

The Corruption of a Wonderful Inheritance

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. And Josh is beginning a new series in the book of Judges.! So do turn if you have a Bible with you.

If you don't have a Bible, we have visitor Bibles scattered around. So please do grab a Bible. The welcome teams have got them in their hands if you need one. But turn with me to Judges chapter 1, page 200.

If you have the church visitor Bible. Well, Judges chapter 1. And we're beginning there at verse 1. And if you've been here in recent months, we've been working through the book of Joshua.

We've almost finished Joshua. So this is picking up where Joshua finishes off. So Judges chapter 1. After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord.

Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? The Lord said, Judah shall go up. Behold, I have given the land into his hand.

[1 : 10] And Judah said to Simeon his brother, Come up with me into the territory allotted to me that we may fight against the Canaanites. And I likewise will go with you into the territory allotted to you.

So Simeon went with them. Then Judah went up and the Lord gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand. And they defeated 10,000 of them at Bezek.

They found Adonai Bezek at Bezek and fought against him and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Adonai Bezek fled.

But they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes. And Adonai Bezek said, Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table.

As I have done, so God has repaid me. And they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there. And the men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

[2 : 18] And afterward, the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negev, in the lowland. And Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron. Now, the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath Arba.

And they defeated Sheshai and Ammon and Talmi. From there, they went against the inhabitants of Debir. The name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-sefer.

And Caleb said, He who attacks Kiriath-sefer and captured it, I will give him Ashak, my daughter, for a wife. And Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it.

And he gave him Akak, his daughter, for a wife. When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey.

And Caleb said to her, What do you want? She said to him, Give me a blessing. Since you have set me in the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.

[3 : 19] And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. And the descendants of the Canaanites, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of Palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negev near Arad.

And they went and settled with the people. And Judah went with Simeon, his brother. And they defeated the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath and devoted it to destruction.

So the name of the city was called Horma. Judah also captured Gaza with its territory, and Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. And the Lord was with Judah.

And he took possession of the hill country. But he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron. And Hebron was given to Caleb, as Moses had said.

And he drove out from it the three sons of Anak. But the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. So the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

[4 : 25] The house of Joseph also went up against Bethel. And the Lord was with them. And the house of Joseph scouted out Bethel. Now the name of the city was formerly Lutz.

And the spies saw a man coming out of the city. And they said to him, please show us the way into the city. And we will deal kindly with you. And he showed them the way into the city. And they struck the city with the edge of the sword. But they let that man live and all his family go. And the man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and called its name Lutz. That is its name to this day. Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and its villages. Or Tanak and its villages.

Or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages. Or the inhabitants of Iblum and its villages. Or the inhabitants of Megiddu and its villages. For the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land.

[5 : 24] When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor. But did not drive them out completely. And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Giza.

So the Canaanites lived in Giza among them. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron. Or the inhabitants of Nahal. So the Canaanites lived among them.

But became subject to forced labor. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko. Or the inhabitants of Sidon. Or Alab.

Or Ashkib. Or Helba. Or Afik. Or Rohab. So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites. The inhabitants of the land. For they did not drive them out. Nathali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh.

Or the inhabitants of Beth Anath. So they lived among the Canaanites. The inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh. And of Beth Anath. Became subject to forced labor for them.

[6 : 24] The Amorites. Pressed the people of Dan. Back into the hill country. For they did not allow them to come down to the plain. The Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Heres.

In Alajon. And in Shalbim. But the hand of the house of Joseph. Rested heavily on them. And they became subject to forced labor.

And the border of the Amorites. Ran from the ascent of Akbim. From Selah. And upward. Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim.

And he said, I brought you up from Egypt. And brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land.

You shall break down their altars. But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this that you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you.

[7 : 27] But they shall become thorns in your sides. And their gods shall be a snare to you. As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel.

The people lifted up their voices. And wept. And they called the name of that place. Bochim. And they sacrificed there.

To the Lord. Amen. May God bless to us. His words. Well do you open once again in your Bibles to Judges.

Chapter 1. Four words. What could have been. They are words that can haunt.

Words full of regret. And unfulfilled potential. Many of us will have faced moments where we reflect on those four words. None of us want to be left stewing on those four words.

[8 : 32] What could have been. The name Ravel Morrison won't mean a lot to many people. But he was once spoken of as the most talented footballer Manchester United's academy ever produced.

But his career became one big case of what could have been. All the talent in the world. All the promise. But unable or unwilling to take hold of it.

