

**Introduction:** There is no more important hope in all the Scriptures than resurrection hope. Even Old Testament figures like Joshua find their faith anchored in the confident expectation that God would remember them in their deaths and preserve their eternal inheritance. Tragically, when God's people forget their eternal inheritance and live for the sinful pleasures of this world, they fall away from the standard of godliness which men like Joshua exemplified for them. This falling away, as we shall see, is how the book of Judges begins. But take heart – Joshua's death is proof that God finishes the work He begins. *Many may fall away, but all God's own, like Joshua, will persevere to the end.*

May we enjoy this return to the books of Joshua and Judges in this week's notes.

**Mon/Tues: read Deuteronomy 31:19-21; Joshua 24:25-28 & Judges 2:1-10.** Under the inspiration of God's Spirit, Joshua realizes what God also revealed to Moses: when Israel inherited the blessings of the Promised Land, they would forget their God. Listen to God's chilling words predicting this to Moses in Deut. 31:19-21:

*“Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. <sup>20</sup> For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, **they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.** <sup>21</sup> And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring).”*

As a testimony confirming Israel's predicted falling away, Joshua erects a witness against them in the form of the stone set up at the place of covenant renewal in Joshua 24:26. Joshua declares that he knows the stone will turn out to be more receptive to God's ways than Israel herself. The stone will remember God's words more than His own people! Sure enough, when Joshua died, “there arose another generation who knew not God” (Judges 2:10).

Meditate and Pray: How well God knows us! There is no human heart which is not open to the all-searching eyes of both God the Father and the Son! Sing about God's omniscience with these words from Psalm 139, (hymn # 36):

*Lord, Thou hast searched me and dost know  
Where'er I rest, where'er I go;  
Thou knowest all that I have planned,  
And all my ways are in Thy hand.*

*My words from Thee I cannot hide,  
I feel Thy power on every side;  
O wondrous knowledge, awful might,  
Unfathomed depth, unmeasured height.*

*Where can I go apart from Thee,  
Or whither from Thy presence flee?  
In Heav'n? It is Thy dwelling fair;  
In death's abode? Lo, Thou art there.*

*If I the wings of morning take,  
And far away my dwelling make,  
The hand that leadeth me is Thine,  
And my support Thy power divine.*

*If deepest darkness cover me,  
The darkness hideth not from Thee;*

*To Thee both night and day are bright,  
The darkness shineth as the light.*

**Weds/Thurs/Fri: read Judges 2:1-22.** Just as God the Father bore witness to Israel's apostasy in Moses' day, so God the Son bears witness against His own people's sin in Judges 2:1-6 – challenging them with the question, “How could you turn away from me after I rescued you from Egypt and redeemed you to myself?”

This ‘Angel’ is the second person of the Trinity. The same ‘Angel of the Lord’ in Joshua 5:14 appears to and is worshipped by Joshua at Gilgal. Here He begins by giving Israel an effective history lesson, reminding them of *His faithfulness* despite their wayward wandering away from Him. He then declares that He will chastise them

with the presence of the Canaanites in their midst. Since they failed to drive out the condemned pagan nations from the Promised Land, He will permit them to become thorns in Israel's side.

But the most profound part of the story is that this 'Angel' is said to dwell among God's people – first at Gilgal, where all the generation of the wilderness were circumcised by Joshua (Joshua 5:1-9), and then coming into the midst of the weeping Israelites in Judges 2:1-6, at the place named for their weeping, 'Bochim'. In other words, this appearance of God in the person of His Messenger, 'the Angel of the Lord', shows that the Lord *is not afraid to dwell among His sinful people!*

He had mercy on them in their *physically uncircumcised* state in Joshua 5, after they had suffered the forty-year unbelief of parents who failed to put the mark of the covenant upon them in the desert; He now has mercy on them in their *spiritually uncircumcised compromise with the Canaanites in the land*, whom they fail to drive out in Judges 2:2.

