

Going Deeper Than Intellectual Understanding

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the book of Judges, highlighting the descent of Israel into darkness due to a lack of personal knowledge and worship of the Lord. It emphasizes the importance of personally experiencing God, passing on the faith authentically, and trusting God in trials. The narrative of Judges 19 is used to illustrate the consequences of drifting from true worship and the need for a renewal of faith and intimacy with God.

Scripture: Joshua 24:31, Romans 1:21, James 1:3, Psalms 78:4, Isaiah 55:8, Romans 8:16

Topics: "Personal Knowledge of God", "Renewal of Faith"

Description

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Transcript

Well, go ahead and turn in your copy of God's Word to the book of Judges. To the book of Judges, chapter 19. And as we read, and as I'm sharing with you, I want you to ask this question.

How did the situation in Israel become so dark? People ask that about America. People ask that about, you know, you've got documentaries on Rome. Well, the Bible has a whole lot to say about Israel.

And at different places and different ways, it might explain the root problem leading to the darkness in a certain way. And something devotionally stood out at the start of Judges that we're going to look at, that I think is going to answer the question of how did it get as dark? As it does. Now before we look at how it got that dark, we're going to look at some of the darkness here in Judges chapter 19.

And remember, this is all very applicable for us. Old Testament history, Paul is very quick in 1 Corinthians 10 to tell us that these things are written down for our example. And so it's so helpful to look at examples, right? Even in parenting, that's one of the things you do.

You might re-illustrate whatever the child did. Re-enact it in order for them to really recognize, oh, this is what happened. You know, the parent said, come.

And I went and picked up a toy and then came. I didn't come right away, or whatever. You're re-enacting that.

You want the person to see a visualization of what happened. And so Paul, he pulls in Israel constantly at different points. And so this is for us.

You might say, as we look at Judges 19, and you might think, you know what, this doesn't have anything to do with our church. There's no sort of darkness to this degree. But, we're going to look at where all this started, and you're going to realize it wasn't that dark initially.

It got there at some point. And I would argue the same thing with the churches in Revelation. They didn't get as dark as it was in some of them.

Overnight, there was a progressive change to get to that state. So, Judges 19. And let me pray, and then we will read from there.

Father, Lord, we do thank You for history that's in Your Word of God. Lord, we find great encouragement from history, seeing Your utter, incredible faithfulness. Finding that not one good promise of the Lord our God failed.

Yet, Lord, we also find in Your Word, terrifying, horrible, and dark examples of where sin can lead. And Lord, we start Your Word out, and what do we find? We find within one generation, there's already the first murderer, because of some sibling rivalry. And Lord, we look at Cain killing his brother, and it's just shocking.

Lord, it doesn't shock us enough as it should. And so Lord, we want to be kept from subtle areas of drifting that could lead to such darkness. So Lord, help us.

Pray You'd quicken these thoughts from Your Word and make them real for Your people this morning, and for my own soul. I ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, Judges 19. We're going to skim a few of these verses, and then read eight of them. So verse 1, In those days there was no king in Israel.

That's mentioned often. Verse 2, this is the whole situation with the man with the concubine. Verse 2, And his concubine was unfaithful to him.

Or she was playing the harlot. Some versions render it. Others try to make it sound like she just got angry at her husband and she left him.

But the ESV puts she was unfaithful to him. What did she do? Verse 2, She went to her father's house. She was there for four months.

The end of verse 2 says, Then this husband arose, verse 3, he went after her to speak kindly to her and bring her back. And so you've got a bad marital situation right here, and why is all this being put here? Well, let's go down. He eventually leaves his father-in-law's home.

And you know, the father-in-law kind of kept wanting him to stay longer, longer and longer, and they finally left. Verse 10, But the man would not spend the night. He rose and departed.

And he arrived opposite Jebus, that is Jerusalem. He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys and his concubine was with him. When they were near Jebus, the day was nearly over, and the servant said to his master, Come now, let us turn aside to the city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it.

And look what his master said. His master said to him, We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Jebus. Now, take note of that.

You could have stopped somewhere. They didn't. Why? It's a place of foreigners.

We want to stay somewhere that's owned by the twelve tribes. We want to stay somewhere that is of Israel. What's the assumption? We stay somewhere where people are of our nation.

How are they going to treat us? They're going to speak good treatment, right? We're all in this together. We're the twelve tribes. It's going to be a really good time.

Well, that's not what we find out. In verse 14, They drew near to Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. So you can see, it's part of the nation.

Now, verse 22. We're going to read from verse 22 to 30. And we're looking at where this darkness has gotten here at this point in Judges.

As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And no, I didn't just turn in my Bible to read about Sodom and Gomorrah. Right? In Israel, in the city of Benjamin, the exact same thing is happening.

You see? Very similar language and situation. They said to the old man, the master of the house, bring out the man who came into your house that we may know him. And the man and the master of the house went out to them and he said to them, no, my brothers, don't act so wickedly since this man is coming to the house.

Do not do this vile thing. Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now.