Well the message of our passage this morning poses those same words. What could have been. Or perhaps more sharply. What should have been.

But in Judges 1. The what could have been. The what should have been. Is not the regret of people who lacked opportunity. Or merely who wasted potential.

It is the tragedy of people who had the promise of God. And refused to take hold of it. In wholehearted obedience. And so they had to come to terms with the consequences of that.

[9 : 37] The setting here at the beginning of the book of Judges. Is one full of promise. The events in this book follow on from Joshua. The early conquest of the land had been largely successful. The people have seen before their very eyes. That God's promises do not fail. Not one of them. Not one of them. Falls to the ground. And so with the first wave of the conquest accomplished. It was time to press home. The victory. And clear out the land in totality. As God had commanded. To take hold of their wonderful inheritance. In full. The land was not merely territory. The land was the inheritance. That God had promised. The place where his redeemed people were to live. In covenant fellowship with him. Under his rule. And in the enjoyment of his blessing. It was the land flowing with milk and honey.

[10 : 39] And so the clearing out of the land was. Not reckless or wanton aggression. Deuteronomy is clear. That Israel was the instrument of God's judgment. On enduring. Egregious. And entrenched. Canaanite wickedness. Joshua has died. But nothing has changed. About God's promise. Or Israel's calling. The Lord has provided. And gone before them at every stage. But all this early promise. All of this possibility. Of taking hold fully. Of the promised inheritance. Is frustrated. Not. By any lack. On God's part. But because Israel. Were unwilling to take hold of it fully. Enduring. And obedient faith. And so the early promise of. The conquest. Turns into a downward spiral. And Israel places itself.

[11 : 34] In a constant snare. As its hold on their promised inheritance. Is loosened and spoiled. The book of Judges. Covers the dark period. Between Joshua's conquest. And the monarchy. In 1 Samuel. Judges is a vivid. And at times grotesque. Picture of covenant breaking. A cycle of sin. Discipline. Deliverance. And then repeat. Only each time. Lower. And lower. And darker. And darker. The cycle. Runs from. Of meal. Chapter 3. To Samson. In chapter 16. Before then. At the very end. Chapter 17 to 21. Show the final collapse. No king in Israel. Everyone doing what was right. In their own eyes. And so the whole book. Leaves us. Longing for the right king. The one who could lead God's people.

[12 : 31] In covenant faithfulness. But before we get. To these cycles. The book begins. With an introduction. In two parts. Our passage today. Chapter 1. Verse 1. Through to 2. 5. And then what we hope to look at. Next week. 2. Verse 6. To 3. Verse 6. And so our passage today. Shows where it all went wrong. Not God's failure. But Israel's compromised obedience. And so the first thing to see. In these verses. Verses 1 to 21. Is the promise. To be grasped. The promise to be grasped. God gives us. The promise of a rich inheritance. And he provides for it. In every way. But it must be taken hold of. Through obedient faith. Now. Judges begins. Much like. Other major Old Testament books. It begins with the death. Of God's appointed leader. Verse 1.

[13 : 29] Joshua has died. And the passing on of leadership. Is always. A crucial juncture. What direction will things go in now? But of course. For the Lord's people. The agenda is not set. By the next leader. It's God who sets the agenda. The question is always. Whether his people will continue to. Trust him. To submit to him. To his appointed messenger. To pursue his mission. And here. It all begins so well. Verse 1. Israel comes together. To inquire of the Lord. A picture of unity. The kind of unity. That will tragically disintegrate. Throughout the book. And so they come together. And ask. Who shall go up for us. Against the Canaanites. To fight against them. That's not a picture. Of shrugging off God. It's a picture. Of submitting to him.

[14 : 26] And so the Lord speaks. Reassuring words. He says. Verse 2. Judah shall go up. Behold. I have given the land. Into his hand. God reaffirms. That he goes before them. To grant victory. It's God's war. And the tribe appointed. To lead is Judah. And so from verse 3. The conquest continues.

Judah goes with Simeon. And the tribe set about. Establishing Israel's grip. And rule in the land. Now it is worth noting. That these verses recount. Similar places. To parts of Joshua. And so it can look. As if the same victories. Are being won twice. But Joshua gives us. The first great phase. Of the conquest. Whereas here. The beginning of Judges. We're shown. The ongoing work. Of possessing. Settling. Securing the inheritance. The battles had been won.