Yet you say, how does the Lord through His Angel show mercy to these wayward people, who confirm their wickedness in falling away almost immediately after Joshua's death in Judges 2:10-15? Well, the key declaration of divine faithfulness is Judges 2:1:

“And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, **I will never break my covenant with you.**”

Meditate and Pray: Think of it! No matter how badly His people sin, God remains faithful. He will not break His covenant! Therefore, when we read of God's wrath against them in Judges 2:20 and His refusal to save His people from the corrupt Canaanites in Judges 2:3 & 2:21, *these are chastisements which prove God's commitment to the curses of the covenant*, (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68), rather than demonstrating that God just doesn't care anymore. He will love His people! Even if that love must take the form of severe chastisement for sin, His loving commitment will not waiver!

This is why we sing so often and with such fervor the following hymn by Ray Palmer about our tendency to wander and God's constancy in staying with us (# 491 TH):

1. *Take me, O my Father, take me;  
Take me, save me, through Thy Son;  
That which Thou wouldst have me, make me,  
Let Thy will in me be done.  
Long from Thee my footsteps straying,  
Thorny proved the way I trod;  
Weary come I now, and praying,  
Take me to Thy love, my God.*

2. *Fruitless years with grief recalling,  
Humbly I confess my sin;  
At Thy feet, O Father, falling,  
To Thy household take me in.  
Freely now to Thee I proffer  
This relenting heart of mine;  
Freely life and love I offer,  
Gift unworthy love like Thine.*

3. *Once the world's Redeemer, dying,  
Bore our sins upon the tree;  
On that sacrifice relying,  
Now I look in hope to Thee:*

*Father, take me; all forgiving,  
Fold me to Thy loving breast;  
In Thy love forever living  
I must be forever blest.*

**Sat/Sun: read Judges 2:4-5, Judges 2:18-19 & Psalm 78:1-38.** It may be objected, since Israel's repentance and tears are so short-lived in Judges 2:4-5, (compared to their rapid falling away later in the chapter), that they do not deserve at all God's patience or attention, and that God should not be expected to hear their cries at all, given their hypocrisy in crying out in the first place! All this is true. Yet, *God does hear – even their sinful and compromised cries!* He does the same thing in Psalm 78, as one Puritan put it most amazingly below! Savor these words as you prepare to worship our great God this weekend:

“There is no disputing the fact which gives accuracy to the text (of Psalm 78:34-38), (namely), that God was moved by a repentance which had not in it even the elements of godly sorrow for sin; which could not even by a casual observer, much less by him who searches the heart, have been mistaken for that repentance which supposes an inward and radical change, and, nevertheless, even such a repentance as this sufficed to procure an answer from God.

Though the sackcloth was on the body and not on the soul; though it was the punishment of the sin and the sin itself which led to their praying, God did not turn away from the forced supplication, but promised the deliverance which was sought at His hands.

Yes, God, who never expresses greater abhorrence of any character than of that of the hypocrite; God, who rejects nothing more indignantly than outward homage when it is not the index of inward prostration – God may be said to have removed the humiliation of the people as though He could not read their hearts, as though, having read them, and noted their unsubdued rebellion, He still thought the apparent contrition deserving of some recompense...

If God would not leave the show and semblance of contrition without a reward, will He be unmindful of real sorrow for sin? If, *“many times He turned His anger away”* from those who *“did but flatter Him with their mouths, and lied to Him with their tongues”*, has He nothing in store for those who are humble in spirit, and who come to Him with the sacrifice of a broken heart?

Oh! The turning away of temporal wrath because idols were outwardly abandoned, this is a mighty pledge that eternal wrath will be averted if we are inwardly convicted, and truly flee for refuge to the Savior. God must have eternal good in store for His friends, if even His enemies are rewarded with temporal good. Yes, as I mark the Philistines and the Ammonites oppressing the idolatrous Israelites, and then see the oppressors driven back in answer to even the heartless crocodile tears of Israel - oh! I learn that true repentance for sin and true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cause all enemies to be scattered; I return from the contemplation of the backsliding people of Israel, emancipated notwithstanding the known hollowness of their vows, I return assured that a kingdom which neither Philistine nor Ammonite can invade, shall be the portion of all who seek deliverance through Christ.” (Treasury of David, on Psalm 78:36-38)