Violate them and do with them what seems good to you. That's a shocking statement. Seems good to you? But against this man, do not do this outrageous thing.

Verse 25, but the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and he made a girl out to them and they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.

And as the morning appeared, the woman came. She fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was until it was light. It doesn't seem like the man's watching out the window looking to intervene, wondering what he can do.

Verse 27, her master rose up in the morning. And when he had opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, Get up.

Let us be going. But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey and the man rose and went away to his home.

And when he entered his house, he took a knife. Taking hold of his concubine, he divided her limb by limb into twelve pieces and he sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. Verse 30, And all who saw it said, Such a thing... We're going to have to look at what the thing is.

It's not the man cutting up the concubine. You can tell that from the context. It's what the minute Jebeah did.

Such a thing has never happened. This seeking to rape the man, this homosexuality, this wickedness has been seen from the day the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day. And then the people, all who saw it, they're saying, we've got to consider this.

We need to take counsel about this. We need to get together about this and we need to speak about it. Like something has to happen.

And that's exactly what continues on in chapter 20, which we're not going to read chapter 20, but they get together. They do take counsel. Verse 7 of chapter 20, Behold you people of Israel, all of you, give your advice and counsel here.

They get together. They have this counsel. Verse 6 of chapter 20, Because they have committed an abomination and an outrage in Israel.

And then even in chapter 20, The tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin. So that's the tribe where all this wickedness happened. And they said, what is the evil that has taken place among you? How did this evil happen? And if you know the chapter well, the men of Benjamin, they defend Beah and there's a war and there's slaughter.

But brethren, I don't know about you. I mean, some of you might even, if your kids are in here, you're thinking, I don't like this chapter being read with my kids in here maybe. I don't know.

That's in God's Word. It shows the significant darkness that has gotten to this point. Now regardless of how you might respond today, my question isn't how do we take this and how do we respond to it.

We have a document right here saying how they responded to this outrage. Right? And that's something we want to consider. How did they respond? And think about it.

It had been maybe about 300 to 400 years if you do the math, since they left Egypt. And now at this moment, it's gotten back to the point where they were seeing the acts of wickedness. And look at v. 30.

It reminded them of the land of Egypt. It took a couple hundred years here and now it's like, wait a minute, look what just happened. Are we living in Egypt? Remember the guy? He didn't want to stop at a town that wasn't a part of Israel, because he thought he'd get better treatment going to Gebeah because it was a tribe of Benjamin, right? Under Benjamin's reign.

And he goes there and looks at the treatment he gets. He gets treated like Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. And so we've got this reemergence of profound darkness centuries later and the people, they're right to say, consider it, take counsel, and speak about it.

We've got to do something about it. So quickly though, because when you look at v. 30, if you're just reading this and you say all who saw it said such a thing has never happened. You could easily take the it meaning the guy cutting up the concubine.

Right? You could think that's the great wickedness. But just to make sure in your mind you realize that's not the thing. I think we get so shocked by that that we think, oh wow, that must be what he's talking about.

No, the focus is on Israel, a nation in Israel, a tribe in Israel acting as Sodom and Gomorrah. We see where their anger is directed as you read on. The tribes, they rally to avenge the wickedness and punish Gebeah.

They don't get angry to go punish the man, the Levite. The Levite's head is not on the chopping block. It's Gebeah.

It's that city where these men sought to sodomize this man. That's where their anger is fueled towards. And think about this.

This happened in Gebeah. The city of Benjamin. Hosea even speaks about it in chapter 9, verse 9. They have deeply corrupted themselves.

And then he has a reference point right then to refer to, and he says, as in the days of Gebeah. He will remember their sin. He will punish their sin.

That's a point. You know how the Bible will refer to Sodom and Gomorrah? Well, Hosea's referring to this time in Israel. That's how dark it was.

It became a point of reference for the depravity that the nation had got to. And we should be asking, how did it get to this point? What's going on here that we would avoid that as well? Them exchanging natural relations. Them having absolute violence towards a person.

And I don't even think that... There's one other verse in the narrative I was going to read, but the man who he stayed at his house wasn't even from the city. Which verse was that? Verse 16 of chapter 19. Behold, an old man was coming from his work in the field.

The man was from the hill country of Ephraim. He was just sojourning in Gebeah. You see, he's not even from the city.

This place has gotten to a point of total darkness. These acts are so wicked that it brought about God's divine judgment of fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And this man, he had no angels there to deliver him from the wickedness of these people.

Now, is there a great indifference in this Levite as well? Yeah, I mean, I don't know about you, when you read verse 28, he walks out the door and he says, get up, let's get going. It's just shocking. The same man who spoke kindly to her in the chapter before to get her to come back with him is now saying, let's get up.

This woman, it's like he's treating her like there was just some boxing match and got knocked down and it's like, hey, get up, let's get out of the ring. I mean, this woman was just severely abused and harmed and ultimately murdered by these men. This is an outrageous thing that is happening right here.

It's absolutely horrible to think about this happening. Alright, now, as horrendous as that is, what the man's treatment of the woman is, it's nothing compared to those of Gebeah. Now, this Levite then, he cut up sacrifices.