[15:24] But the victory. Still needs to be pressed home. We won't get. Bugged down. In the geography. And the tactical detail. But just notice. The overall picture. Being painted. Verse 4. The Lord gives the Canaanites. And Perizzites. Into Judah's hand. Then victory follows. At Jerusalem. Verse 8. At Hebron. Verse 10. Debir. Verses 11 to 13. The Negev. Verse 16. Zephath. Verse 17. And then verse 18. Gaza. Ashkelon. And Ekron. Victory. After victory. God delivering. All that He promised. And verse 19. Reaffirms it. The Lord was with Judah. And He took possession. Of the hill country. God promises. A rich inheritance. And He's able to deliver it. In might. And power. But alongside.

[16:21] The military. And geographical details. There are three notes. Of intrigue. In this campaign. That the writer of Judges. Wants us to see. Firstly. Verses 5 to 7. Divine recompense. Look. Look at the incident. With Adonai Bezek. As part of. The victory at Bezek. We zoom in. To see what happens. To one of the Canaanite kings. It's a gruesome deal. Adonai Bezek. Flees. But verse 6. Says he's pursued. Caught. And mutilated. His thumbs. His big twos. Are cut off. It's grisly stuff. And we might wonder. What place this has. In God's unfolding. Plan. What does such gore. Have to do. With God's wonderful inheritance. For his promised people. But look at what Adonai Bezek. Says himself. Verse 7. As I have done.

[17:21] So God has repaid me. This Canaanite king. Understands what's happening. He has done the same thing. Himself. To 70 kings. Taking their thumbs. And their big twos. Humiliating them. Under his table. And now. He recognizes. That God's justice. Has caught up with him. You see. This conquest. Was not. The vanity. Of a bloodthirsty Israel. Israel. Was God's chosen. Instrument. Of judgment. Upon truly wicked Canaan. Listen to Deuteronomy. Chapter 9. God says. Not. Because of your righteousness. Or the uprightness. Of your heart. Are you going in. To possess the land. But. Because of the wickedness. Of these nations. The Lord your God. Is driving them out. From before you. And. That he may confirm. The word that the Lord.

[18:15] Swore to your fathers. To Abraham. To Isaac. And to Jacob. This is God's. Just judgment. Falling on a wicked people. And. It's God's promised word. Being confirmed. God's promised salvation. Is wonderful news. For those who trust him. And. It also means. Perfect justice. Against all that is evil. It is his fight. It's his victory. And so as we journey. Towards the heavenly Jerusalem. The heavenly promised land. We can rest. In that same character. The promised day of the Lord. Will bring. Both real. Essential. And longed for justice. Against all that's wrong. In this world. All that's corrupting. And evil. And murderous. And destructive. The promised day of the Lord.

[19:12] Will bring justice. Against all of that. And the promised day of the Lord. Will bring the full enjoyment. Of our inheritance. Those two things. Go together. But we also see. In verses 11 to 15. Daring romance. The writer wants us. To see that real faith. Faith is required. To take hold. Of all that God had promised. Obedient faith is required. And sometimes. That faith must be daring. That's what this little story. Of romance is about. The conquest of Debir. Formerly Kiriath Sefer. Comes into focus. And in verse 12. We meet Caleb. The great veteran. Of Israel's army. Now an old age.

The man who lived by faith. And not by sight. The spy who trusted in God. And what is he doing here? Well he's seeking to rouse.

[20 : 09] That same bold faith. In the younger generation. You see he knows. There's more work to do. The mission is not complete. The promise still awaits. And so Caleb offers his daughter.

Aksha. In marriage. To the man who captures. Kiriath Sefer. And Othniel. Needs no second invitation. Faint heart.

Never one fair maiden. Verse 13. He steps up. Captures the city. And receives his bride. Then in verse 14. Aksha.

Shows that she is a chip. Off the old block. She too is not afraid. To take hold of the inheritance. That God richly offers. Back in Joshua chapter 14. Caleb. Her father had boldly asked.

Give me this hill country. Now verse 15. Aksha asks. Not just for a field. But give me also springs of water.

[21 : 09] Aksha. And Othniel. Here together. Exemplify real faith. Taking hold. Of God's promised inheritance. Not passive. Not timid.

But daring and bold. Longing to receive the blessing. That God offers. Wanting to take hold of the land. That's theirs. The promise of God for them. This little episode is repeated.

It's lifted out of Joshua. And it's surely placed here. To show. What is required. To enjoy the rich inheritance. That God has promised. To give his people. Aksha did not just want the field.

Verse 14. She was looking ahead. She wanted. A long and blessed inheritance. One that would endure. And so she knew. That she needed. Not just land.

