

(Through the Bible) Judges & Ruth

by Zac Poonen

The book of Judges highlights the importance of good leadership in God's work and the consequences of backsliding, emphasizing the need for spiritual leaders who know God.

Duration: 54:16

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:27

Topics: "Leadership Principles", "Faithfulness Matters"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Judges, highlighting the importance of good leadership for God's people to prosper. It emphasizes the need for leaders who know God and seek His will, contrasting the failures of leaders like Aaron with the faithfulness of leaders like Moses and Joshua. The sermon also explores the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman who exemplified faithfulness and humility, ultimately becoming the great grandmother of King David and part of Jesus' ancestral line.

Transcript

Okay, we can begin now. Let's turn now to the book of Judges, the book of Judges, Judges chapter 1. Now Judges is describing the backslidden state of Israel immediately after this very powerful victory and triumph they had in the book of Joshua over a period of a number of years. And again we see the same lesson that we have seen before, that everything depends on God's people having a good leader.

Wherever there were good leaders, whenever there were good leaders, Israel prospered. When Moses was leading Israel, everything was okay. When Moses went up to the mountain for 40 days, just 40 days, they started worshipping idols, made a golden calf.

Even Aaron could not control them. Most leaders in Christendom are not strong enough to control God's people, to keep them in the straight and uncompromising path because those leaders don't know God themselves. They seek popularity like Aaron, and so a person who seeks popularity can never be a man of God, can never lead God's people.

Moses never sought popularity, neither did Joshua. But by the time of the Judges, Joshua had died and there was nobody there to replace him. And so what happened? We read in chapter 2 and verse 7, the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which he had done for Israel.

And then Joshua died. And then, verse 10, that generation also died. And then there arose another generation, verse 10, chapter 2, 10, who did not know the Lord.

That was the problem, nor the work which he had done for Israel. The problem was there was nobody who knew God. And I want to tell you, after many years and years of moving around so many Christian groups, I have to say, I have seen very few people who know God.

Very few people who can say like Elijah, as the Lord God lives before whom I stand. Most people in Christian work today are professional preachers. They studied the Bible somewhere, they got a degree and they're going out to serve God.

Or they got a zeal. There may be sacrifice, there may be zeal, but all that will not help if you don't know God. You can do a lot of work and your statistics may be impressive, but the quality of your converts will be poor.

Because you yourself don't know God. Yeah, these were Israelites in the book of Judges. And we can say our church has got believers, but what type of believers? The apostles were also believers, the people in your church are also believers, but what a difference.

Between spiritual believers and carnal believers. A man of God realizes it's better to have a small church of spiritual believers than a large one full of carnal people. That's like saying it's better to have one 1000 watt bulb than 20 zero watt bulbs.

Do you agree with me or not? That's what I mean. You are the light of the world. The intensity of that light depends on how much you know God.

And if the leader doesn't know God, the people don't know God either. The people know the Bible. You can study the Bible and tell people all about it.

And they get to know the Bible just like teaching chemistry or physics or some subject like that in a classroom. But that doesn't get people to know God. You can't teach people to know God by just giving them information.

And you can't know God that way yourself. You've got to go through trials, you've got to humble yourself. You've got to have a yearning in your heart.

It's in the hours of the night that we come to know God, not sitting in a classroom. We need to know the scriptures, but we need to go through the scriptures, beyond the scriptures to know God. The people who know their God will be strong.

It says in Daniel 11.32. So these people did not know God. And therefore, verse 11, the sons of Israel, 2.11, did evil and even began to serve other gods. So that's the result of Joshua's death.

And it's happened throughout Christendom, we read, in the history of Christianity in the last 2,000 years. Wherever God has raised up a godly man, a John Wesley here, a William Booth there, a Hudson Taylor here, a C.D. Studd there. They've been able to lead people to some extent.

An A.B. Simpson here, a Charles Finney there. To some extent, they're able to lead them, but then they die. And another generation comes up.

They hold the same doctrines. They take the same denominational name. But it's not the same.

Their doctrines are the same. Their beliefs are the same. Their theories of sanctification are the same, but they are not sanctified.

Like their leader was, like their founder was. They claim to have the same baptism in the Holy Spirit that their founder had, but the result is not the same. It must be some other spirit then.

See, this is what has happened in Christendom again and again and again and again. And again, God has to raise up a man. God has always done his greatest work in the church through single men whom he has raised up.