This Levite, who would usually cut up a sacrifice, he's used to doing that. What does he do here? He cuts up his concubine. He just was at the father-in-law's house.

He cuts up her body to send one piece of the body to all of the different tribes. And I think this implies that there is a letter that was attached, right? If you look at v. 30, all who saw it, they said, well, let's consider it, take counsel and speak. Clearly, just receiving some body part isn't going to make you understand what's going on.

Right? I think it's implied there was something communicated. So I look at the body part. It's like an attachment to the letter in order to provoke an outrage in the people to recognize this is as dark as it's got and we've got to take counsel.

We've got to consider it. We've got to do something about it. And that's exactly what it brings about as we see in chapter 20.

You know how it is. You get some email and it has something in there about the atrocities that are happening in some foreign country. Well, that email has pictures attached to it of kids being brutally harmed or women being brutally harmed.

That kind of makes that email have a greater weight to it. I think that's the whole idea here. Here this letter is, listen to what happened in Gaba.

This is happening in Israel. I stopped her to get hospitality. This is what I got.

And here this attachment is, this member of my concubine, for you all to recognize the absolute darkness and to count on a moral outrage being awakened in the people, which is exactly what happened. There is an outrage. They do get together.

They do counsel. And that is applicable to us, right? There are certain things that it's kind of like child training or other areas where you don't deal with it severely enough, right? Eli disciplined his sons, but it wasn't severe enough, so their wicked behavior continued, right? The same type of thing can happen in the church or anywhere in life where something is so severe and you don't have the right response. Well, this guy, it's like he's provoking them to have a serious response.

I mean, this is Sodom and Gomorrah v. 2.0. We've got to do something about this. So there's times that you need to be a whistleblower, so to speak. You need to expose the corruption on a grander scale.

And you need to sound an undeniable alarm. That's how I take him getting home, thinking about all of it, and he doesn't just do nothing. Verse 29, divides his concubine up limb by limb and sends her to the territories.

And for chapter 20, you can see what it led to. It led to war. Sadly though, the nation's already this dark.

They didn't wipe out all the Benjamites. They didn't kill them all. What, 600 were left alive? And what happened next? They had made a rash oath that we can't let them marry any of our women.

Remember, this is people supporting what happened at Gebeah. And what does Israel then proceed to do? Let's get these guys some wives. And hey, you know what? There's this one tribe, they didn't actually come to the battle.

Let's go kill all their men, kill all their women and their children, but keep all the virgins and give them to these Benjamites. And they did that. How many women did they get? 400.

So they didn't have enough. They needed 200 more women. And you know what this dark nation at this point did? They sanctioned abduction and kidnapping of women.

And there's this festival going on and they just tell them to go out there and kidnap those women and take them away. And you know what? As I was reading that, I thought that's almost exactly what happened in Israel at that festival. Hamas comes into the festival and they start kidnapping these different women and taking them back to the Gaza Strip.

I mean, that's what this nation is doing to try to keep this one tribe alive. Imagine. Imagine all of this happening right here.

All this evil taking place. Verse 21 is where all that happens. Verse 20, go lie in ambush in the vineyards and watch.

They're endorsing kidnapping these women. Well, you had some type of oath, right? We better not break the oath. But you know what? We'll sanction a little trick here.

You can go and just take these women away from their families and then we're going to tell the families they can't do anything about it. It's dark. I mean, do you want to live in this nation at this point? You want to move there? This is how the news is? You guys want to relocate? To Gath? To Benjamin? To Israel? So, how did it end up like this? And they were even sending people to Benjamin.

I pointed out chapter 20, verse 12. Similar question. What evil is this that's taken place? How did this evil take place? They're asking that question.

How could such a wicked thing take place? So I'm asking the same question because they're asking that question. And I trust you're asking that question as well. So that's when I want to now transition to look at one of the answers that I think really stands out that is given leading in to all of this.

And so turn to Joshua. Go back to the left. Joshua 24, and then we're going to look at the start of Judges.

Everything is not at this point yet right here, but something stood out devotionally where I thought this is very interesting. This gets brought up at the end of Joshua. It gets brought up at the start of Judges.

This keeps getting mentioned here. And I think this is application for us. Joshua 24, verse 29, After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old.

They buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gath. The hill country of Ephraim. That's where that one guy came from who was staying in Geth.

Verse 31. This is the verse. Look at verse 31.

Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel. That's interesting. Some versions they render it all those who had personally experienced the power of God.

The works of God. Who personally knew the Lord. And look at verse 31.

They served. That word is worship. They worshiped the Lord.

But it stopped at some point. What led to the diminishing of the worshiping of the Lord that is mentioned right there? Joshua dies, and then all these other people who were alive and had witnessed firsthand the power of God, they die. They die.

Now, let's go further into judges. Real fast, another version. Renders verse 31.

Listen to this. These men had experienced firsthand everything the Lord had done for Israel. When you take out the people who firsthand had experienced the power of God, who walked with the Lord, who knew the Lord, you take them out.

