

You Really Need a King: Compromised Discipleship

(Judges 1:1- 2:5)

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Abstract: The Israelites were God's chosen people called to be set apart for God. As they trusted God and obeyed Him, God blessed them. As a result, surrounding nations wanted to know more about the God of Israel. After the death of Joshua, the Children of Israel were to finish conquering the Promised Land, but they made gradual compromises with the inhabitants. When they chose to depart from God to assimilate into the world, dreadful consequences followed.

Introduction

The Lord selected the Jews to be His chosen people. God wanted to work through them so that others would be drawn to the Lord. God promised in Deuteronomy 28 that if His people would obey Him, then God would bless them. If they were to disobey, God would curse them. It is God's desire to bless His people so that it would attract others to want to know more about the amazing God of Israel.

This was evident when Moses led God's people out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land that was filled with milk and honey. After witnessing the power of God over and over again through the plagues, Pharaoh submitted to God's authority. Initially, God's people praised the Lord for rescuing them. But when they faced difficulties, they complained and grumbled. Because of their unbelief, God delayed their entrance into the Promised Land. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years in order for all the adults to die off. Only Joshua and Caleb were allowed into the Promised Land because of their faith in the Lord. Even Moses was not permitted to go in because he rebelled against God. In the latter part of Moses' life, he wrote the Book of Deuteronomy to prepare the people to enter the Promised Land. In Deut. 6, there were four specific instructions that His people needed to obey to assure them of victory as they claimed the Land. It included the following:

1. Love and obey God (Deut. 6:1-5)
2. Teach their children God's laws (Deut. 6:6-9)
3. Do not forget what God has done (Deut. 6:10-12)
4. Do not worship idols (Deut. 6:13-15)

Moses had mentored Joshua to lead God's people into the Promised Land. Joshua followed the instructions of Moses to the tee. As a result, he had victory after victory because he placed his allegiance on the Lord. Most of the land was conquered and it was distributed to the 12 tribes. However, the tribes needed to claim the remaining part of the land for their inheritance by defeating and dislodging the inhabitants. The people of Israel owned all the land because God had promised it to them. However, they did not possess all of it. They needed to trust God and claim it.

Under Joshua's leadership, God greatly blessed His people because they obeyed God. Surrounding nations' hearts melted as they saw the power of God. God's people were influencing the world. However, there was a drastic change after Joshua passed away. His people did not follow what Moses taught them. They disobeyed God. In Judges 21:25, it gives a summary of the Book of Judges. It says, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." Instead of influencing the world, the world influenced God's people. They did not put their allegiance on God as their king. As a result, they were disciplined.

Like the Israelites, God has called us to shine for Him by being obedient to Him so that we can draw people to the Lord. As we place our allegiance on God as our king, God will bless us and use us for His glory. However, we have seen how our culture has influenced the Church instead of the Church influencing our culture. God's absolute truths are being compromised. Our country has imitated the Children of God in the period of Judges, where there was no king and everyone did as he saw fit. Our country is in a mess. God's people need to wake up and turn their allegiance back to God as their King.

We are starting a new preaching series called "You Really Need a King." God's people fell into sin as they compromised with the world. As a result, they were judged by God. After being broken, they repented and turned back to the Lord, who delivered them. God's people today need to be broken and to turn back to God as their king. We need a spiritual revival so that we can make a greater impact on our culture.

Before the death of Joshua, there was no succession plan. Joshua did not disciple anyone to take his place. As a result, there was a vacuum of leadership. Right off the bat, the Israelites were wise enough to consult with the Lord asking who would lead them to battle. Joshua 1:1, "After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, "Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?" The Lord answered, "Judah is to go; I have given the land into their hands." My message is entitled "Compromised Discipleship." I have divided the message into three sections: The Days of Glorious Conquest, the Days of Gradual Compromise, and the Days of Grim Consequences. We will follow the journey of God's people as they made compromises that drew them away from God.