She could see. That it was a dry piece of land. She wanted water for it. She wanted it to last. To flourish. To thrive. And so she asked. She sought.

[22 : 07] To take hold. Of her promised inheritance. I wonder what abundance. Do we miss out on. In the Christian life. Because we will not take hold.

Of what God has promised. God has promised us. An imperishable inheritance. That is to come. But he has also granted to us. Nigh. Profound blessing.

Jesus himself says. Ask. Seek. Knock. And you will receive. You will find. The door will be opened. In Luke's gospel. He says.

The great gift. The father gives. To those who ask. Is his holy spirit. He has promised. To give us. Everything we need. For life and godliness. He has sent his spirit.

To dwell. In every believer. To open our eyes. To his word. To assure us. That we belong to Christ. To enable us. To fight. Sin. To grow us.

[23 : 02] Into the likeness of Christ. To preserve us. Through suffering. To the end. The spirit is given. So that we might. Live in the good. Of the inheritance.

That Christ has won. And so why live like paupers. When the father delights. To give us what we need. Christians have the.

Mighty power of God. Dwelling within us. And so why settle for a dry field. When he offers springs. The writer wants us to see.

The writer wants us to see. Othniel and Aksha. Wants us to see in them. A model of taking hold. Of what is promised. In real and daring faith. Real faith.

Obedient faith. Takes hold. Of the inheritance. And longs to enjoy it in full. Takes hold of all that is theirs. Through God's promise.

[23 : 59] And yet it may be. That we do not have. Because we do not ask. Perhaps we do not ask. Because deep down. We've already settled. For the dry field.

Well then in verses. 19 to 21. We see deadly disregard. Verse 19.

Sounds a positive note. The Lord was with Judah. And he took possession. Of the hill country. But there is a big but. But he could not drive out.

The inhabitants of the plain. Because they had chariots. Of iron. We've been here before. Haven't we? In Joshua. Those iron chariots.

Appeared to be a grave obstacle. But only. When the eyes of faith. Were shut. Because it's the Lord. Who's fighting.

[24 : 53] The Lord. Who swept Pharaoh's chariots. Into the sea. With a blast of his nostrils. The problem here. Isn't. That the Lord. Isn't with them.

Verse 19. He is. The problem. Is that faith. Has given way to sight. The promise. Then. Is reimagined. Reinterpreted. Through. The lens. Of what looks possible.

To us. Whether. That be. Because of iron chariots. Or because of a culture. That is rejected. Wholesale. The ways of God. God. And such. And such. Compromise. Is deadly. Gangrene. You see. In verse 19. Could not. Well. By verse 21. What does that become? Did not. The crack spreads. Judah faltered. In the plain. But by verse 21.

[25 : 48] Benjamin. Fealed. At Jerusalem. And compromise. Disregard. For God's commands. Creates problems. That can linger. And linger. Do you see verse 21? Hundreds of years later.

As the book of Judges. Is written. These Jebusites. Are still in the land. To this day. This deadly disregard. Creeps in.

Even with Judah. The God appointed. Lead tribe. Judah is a shining light. But already. Undermined. By compromise. Compromise. And that's the first crack. The Lord is with Judah.

The promise is intact. The inheritance is there to be taken. But the chariots look too strong. And faith gives way to sight. That's why compromise begins. Isn't it?

Not with a great public. Rejection of God. Not with a formal renunciation. Of his promise. But with God's people deciding. That obedience is optional. In some areas.

[26 : 43] That it's possible. Everywhere else. Except this one area. Right here in front of me. And the message of Judges here.

Is that that is deadly. Because God gives his people. The promise of a rich inheritance. And he provides for it. In every way.

But it must be taken hold of. Through obedient faith. And so we see. The consequences of such things.

Verses 22 to 36. The compromise that corrupts. The compromise that corrupts. We refuse God's promise. Whenever we make peace. With what God opposes.

Choosing agreeable compromise. Over wholehearted obedience. These verses mark a change. From the house of Judah. In the south. To the house of Joseph. In the north. Each of these sections.

[27 : 40] Start with the same word. Verse 4. They went up. To fight. Verse 22. Again. They went up. It's war language. They're going up to fight. And these verses.

About the house of Judah. Joseph. These verses are a chronicle. Of compromise. But notice once again. That it is nothing to do. With a lack of God's part.

Verse 22. This part of the conquest. Also sets out. Knowing that the Lord was with them. Any failure. Is not on the part of God.