Look where Israel ends up. The interesting thing is when those men were alive, their influence was powerful enough that a nation of people was at least going through the motions and doing the very things that they supposedly were supposed to be doing. But you take those men out of the picture who truly knew the Lord, something right here that happens.

It seems like their worship it hinged upon Joshua and the elders who firsthand had experienced the Lord. Meaning, they were just going through the motions like a child with their parents. You remove the parents and you see what the child truly desires.

And we see for a younger generation to continue in the path of the older, they need to not only inherit the knowledge and the truth in the head, but the younger generation has to personally experience and know the reality of the Lord and know the Lord Jesus Christ. Did not Christ say, this is eternal life, that they might know Me, the one true God, and Jesus Christ Whom I have sent. Salvation is to know the Lord.

It's not just in the head. The Pharisees are a New Testament example of people who had a lot of intellect. They had a lot of head knowledge.

And so, you can just have traditions. You can know truth. You can look up to good, wise people.

But that is not enough if it isn't a reality in your own life. And everything doesn't just nosedive into a crash right away. There is a drifting.

And if you look at the start of Judges, you see what he said right there. And then you go into the start of Judges. We're going to see the same thing mentioned in a minute, but look at chapter 1. Look at this issue of partial obedience that really starts to happen.

Verse 27, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants. Okay, well, you know Manasseh. They did that.

Verse 29, Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites. Okay, now it's just two of them. Verse 30, Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants.

Verse 31, Asher did not drive out the inhabitants. Verse 33, Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh or the inhabitants of Bethana, so that they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, they ended up putting them to forced labor.

Right in verse 34, the Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country for they didn't allow them to come down to the plain. And the Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Geriz. So you've got this partial obedience.

Then you go to chapter 2. Now the angel of the Lord, verse 1, went up from Gilgal, and he said, I brought you up from Egypt, and I 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 altar, but you have not obeyed My voice.

So they're not obeying. They have a partial obedience here. And then look what he brings up.

Verse 6, When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his own inheritance to take possession of the land. Verse 7, And the people served the Lord. He's basically reiterating the same thing.

All the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. Verse 10, And all that generation were also gathered to their fathers, and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done for Israel. They hadn't personally known the Lord.

They didn't know His work. You remove the people who do, and then you see who's really going through the motions. Or who's just going through the motions and who isn't really walking in an intimate way with Christ.

And we read these sad words, Judges 2:17, 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. To me, that's just a scary verse, right? Especially even being a father, and you think of trying to instill the truth and the Gospel in your children, and the last thing you want to do is you die and you're the influence holding those children's religion together and it's not something that they have as a reality of them in Christ. And all of a sudden, that restraint is now removed.

And they go and live in sin. I've seen that happen. And some of those people thankfully got converted at a later point after their parent died and was gone.

Then look at v. 19. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their father. So again, restraint.

When one of the judges is alive and he's leading, there's restraint. But you take them out of the picture, and they're not going to drop any of the practices or their stubborn ways. And so, it's clearly showing that individuals can end up mechanically adopting their leader's beliefs and values similar to shadowing their footsteps without genuinely grasping the convictions for themselves.

That metaphor of shadowing someone's footsteps, it underscores the idea of you're following closely behind someone. You're mimicking every move without engaging deeply or understanding the path you're actually on. You're following it, but you don't understand it.

It's not personal. It's just doing something because someone else does it, not because you really believe in it yourself. You could say it's like copying someone else's homework.

You might get all the right answers, but you're not actually learning anything. You're getting it in the head. It's not in the heart.

It's short-term memory. And the real test is, let's say if you're a kid at school and someone was actually copying all the answers, you get the kid who really knows the material, you remove him, what's going to happen to the person who's left? Do they themselves know that material? And I would say clearly, to truly experience and know the Lord is to be truly born again. To have genuine faith.

The problem with Israel is we find even Paul saying most of them died in the wilderness in unbelief. You have a nation of people who are a part of a physical nation, but most of them had not been circumcised in the heart. And what does the law even produce? What do we see the law doing in the New Testament? It's arousing sin in different people.

Israel kept getting darker and darker because the majority of Israel did not truly know Christ. They didn't know the Lord. They didn't have a new heart.

They didn't have a different spirit. It says Caleb is a man with a different spirit because he's followed Me wholly, therefore he will enter the land. So this is a caution for our church, for all of us.

If we forget what it truly means to be a Christian, or if we drop our standards of what genuine conversion is and what is an authentic characteristic of someone who's following Christ, and we just start adhering to traditions, we stand a generation away from vanishing. And look, that happens. You get churches, they lower what it really means to be a Christian.

And not to harshly pick on Presbyterians, but this happens more with Presbyterians because they already have the idea of our kids are part of the covenant and in some way they're good to go. So they're already lowering a standard right there where these kids kind of grow up with some expectation, well, I'm part of God's covenant people. It's all going to be okay.

And you look at church history and you look at those who embrace some of those views, you don't find generations and generations lasting there. You find compromise happening. I'm not saying that can't happen in a Baptist church.

