



Central Peninsula Church

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Judges 1:1–2:5
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The Consequences of Compromise

Thirteen years ago Lynn and I bought the home that I had grown up in. The house was built the same year I was born, which means it's been around awhile. It had an old roof, old pool, old windows, and an old septic system. When we moved into the house, we knew that eventually all of these issues would need to be addressed. We also knew that we wanted the house to feel like OUR home, not the home I grew up in. As much as we liked gold veined mirrors and green formica, it just didn't do it for us! We wanted the house to reflect our tastes and our lifestyle. In a strange way, the house belonged to us, but we still had a lot of work to do to make it our own. When we moved into the house, we were optimistic about all of this work. We had a list of things we wanted to do in the first month. But, before long, reality set in and our one month list turned into a one year list and then a five year list. After 13 years we're still not done with the list! What's interesting is that we've sort of grown used to the house just the way it is. I probably speak more for myself here than for Lynn, but after the first year there I hardly even noticed the gold veins in the mirror. I said things like, "You know, those are vintage windows. They don't make windows like that any more!"

In many ways, the Christian life is like that. When we become a Christian by trusting Christ as Savior and Lord, we enter into a new life. But there are many things that still need to be addressed; many projects that need to be accomplished. It might be a bad temper, or a controlling spirit, or a consumptive lifestyle. Often times, dealing with these issues doesn't happen overnight or even in a month, it takes time. One of the things that can happen to us though is that we can get used to those things. We can begin to say, "You know, that's not really that big of a deal. I don't need to change that. It costs too much. After all, I've changed a lot here already. I don't need to do more."

I. Christians must fight to take possession of life in Christ.

This morning we're beginning a study of the OT book of Judges. In many ways, the story of the Judges mirrors this same process and mindset. The people of Israel had entered into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. This was the culmination of centuries of waiting and struggling. God had called

Abraham out of Ur and brought him to the land of Canaan. He told him, "This will be the land that you and your descendants will inherit. I'll make you a great nation." The age of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob followed. Then, one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery in Egypt. They were held in slavery for 400 years and then God raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt. They crossed through the Red Sea, but they failed to go into the land and they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Finally, Joshua and a new generation crossed over the Jordan River and entered the land. But, the land was filled with a variety of people called Canaanites. God had promised his people that if they trusted him and obeyed him he would drive these Canaanites out. Under Joshua's leadership that began to happen. They conquered kings and took over the major political centers. They divided up the land between the twelve tribes. But when we come to the book of Judges, we see that there was still a lot of work to do. It was the duty of each tribe to remove the smaller pockets of resistance that remained so they could settle down in their particular territory. Judges begins with these words, "**Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD, saying, 'Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?'**" (Judges 1:1).

There are many parallels between what Israel faced and what we face as followers of Christ. Paul wrote, "**Now these things happened to them [Israel] as an example, and they were written for our instruction...**" (1 Cor 10:11). Just like Israel, God delivers us from Egypt, from the world system, from its way of thinking and acting. He leads us through the Red Sea and across the Jordan River. These crossings picture the end of our old life. As we enter into the land of Canaan, we enter into our new life in Christ. There are several things to remember about this new land.

First, it's a gift. Over and over again, God says in effect, "I will give you this land as a free gift." Israel brought nothing to this promise. The initiative was with God, and it arose out of his love for his people. Israel couldn't take it or grasp it. The land was beyond her power to acquire; it could only be hers as a gift. When we come to the NT, the same thing is true about our life in Christ: Christ is a gift, and the life that he gives is a gift. **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal**

life in Christ Jesus our Lord" says Romans 6:23.

Second, this land must be entered by faith.

This was a hard lesson for the nation of Israel to learn. The first time they came to the land they sent in spies, but all of them, except for Joshua and Caleb, came back and said, "The giants are too big. There's no way that we can enter into that land." So because they lacked faith that generation didn't enter in; they were consigned to wandering in the wilderness. The same is true of our life in Christ. We enter into the life of Christ by faith alone. Eph. 2:8-9 says, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.**" We enter by faith and continue to live by faith, or else we wander like Israel in the wilderness.

Third, the land is holy. The land is where Israel met God, where they walked with God and enjoyed his company. God said, "**And you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel**" (Num 35:34). The land demands a specific lifestyle. God said, "**These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land...**" (Deut 12:1). He told them, "**You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you...**" (Lev 18:3). Israel wasn't free to set its own behavioral guidelines, and neither are we. Our relationship with him demands obedience. We can't live as the world lives. We're in the world but we're not of the world. There's a way of life that comes with life in Christ. Jesus said, "**If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments**" (John 14:15).