In different generations, in different lands. And around such a man, God gathers together a few people who are concerned not so much for size as for quality. For the purity of a testimony for God in their generation.

And I believe that India needs many, many, many such men and women. Even women, in the book of Judges you find that when God couldn't find a man, he found a woman called Deborah. That's an encouragement to all the sisters.

So God is looking, and when he finds one, in the measure in which that person has yielded, he uses him. Not all were of the same quality. And you see that very clearly.

In the book of Judges there was hardly anybody. No one of the quality of Moses and Joshua. They were leaders.

Gideon was a good man when he started out, but he declined towards the end of his life. So the book of Judges is very relevant to the type of life we see. And Israel failed to conquer Canaan.

And the Lord said to them in chapter 2, verse 3, He says, I told you, an angel of the Lord, verse 1, came and said, Chapter 2, verse 1, I brought you out of Egypt. I led you into the land. I said I'll never break my covenant with you.

I told you, you must make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land. You must tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed me.

You have not obeyed the manufacturer's instructions. You followed your own reasoning, just like a lot of Christian leaders today. They don't preach what God's word says.

They always think, how will it affect the people? Is this relevant to our time? Those are all in the first century. Now we are in the 20th century. We must modify it.

That's exactly what these people also did. They didn't follow exactly what God said. And the result is, okay, you don't listen to me.

Therefore, these people, you will not be able to drive them out. You will not overcome sin. You'll live with your problems all your life.

And these people will be like thorns in your sides, verse 3. And their gods will be a snare to you. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they wept. And they sacrificed.

But they didn't change. And a lot of Christians today who fast and pray and get all stirred up when they hear a message like this and they weep. But they don't change.

They go back to their old ways very soon. Because, again, they've got their leaders leading them in the wrong direction. And there are very few people who say, I want to know God.

And I want to live by the standards of God's word. Many of you come from many parts of this land. When you go back, please remember that God wants you to be a witness for him.

Like Joshua. Like Moses. To lead a number of people in your locality to the truth.

And if you want to be like that, and you don't want to be like the people in the book of Judges, be a man of God. Be a one who knows God. Be a woman of God.

In Joshua, in the book of Judges, we read about 13 judges that God raised up from chapter 3 to chapter 16. You read about 13 judges. The 14th one was Samuel that you read of in the book of Samuel.

There were altogether 14 judges. 13 of them, most of their names are not so well-known. A few of them perhaps you will know.

The first of them was a man called Othniel, who happened to be the son-in-law and also the nephew of Caleb. You read of him in chapter 3, verse 9. The Lord raised up a deliverer when the Israelites were being enslaved. The Lord raised up a deliverer, and his name was Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, and who also married Caleb's daughter, as we read in the book of Joshua.

I think it's chapter 14 there. And it says, the spirit of the Lord came upon him, verse 10, and he judged Israel. Now that occurs more than once in the book of Judges.

The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. The spirit of the Lord came upon Samson. See, this was their ability, the qualification, which enabled them to guide and rule Israel.

So we see this emphasis, that it was not anything else, but the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. And that is what must be said about you and me. We may be born again, the Holy Spirit may have come and done a work in our hearts, but it must be said about us, the spirit of the Lord came upon us, and that qualifies us to serve.

And don't be just satisfied with an emotional experience that you got in some meeting. Don't even be satisfied with speaking in tongues. I believe there are a lot of people today who speak in tongues.

I don't believe the Holy Spirit has filled them. I don't know what they got, but when I look at their life, it doesn't seem to convince me that this is the Holy Spirit. There is not an anointing, there is no power.

They seem to have some gift, I don't know how to explain it, but they certainly don't seem to have power. And don't ever be satisfied without the power of the Holy Spirit. You can never, never, never, never, never do God's work without the Holy Spirit's power.

Even Jesus, who lived a perfect life for 30 years, born of the Spirit, lived in obedience to the Spirit for 30 years before he stepped out into the ministry. He was baptized and he prayed, and as he prayed, the Spirit of God came upon him. And he went out into his ministry.

Follow him, follow his example. There is no other way. Any amount of knowledge, any amount of information, any amount of certificates will never qualify you to serve God.

It's the anointing, it's the anointing. So that's what we see here. But the land had rest for 40 years, verse 11, and then Othniel died.

And again, the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. And when they did evil, the Lord allowed the enemy, the king of Moab, to rule Israel. And they served, verse 14, the king of Moab for 18 years.