But then from verse 27 onwards. This is not merely a report. It's an accusation. The narrator. Like a good lawyer.

Is building the case against Israel. Tribe by tribe. Failure by failure. Verse 27. Manasseh. Did not drive out the inhabitants. The Canaanites persisted.

[28 : 41] In dwelling in the land. Verse 29. And Ephraim. Did not drive out the Canaanites. Verse 30. Zebulun. Did not drive out the Canaanites. Need I go on your honor. Indeed I must.

Verse 31. Asher. Did not drive them out. Verse 32. They lived among the Canaanites. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Do you see the picture? Here. Verse 33. Naphtali did not drive them out.

And what's more. It gets much, much worse. Because look at verse 34. The people of Dan. Don't just feel to drive out the people. But they are themselves.

Pressed back. To live only in the hill country. Their inheritance diminished. These verses are a grim charge sheet.

And it's made worse. By the repeated phrase. About forced labor. Do you see verse 28? When Israel grew strong.

[29 : 39] What did they do? They put the Canaanites. To forced labor. But did not drive them out completely. Same pattern. Appears in verse 30.

Forced labor. Verse 33. Forced labor. Verse 35. Forced labor. Forced labor. The failure to follow God's command.

Was not a military problem. Was not a might problem. It was a moral problem. They were strong enough to dominate. To enslave.

But not willing to obey. And we see what was at stake in all of this. In the little instance involving Bethel and Luz. Verses 22 to 26.

They scouted out Bethel. And by devious means they are victorious. Verse 24. They find a man willing to betray the city. To show them the entrance for a surprise attack.

[30 : 39] But notice they do so whilst promising to deal kindly with the traitor. And verse 25 and 26. They let this man go. And he proceeds to move elsewhere.

And rebuilds that same city called Luz. Luz lives on. And the name adds a sting here. Do you notice the writer draws attention to the names?

Verse 23. It's Bethel. But it was formerly called Luz. Luz. And in verse 26. Another Luz sprouts up. The name Luz can carry associations of deviation.

Perversity. Whereas what does Bethel mean? It means house of God. Failure to fight what God commands. Failure to fight what God commands us to fight.

Allows a little Luz to sprout up elsewhere. A pocket of deviation. In the house of God. And when we boil it down. Such things are really saying.

[31 : 45] That perhaps we knew better than God. And actually perhaps we're a little bit more gracious than God is. The message is clear. When we compromise on what God says.

When we feel to do war with sin. When we give the enemy an entryway. However small. When we make light of sins. Make peace with them. Allow them to linger among us.

They will sprout up. And when we do so. We make light of God's just judgment. Saying that we knew better than he does. We're oppressed all the time aren't we?

To believe that the Bible is outdated. We live in a world that wants us to be squeezed to believing that. Outdated especially where scripture confronts the idol.

That this world has made out of sexuality. And all that that means. Outdated. Around the killing of the vulnerable. In the name of health care.

[32 : 49] Or the relativism. That insists all gods and all religions are finally the same. But to cave to such pressure. To conform to such things.

Is to allow Luz. To remain and sprout up. Amidst the house of God. Or perhaps more personally. For each of us. We must think.

Where have I? Where have you? Made peace with sin? Where has it become agreeable? Perhaps. In the bitterness.

That we nurse. The greed. That we piously spin. As prudence. The lust.

That we keep private. The fear of man. That we call winsomeness. Or perhaps our prayerlessness.

[33 : 46] That we excuse by our activity. Such things. Can we allow a little luth. To sprout up. Little pockets of perversity.

That ultimately erude. And undermine the house of God. And that is no small thing to the Lord. It's a very dangerous thing for a church to do.

For Christians to do. A very dangerous thing for me. And for you. And that's what we see finally. In chapter 2 verses 1 to 5.

The snare that remains. The snare that remains. If we refuse to receive his promise. In wholehearted obedience. Don't be surprised.

When he gives us over to the bitter fruit. Of our compromise. So that what we spare. Becomes our snare. The chronicle of compromise has been laid bare.

[34 : 48] The lawyer has stated his case. And now comes the judgment. Chapter 2 verse 1. The angel of the Lord went up. At Bushim. There's that little phrase again.

1 verse 1. Who shall go up to fight? 1 verse 4. Judah went up. 1 verse 22. Joseph went up. But now the angel of the Lord goes up.

Ready to fight. But this time the judgment is upon Israel. Israel have won many victories. Great appearances of success.