It absolutely can if you lower the doctrine of regeneration and don't talk about what true conversion is. But a few leaders can influence a whole nation, yet the whole nation not have reality. And I remember getting converted when God saved me.

That was one of the things I had to ask myself. I thought, what if all the men I really respect became an atheist tomorrow? Would I still follow Christ? I played through that scenario in my own mind. And the whole point of it was to ask myself the question, is my knowledge of Christ personal? Or have I just heard all this truth, heard all this doctrine and with joy received it, but there's nothing in my own soul of me walking personally with Christ for myself? And yes, thank God that when you're saved, you have older Christians and they could be like big trees, that they're sturdier, their root system is bigger, and when the winds of trials come, the little trees are being protected and everything, but eventually when those old trees die out and all you've got is the younger generation, you're going to find who really has a deep root.

But some of those trees, they might topple over with those winds of trials and the cares of this life and it proved that the faith there wasn't the real thing. So do you firsthand know Christ for yourself? Or do you live off the reality of others? When you think about firsthand, firsthand experience, it refers to knowledge

gained through direct involvement. It's not second-hand sources or accounts.

It's a direct involvement of you walking and knowing and believing in Christ for yourself. Brethren, it's amazing. Joshua alive and those elders alive and how much Israel was towing the line.

And yet, they die off and it's just like... vanishes into depravity. Now this in no way means we don't tell the works of God to those who have yet to know the Lord. We do that.

We better do that. Listen to Psalm 78, verse 3. What we have heard and learned, and you know why we tell people the works of God? You know why us as parents should try to journal and remember the great things God has done and relay that to our children and read our children biographies where they see the great things God did in the lives of other individuals? And why you should rejoice at the Thanksgiving prayer meeting? Or why we should ask for praise requests? Because that's going to show people as they're seeing what God is doing, the kids are going to realize this God has a value and He is worthy. He's worthy.

And that might be the very catalyst to get them to trust the Lord, is they recognize His faithfulness in your own life. And so just because there's a danger where people live off the reality of others, it doesn't mean you conceal all of that. But Psalm 78, what we have heard and learned, that which our ancestors have told us, we will not hide from their descendants.

We will tell the next generation about the Lord's praiseworthy acts, about His strength and the amazing things He has done. He established a rule in Jacob. He set up a law in Israel.

He commanded our ancestors to make His deeds known to their descendants so that the next generation, children yet to be born, might know about them. They will grow up and tell their descendants about them. I mean, are we doing that? That's one application here.

You know what you could do? You could all the more talk about the Lord, talk about His praiseworthiness, talk about His deliverances, testify to His name before your kids, before brethren in this church, not grumble, not be anxious, not complain. That's what the Israelites did and it spread like a canker sore to all the other individuals. How long did Moses have to be gone for Israel to decide that there's someone else worthy to worship? Forty days.

And they were impatient with the delay and they went up to Aaron and they said, get up, make a golden calf for us to bow down and worship. Forty days. Isn't that incredible? Joel 1 says tell your children about it.

Have your children tell their children and their children the following generation. So yes, we've got to be taking the truth and communicating it to the younger generation. As Paul said in 2 Timothy 1, I'm reminded of your sincere faith, Timothy, a faith that first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice.

Now listen to this. And now I am sure it dwells in you as well. Paul is certain.

The true, saving faith and the knowledge in the walk with the Lord Jesus Christ that Lois and Eunice had, Paul could look at Timothy and it was evident enough in his life that he was sure that that dwelt in him. It wasn't just head knowledge. It wasn't just going through the motions.

It wasn't just cheating on someone's homework. It wasn't just following someone else's footsteps. But Timothy was going in his own path, he and the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Judges 2.10, all that generation that gathered to their fathers, there arose another generation who didn't know the Lord. They didn't know His words. They hadn't experienced His goodness themselves.

They didn't feel deeply moved by how great He is. They didn't feel thankful for worshiping Him for the amazing things He had done. There's a generation that forgot God.

But they didn't know they were forgetting God. By the fact they didn't annihilate the Canaanites and they didn't fully drive them out, right there you knew they forgot God. Where on earth do you get the idea that you're supposed to wipe out all of them? Don't you remember what others have done who didn't fully annihilate? That's what the Lord told them to kill.

Don't you remember what happened to them? It's easier once the first group, well, they didn't drive them fully out, so you know what, I guess we don't really have to drive them fully out. It just trickles down. It corrupts the nation as a whole.

So brethren, this is a call here to truly pursue God. We're not going to coast in on the coattails of any other person. It's going to be you and the Lord Jesus Christ on that great day of judgment.

I'm going to be there. It's not going to be you all. It's going to be me and God.

It is appointed for James Jennings once to die and after that, the judgment. And all of my thoughts, my motives, of my heart, they're going to be disclosed. And if Paul, the mighty apostle, would even say he doesn't judge himself yet, he says, let the Lord judge me on that great day.

Because Paul recognized some things in his life might not appear to be what they really are. But it didn't mean he didn't have confidence. He did.