In the book of Judges, we see seven cycles like this. It's a cycle. Backsliding, punishment, backsliding, punishment, they have to serve the enemies.

Then God raises up a judge. Deliverance. And then the judge dies.

Backsliding again. Punishment. They cry out to God.

He raises up a deliverer. Deliverance. Again, backsliding.

This is a cycle. This is the life of many, many believers is like this. You can call it an up and down wave type of experience.

Or a cycle where you just keep going round and round and round and round. That you come to a meeting, perhaps like this, and you get all stirred up. And you're dedicated.

And you're stirred. By, could be anywhere. You went for a meeting and some anointed man proclaimed the word.

You got challenged. Stirred up. And you came back to God.

And then that man moves away or you don't have any more contact with him. Backsliding again. Till another man, anointed man, comes somewhere.

You come to a meeting and you get all stirred up. And you're all delivered and free and you're rejoicing for a time. Then you lose contact with him again.

Backsliding. Should it be like this? No. Today we have the Holy Spirit to be with us all the time.

Every one of us can have the Spirit come upon us. In those days the Spirit came upon one man. And he led.

So you were dependent on that one man. Today the Spirit can come on every one of us. We don't have to be dependent on one man.

Not at all. And we can, every one of us can keep that fire of God burning within us all the time. And then they were serving Moab for 18 years.

Again the sons of Israel, verse 15, cried to the Lord. And the Lord raised up another deliverer called Ehud. He was the second judge.

So I'm surprised that they waited for 18 years to cry. Why didn't they cry as soon as they backslid? Why does a person have to wait for 18 years of backsliding before he turns back? I can't understand that.

That's how it is.

And that's how it is even today I see. And Ehud became another king. And after that Moab was subdued.

And verse 30, the land was undisturbed for 80 years. Okay. But then again they backslid and Shamgar, he came up.

And he was another man on whom the Spirit of God came. And it says he killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad. Certainly that was another man like Samson.

We thought Samson was the only one who had supernatural strength. And Shamgar, who was not so well known, was another man who was equipped with supernatural strength to deliver Israel. But then the sons of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.

Between Ehud and Shamgar there doesn't seem to have been much of a gap. But after that again they did evil. And then the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan.

Imagine, the Canaanites, they ruled now ruling them. The condition of many believers, we're supposed to rule over sin, but sin rules them. Then they cried to the Lord, because this man had 900 iron chariots.

And he oppressed Israel for 20 years, chapter 4, verse 3. And then the Lord raised up Deborah. I want to say a word here. I believe that God has appointed men to be leaders in the church.

In 1 Timothy 2, in the last few verses of that chapter, it says, Adam was created first and Eve was created as a helper for Adam. It was not that Eve was created first and Adam was created like a helper for his wife. That's how it is in some homes today.

But that's not the way it should be. That's not the way God created man. Eve was to be a helper to Adam.

Secondly, it says, Adam was not deceived. In 1 Timothy 2, Eve was deceived. Therefore, the Lord says through Paul in 1 Timothy 2, I do not allow a woman to be a teacher in a church.

She can teach Sunday school, she can teach other girls, and she can teach her children at home, but she cannot be a teacher in a church. And she cannot be an elder in a church. That is God's will.

But, it was the same in the Old Testament. In fact, in Isaiah, there's a verse that says, what a pathetic condition you Israelites are that women are your leaders. But, what shall God do when he finds the men are all useless, and lazy, and lazy, and do not do the evangelism they are supposed to do? Then God will raise up a Deborah.

And that's why through the years, He has raised up many Deborahs. And I praise the Lord for every one of them. Sure, I agree with God.

Always. But, I don't believe that's God's first choice. But, He has used some women, mightily.

Through the years, He's used the writings of people like Madam Guillaume, Jessie Van Lewis. Amazing teaching ministry some of these women like that had. I believe when God doesn't find a man, He has to use a woman.

And that's what we learn from the book of Deborah. I will pour out my spirit on your sons and your daughters. It says in Acts 2. And your sons and your daughters will prophesy.

The daughters of Philip, we read, were prophesying. In Acts of the Apostles. So, though they are not called to be elders, they can prophesy and speak forth God's word.

It's mentioned in Acts chapter 2. And in the example of the daughters of Philip. And here is a wonderful example of Deborah. Who was more than a prophetess.

She was a prophetess. Verse 4. She was the wife of Lapidoth. I don't know what type of brother, brother Lapidoth was.

