

More Lessons from History - Judges to 1 Samuel:

Tonight's question: *What do the books of Ruth and Judges have in common?*

The book of Joshua covers a period of about twenty-five years. **Judges** covers a period of about three hundred years.

The book of **Judges** is the story of a continually repeated cycle of defeat - of decline, discipline, and then deliverance - over and over again!

God sent judges to the people of Israel to deliver them from persecution and bondage.

The book begins with the story of Othniel, the first judge God sent, and ends with the story of Samson, the last judge. There were seven judges altogether whom God used to deliver the people.

However no sooner had God set the people back on their feet than they began again to fail. Everything that happened to Israel is as an example to us. **[Read 1 Corinthians 10:11]** If this is so then we must ask ourselves "why did they fail?" What is the stumbling block or "peril" of the book of Judges? **[Read Judges 2:11-13]**

Israel fell into idolatry! *After the tremendous victories of Joshua, how did they ever get into this mess so quickly?* The key to the book in the very last verse. **[Read Judges 21:25]**

The danger shown to us in the book of Judges is what might be called "**dedicated ignorance**". It wasn't that these people did not want to do right. It was that they simply were deluded. They did what was right - it doesn't say they did what was wrong - they did what was right in their own eyes. But they didn't know what was right.

*Remembering what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians we must learn why so many Christians today are weak, ineffective and defeated. They are suffering from **dedicated ignorance**. There is nothing wrong with their dedication. They mean well, but they did not expose themselves to truth and relied on their own deficient morals.*

For this same reason, throughout the period of the Judges there was a repeated cycle of failure, defeat and deliverance for a while by God's grace; but then the cycle would begin all over again.

In the last chapters of Judges we can read of the darkest, most terrible picture of sexual depravity in all the history of Israel, arrived at by a repeated cycle of moral failure, but right in the middle is the wonderful little story of **Ruth**.

The books of Ruth and Judges are related in that the events of Ruth took place in the same time as the first half of Judges.

In the book of Ruth is a story of faithfulness in the midst of defeat. A heathen Moabite woman heard the voice of God - heard the story of grace in a far country - and left all

her friends and home and family, remained with Naomi - her mother in law - and returned with her to Israel. It is the most beautiful story of romance in the Bible - a young, lovely widow meets a rich young bachelor, and they were married.

Ruth is one of only 4 women mentioned in the ancestry of Jesus Christ **[Read Matthew 1:5]** and she was not an Israelite!

When Ruth left her home and all her friends, she was willing to walk with God despite all the defeat and failure in the land around her. **[Read Ruth 1:16-17]**

Ruth therefore is the single character in the Books of Judges and Ruth that stands against the predominant danger of the books - dedicated ignorance - she was faithful to God and believed in Him rather than her own flawed morals.

Now on to **1 Samuel**. This is largely the story of two men - Samuel and Saul. *(later on in 1 Samuel there is the early history of David)*

Samuel was the greatest judge Israel ever had. His ministry lasted over forty years. During this time the people were still hungry after something other than God. The first danger to faith in this book is in **1 Samuel 8:5**.

The trouble with the Israelites wishes is that God had called this nation to be *unlike all other nations!* Here they were hungry to be like them, and particularly to have some kind of authority other than God.

This danger or peril to faith can be called "the peril of **legalistic conformity**" - the desire for outward rule over life - one of the most devastating perils of all in the spiritual life.

With the freedom and liberty we have in Christ means that we must continually be exercising judgments, making decisions, evaluating circumstances. Lots of people don't want to do that! They don't like the freedom God gives us in Christ. But a life lived under rules is always a life lived in bondage - serving rules (religion) rather than God!

This is the story of the life of the nation during Samuel's time. God allowed the people to choose a king and they chose Saul.

The story of Saul is one of the great tragedies of the Bible. He was a man of great promise, a handsome man with great abilities. His defeat came because he sought the *favor of man*. **[Read 1 Samuel 15:7-20]** Saul was told by God to kill all the Amalekites, but he refused and saved King Agag, because he felt this would find him favor in the eyes of the people. So the awful tragedy of Saul's life was the **second peril of divided allegiance**. He was quite content to serve God so long as it pleased those around him.

Have you ever discovered this in your life? It is a peril which will defeat you ultimately and bring the same tragic end which Saul finally came to - his kingdom was taken from him, his crown taken from his head. He lost everything!

The person/s who display victory over the peril of *legalistic conformity* and *divided allegiance* is found in the story of David and Jonathan.

Next time we will continue with the 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. This is all about David. What do you think the peril of these two books is? What did David do wrong and what led to his downfall?)