A. Days of Glorious Conquest

God told Judah to go first because Judah was the tribe where the future Messiah would come as recorded in Gen. 49. The tribe of Judah without any hesitation obeyed God and claimed the promise of God for the coming conquest. They did ask the Tribe of Simeon to go with him in battle. Since Leah had given birth to Judah and Simeon, these tribes were blood brothers. With God's help, the two tribes conquered the Canaanites. In verse 4, it is clear that the Lord gave the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands.

APPLICATION: When God invites us to partner with Him and we make ourselves available for God's service, He will do the heavy lifting. We will miss out on God's conquest when we refuse God's invitation. God invited Judah to fight for Him. As he made himself available, God gave him victory.

Is God inviting you to partner with Him on a project? Don't be scared. When He calls us, He always provides the necessary resources. Is God calling you to disciple someone? Is God calling you to serve in the church or your small group? All God wants from us is availability. He will do the heavy lifting.

In verse 8, it says, "The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem also and took it. They put the city to the sword and set it on fire." Judah continued to trust God, who gave them another conquest at Jerusalem. In verses 9-10, they fought against the Canaanites living in the hill country, the Negev and the western foothills. They made advancement and defeated the inhabitants there. When the tribes of Judah and Simeon obeyed the Lord, they were victorious. God kept His promise by giving them victories as they obeyed exactly what God instructed them to do. They were attacking and driving out the enemies of the Promised

Land. In verses 17-18, Judah continued to claim one city after another. These were the days of glorious conquest. The secret to their conquest is recorded in verse 19, “The Lord was with the men of Judah.” This reminds me of Romans 8:31, which says, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” May we learn to trust and depend on the Lord alone. May it be evident to others around us that the Lord is with us.

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites started out well, but unfortunately, the tribes went from being obedient to God to being partial obedient to disobedience. We entered into the Days of gradual compromise.

B. Days of Gradual Compromise

Instead of fighting the enemy, the Israelites spared the enemy. This was the beginning of a long list of defeats. In v. 19, Judah took several Philistine cities and the hill country; but he could not take the valley due to the strength of the Canaanites’ iron chariot. Judah initially took Jerusalem, which is in the land given to Benjamin, but Benjamin in verse 21 was not able to drive out the Jebusites. In the end, they allowed these pagans to dwell with them. Here we see partial obedience. The inhabitants were not driven out. This was the beginning a slippery slope that led the people away from God.

It started with tolerance. “They are not that bad of a people. We will just make them slaves. Driving out the inhabitants might be hard work.” They tolerated the ways of the Canaanites. They began to imitate their worldly neighbors instead of being a testimony to the only true God. Instead of driving out the evil enemies, they began to compromise with their enemies and adapted their worldly, immoral, and idolatrous ways.

These incidents teach us many lessons. The Jews lived in a culture that was in opposition to their faith. Instead of setting apart from them, they allowed their culture to slowly influence them. One compromise led to another compromise. Instead of upholding what they believe, then conceded.

1. Canaanites that they feared

In verse 19, we witness Judah’s unbelief and compromise. It said that the men of Judah took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had iron chariots. Judah failed to believe God. Judah did not trust God to help in conquering the enemies of the plains because of the enemy’s high power weaponry, the iron chariots. Here they confronted Canaanites that they feared. Instead of trusting God, they shrunk back and compromised.

APPLICATION: There might be people that are around us that we fear. We fear their ridicule, their name calling, and their rejection. And we are tempted to give in? The important lesson that we can learn from here is that victory has nothing to do with the size of the enemy, but rather with the size of our faith in the promises of God.

ILLUSTRATION: A member of our church was very uncomfortable for some of the unethical behavior taking place at his company. When he brought it to the attention of his supervisor, he threatened to fire him if he did not comply with his underhanded ways. After praying about it, this member of our church decided that he was accountable to a higher being and His moral standards. He submitted his resignation. That was a very

bold decision that he made to obey the Lord. After he resigned, the Lord gave him a much better job.

2. Canaanites that they favored

The Jews not only faced Canaanites that they feared, but also Canaanites that they favored. The Israelites tolerated the ways of the inhabitants. Here not only did they not drive them out, but they lived among them. However, we are in the world, but not of the world. They challenged the Canaanites for a while, but the Canaanites were determined to live in that land as recorded in v.27. Instead of staying strong on their convictions, they compromised. It was gradual as they tolerated with their culture.