But, he was a pretty meek, quiet man. Who was Cherub his wife. That was his address.

And he just lived there with a meek and a quiet spirit. And Deborah was the leader. Okay.

He couldn't find Lapidoth. Okay, he uses his wife. And I think in the Acts of the Apostles, it appears as though, I can't show you a verse.

But, it appears as though Priscilla seemed to know God and the scriptures better than her husband Aquila. Because sometimes you don't read Aquila and Priscilla. You read Priscilla and Aquila.

And that's significant. So, even in the New Testament, there are examples of people who know God better than their husbands and who know the scriptures better than their husbands. And then they should.

But Priscilla is a wonderful lady in the Old Testament. She lives in submission to her husband Aquila and guides even a man like Apollos to a correct understanding of the truth. She doesn't get up in the church and denounce Apollos.

No. She called him home and sat down with her husband and let her. That's a wonderful example of a man, of a woman, who knew her place, but who had the anointing of God upon her life and could help a man like Apollos who grew up to be a co-worker of the Apostle Paul.

But the one who helped him first was a woman, Priscilla. So, Deborah here used to sit under the palm tree. It was called the palm tree of Deborah, verse 5. And the sons of Israel came to her for judgment.

And maybe her husband Lampadot was cooking the food inside and she was sitting under the tree judging. Yeah, that happens sometimes. God has to do that because the condition of all the men in Israel was so pathetic at that time.

And then she sent and summoned Barak. See, this is the difference. She was a woman who recognized her position.

She didn't go out to battle. She said, I need a man just like Priscilla called Aquila. She called Barak, the son of Abinom and said, see, the Lord has commanded.

You go and march and take 10,000 men with you and go and fight. And I'll draw out Sisera and I will give him into your hand. The last part of verse 7. Such a clear word from the Lord.

And if you want to know the condition of Israel's men and Barak was the best of them, see his, listen to his reply. He says, sister, if you come with me, I'll go. I'm scared to go alone.

Please. See the condition of the best man in Israel. Sister, please come with me.

Then I will go. Otherwise, I will not go sister. If you say you're not coming, I'm not going.

I'm scared. And she said, okay, I'll come with you Barak. Oh, thank you sister.

Now I'll go. But the Lord says that Deborah told Barak because you're like this, you're an effeminate man. The honor of killing Sisera will not come to you.

A woman will kill Sisera. And you read later on at the end of that story that it was a woman called Jea. Jea, who killed Sisera in verse 22.

A woman. See this is the condition of the men in that time. And I find that there is a lesson here for men.

God is disappointed when He doesn't find men to lead. But God's work will not be hindered just because the men fail Him. He will use the sisters.

And He's used so many sisters as missionaries through the centuries across the lands in many, many places to even in Africa. Mary Schleser and different ones like that who've been used of God to do a tremendous work. Amy Carmichael here down in South India.

Many godly women like that whom God has raised up because He couldn't find a man. So God is not limited. He will use a woman if He can't find a man.

And He'll use anybody. But God is going to determine to do His work. And Deborah and Barak then sing a song.

In chapter 5 it's called the song of Deborah and Barak. And I want you to notice one or two things here in this song. It says here in chapter 5 in the song verse 16.

He's talking about the different tribes that came to fight in the battle. And he says among the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart, verse 16. And verse 23, curse Meroz.

Why? Why curse Meroz? Because they did nothing. They did not sin. They did nothing.

They did not come to the help of the Lord when the enemy was coming. Sometimes we may say, well I never sinned anything. Maybe you didn't sin.

But you did not go out in the battle to fight. That's your sin. And there's a curse.

There's a curse on people who sit back committing no sin and not fighting the battles of the Lord. That's not a sin of commission. That's a sin of omission.

There are two types of sins. Sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission are where you go and do something wrong.

Sins of omission are where you do nothing. When you should have done something. You know the story of the Good Samaritan? The man was lying there.

Fallen, beaten up. What was the sin of the Levite and the priest who walked by? They did nothing. That was their sin.

Meroz was like that. There was a need for warriors to fight for the Lord. They did nothing.

There's a need for warriors today. When you do nothing, you're sinning. When you sit back and say, I'm living a good life.

I'm living a comfortable life. I'm not hurting anybody. I'm not harming anybody.

You're living in sin. Because you do not come to the aid of the Lord's workers who are battling in the battle front. Okay.

