

## MEN FOR MINISTRY

Scripture Lesson: Judges 2

Text: II Timothy 2:13

Songs: R535; R279; R560; R573

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

This morning we celebrated the Lord's Supper. Tonight we are here to learn one lesson about those who eat this meal. It is first not our faithlessness that matters most, but God's faithfulness that prevails. We learn that in our Scripture Lesson and text. The Bible is plain about God's faithfulness and human unfaithfulness.

"If we are faithless . . . ." That is how our text begins. What record from Judges 2! Let's see it step by step.

In verse 1 we hear the voice of "The angel of the Lord." That expression for God we read first in Genesis 16:7 when God speaks to Hagar after she ran away from Abram and Sarai. We have also seen this expression in the angel of Revelation who is really Jesus Christ. God is speaking to His people in Judges 2. What does He say?

"I brought you up out of Egypt . . . ." Here God refers to His Old Testament act of redemption leading the people out of the slavery of Pharaoh as Christ later would lead His people out of the slavery of sin. This parallels how God introduces the Ten Commandments. "Exodus 20:1."

"I will never break my covenant with you . . . ." This great God, the only God of heaven and earth, binds Himself to His people with a covenant that He will not break. That is how we so soon get to the second clause of our text, II Timothy 2:13, "He will remain faithful." What contrast between God and us!

In verse 2 God goes on to tell His people what they are not to do. "Judges 2:2a,b." They are not to accommodate themselves to the pagan world of the people who occupied the Promised Land before them. They are not to make treaties with them. They must destroy their pagan civilization. Israel did not do that. That is why God says, "Judges 2:2c." They have slipped into a pagan life-style and allowed paganism to persist.

"Judges 2:3." That is the history of Israel in a nutshell.

"Judges 2:4,5." After God spoke it was clear to them that He had been faithful and they had been faithless. It was plain that they had drifted into greater sin while God had remained constant and true. They cried so much for their sinful ways that they re-named the place "Weepers," or in their language "Bokim." When they had their sinful backs to the wall they sacrificed to God in their shame. Was it remorse or repentance? Let's see.

That was quite an event in their national life. We read on. "Judges 2:6,7." Notice that verse 7 again. "Judges 2:7." There is no way to make that more plain. This was a generation that had been jarred into trust and obedience by the voice of God and the Holy Spirit working penitence in their hearts. This generation remembered God as long as they lived. They did their best to follow His ways and obey His laws.

We read about Joshua's death in verses 8 and 9. Then the narrative picks up the rest of that generation. Listen to verse 10. "Judges 2:10." Notice they were a generation that "neither knew the Lord nor what He had done for Israel." That sentence boggles my mind. It should yours, too. How could a generation who wept for their sins and sacrificed to God not pass on to the next generation what God had done for them? After weeping for

sin it is incomprehensible how in a single generation people could drift from God. It amazes me. Maybe it does you, too. Consider the next verses. “Judges 2:12.” What a disaster in one generation! Terrible!

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God was not a silent bystander. “Judges 2:13-15.” Sin, punishment, remorse but not repentance: These verses describe the repetitive cycle of sin and punishment. What do we know about these cycles of sin and punishment, remorse and regret without sincere repentance and desire to reform? There is a word and a phrase in the next paragraph which tip us off. The words are “quickly” and “even more corrupt.” I am going to read this paragraph again with an emphasis on these key words. “Judges 2:16-19.” There is a downward spiral that increases both the speed and the depth of descent into wickedness. The increased speed with which each cycle occurs is described by the word “Quickly” and the deepening depth is described by “Even more corrupt.” Each cycle of sin comes faster and the people go deeper into sin.

It is not difficult to guess the result of this faster, falling-deeper-into-sin cycle of God’s Old Testament people. There are four actions God takes. First, He is angry. “Judges 2:20.” Second, God is no longer at their side. “Judges 2:21.” Third, God uses Israel’s enemies to test His own people. “Judges 2:22.” Fourth, God allows those nations to remain to be constant antagonists to perpetually pester His people to obey. “Judges 2:23.”

None of those four responses are desirable. There is nothing good that comes from rapidly repeated, increasingly sinful behavior. This behavior is all against God. When people are no longer on God’s side they suffer severe consequences. This is a sinful situation we all want to avoid. Yet is the very setting we find ourselves in today. We see the cycle of sin both speeding up in our culture and falling to increasing depths. Think of the decline of prime time television or the sexually loose life-style of people in America. If you are a senior member here this evening, you know the change the church has made in regard to sin. Movies were forbidden and TV discouraged. A couple who conceived a child before marriage had to publicly confess their sin in church. Today Pella pastors from many denominations tell me many of the couples they marry are living together before the ceremony, and each pastor has a different policy about that. Many of you grew in an age when the word “Homosexual” was never used because no one admitted that sin, and today homosexuals are allowed to be leaders in many churches. We have gone faster and deeper into sin than generations before us.

There are encouraging signs. I read the Breakout Groups they are having at the Young Calvinist Convention this summer in North Carolina, July 25 to 29. Jason Lief is leading one of them and so is Dr. Ed Laarman. Most of them focus on wholesome, Biblical relationships between the sexes. There is strong current of purity present in the Breakout offerings at the Convention. It is one thing to identify a problem as we all can do; it is another thing to do something about it. I am thrilled that the youth leaders of the Christian Reformed Church are doing something about our culture’s downward spiral into sin that is ruining so many lives as it did back in the days of the Judges. I rejoice that in this world of greater temptation there are also greater resources for our youth.

Is there any way this sinful, downward cycle can be broken? Is there any way a segment of our society could break the chain of the faster and deeper descent into sin? Could there be a spiritual doorkeeper who could close the door on sin? Yes. The fathers and husbands of this generation can stop the spiral of sin. In the creation structure of the family God gives fathers the responsibility to break the cycle of sinful degeneracy. It seems inconceivable to us that Israel could in one generation or less spiral downward into such sin—until we think of how different we are today than the generation still with us but now no longer serving in leadership roles.

When we read, “Judges 2:10,” we wonder how it could happen? Where were the fathers who should have been passing along the great things God had done during the days of Joshua? We cannot explain it until we look at ourselves. Then we know the challenge for every father and husband on this Father’s Day. Fathers hold the key to the door of sin. Stopping the spiral of sin is the responsibility of every Christian husband and father.

Even the best husband and fathers are imperfect. What happens if they fail? That is the comfort of our text, “II Timothy 2:13.” We fathers are not perfect, but God helps us do the best we can. We have the confidence that though we are unable to be fully faithful, God is equally unable to be anything but be perfectly faithful. What a lesson for Father’s Day evening! Russ Stravers has a song that summarizes the sermon. Let’s hear him sing.