

Judges: Missing Life For All The Wrong Reasons  
*The God Of Second Chances*

If you Google the phrase “Second Chance,” you get 6,030,000 hits. After you weed out all the links to the lyrics from the Shine Down song you’re left with things like this:

Second Chance: Taking People Off The Streets And Putting Them To Work, Second Chance Wildlife Center, Second Chance Pet Adoptions, Second Chance Services For Victims Of Domestic Sex Trafficking, Second Chance National Reentry Center For Criminal Offenders, Operation Second Chance For The Recovery And Rehabilitation Of Wounded Service Men And Women, Second Chance Employment Services, and on and on.

Obviously, as a nation, we recognize the worth of getting a second chance at life. We want people to succeed so we value second chances.

I have no doubt that all of us in this room could point out significant times in our life when we’ve been given second, third, even fourth or fifth chances.

Fortunately God is a God of second chances.

We’re in week two of a series on the Old Testament book of Judges we’re calling *Missing Life For All The Wrong Reasons*.

The God of the Bible created us to bring Him glory and honor. Worshipping God is the main reason we exist.

But that same God wants us to enjoy life by enjoying Him. Worshipping God isn’t a chore. It’s a joy when we really realize who He is and what He has done for us.

God our King could lord His authority over us. He could sit in heaven barking out orders with absolutely no concern for us. Instead He sent His Son to be our Savior. He sent Jesus Christ to die in payment for our transgressions of His law.

We broke the divine rules. We have lied, stolen, blasphemed, lusted, given in to jealousy. The list goes on and on. We’re the transgressors but God in His love for us became our Savior.

When we really understand that we were hopelessly lost, and that God has redeemed us through the cross, we can't help but worship Him. It's a pleasure to worship Him. There should be no reason why not to worship Him.

And yet as we'll see today in Judges...

### *1. The People Of God Are Susceptible To All Kinds Of Sin*

#### **Open your Bible to Judges chapter 2, page 218**

The book of Judges covers about 300 years of Jewish history starting right around 1380 BC. Now, that means that we're going to be reading about people who lived about 3400 years ago.

At first we might be tempted to ask, "So what? Who cares about people who lived thousands of years ago? What's this have to do with my life now?"

Here's what's so amazing about the Bible. Anybody have a set of encyclopedias from 1975 sitting on a shelf at home? They're 35 years old, they cost a virtual fortune new (2010 edition is \$1350) but you couldn't sell them on ebay right now. Nobody would bid on them. Why not? Because the information they contain is so outdated!

Things changes constantly, but not human nature. The Bible is timeless because it comes from the hand of a timeless God, but also because people really don't change.

The Jews were directed by God to drive the Canaanite people out of the land we now call Israel and Palestine.

The Canaanites were some of the most debauched people in history. Their worship involved fornication and perversion. They sacrificed their first born children. They practiced incest and bestiality. But what's so shocking about the book of Judges is the behavior of God's people.

#### **Read verses 7,10,11-13**

Over and over again we're going to see God's people pulled into to quagmire of the Canaanite lifestyle.

Kim Riddlebarger writes, "In this we see that the Jews of that era are just like we are. There is nothing new under the sun. As we lament the plague of pornography, celebrity worship, the sexualizing and coarsening of our culture, we will see much of the same thing in judges.

We are not the first to face such temptation springing from the lust of the flesh. While technology has improved beyond all measure, none of the things which trouble us today are really new. The people of Israel faced very similar challenges and temptations to those with which we are all too familiar.”

Any culture is only a generation away from apostasy. It only takes one generation of unfaithfulness to completely change a society.

*When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. (Verse 10)*

It's been said that God has no grandchildren. It's up to each successive generation to pass on the faith to the next generation. But there's only so much they can do.

I have to believe that those who were contemporaries of Joshua must have tried to convey God's truth to their children. But somehow the pull of the Canaanite religions was too strong.

*I. The People Of God Are Susceptible To All Kinds Of Sin*

*II. The More The People Of God Become Like The Culture, The More The Culture Takes Advantage Of Them*

### **Read verse 14**

In Deuteronomy 6, just before Israel enters the promised land God says, “Love Me and teach your children My truth.” Then He says, *So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant--when you have eaten and are full--then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*

*You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.*

*You shall not tempt the LORD your God. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you*

*shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken. (Deuteronomy 6:10-19)*

Did you notice that 10 times in those 10 verses God calls Himself the LORD (capital LORD). When you see LORD in all caps the translators are letting us know that the Hebrew word there is YHWH, or we would say, Jehovah.