Now we come to the land was undisturbed. Chapter 5 verse 31 for 40 years. And again, chapter 6 verse 1. The Lord, they did evil in the sight of the Lord.

They became captives to the Midianites for 7 years. And then God raised up Gideon. And it says about Gideon that the spirit of the Lord came upon him.

Verse 34. The spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon. The margin says, like a dress came upon him.

That's how it was in the Old Testament. Like a dress came upon Gideon. And Gideon blew a trumpet and went out to battle.

And I want you to notice how he selected these men. There were 32,000 people who came to fight. And the Lord said, these people are too many.

Chapter 7 verse 2. God doesn't want so many people because they're not all wholehearted. Send them home. He says, all those who are afraid, go home.

That's what the Lord says. Are you afraid of the devil? Go home. Are you afraid that somebody will call you a bad name? Go home.

Are you afraid that somebody will call you bilzibub or heretic or false prophet? Go home. If you're scared of bad names, brother, go home. Don't serve the Lord.

22,000 went home. 10,000 were left in verse 3. He says, this is also too much. These 10,000 are not wholehearted.

Most of them are interested in money. Most of them are interested in seeking their own. Take them down to the water.

Verse 4, and I will test them there. And when they came to the water, there were some people who forgot all about the enemy, bowed down their heads in the water and began to drink. Like people who, when they see something attractive in the world, forget about the Lord, forget about the Lord's battles, and bury their head in their job and in their pursuit of money.

And the Lord says, send them home. 9,700 went home. But there were 300 there.

When they came to the water, they stood up, looking for the enemy and just drinking enough water and being alert. These are the believers who, they need the world, they need money, but they don't get taken up with it. They do their jobs, but that's minimum.

Their aim is to live for God. The Lord says, those are the people I want. And there were only 300.

One percent of that original 32,000. One percent. It's always like that.

Two, Joshua and Caleb out of 600,000. The Lord says, that's enough for me. And they went down, and they took, it says here in chapter 7 and verse 20.

They divided into three companies, 100 each. Each of them carried a trumpet and a pitcher with a light inside. Now this is very significant.

They broke their pitchers so that the light shone, and they blew their trumpets. This is a picture of life and witness, ministry. A witness to our life and through our speech.

Through our trumpet, we proclaim the Lord, and when Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and that earthen vessel must be broken through carrying the dying of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 4, 7-10. He was thinking of Gideon's army, carrying an earthen vessel with a light inside, which could not be seen until the vessel was broken.

So God is looking for people who are broken through so that the light of the life of Christ can be seen and who blow the trumpet and proclaim the word of God unashamedly. Those are the people the Lord is looking for and the enemy was defeated. I just want to say one more thing.

Before Gideon went to this battle, the Lord told him, if you want to get a little courage, verse 9, just go down at night to the enemy camp and listen to what they are saying. And he heard that they were scared of Gideon. And I would say to you, if you go into the camp of the devil and listen, you'll hear that they are scared of Jesus and all those who follow him.

And that should encourage you. That's what encourages me to go into this battle. The devil is scared of Jesus Christ, my captain.

And that's how they went into battle. Gideon is a picture of Christ here. But, we read that even Gideon did not endure.

They wanted him to rule over them. Chapter 8, verse 22. And he said, no, I won't rule.

Neither will my son rule. The Lord will rule over you. That sounds very spiritual.

But then, some of these people who sound very spiritual, in the next sentence they compromise. They said, but please give me an earring, all of you. So all the people gave their earrings and when they got, Gideon got 1700 shekels of gold, verse 26.

And what did he do with it? He made it into an ephod, verse 27 and placed it in the city of Ophira and that became an idol. So you see that Gideon backslid. We see the story so often even in history.

Mighty men used by God towards the end of their life, the anointing is gone. They've run after money. They're collecting earrings, gold.

They didn't start like that. We are seeing it, even in the 20th century, we see examples of that in our own country. People started so well.

Some of you have started very well. Learn a lesson from these people. And then, we read of other leaders, Abimelech, Tola, Jer, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and then we come to the 13th, Samson.

Chapter 13, we read of a family there that didn't have any children and God said, you're gonna have a son, he's gonna be a Nazirite. And Samson was born and the spirit of God came, stirred him. It says in chapter 13, verse 25, the Lord blessed him and the spirit of God began to move.

This is the secret of all these leaders. And unfortunately, the next verse, it says, Samson went down, chapter 14, verse 1, and saw a woman. This was his weakness throughout his life.

