

## How We Get Thorns in Our Sides

The Canaanites became thorns in the side of Israel. Why did God allow it?

Judges 1.19–2.5

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Scripture Reader and Reading: Carl Peugh – Judges 2.1–4

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Christian Lake – Songs on submission; doing God's will

### Persuasion:

#### **I. Judges 1.19 – Something Changed**

19 So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron (Jdg 1.19).

A. Yahweh was with Judah in driving out the mountaineers, but

B. when it came to the lowland, Judah could not drive out the inhabitants.

1. How could that be?
2. Did Judah think that the Lord was only the God of the mountains?
  - a) You know, First Kings 20, says that the Syrians thought that about God.
  - b) They fought Israel in the mountains and Israel whipped them.
    - (1) Therefore, the servants of the king of Syria told him
    - (2) that Israel's God was only in the mountains,

23 Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they" (1Ki 20.23).

- (a) Because they thought that way,
- (b) the Lord sent a man of God to the king of Israel,

28 Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because the Syrians have said, "The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,"

therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord” (1Ki 20.28).

C. I know many Christians who do not believe

1. that the God they read about in the Bible
2. is the same God we worship today, because
  - a) they do not believe He works today, and
  - b) they or the government must do everything.

## **II. Judges 1.20 – Something for Caleb**

20 And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak (Jdg 1.20).

A. Caleb’s faith in the Lord paid off.

1. His obedience when spying the land of Canaan saved his life.
2. His further obedience brought him the land that God promised.

B. Caleb had been generous.

1. Remember we saw verses 12–15
  - a) that he gave his daughter to the man who conquered a place and
  - b) he gave her land and springs of water.
2. He was generous;
3. God was generous with him.

C. By faith he expelled the three sons of Anak.

1. Numbers 13 clues us in on the significance of this statement.
2. You will discover that Caleb himself finally did
  - a) what the ten spies said could not be done and
  - b) the rest of Israel believed could not be done,

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.” 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants {Hebrew nephilim} (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Num 13.30–33).

(i) However, Numbers 14 gives the answer of Joshua and Caleb,

8 “If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them” (Num 14.8–9).

D. The descendants of Anak looked at the spies and saw *them* as grasshoppers.

1. The ten spies looked at *themselves* as grasshoppers in comparison to Anak.
2. Caleb looked at Anak in comparison to God and saw *them* as grasshoppers.

### **III. Judges 1.21 – Something for Benjamin**

21 But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day (Jdg 1.21).

A. Did Judah’s lack of faith influence Benjamin?

B. If Judah had taken all that the Lord gave,

1. do you think that would have motivated Benjamin?
2. How many people truly know the power of their influence?

### **IV. Judges 1.22–26 – Something for Joseph**

22 And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them (Jdg 1.22).

A. Joseph was a bright spot,

1. even as Judah was initially.
2. However, we have to maintain our zeal for the Lord.

B. Joseph continued,

23 So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.) 24 And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, “Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy.” 25 So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. 26 And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day (Jdg 1.23–26).

1. Israel’s history was known to the Canaanites.
  - a) When Israel was operating by faith, no one could stop them.
  - b) This man knew it and did the right thing.
2. This story reminds us of the story of Rahab.
  - a) However, she joined Israel.
  - b) This man did not.

## **V. Judges 1.27 – Something for Manasseh**

27 However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land (Jdg 1.27).

A. The Canaanites dwelt in the land because the faith of Manasseh was weak.

1. The Canaanites held off the people of God!

2. The world does marvelous things by sheer determination.
  - a) Look at their engineering, technological, and medical accomplishments.
  - b) Cannot the people of God do more by faith?

B. However, faith is not tangible and so we fail to use it fully.

## **VI. Judges 1.28 – Something for Israel**

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out (Jdg 1.28).

A. If Israel could put the Canaanites under tribute,

1. then Israel could have driven them out.
2. Sometimes people think that God has a good way, but
  - a) that it could use improvement.
  - b) Israel liked the idea of removing most of the Canaanites, but
    - (1) Israel also liked the idea of using these people,
    - (2) like Saul saving the best of the Amalekites.

B. Does God know what He is commanding?

1. If we live by faith,
2. we know He does.
  - a) If we say He does not,
  - b) then we think we know better than He does.