Finally, there is one more parallel between the land and our life in Christ: ***The land would need to be possessed through warfare.*** Yes, the land is a gift, but when Israel enters it, there are enemies living there. This is the issue that is raised in the first verse of the book: "Who will go up first and fight the Canaanites?" God's instructions to Israel were quite clear from the start. God said in Deut. 7:1-2, "**When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you...nations greater and stronger than you, and when the LORD your God shall deliver them before you, and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.**" Clear instructions: Israel had to drive the enemy out of the land completely.

Why does God insist on total destruction? Is God picking on these people? No! It was because of

their moral depravity. God had given the Canaanites and the other peoples living in this land time to respond, yet they chose to worship idols. Way back in Genesis, God told Abraham that he wouldn't possess the land because "**the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete**" (Gen. 15:16). Well, when we come to Joshua and Judges it IS complete, and God was bringing about their judgment through Israel. God has always reserved the right of judgment. He did it in the Flood, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and he does it in the destruction of the Canaanites.

How does this parallel our life in Christ? Remember that the land represents for us our life in Christ that is given to us as a gift when we believe. But just as Israel had enemies to conquer so we too have enemies in our life. The life we have in Christ needs to be possessed and the only way to possess it is by fighting; by driving out the enemy. The first lesson we have to learn from the book of Judges is that our life in Christ is a gift, but it must be possessed. When we enter into this life we become full heirs of God's blessings, but we still have enemies to contend with. We battle against what the Bible calls "the flesh" which refers to our sinful desires. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. We also battle against what the Bible calls "the world," which describes a way of thinking about life that's self-centered instead of God-centered. John writes, "**Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world...**" (1 John 2:15-17). Finally, we battle the devil, a clever, malevolent, spiritual being who Peter says, "**prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour**" (1 Peter 5:8).

These are our enemies. Our job is to trust God and drive them out; to utterly destroy them. This is the paradox of the Christian life: God fights for us, and God gives the victory, but we have to enter the fray, and we have to stay obedient. Victory in the Christian life isn't automatic. Even though no enemy can stand up to the power of Christ, we still must enter into the battle. Our enemies just don't get up and walk away, they have to be defeated. Even though we might know great truths about God, it doesn't mean that we'll automatically get to enjoy them. The land needs to be possessed. Have you learned that?

When I was a kid, I picked a fight with a fellow classmate. Back then, when you wanted to fight someone, you said, "Call you out." I called him out, and I was sure that he would be too afraid to take me up on my offer. To my surprise, he accepted it. We met after school just off the school grounds and squared off. I still didn't take the guy seriously. I mean, I was tougher than this guy! But then,

before I could do anything, he punched me hard in the eye. I was shocked! All of a sudden I realized I had to take this fight seriously. Sometimes we're reluctant to fight because we don't take the enemy that seriously, whether it's the world, the flesh or the devil. We don't think they're really out to get us. But then sin lands the first punch and we get a black eye. God says we're in a fight and we need to take the enemy seriously.

II. The temptation is to compromise with sin.

Chapter one records how Israel began to drive out the enemy. They actually got off to a decent start.

“The LORD said, ‘Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.’ Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, ‘Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you.’ So Simeon went with him. Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands, and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek. They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Adoni-bezek said, ‘Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.’ So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there. Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland. So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai” (Judges 1:2-10).

Judah and Simeon teamed up. It's always a helpful thing to team up with a brother or sister to take on new territory and defeat enemies. But, despite many successes, they made compromises. They defeated Adoni-bezek, but they didn't destroy him. They cut off his thumbs and his big toes, which is what the pagan nations around them did. “That's what Adoni-bezek had done, so why not do the same thing to him?” This would be like the United States responding to 9-11 by flying commercial airplanes into some tall buildings in the heart of Bagdad. We don't take our cues from the world; we don't adopt their practices just because they seem to work. This was a failure on the part of Judah.

They began to have more victories, driving out more enemies, but another problem arose. Look at v. 19. **“Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill**

country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots.” They took the hill country, but they couldn't drive out the inhabitants of the valley. These people were had iron chariots, which could be used in the valleys but not in the hill country. Some sin is like that. It doesn't go away easily. When I first became a Christian, there were a lot of patterns of behavior that had to be removed from my life. I had a filthy mouth. I ran with the wrong friends. I used drugs. I was in an immoral relationship. In the first year or so after I became a Christian, all those things changed. I thought I was doing pretty good. But slowly I began to realize there were other issues I had to face that were much tougher to root out. I have a deeply competitive spirit that drives me not just to win but to be the best at whatever I do. It makes it hard for me to enjoy anyone else's victories. That was a pattern of thinking deeply entrenched in my flesh. I've made progress, but I still fight it. We all have certain “iron chariots” in our lives, don't we? That's why Judah failed to root out the inhabitants of the valley.

