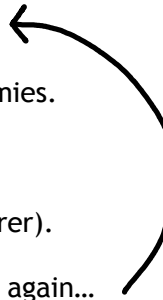


**Words of Life: Chaos**  
Judges

*You shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. (Leviticus 18:3)*

**The Downward Spiral of Sin**

- The book of Judges may appear to be little more than a collection of heroic and inspirational tales.
  - Certainly, there are inspirational stories of deliverance by the judges (or deliverers).
  - But many of the deliverers in the book are tragically flawed.
- The book of Judges describes a cycle of sin that persists in Israel's history during this period (2:11-23).
  - Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.
  - God gave them into the hands of their enemies.
  - Israel groaned under their affliction.
  - God saved Israel through a judge (or deliverer).
  - Israel lived in peace, but then Israel sinned again...
- Israel experienced God's grace through...
  - God's repeated deliverance.
  - God's firm discipline.



*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11)*

- The frightening lesson of Judges is not the continuous cycle of sin but the downward spiral of sin.
  - The earlier cycles of sin contain all the elements of the sin cycle.
  - The latter cycles of sin contain significant breaks in the pattern.
    - Israel appoints their own judge, Jephthah. (Judges 11)
    - Israel hardly acknowledges their need for a deliverer with Samson. (Judges 13-16)
  - The truth: over time, comfort with sin dulls our spiritual sensitivity—sin binds and blinds.
- The closing chapters of Judges show the horrifying depths of sin.
  - Chapters 17-21 are filled with instances of abuse, violence, and bloodshed.
  - Tragically, Israel has become like Sodom.

*And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." <sup>6</sup> Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, <sup>7</sup> and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. <sup>8</sup> Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." (Genesis 19:5-8)*

*As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And 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." <sup>23</sup> And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. <sup>24</sup> 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, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing." (Judges 19:22-24)*

- How did Israelites become like Canaanites?
  - Israel had promised before Joshua that they would serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:16-18)
  - But "there arose a generation after them who did not know the Lord." (Judges 2:10)
  - The question is: are we giving supreme attention to our hearts and avoiding moral drift?

*People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated. (Carson)*

### The Heavenward Look for a King

- Four times in the last chapters we are told "there was no king in Israel." (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)
- The book of Judges shows us our dark side, and in so doing cries out for the ultimate Light.
  - Eventually, Israel was given kings to rule the people, but they, too, were unable to restrain the people (or themselves).
  - The ultimate Deliverer was still to come, and in the fullness of time He did come!

*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)*

*For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)*