He said, I don't know of anything against myself. But we've got to pursue God. Think about it in this way.

In your house, you've got some sort of background noise, right? You move into a new home. They already have a fridge. Wow, that fridge is really loud.

It kind of draws your attention, right? Well, what happens five months in? It doesn't draw your attention anymore. You're not thinking about how to fix it unless you did fix it. It becomes background noise.

Well, it blends in. Things that used to bother you, your neighbor's barking dog, is now background noise. Brethren, that's what happened in Judges with so many of these people.

It was at the forefront when Joshua was there. But you start taking all these old leaders out who it was a reality to them. They spoke about it in a way where they really believed what they were talking about and they really believed what they were saying.

And you strip all that out of the nation and all of a sudden, it's not drawing attention like it used to to their souls. It's not awakening them as it was. It no longer commands their attention.

It's lost its ability to command your attention. You and I don't want that to happen. We don't want that to happen where you read about the divine, powerful works of God in the Scriptures, and it doesn't have any

impact upon your soul.

This is an issue of whether or not you and I see the Lord as worthy to worship. That's what happened to Israel when Moses has gone 40 days. They had hearts that wanted to worship something.

And he's taken so long. I noticed this worship of a golden calf. How stupid as that is that they did that.

They didn't do that. It only took 40 days. And they'd just seen miraculous deliverances and Red Sea split in half.

How on earth do you do that? That shows how much we need reminders. Turn it back a couple pages. Joshua 23.

You see, this is really an issue of worship. This is really about worshiping and serving the Lord. In these verses, the ESV renders it serve.

But many versions render it worship. Your heart is prostrate and bowing down to that which you find is worthy of your heart's affections. Right? Joshua 23.11 Be careful, very careful therefore, to love the Lord your God.

For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations, and then he goes on right there. You see the issue there? Careful to love. Verse 24, I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, not one word has failed.

I mean, they knew it. He's saying you guys know it. Not one word has failed of all the good things the Lord your God promised concerning you.

Everything has come to pass. Not one of them has failed. You'd think that would be enough for them to trust God once He's dead.

And it wasn't. Chapter 24, verse 14, And therefore, fear the Lord and worship Him, serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. And then the evidence you're doing that is you put away the gods, right? If you're saying you worship God and you're holding on to false idols and sin, it's not sincere.

That's his point. Pretty simple, right? Verse 14, there's a true repentance. There's an evidence of that.

Verse 21, And the people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve the Lord. See in this dialogue here, they're saying we are going to serve the Lord. And then Joshua said to the people that they're not going to serve the Lord.

Verse 19, he says that you're not able to serve the Lord. And then that's when we led into verse 31 that I already read. They served all the days of Joshua.

My point is, it's an issue of worship. It's an issue of who do you find worthy and valuable of serving. It's not just does the older generation find the Lord worthy of serving and valuable, but do you yourself? And I thought this is actually very similar to Romans 1. It definitely connects.

Okay, homosexuality is now in Israel. How did they get there? And you could say, well, they didn't give thanks to God, right? Romans 1 says they don't give thanks. They don't honor God.

God gives them over to depravity and they exchange natural relations. Well, it's the same idea. It's an issue of worship.

Right? They don't give thanks. And they don't honor God. And God responds and He gives them over.

Well, that's exactly what happened to the judges. I'm not going to worship this God. He's not faithful.

I'm going to question Him. I'm going to grumble at Him. I'm going to be anxious and question Him.

Matthew 6, Jesus connects anxiety to unbelief. That's what the devil wants us to do to doubt the character of God. The moment you and I can't thank the Lord, brethren, if you can't thank God, you can end up at the end of the book of Judges.

Just not thanking God. That's the whole point of Romans 1. They don't honor God. They don't give thanks.

God gives them over. You know how important it is that you thank the Lord and thank Him for trials rather than we grumble? So what does this mean for you and I? First, to know the Lord, we must face trials. Look at Judges 2.22. This is very interesting.

He says, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died. Why am I not going to drive the nations out? Verse 22, in order to test Israel by them. Whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did, or whether they will not.

God allows these nations to remain to see what they're going to do. You think of your trials like that? There's trials that you've got, that I've got. God has that there to see.

Do we find Him valuable of worship? Do we personally know this Christ and find Him worthy? Isn't that what James 1.3 says? The testing of your faith produces what? Unbelief and doubt and morbidity. What's it say? The testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Trials have a purpose.

You and I have to personally experience the Lord. And you know what? I can read every biography on planet earth of every missionary who got martyred. And I can read the whole Old Testament.

And I can read everything about the Apostle Paul. Not law. Apostle Paul.

10,000 times over. Does that mean I'm still going to have to experience something to know the Lord? God's going to still have to test me. I can hear of others' tests.

I can hear of others' trials. I can read about them. And yes, I can glean from that that God is faithful.

Wow, if I face that, I can trust God. I don't have to doubt. Look at Him.

Look at how He delivered this person right there. But we're still going to have to personally experience the Lord in the face of our trials so that He doesn't become background noise. When a trial happens, certain truths from the Bible that were starting to become background noise, it's like they get amplified all of a sudden.