God used him, but he had a weakness for women. And Samson's example stands in great contrast to Joseph in Genesis. Many, many servants of God have been ruined through women.

And Samson is one outstanding example of that. And he was drawn to women who were not even Jews. Heathen women, unconverted women.

And then it says in verse 5, Samson, chapter 14, verse 5, went down to Timnah and in the vineyards of Timnah, a young lion came roaring towards him. And again, that expression, the spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, verse 6, and he caught that lion and tore him to pieces. Just like we tear a piece of paper, he tore him to pieces.

And then he didn't tell anybody. He didn't tell his father or mother. Now I suppose if you and I had killed a lion, we'd probably be telling the whole town about it.

But Samson was a humble man. He knew that it was the Holy Spirit. Many people start out like this.

But after a while, they change. He didn't tell anyone, it says. But next thing it says in verse 10 is he went down to the woman again.

The father went down and Samson married her. And you'd find this alternate thing in Samson's life. He would do a mighty thing and then he would go down and chapter 16, verse 1, he went to Gaza and he saw a harlot there and he went to her.

Then he would, when he was going to be caught, he'd just take out the gates of the city and walk out. And then after that, he went somewhere else, 16, verse 4, and he loved another woman called Delilah of the Philistines. And we know that she was the one who finally, this was not the first case.

I mean, God must have spoken to him many, many times with all these other women. Be careful, be careful, be careful. Sometimes God speaks to you, be careful, be careful, be careful.

And you keep playing the fool, you keep playing the fool, till finally one day calamity hits and your ministry is gone. That's what happened. It's what's happened to many, many, many creatures.

He finally put his head on Delilah's lap, revealed his innermost secrets to her. She cut off his hair and that was the end of his ministry. What a tragedy.

A man who was such a mighty deliverer, enslaved to his passions. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, he says, it's possible for me to preach to other people and be disqualified myself. Verse 27.

1 Corinthians 9, 27. And he says, if I'm not to be disqualified, there's only one thing I have to do to prevent myself from being disqualified. I have to keep my body in subjection.

Like the Living Bible paraphrases it, I tell my body what it should do. I make my body do what it should do, not what it wants to do. I make my body do what it should do, not what it wants to do.

I make my body eat as much as it should eat, not what it wants to eat. I make my body sleep as much as it should sleep, and not how much it wants to sleep. I control my eyes so that they don't look at the things the eyes want to look at, but look at the things they should look at.

I control my tongue so that it speaks what it should speak, not what it wants to speak. If you don't control your bodily passions, you can preach wonderful messages and be disqualified. That's the message of Samson.

Wonderful ministry. So many people blessed, but the man himself. Do you know how many great preachers and healers have fallen a prey to women? More in western countries.

It doesn't mean it's not happening here. Here it happens more secretly, I think, but it's happening, even among leaders. And some of those leaders continue as leaders, even though there's immorality in their life.

That's a sad state of Christendom today. Pathetic. Don't make such people your examples, even if they are great leaders of huge organizations.

God cannot use such a man. If you are not faithful with women, I'll tell you this, don't try to have a ministry. Forget it! Don't dishonor God's name by trying to be an elder or a leader.

If you don't know how to be faithful with women, just be an ordinary brother in a church. Don't try to fool the people that you're a holy man. God will expose you one day if you continue.

You think, no, no, no, you're clever. Maybe you're clever, but not clever enough for God. He will expose you worse than you've ever been exposed so far.

And it says in chapter 16 how he was defeated by this woman who cut her hair and he lost his power and his eyes were blinded. This is what happens when people go after women. They lose their spiritual vision.

They cannot see clearly anymore. They understood all the doctrines in their head, but spiritual vision is gone. And we read that he was enslaved, but finally he repented and he destroyed a lot of Philistines in his death.

But notice there were two lions. One was the lion outside and the other was the lion of lust inside his heart. Which was stronger? The lion inside.

Because he could conquer the external lion. He couldn't conquer the inward one, which teaches us that the lion of sexual lust is more to be feared than even if a huge lion came bouncing at you on the outside. What would you do if you saw a lion, a fierce lion coming down your way on the road? Tell me what would you do? I know what I'll do.

I'll turn around and run. And I'll probably break a few world records in that running process. I'd be scared.

Do you believe that the lion inside is worse? Are you ready to run? Flee immorality. There's only one thing to do. Don't go anywhere near temptation.