So, in verse 21, the whole scene changes, and problems really develop. **“But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.”** Those words “did not drive out” are repeated several times in these verses. Instead of driving them out we're told over and over again these Canaanites were allowed to “live among” Israel. They failed miserably to carry out God's command. God had made it clear to them: Drive them out completely, destroy them. But they compromised; they grew complacent; they let them to live with them.

The danger of this is seen in an incident is recorded in vv. 22-26 where the tribe of Joseph makes a deal with a man from Luz. Since he showed them a secret entrance to the city, they let the man and his family go free. What was the result? Look at v. 26, **“The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day.”** They let him go so he went someplace else and built a new city, even calling it by its original name. If we let sin live, if we don't crush it completely, then it will begin building up in some other area of our lives. If we think we have control of some area of our lives, say, our home, but if we don't completely drive out sin, it's going to surface somewhere else—at work, perhaps; it's going to make itself manifest in another area in our life. As you go on you see that some of the tribes thought they had victory, they thought they had control because they put the Canaanites into forced labor. “No need to drive them out. Let's put them to work for us.” But then we come to verse 34: **“The Amorites forced the sons**

of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley." Now they weren't even in control; rather, their enemy was controlling them.

The spiritual principle is obvious: When we enter into our new life in Christ, the beginning of defeat for us is when we fail to completely eradicate the enemies from our life. We allow sin to live with us. We don't drive it out completely. We grow complacent. We compromise. We think we have our sin under control, and that's good enough for us. Like Israel, we settle for something short of complete destruction of sin. Thus begins the downward slide. Here is how the NT teaches this truth, from Romans 13:14, **"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."** Judges gives us the unabridged version of that verse. Do you make "no provision" for the flesh, or do you just give it a little room once in awhile?

You say, "Why? Why should I be so careful? Why so strict? Isn't this a little extreme?" This passage also gives us a strong motivation for refusing to compromise with sin at any level. We see this in vv. 1-5.

III. If we allow sin to remain, we end up in defeat and weeping.

At this point in the story, Israel has a visitor called the angel of the Lord.

**"Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, 'I brought you up
I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.'" But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?' Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'" When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD"** (Judges 2:1-5).

We'll encounter the angel of the Lord again in this book. This angel is none other than the Lord himself. Many believe he is the pre-incarnate Christ. He reminds Israel of how he had delivered them from slavery and how he would never break his covenant with them. He then reminds them of his command: "You shall make no covenant with them." But Israel had

sinned. "What is this that you have done?" asks the angel. Isn't it great when God asks us questions? He's not trying to get information; he's trying to get us to look in the mirror. God is the covenant keeper, but man is the covenant breaker. So God says, "I will no longer drive this enemy out. They'll become a snare to you." Israel thought it was no big deal. "We can have these people around and still worship our God and live for him. We're in control here." But God says, "They'll trip you up. And you'll lose my power to drive them out." Here is why we can't compromise: partial obedience leads to complete defeat. Small compromises reap massive consequences.

The people respond by lifting up their voices and weeping. Notice how the angel of the Lord moves from Gilgal to Bochim. This is highly significant. Gilgal was where Israel crossed the Jordan, the place where they renewed the practice of circumcision, where they kept the Passover. This was where God appeared to Joshua and told him that he was the commander-in-chief of the Lord's army and that he would lead Israel to victory. In other words, Gilgal represents victory, blessing, obedience. "Bochim," on the other hand, means weeping. In the book of Joshua, the people lived in victory, but here in Judges they're miserable.

Many of us have wondered: why don't I have any joy in my Christian life? Why am I so miserable? Why don't I feel close to God like these others do? The answer might be right here: the path of partial obedience and compromise leads to Bochim. We think that by doing this or having that we'll enter into life, but then we discover that we're controlled by sin. Sorrow, not victory, becomes our portion. One writer wrote, "The most miserable people in the world are professing believers who won't commit themselves to the Lord Jesus." Have you ever been there? I have. It's not a place I want to call home. It's not a place I want to become comfortable.

CONCLUSION

We have learned three important truths today. First, we have been called to fight to take possession of that which God has promised us. We have to take the enemy seriously. He won't go away automatically. Second, the constant temptation is not to ignore sin, but to make compromises with it; to only go so far in rooting it out; to become complacent. Third, when we compromise with sin, we end up in defeat and sorrow. Thankfully, God uses that defeat and sorrow to bring us back to himself, and as we see here, God is a covenant keeper. But why waste time in Bochim when you can live in Gilgal?

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