It's like loud again. And you're gripped with the reality of that truth. That's the means of God to keep us.

We even looked at that at Grace Group. God putting a thorn in Paul's flesh to make him weak because the Lord's power is manifest when we're weak. I mean, the Lord has a purpose of giving you a thorn.

And you're asking Him to remove it. And the Lord is saying, no, it's actually for your good. And the moment you get content and you rejoice in the thorn, whatever it might symbolize in your life, then you're going to find a nearness to the Lord.

So another thing, what can I do to know the Lord more? Well, Psalm 78 said, make known His deeds. Brethren, we want to be a people who make known the deeds of God. When you're at Grace Group or somewhere and one of us asks you, does anyone have something that you want to praise God for this week? Or anyone have a testimony of some way that God has delivered you? Don't just look at that and say, oh yeah, I'm shy, I don't want to share that.

That right there can be used to stir up and show an impact to all those other people there and help them in a way that you might not see. And if you shut your mouth, because you're going to take the card if you have a shy personality, you might be preventing others from being edified and exhorted and their hearts from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. I mean, we've got to exhort one another every day.

We need each other speaking the praises of the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives and telling others of what He has done. Who knows what the year 1900 is known for? Anyone? The year 1900 is the year that 2,000 Chinese Protestant believers were killed, 93 missionaries were martyred, and 74 of their children were murdered. Right? The Boxer Rebellion in China.

Up until that point, Hudson Taylor, he had taken comfort in the fact that in 32 years, not one missionary had died from violence from the Chinese. And here, in one year, 93 died, 74 of their kids. One of them, Lizzie Atwater, a young pregnant woman.

Here she's facing this trial. She's going into this. It's her and the Lord.

And she writes this letter, August 3, 1900, Dear ones, I long for the sight of your dear faces, but I fear we shall not meet on earth. I'm preparing for the end very quietly and calmly. The Lord is wonderfully near, and He will not fail me.

You hear that? He won't fail me. I was very restless and excited while there seemed a chance to live, but God has taken away that feeling. I now just pray for the grace to meet the terrible end bravely.

The pain will soon be over. Oh, the sweetness of welcoming love above. In 12 days, she wrote some more.

I don't have time to read that, but 12 days later, her and her unborn child and six missionaries are hacked to death by a bunch of guards in 1900. And you read about all of that and you hear about these trials and you find God was faithful to them. They personally knew the Lord.

They walked with Christ. They found His promises to be such that you can trust Him when you're standing in the furnace. It's not a matter of in that moment believing that.

You've got to be walking in that way prior to that. We're about out of time. What does it mean for you and I? We need to pass the baton well in our church, and I'd say this, in our parenting.

We don't want to be people who make, as they call it, making little Pharisees. Making kids who it's all about rules and regulations and laws and you can see all that happened with the Gotherdite movement from that. You see what it created.

It created a generation bitter at the God of the Bible, because they had the God of the Bible wrongly represented to them, because it wasn't about Christ. It wasn't about personally walking with the Lord Jesus Christ and knowing Him. It was about all manner of external dos and don'ts and all of that.

And that has the appearance of stopping the indulgence of the flesh, but it is of no value. So you and I, we've got to look at our parenting, right? You will have an impact, either for good or for bad, on your children in your own life. The same goes for me.

So we want to pass the baton well. Maybe what you need is a renewal. What do I mean by renewal? You need your own walk with Christ to be revived in your own life.

You remember Josiah when they found the book of the law and they read it? Remember the impact it did upon that man? He said, go inquire of the Lord for me, for the people concerning the words of this book that have been found. I mean, he was struck by the Word of God in such a way. Listen to Duncan Campbell.

God used Duncan Campbell in a mighty way in different revivals. But look at a point that he got to in his own life. He described his heart condition as a barren wilderness in which it had been for years.

He felt that he had to make a move from his present situation. This was a great crisis of his life. You see, it's not enough just I've been walking with the Lord near in the past and I had reality then.

It's got to be maintained. Campbell was preaching at a conference on having a deep spiritual life. He says this, as I sat listening to Dr. Fitch giving his last message, I suddenly became conscious of my unfitness to be in the pulpit.

I saw the barrenness of my life and ministry. I saw the pride. That's what led to it.

The pride of my own heart. How very humiliating it was to discover that I was proud of the fact that I was booked to speak at five conventions that year. That night, in desperation on the floor of my study, I cast myself afresh on the mercy of God.

He heard my cry for pardon and cleansing. And as I lay prostrate before Him, wave after wave of divine consciousness came over me, and the love of the Savior flooded my being. And in that hour, I knew my life and ministry could never be the same again.

If any small measure of God has been pleased to use me, it all is because of that night. Then he goes on, the author, Campbell remembered that his young daughter Sheena had asked him, Daddy, God used you in revival in the past. How is it that you don't see revival now? The question devastated him.

Alone with God that night, he saw thousands from the highlands and the islands of Scotland going to hell. He had to go to them. There, in the presence of God, he went through an upheaval of enormous dimensions.