Don't go near women who tempt you. Be with godly sisters. Don't be... Don't ever go near a woman who's flirtatious.

Take that warning unless you want to destroy your life. Now those are some of the important chapters in Judges. Chapters 17 to 21 speak about a lot of idolatry and immorality and wars.

And it can be summed up. Everything can be summed up in chapter 21 verse 25. The last verse of Judges which says In those days there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. You see how it was? Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. That's how they lived in those days.

It's the verse that describes the book of Judges. There was no leader. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Just like a lot of Christians today who don't have any leadership. They don't allow Jesus to lead them and they don't have godly leaders to lead them. If you don't have Jesus as your leader you must at least have a godly leader on earth.

Otherwise you'll end up like this. Particularly when you're young. You will do what you think is right and you will go completely astray.

So that's how we conclude the book of Judges. Now the book of Ruth that follows that is a very brief book and I'd just like to quickly cover that before we finish this session. The book of Ruth it's a story it's an interesting story because it deals with a woman who was a Moabitess.

She was not a Jew. She was a Moabitess. Now Moab was one of the sons of Lot which came through incest when he committed adultery with his own daughter.

He got a son called Moab and from this race this polluted incestuous relationship came a race called the Moabites and from those Moabites was this woman Ruth. A very bad heritage and yet this woman became the great grandmother of King David and came in the ancestral line of Jesus Christ of Joseph and of Mary the earthly parents of Jesus. So it's amazing and that's why the story is so wonderful about this woman who was a Moabitess with all this bad history.

See God's love for prostitutes for people who've come from incestuous relationships. It's a great encouragement for some of you who may have come from a very bad past life. Maybe your family is a bad family.

Maybe you were born out of prostitution. It doesn't matter. Maybe you were born out of something worse than prostitution, incest like Ruth.

It doesn't matter. You can be a godly woman even now. That's the encouragement in the book of Ruth because of her character.

God did not judge her because she came from a certain race. God looked at her heart and saw that she was interested. You see particularly I don't have time to go into the whole story.

You must read that for yourself. It's a very interesting story. You read about how she was married.

First of all there was Elimelech and Naomi who when there was a famine they went into Moab. They had two sons and the two sons married Moabite women. Elimelech died and Naomi was a widow and then the two sons also died and the two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah also became widows.

And then Naomi was a good lady. She said all of you can go back to your own land. Verse 8 May the Lord be kindly with you.

I'm sorry that I brought all this trouble upon you. My children have died. I'm going back to my homeland of Israel.

And don't come with me. And they both verse 14 lifted up their voices and went. Ruth and Orpah went.

And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and said goodbye. I have to go home. I've got to find another husband.

I've got to take care of my life. But Ruth clung to her. She had learned something about the true God.

Orpah did not care for that. There was a fork in the road there. Orpah took the wrong one.

Ruth took the right one. Sometimes we come to forks in the road and we choose the way of God. Sometimes you hear a message which shows you two ways.

Some of you may be facing that right now. Orpah chose one. Ruth chose the other.

And it made all the difference. You never hear about Orpah again. Those forks in the road are very important.

That's the time you take a decision. And Ruth said, don't tell me to go back. I will go where you go, verse 16.

I will stay where you stay. Your people will be my people. Your God, my God.

She took a decision and that was it. I'm going to follow. Your God is my God.

Your people are my people. And when Naomi saw Ruth 118, that she was determined, she said, okay. And they both went and came back to Bethlehem, verse 19.

This is interesting. They came from Bethlehem. This is where Jesus was born.

The city of David. The city of David, because that's where Ruth came. And Naomi says, I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.

If only Naomi knew what lay ahead of her. Sometimes we complain that the Lord has brought me back empty. The Lord has witnessed against me.

The Almighty has afflicted me, verse 21. How foolish of Naomi to do that. But even though she had a mother-in-law like that, Ruth did not complain.

She took care of her mother-in-law and was a very very good daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law. God was watching all this. God was watching this heathen girl, not complaining.

Sometimes the people who come out of heathenism to Christ behave much better than those who are born in Christian families, even in believer's families. And that's what we see here. A girl who came out of a heathen background seen her is a challenge to all of us.

Her devotion to her mother-in-law, the way she took care of her. And then it says here that Naomi had a kinsman, chapter 2, verse 1. A relative, a man of great wealth called Boaz. Now there was a law in Israel that if your brother dies you must, in Deuteronomy 25, verse 5 to 9, you read about that law that if your brother dies you must marry the widow and bring her up and if, or the closest relative must marry the widow so that the name does not get destroyed.