Jehovah is the covenant name of God in relation to Israel. The nations around all had their gods. Their gods were mythological but they sincerely believed they were real. Israel worshipped the living God. Religious sincerity doesn't determine truth but it can sure imprison people in deception.

You'll hear people say, "God's not so much concerned with what you believe as much as how sincere you are in your faith." That's a philosophy that's completely contradictory to the Bible. The Canaanites were sincere.

Of course God's concerned about sincerity. But it's possible to be sincerely wrong. That's why Jesus said, *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* (John 8:32)

This summer we have a missions team going to the South American country of Guyana. Back in November of 1978 over 900 Americans died after they drank cyanide laced Kool-Aid in a settlement they called Jonestown. They had traveled to Guyana following a man named Jim Jones who called himself a pastor.

That's sincerity in action. You don't get more sincere than that. The problem was it was sincerely wrong. People who should have known better devoted their lives to a false prophet. There were no Bibles in Jonestown.

That resulted in the largest single loss of American civilian life in a non-natural disaster until the events of September 11, which were perpetrated by 19 other sincerely wrong religious men.

The Bible says, *For the word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth. (Psalm 33:4) The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. (Psalm 119:160)*

When Jesus prayed for His disciples He asked the Father, *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:17)*

It doesn't matter whether we're talking about 1380 BC or 2010 AD. What we believe

has to be grounded in truth. We live in a culture that can be oppressive at times. And just like Israel we can be bewitched by what we see and hear. That's why we preach from the Bible here at FCC. That's why our classes, VBS, counseling, singles, AWANA is all based on the Bible.

The Bible is the authoritative source of spiritual truth. It's not about what I think of God, it's what God says about Himself that matters.

But, see these Israelites let God's truth slip. They had the books of Moses. They had the words and the wisdom of God. But back in verse 7 it says, *So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.*

The people who saw the miracles believed. But the next generation didn't see the miracles. They heard about them. They read about them. But God wasn't splitting seas, bringing water out of rocks, producing fresh bread on their front lawns every morning. So they became dazzled by what they saw around them.

They got caught up with what was around them and they ignored the truth that God had been faithful to their forefathers. That God had made them great and precious promises. That God's plan was to give them a future and a hope.

What a powerful lesson for us. I hear Christians saying, 'Why didn't God stop that tragedy? What did God allow this thing in my life? Where is God when hard stuff happens to my family? I don't know if I believe that God's real because I didn't see Him doing what I think He should do.'

God's done the miraculous for us just like He had done it for them, except on an even greater scale. God sent His Son to die for our sins and then He raised Him from the dead. How's that for doing the miraculous? How's that for God demonstrating His love? How's that for God proving that He cares about each of us as individuals?

How foolish we can be! How absolutely thick we can be! If we're not careful we can fall into the same trap Israel did.

And look what happens. They turned their backs on God to go after the godless culture around them and God delivers them into the hand of the plunderers.

Here's what He had warned. **Look back at verse 3**

If you reject Me then you're on your own. I'm not going to drive them out before you.

They'll be thorns and snares.

The whole rest of the book of Judges, and much of the Old Testament is about God's people battling off their enemies. The more God's people became like the culture, the more God took off His hand of protection and the more the culture took advantage of them.

Why is it that the first century strongholds of Christianity, like Egypt and Turkey, are Muslim today? God's people got sidetracked and God let their enemies take over. Why are the Christian reformation strongholds in Europe almost completely secular today? Why is Europe full of cathedrals that are museums instead of houses of worship? God's people got sidetracked and the culture took advantage.

Why is it that with all the churches, all the Christian radio and TV programs, the Christian heritage of our founding fathers, that in so many ways we've lost the ability to be a positive influence in this country?

Did you know that of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, all recognized God as Creator, 54 were Bible-believing Christians, and 27 had theological training.

Once again, I believe the biblical principle is, when God's people as a whole get sidetracked God lessens their influence. When we get so caught up with owning stuff and living for ourselves God eventually says, "If you don't want My truth then I'll give you what you want."

And the more we buy into the cultural philosophy around us, the more the culture takes advantage of the opportunity to gain control.

*I. The People Of God Are Susceptible To All Kinds Of Sin*

*II. The More The People Of God Become Like The Culture, The More The Culture Takes Advantage Of Them*

*III. God Is The God Of Second Chances*

**Read verses 15 - 19**

When you realize just how far into the depths of sin and rebellion Israel sank it definitely takes you back. But there's something else that takes us back here.

