

Rebellion's Cycle  
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Judges 2:11-19

I can't nail down who said it, but I like this quote:

*"Anything that hurts you can teach you, and if it keeps hurting you it's because you haven't learned the lesson."*

Here's a more famous quote:

*"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."* - George Santayana <sup>1</sup>

There is nothing more frustrating than repeating the same mistake over and over! (Like picking up a "hot horseshoe")

- **Ever had any experience with this? How does this apply to our spiritual life? When we have so much access to God's commandments for our lives, why do we make the same mistakes over and over again?**
- Another quote: *"When you repeat a mistake, it is not a mistake anymore: it's a decision."* – Paulo Coelho <sup>2</sup>
- In the time of the judges, the Israelites, made repeated rebellion a way of life.

Big Idea: When we rebel (sin), God responds. We call that "righteous judgment." His goal isn't to hurt us, it's to teach us. The first step to learning is repentance: saying you're sorry; meaning it; and turning away from that behavior for good.

- As we finished the book of Joshua, this great leader had challenged the people to commit to serving God and they did just that. They wrote a covenant and placed a large stone to remind them of their promise.
- When Joshua died, things began to fall apart.
- The Promised Land had been divided among the tribes but there were still enemies to overcome. This was a test from God to see if they would finish the mission they'd been given. They

- “slacked off” and refused to completely eliminate the enemies from the land: “incomplete obedience.”<sup>3</sup>
- The cycle of rebellion to God often begins with “incomplete obedience.” We don’t start with open rebellion; we just don’t quite obey God’s commands. That’s how it worked with the Israelites.
  - Refusing to completely eliminate the enemies led to intermarriage and idolatry (2:6–3:7) and everyone doing “what was right in his own eyes” (17:6). Before long the Israelites became captives. Out of their desperation they begged God to rescue them. In faithfulness to his promise and out of his loving-kindness, God would raise up a judge to deliver his people, and for a time there would be peace. Then complacency and disobedience would set in, and the cycle would begin again. <sup>4</sup> Over a period of 325 years God would raise up 12 men and women to deliver His people. Let’s begin our study with today’s text.

Judges 2:11–19 (ESV)

### **Israel’s Unfaithfulness**

<sup>11</sup> And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. <sup>12</sup> And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. <sup>13</sup> They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashteroth. <sup>14</sup> So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. <sup>15</sup> Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

### **The Lord Raises Up Judges**

<sup>16</sup> Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup> Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.

<sup>18</sup> Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with

the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. <sup>19</sup> But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

- Verse 14: **How did God respond to their idolatry? Was he just letting them feel the consequences of their sin or was this more than that?**
- God seems to be the active agent of judgment against His own people. In reality, when God's people chose to live in a way He did not prescribe, He allowed them to fully experience the perils. He remained faithful to His covenant even when His people rebelled against Him. The distance between the Lord and His people when they sinned was due to their waywardness. Though the Lord had tried to convince them to repent, they stubbornly refused.<sup>5</sup>
- God had always given them the power to conquer their enemies, when they rebelled He removed that power. **How does this apply to us today? What kind of warfare do we face today (Eph. 6:12 <sup>6</sup>)? How does God give us power to defeat those enemies?**
- Verses 12 and 13 say they “abandoned the Lord.” Specifically, in their case they had turned to the idol worship of the people around them.
- Think about followers of Christ today. We don't have a shrine in our home with carved idols. **How are we in danger of “abandoning the Lord?”**
- The Israelites' sin didn't start with idol worship. Look at Judges 3:5-6:

Judges 3:5–6 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>6</sup> And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.

- We have to live IN the world of unbelievers, but we're commanded not to become a part of that world. **How can we do this? What steps can we take to live among pagans without sliding backward into sin?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Seven times in the book of Judges, Israel repeated the cycle of rebellion.
- Drifting would lead to defeat. Defeat would lead to desperation. Desperation would drive them back to God. And sadly they would go back through that cycle again.
- How can we keep that from happening in our lives?

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

R.C. Sproul writes:

*"Something that is transformed is something that is changed. The prefix trans-means "above and beyond." We are to be above and beyond the standards of this world, not in the sense that we are to elevate ourselves in lofty status above everybody else, but that we are called to a more excellent way of life."*<sup>7</sup>

- Spending personal time in God's word is crucial! If salvation made us immune to being influenced into sin, we wouldn't need a Bible. The problem is our sinful nature is still alive and well after we're saved.
- Salvation gives us God's Spirit living in us. The Holy Spirit allows God's word to transform our thinking and our behavior. God's word will keep us from making the same sinful mistakes over and over again.
- We also need to spend personal time in God's presence through prayer. It's hard to talk to God with a straight face when we know we're drifting into sin. That's why confession is so important:

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT)

<sup>10</sup> For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

- So, to paraphrase Santayana's quote: *"Those who refuse to be transformed by God's word and God's presence will have to live without God's blessing and power."*
- Just like the children of Israel, we'll be fighting our battles without God's help. I don't know about you, but I don't like those odds!
- It's unlikely you'd go out into the snow without a coat, or into a thunderstorm without an umbrella. Why would we go into the storms of life without preparing our minds with God's transforming word and presence, so we can have access to His power? Don't leave home without it!

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/g/georgesant101521.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/paulocoelho/status/454362906592018432>

<sup>3</sup> Life Application Study Bible copyright © 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Lifeway. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Commentary Judges 2*.

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/how-should-we-be-world-not-it/>