But worldly success and spiritual success are not the same thing. Making peace with God's enemies is treachery. It is spiritual adultery. It's covenant breaking and so as the angel of the lord brings prosecution and judgment notice verse one the judgment begins with grace i brought you up from egypt the lord does not say you feel to earn my favor he says i've already redeemed you i brought you up i brought you in i promised never to break covenant and you have not obeyed my voice grace upon grace has been poured out but what is this that you've done i said to you verse two you shall make new covenant with the inhabitants of the inhabitants of this land you're in covenant with me your gracious rescuer no you shall break down their altars but you have not obeyed my voice you've tolerated their abominations for expediency and ease and this is no

surprise joshua in chapter 23 of his book had warned them just before he died if you cling to these nations if you make peace with them if you associate with them then they shall be a snare and a trap for you this prosecution is not a bolt from the blue it's repeated warning now he turns to judgment and god's discipline is to hand them over to the consequences of taking him lightly the consequences of tolerating polluting influences sin and idolatry so verse three i will not drive them out before you they shall become thorns in your sides now gods shall be a snare to you you see compromise is the gateway to full-blown corruption israel would taste the bitter fruit of its disobedience the people they failed to drive out the people they retained in forced labor would be enduring snares for them thorns in their sides for centuries all throughout the period of the judges right through and beyond david's reign not just as military nuisances but as a religious cancer polluting and tempting and corrupting their spiritual life we never knew better than god his judgment on wickedness is not only just it's protective it's protective the full-blown sensory and sensual pagan religion of the canaanites would be poison to the faith of the lord's precious people ralph davis says of the the faltering and faithless conquest they're like a surgeon who removes only a part of the cancer because even cancer has a right to grow and find fulfillment he says tolerance and suicide are congenial bedfellows and that is a chastening word to us still we can so easily think a little tolerance here or there a little compromise a bit of nuance about sin and morality it won't be ruinous we can be friends with this world as well as sons of god we'll be able to keep a handle on it well that private lust allowed to linger that is the gateway to ruinous adultery divorce and mess that bitterness that is nursed the gateway to ruined relationships to isolation to misery that fear of man it's the gateway to unbelief isn't it when a church adopts the causes and morals of contemporary society that is the gateway to giving up on the gospel god does not break covenant he is ever faithful there is no lack in him and sometimes the discipline that will bear fruit for us will come through being handed over to taste the bitterness of our sin in full measure and if we will not heed such discipline if we persist in refusing lord himself then those snares will not simply wound us they may finally destroy us well when faced with such a devastating word verse 4 israel wept weeping over our sin is a fitting response often a good sign that there is cognizance of the grief of sin weeping is a fitting response but it is not a full response verse 5 they sacrifice to the lord but even that is not a full response for samuel says behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams and so the picture we're left with here is one of regret maybe maybe even remorse but as judges unfolds we see that it did not go as far as repentance now god will grant intermittent relief through the judges the various deliverers but the snare remained until the book descends into full-blown anarchy no king in israel and everyone doing what's right in their own eyes and this side of the cross the message only sharpens doesn't it the writer of judges wants the lord's people to put their trust in the king who would lead them in righteousness verse 1 who will go up for us a question that's picked up again at the end of the cycle in chapter 20 verse 18 who will go up for us and then the last line of the whole book in those days there was no king in israel judges was likely written close to when saul's reign would give way to david's and there was a contest about who would be king and the writer is urging the lord's people to trust in judah and we now have the king who can lead us in righteousness the lion of judah who has dealt a crushing blow against evil who will finally destroy all evil and through whom we share an imperishable inheritance that cannot and will not spoil or feed with new thorns new snares and so for us with fuller and richer promise laid out before us how much more must we take hold of that promise how much less can we afford to dabble with to tolerate or give oxygen to the things that can snare us this chapter is written that we not be left asking what could have been or perhaps what should have been but rather so that with AXA we would say give me a blessing give me springs of water it was written that we might take hold of Christ's full colour inheritance with daring and obedient faith and so will we long to enjoy a rich and lasting inheritance [43 : 27] or will we invite in snares that will dog us give me a blessing give me also springs of water let's pray heavenly father we are conscious that your word lays before us profound promises rich blessings but how easily we refuse what would otherwise be ours and so grant us your grace grant us your help that we would not be tossed to and fro in this world that we wouldn't be wooed by it that its allure would be unable to overcome the eyes of faith and so teach us to repent wholeheartedly by your spirit help us to obey gladly and receive all that you have for us that we might enjoy it and we ask your help in Jesus name