Even though Israel is subject to the covenant curses in which Jehovah will allow the

nation to be plundered by its enemies, God sends a series of deliverers to actually rescue His people from the consequences of their own actions. He sends a series of what are called judges to rescue His people.

These are not guys in black robes sitting on the bench deciding court cases. These are more like leaders who rally the people to fight against the Canaanites.

So what you have in Judges is a repeating cycle of rebellion by the people, retribution by God by allowing their enemies to suppress them, repentance on the part of the people, and restoration by God.

God is the God of second chances. In Judges it's second, third, fourth, fifth, and on.

What's going on here? *The LORD was moved to pity by their groaning.* The God of the Bible is holy and righteous. The God of scripture is completely just. He punishes sin and rewards righteousness. But the same God who hates sin, loves sinners. The same God who is holy and righteous has mercy on His people who are sometimes unholy and unrighteous.

God had a bigger plan than any of these Israelites seemed to understand. They were His people. He had promised to bless them and bless the world through them. They would be the people through whom the Son of God, the Savior of the world, would come.

Today we have forgiveness because a Jewish man named Jesus of Nazareth was born to a Jewish virgin named Miriam. He lived a perfect life and then suffered the brutal indignity of the cross on our behalf. He died in our place, the just for the unjust.

We know all this because God used Jewish prophets to record His word. We call that record the Bible. Because God is a God of second chances Israel was spared. Because God is a God of second chances we have a Savior.

In a few weeks, Christians and Jews will celebrate the holy days of Passover and Easter. One of the many lessons of these celebrations is that God gives second chances, not to mention thirds, fourths, and more. We live in a time where we need to believe in second chances.

At one point or another, we all need a second chance. A relationship goes sour, a deal falls apart, a test is not met, a spouse fails you, a child breaks your heart. Disappointment can easily become despair and we wonder, "Is there hope? Is God still with me?"

In both the Old and New testaments, people experience God's answer: "Yes! Try again. I'm still with you. Others may fail. You may fail. but I'll never fail." Despite our failings, the covenant isn't broken. Despite our betrayal, God's love isn't defeated.

The Bible says, *And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints. O LORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.* (Psalm 89:5&8)

This is the most fundamental hope of people of faith: Our God is ready to give us another chance. The universe isn't random, chaotic, and arbitrary. We are not gamblers trying to win a game but hopelessly destined to lose all our chips.

Jeremiah was a Jewish prophet who lived at a time when it looked to many like all hope was gone. Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered and those who were spared were carted off as slaves.

There wasn't a whole lot of land speculators buying up property in Israel. The bookies weren't giving very good odds that there would ever be a Jerusalem again.

But Jeremiah knew God's promises. He knew that God is a God of second chances. So this is what he wrote: *This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"*

*The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.* (Lamentations 3:21-26)

The Lord restored Israel.

Think about what God has promised believers.

### **Turn to Romans chapter 8 Page 1005**

Romans 8 is a chapter full of promises.

**Read verse 18** The troubles we face here may seem so big at times. But compared to the blessings God has for us in eternity they're small.

**Read verse 28** God can even use the messes we make of life to accomplish His

purposes.

**Read verse 31-39**

*Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.* God delivered His Son up for us. Do we really think that somehow He doesn't have our best in mind?

Life can be filled with all sorts of troubles. Some come from living in a fallen world. Some come because of the sins of other people. Some come as a consequence of our own sin.

But God is a God of second chances. He took pity on Israel and sent them judges to rescue them from the Canaanites. And because God took pity on us He sent His Son to die for our sins and to be raised for our justification.

Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts to do what the judges and even the Jewish priests could never do-rescue us from something a whole lot worse than the Canaanites. Jesus came to deliver us from both the guilt and the power of our sin.

Have you ignored God's command to believe on His Son? Here's a second chance.

I just did my 97th funeral yesterday. I said in the service, "One day it will be my funeral. One day it will be yours. The question isn't will we die, it's are we forgiven.

The Bible says, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.* (Acts 16:31) *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* (II Corinthians 6:2)

Maybe you're already a believer. You've trusted Christ alone for forgiveness. But somehow you've bought into the faulty logic of our age and been caught up in sin. Do you feel surrounded by the enemy with no way out? The Bible says, *Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* (Romans 6:11-13)

Praise God that He's the God of second chances. God wants to lift you up. God wants to set you free. He has pity on our groanings.