This was a pivotal point in his life. The battle was on. It was a night of encounter with the Almighty.

God touched his life again and restored him to full fellowship and blessing. He would ever after say how glad he was that God was the God of new beginnings. Look, that experience he had was unique and it might not be the same thing, but you get the point.

You had a man who God had used in many ways and he was getting in the season for years of dryness. It was to the point he didn't even recognize it like Samson, the Spirit of God, had left him and he was unaware of it. He could get up there in a pulpit at a conference and he could preach at these five conventions and here, the Spirit of God, that one meeting just shows him this isn't real in your life.

It's up here. You're just following in the steps of another. It's not a personal, experiential walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here God decks his pride and draws him near. And so that's good news for us. The Lord is not one to leave us.

So, one other thing I think. I've got a couple more minutes. What can you do more in your own life to know the Lord in a deeper way? Yes, be in this book.

Yes, love the brethren, specifically those who are difficult to love in the church. Like me, probably. And my son Boaz.

But, I was just listening last night, laying in bed, chapter 11 of Hudson Taylor's biography. And you know what Hudson did? He wanted to go to China so bad. But he thought, if my faith falls over there, it's one thing for it to be a trial here.

And so he put a test. He determined he was never going to remind his boss to pay him. He wasn't going to do it.

He was going to pray. Every time his boss forgot to pay him on a quarterly basis, he would pray for God to provide. And it's a lot longer in context.

But it's just remarkable the test of faith. And after he went through all of that, he ended up giving all his money away to a family that he was initially reluctant to and then he couldn't get food, he couldn't pay his rent. And you know what the Lord did? His boss then remembered he needs the money, and then Hudson's all excited and then he says, oh, but I already sent it all to the bank.

And so Hudson wasn't going to have the money for that day and he was praying. And one of the richest men that was a client came at 10 at night. Who gets a rich man at 10 at night to come pay a bill? The Lord does.

And that man paid the bill and then the person Hudson worked for, he went and he gave him that money and Hudson was able to pay all of his bills. And he realized at that moment, he knew God can be trusted. And so think, brethren, are there ways in your life that you could more trust the Lord and step out in faith? It almost sounds presumptuous to say I'm not going to remind my boss to pay me, I'm just going to pray.

Is that presumptuous? Doesn't the Bible talk about God controlling the hearts of kings? So, I thought that's a creative thing Hudson Taylor did. And it drew him nearer to the Lord. He wasn't walking in the footsteps of someone's biography.

He was creating his own biography as he walked with the living God. Let's pray. Father, Lord, we don't want that to happen.

We don't want the Joshua's and the leaders, those who walk near to God, to die off in this church. And then the younger generation, they don't drive out the inhabitants of sin in their heart. They don't cut off the

right hands that caused them to sin.

They lose a radical desire for holiness. For love. Lord, what an emphasis You put on loving one another.

Lord, that city in Gibeah, they didn't love that man. They didn't love that woman. They were selfish animals.

And that man threw his concubine out like a piece of meat for a bunch of wolves. Lord, we look at that. It's so dark.

It's so disgusting. It's so depraved. And yet, Father, here we've looked at the beginning of it.

These men died off. And the generation had not seen the works who didn't personally know the Lord. Look where they ended up.

Lord, we want to personally know You. We want You to prove Yourself faithful in our lives as we walk with You, Lord. We want to know You in a personal and an intimate way.

And so, Lord, I pray You would do certain things in my brothers' and sisters' lives for them. Lord, I know as a parent, there's times that I want to get alone with one of my kids and maybe pray or take them somewhere and talk. It's just me and them.

It's not all six of them. And Lord, we're thankful for the times when we're all gathered and You draw near. Lord, I pray You would draw near.

Not in some false emotional false fire, but Lord, a real drawing near as Romans 8.16 says, Lord, the spirit bearing witness with their spirit that they are a child of God. Lord, where You just pull out the papers and You just put it right in their face and You show them, You are my adopted child. It's done.

It's finished. It's the real deal, Lord, that they would experience the witness of the Holy Spirit in their heart. That there would be an inner reality of knowing that You are their Father.

That You love them. Lord, is that something too small to ask that You would do for Your people, Lord? That it would give us a greater boldness in our own lives to honor You in every way we can? And so, Lord, do help us. Help us, Father, to be like Eunice and Lois and so instill the truth in our kids that we can look and we can say, I'm sure that faith dwells in them.

Lord, not maybe or whatever, but there's a certainty of it. So, Lord, help us. Help us to walk with You.

Lord, help us to stand in all of Your works to worship You. Lord, You are worthy of worship and praise. Lord, forgive us the times we don't worship You as we ought.

Father, we don't hold You in honor as we should. We don't give thanks. Lord, there's times we don't thank You.

We don't give thanks. Lord, I repent of that. Help us to be a thankful people, a people who wants to praise You among the great congregation, to lift our lips in praise of You because You're worthy.

Lord, show us more of Your worthiness. We thank You in Christ's name, Amen.

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