C. *Newsweek* mentions this as a typical American way of thinking,

“...most Americans are actually quite concerned about morality but they want to determine for themselves how to construct a virtuous life. Less and less do they defer to the moral authority of institutions like churches...even among the religious, the dominant trend is toward individualized forms of faith in which personal autonomy plays a big role. The language of born-again Christians, for example, while deeply religious, is about personal self-discovery, not obedience

to doctrine. ‘There is a moral majority in America,’ writes Wolfe. ‘It just...wants to make up its own mind’” (Fareed Zakaria, “The Character of Our Campuses,” *Newsweek*, May 28, 2001, p. 31).

D. When we think that we do not have to drive something out of our lives

1. that God wants out,
2. we end up with thorns in our sides, and
  - a) snares in our lives,
  - b) as Israel experienced with the Canaanites.

E. The way that the Canaanites became thorns and snares was through control.

1. Israel thought that they would control the Canaanites, but
2. the Canaanites controlled the Israelites.

## **VII. Judges 1.29–36 – Something for the Other Tribes**

29 Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. 30 Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute. 31 Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. 32 So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. 33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them. 34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; 35 and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute. 36 Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward (Jdg 1.29–36).

A. This passage presents a great danger of disobedience.

1. At first, Israel appeared to profit from its partial obedience.
  - a) They had these vile people do the hard work for them.

- b) They received money from these people.
- 2. However, it opened the door to compromise with the Canaanites.
- B. James 4 shows what happens when we choose the path of compromise,

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (Jam 4.4).

### **VIII. Judges 2.1–2 – Something for the Lord?**

1 Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. 2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? (Jdg 2.1–2).

- A. From this time throughout the rest of the Old Testament,
  - 1. God reminded Israel constantly
  - 2. of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, saying,
    - a) “I will never break My covenant with you.”
    - b) He is faithful, but
      - (1) God expects us to do our part.
      - (2) If not,
        - (a) we suffer for it,
        - (b) as Israel did in the Book of Judges.
- B. He wanted to know why they had not obeyed Him.
  - 1. By determination the Canaanites outdid the weak faith of the Israelites.
    - a) By determined faith Israel should have obeyed the voice of God.
    - b) Is there any excuse for not doing what God tells us to do?

2. What kind of answer can we give God for not obeying His voice?
  - a) If we never become fully compliant to His will,
    - (1) we had better start thinking of how we are going to answer, because
    - (2) we will have to answer on the Day of Judgment.
  - b) In Amos 4, the Lord reminded Israel how He punished her, but
    - (1) she refused to repent.
    - (2) He went on to prophesy,
      - 12 “Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel;  
Because I will do this to you,  
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”  
(Amos 4.12).
    - i) The time for repentance had passed;
    - ii) next, they would meet God.
  - c) In time, all humanity will stand before God.
    - (1) He will question the disobedient.
    - (2) He will ask a question like the one the Angel asked Israel.
      - (a) If you never plan on following the whole counsel of God,
      - (b) start thinking right now what you are going to answer Him.
    - (3) Then be prepared for the response.

### **IX. Judges 2.3 – Something for Disobedience**

3 “Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you’” (Jdg 2.3).

A. Their partial obedience led to two problems:

1. The Canaanites would be thorns in the side of Israel.
2. The gods of the Canaanites would be a snare to Israel.

B. However, Numbers 33 prophesied that this would happen,

55 “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell” (Num 33.55).

“Those deceive themselves who expect advantage by friendship with those that are enemies to God” (Matthew Henry).

## **X. Judges 2.4–5 – Something for the Soul**

4 So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD (Jdg 2.4–5).

A. They were on the right track, but they needed to keep going.

1. When we learn of our disobedience,
2. it should be a very emotional time for us.
  - a) If our hearts are truly broken,
  - b) spontaneously we will lift up our voices and weep.

B. The Canaanites would stay in the land,

1. aggravating the Israelites for centuries.
2. What the present generation does affects future generations.

### **Exhortation:**

#### **I. We want something from the Lord.**

A. Can He expect anything from us?

B. Is that too much to ask?

1. The Father gave the Son.
2. The Son gave Himself.

- a) What can I give?
- b) I can give myself 100% to Him.