ways diligently—not just on Sunday morning....they were supposed to talk about him and his ways all the time. Remembering, learning, and discussing, the things of God were supposed to saturate the home.

Think about your passion...what dominates most of your time, mental energy, work, play, money? What would others say is "your family's passion?"

This is a challenge that we as a church want to encourage you all in, resource you as much as possible, pray for you, support you, work alongside you, it's a huge responsibility and we take it seriously.

Any way Judges is a big book we better move on.

Judges 2:11-19

¹¹The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight and served the images of Baal.¹²They abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They went after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them. And they angered the LORD.

¹⁸Whenever the LORD raised up a judge over Israel, he was with that judge and rescued the people from their enemies throughout the judge's lifetime. For the LORD took pity on his people, who were burdened by oppression and suffering.¹⁹But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them.

Cycle of Judges

After a period of peace with Joshua and his merry men, the people started to forget God. Remember this generation was a generation of warriors so had been raised in tents, temporary military bases, while their fathers fought for God. When they had grown up, they finally entered the large cities their fathers had fought for. They found the cities, and the gods of the people, to be more attractive than the God of their parents. The Canaanites were sophisticated, wealthy, city people who didn't worry about sin or a 'god' that guided them because they had created their own gods of money and sex who they could control. These Canaanites had coffee shops, malls, houses with walls, centres of art/music, and their worship services were at strip clubs and brothels. Sadly Israel rejects God, which leads to Gods response recorded in Judges 2:13 '*The Lord was angry!*'

And so we enter into a cycle of God raising up oppressors to judge and punish Israel, and then He raises up a Judge to deliver the people from the oppressors.

As I said earlier Judges has some pretty fascinating characters and some disturbing stories, and I just have to include this one as an example of the cycle.

Judges 3

¹²Once again the Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight, and the LORD gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel because of their evil...

¹⁴And the Israelites served Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.

¹⁵But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD again raised up a rescuer to save them. His name was Ehud, a left-handed man of the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelites sent Ehud to deliver their tribute money to King Eglon of Moab. ¹⁶So Ehud made a double-edged dagger that was about a foot long, and he strapped it to his right thigh, keeping it hidden under his clothing. ¹⁷He brought the tribute money to Eglon, who was very fat.

...He came to Eglon and said, "I have a secret message for you."

So the king commanded his servants, "Be quiet!" and he sent them all out of the room.

²⁰Ehud walked over to Eglon, who was sitting alone in a cool upstairs room. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you!" As King Eglon rose from his seat, ²¹Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled out the dagger strapped to his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly. ²²The dagger went so deep that the handle disappeared beneath the king's fat. So Ehud did not pull out the dagger, and the king's bowels emptied. ²³Then Ehud closed and locked the doors of the room and escaped down the latrine.

....

²⁹The Israelites attacked the Moabites and killed about 10,000 of their strongest and most able-bodied warriors. Not one of them escaped. ³⁰So Moab was conquered by Israel that day, and there was peace in the land for eighty years.

That is an example of the cycle of Judges. This is not like today as we vote in and out a new political party every few years, this is generational stuff.

God's Faithful Anger

The final issue that I want to raise from this passage is a difficult and even disturbing concept here that is uncomfortable for us to look at, but is necessary if we are to understand and grow in our understanding of God and his word.

As Christians, we all have some level of understanding of God's grace towards us as sinners. However the more challenging concept for us to come to grips with is God's anger. Specifically His anger pointed towards His people. His anger is not irrational, impulsive, or spiteful. It's not sinful so he is not led or controlled by it like we often are. It's a faithful anger perfectly felt, controlled and executed.

As difficult as it sounds we desperately need God's Faithful Anger because without it he cannot be a just God, a trustworthy God, a gracious God, or even a loving God. For those of us who claim to follow God, the manner of God's anger displayed in Judges is both positive and comforting for several reasons:

1. **God's Faithful Anger shows us He is consistent and faithful to His word.**

By being consistent and faithful in His anger God shows His people He does what He says he is going to do. This shouldn't be undersold. Every earthly relationship has some level of unpredictability where we never quite know how someone is going to react emotionally to different situations or is actually going to follow through with what they've said they will. God is faithful in His emotions and His actions, meaning we can trust He will be faithful to His promises to love and care for His people because we know he is consistent.

But, is 'consistent in anger' really that comforting? What about consistently forgiving or consistently happy? In our world we need him to be faithful in anger.

2. **God's Faithful Anger shows us there is justice in the world and God hates sin and brokenness.**

Our world is broken, seemingly beyond repair. Some of us avoid the news because we know it's depressing and rarely shows us anything positive. When we look at the problems and injustice of the world we are often moved to sadness, frustration, and anger. God can be angered by the same things that anger us. God's anger isn't just against sin, it's a hope filled anger that seeks to show the intensity of His passion for his people and that he uses to restore us to relationship with Him.

3. **God's Faithful Anger comes from His jealousy for us.**

Countless times though out the Old Testament God tells us His faithful anger is a direct result of His jealousy. We hear jealous and our mind instantly defaults to it being a bad quality, because when we're jealous it's usually rooted in sins of insecurity, envy, or pride. To be clear God is not jealous of us, he is jealous for us. God's motives, including His jealousy, are pure.

God's intense jealousy is the flip side of His love. God's covenant relationship with His people is often compared to a marriage. A husband who is either ok or indifferent with a wife's infidelity is NOT a loving husband, and visa versa. To have a God jealous for his people is to have a loving God, who want's better for us than we even want for ourselves.

4. **God's Faithful Anger shows us he loves us enough to train and disciple us like a parent should.** Joshua's generation failed to train their children to remain faithful to God, so God has become the trainer. In chapters 2:22-3:2 we are told that God is using these cycles to test hearts and train new generations of people to fight for righteousness. God is a loving parent to His people.

Unfortunately, in Judges we don't see the peoples' relationship with God improving, unfortunately it only gets worse. For the remainder of judges we will see this cycle of idolatry, consequences, grace, idolatry, and consequences repeated over and over, as the people's rebellion and sin only increase with each cycle.

Thankfully the story isn't over; God's faithful anger gives us hope. The good news is that God has loved us by unleashing His faithful anger on someone else. In love He poured out all of his anger on His son so that we might experience His love. With Christ, the cycle is over...it is finished.

Jesus, with no sin of His own to earn consequences, and no sin to need grace, willingly bears the full burden of our idolatry, our ungodliness, our sin, up with Him on the cross. On the cross he takes the full punishment, dying the death we deserve. And because He rises from death, through faith in Him, our debt of sin has been paid and we can enjoy eternal grace, which we did nothing to earn.

We're going to take communion remembering God's faithful anger towards us was poured out on His son Jesus for His Glory and our forgiveness.

And we are going to worship the Creator God who is the only one worth singing too!