These compromises are spelled out in a list of progressive failures. Seven times in these verses, the tribes are charged with not driving others out. The significance of this is that by not driving out the inhabitants, the Israelites left themselves open to the influence of other religions. They felt it was too much struggle, too much energy, too much effort, too much personal cost that was required to conquer the remainder of the Promised Land. Judah and other tribes decided to compromise and live a permissive lifestyle rather than to obey God.

APPLICATION: We live in a world where God has called us to be a light in the world and to *influence the world*. But unfortunately, some Christians have responded in one extreme or the other extreme. I like what Chip Ingram, a modern theologian, said,

“We cringe with remorse and embarrassment when we hear hate-filled speech and name calling and see violent actions by “Christians” in their effort to address issues like abortion, homosexuality, and the environment. We understand their passion for truth and moral fidelity but perceive their method and lack of love to be anything but Christ-like.

On the other end of the continuum, we are equally dismayed by those in the Church who have abandoned or compromised the moral absolutes in Scripture. In the name of tolerance, relevance, political correctness, and compassion, they have embraced popular culture’s views on human sexuality, abortion, and homosexuality as “Christian” views while violating the clear teaching of Scripture. We understand their passion to champion God’s grace and acceptance, but grace without truth is unloving and again anything but Christ-like.”

Our culture has set guidelines as to how we are to behave. We have moved away from absolute truth to relative truth. Instead of asking what is right and wrong, we ask what will work. We stress what is pragmatic instead of what is truth. May we not only understand our convictions that God has given to us, but to stand firm in it. Let us be graceful, but firm.

3. Canaanites that they fellowshipped

The Jews became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn’t seem sinful any more. Progressively, the Israelites were influenced more and more by the people that dwelled in the land. First they feared them and avoided them. Then they favored them and did not drive them out. Finally, they fellowshipped with them. They dwelled among them. They slowly drifted away from the Lord. Instead of setting themselves apart from the world, they tolerated the sin of the world and then they embraced it.

APPLICATION: Falling out of love of God is a gradual process. Many of us do not mean to fall out of love for God, but it happens in a gradual process. We make small compromises like missing time with the Lord: “I am really tired today, I will just miss one small group or worship service. God would understand.” Before we know it, our priority for God has shifted. He takes the back seat. “Since everything is going well, I do not need Him. When I get in a jam, then I will give God a call.”

We allowed the world to shape our value system. Instead of holding onto absolute truth from Scripture, we adopt the relative truth model. Instead of having our life validated by a set of biblical principles, we validate our life based on personal experience, which the world teaches. “If it feels good, do it! Do your own thing. You choose your truth, I’ll choose mine.” “Truth is different for different people. We won’t judge each other about what is right from wrong. To do so would be intolerant.” According to George Barna’s research among evangelical Christians, 54% do not believe in absolute truth.

Asher and Naphtali allowed the previous inhabitants to dwell among them. Let us read vv. 32-33, “And because of this the people of Asher lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. Neither did Naphtali drive out those living in Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath; but the Naphtalites too lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, and those living in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath became forced laborers for them.” We are to live in the world, but not be of the world. They had moved from the days of glorious conquest to the days of gradual compromise; now thirdly, all of these compromises led to the days of grim consequences.]

C. Days of Grim Consequences

A preacher once said, “Sin will take you further than you want to go; it’ll take you longer than you want to stay; and it will cost you more than you want to pay.” As we turn to Judges 2:3, we see the grim consequences, “Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.” God basically said, “If you want to live in sin and not obey me, I will let you bear the consequences of sin.” God would not drive their enemies out before them. “The values you embraced from the world will become a thorn and snare to you.

We as Christians need to wake up and go back to the absolute truth in the Bible. May we repent and seek after God. Instead of compromising our discipleship, may we return to the Lord acknowledging God as our king. May we recommit ourselves to His truths.