And so Naomi thought well here is a close relative of mine called Boaz, perhaps he's still single perhaps he can marry Ruth. Now Ruth didn't know all that. She did not go looking for a husband.

She went looking for God. It was Orpha who went looking for a husband. Ruth went looking for God and found not only God but a good husband and a good future, everything because she sought God first.

It's one of those examples of people who seek God's kingdom first and find all the other things added to them. So we see here that Ruth is told let me go and get some do some work in the fields, you know, just like a field worker. She was a servant girl.

Let me go and earn some money, pick up some grain, glean among the ears of grain and pick up some things so that we can have food. You know there was a law in Israel that when people gleaned their fields, rich people, they shouldn't go back a second time to pick everything. Leave it for the poor.

So Ruth went to pick up these things. She was a poor girl and wanted to take care of herself and her mother-in-law and then she saw Boaz and Boaz saw this woman gleaning there and said, who is this woman? And they said, this is the young Moabite woman who has come back with Naomi and she said, can I please pick up the leftovers? And Boaz was such a kind man. He went up to Ruth and said, listen carefully my daughter.

He was scared this young girl can be corrupted by other people so he was a godly upright man and said don't go to glean in any other field. It's dangerous. Stay here and let your eyes be on the field and I commanded, verse 9, the servants not to touch you.

And she fell on her face, verse 10, bowing down and said, why have I found favor in your sight? She was a very humble girl. Why did God pick such a girl to be the ancestor of David and of Jesus Christ? Why did God pick such a girl to be the husband to the wife of Boaz? Because she was hard working. She was kind.

She was gracious. She was a woman of faith. One who treated her mother-in-law with respect and kindness and love and God chose.

Now those are the qualities God looks for even today in a young sister. A wonderful example we see in Ruth. And later on we see her mother-in-law when she came and asked her, where did you glean today, verse 19? She said, I gleaned in the field of Boaz.

And then Naomi said, I think I should seek security for you. Chapter 3, verse 1. Boaz is our relative. And do one thing.

Go to his field and just lie down there quietly and she did that and she told her what to say. And she must have explained to Ruth about this law which says a relative can marry you and redeem your property which you have sold. And so when Boaz meets her she says in chapter 3, verse 9, I'm Ruth your maid.

You're my close relative. Please redeem me. And Boaz said, blessed are you my daughter that you did not go after one of these young men.

Boaz must have been a much older man. And usually young girls like to go for young men. And he said, no, I'm so happy to see that you didn't go after these young men.

There is another relative who's closer than me. I must ask him first for that he will redeem you. So the next day Boaz went to the gate, chapter 4, and asked this other relative, see Naomi has come back.

You're the closest relative. Are you willing to redeem her? Redeem her property? The land which belonged to our brother Abimelech, verse 3. And he said, yes. I'll redeem it.

But Boaz said, there's one more thing. When you redeem it, you've also got to marry Ruth the Moabites. And he said, no.

In that case, I don't want to marry the Moabites because I will jeopardize my own inheritance and I may have some problems if I marry her. Her sons will claim an inheritance with my sons and so on. He said, so I cannot redeem it? And there was a custom those days, verse 7, the man would take off his sandal and give it to say that, verse 7, I'm not going to redeem Ruth.

Boaz said, okay. Then he told everybody, you're witnesses. Then I'm going to do it.

I'm going to buy this land and I'm going to make Ruth my wife. Now that was a tremendous step for a man like Boaz to marry a Moabites but he had seen qualities in this girl who had come from heathenism. You know, sometimes, if you want to understand it, you see how Christian boys sometimes do not like to marry a girl who has come from Hinduism.

But some of those girls who have come out of Hinduism are more godly than some who are born in so-called believers families. If you understand that problem, you understand Boaz's problem and how bold he was to take that step. And he married her and we read later on at the end of that chapter that to Ruth and Boaz, verse 21, they had a son called Obed.

Verse 22, to Obed was born Jesse and to Jesse was born David. Verse 17, Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of David. You see how God honored a woman from a heathen background because she honored God.

What we learn in Ruth is the truth of 1 Samuel 2.30 Those who honor me, I will honor and there is no partiality with God. I hope you are encouraged, especially your sisters. God bless you.

Let's pray.

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