

“Learning War”
Judges 3:1-11
(Preached at Trinity, December 7, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God's purpose for Israel in the Land of Canaan was to drive out the inhabitants little by little until the land would be completely free of all the foreign nations. But they were required to fight diligently, not making covenant with the nations until every last one was destroyed. They were to remain God's distinct people.
Exodus 23:29-33 NAU - "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. ³⁰ "I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. ³¹ "I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River *Euphrates*; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you. ³² "You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ "They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."
2. But Israel did not obey. They were not diligent. They were not zealous in remaining God's holy people. They allowed the pagan people to remain with them.
 - A. These nations included the five lords of the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites. In addition to these we find in **Verse 5** the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
 - B. Just as God warned them, these nations became a snare to them.
Judges 3:6-7 NAU - " they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. ⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth."
3. As we enter **Chapter 3** we find that God left the pagan nations among Israel for several reasons.
 - A. First, it was an act God's judgment in for their unfaithfulness.
Judges 2:1-3 NAU - "Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, ² and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? ³ "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become *as thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you."

- B. Second, it was to test their faithfulness.
Judges 3:1 NAU - " Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to test Israel by them "
Judges 3:4 NAU - "They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses."
- C. Third, it was to make them strong warriors
Judges 3:2 NAU - "in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war"
4. As we began our journey through the Book of Judges I stated that caution must be exercised in handling the narrative portions of Scripture. One danger is in turning them into allegories where we seek a hidden meaning to every element. Another danger is over moralizing the various accounts. But we cannot dismiss the typical elements of Israel as they apply to the church. In other words, Israel serves as an example to the church. The Church is the fullest expression of Israel.
 Paul wrote regarding Israel as our example:
1 Corinthians 10:5-11 NAS - " Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. ⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."
5. As we look at Israel surrounded by the pagan nations we cannot fail to see our own experience in this world as God continues to train us up unto righteousness.
- I. As Christians we too are dwelling in the midst of pagan people
- A. This demands great wisdom on our part
1. Christians will always be in the minority. This means we will always live in a world dominated by sin and unbelief. It is a lawless world in rebellion against God. We shouldn't be surprised by their behavior.
 - a. Don't be surprised that some are confused about their sexuality
 - b. Don't be amazed that mothers kill their babies
 - c. Don't be surprised that they are confused about true Christianity
 - d. Don't be surprised when religious lost people do not think spiritually
 - e. The lost man is characterized by sin – continual sin
 2. The Bible doesn't command us to live in total isolation
1 Corinthians 5:9-11 NAU - " I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one."

3. Instead of isolating ourselves we must mingle with them and involve ourselves in their lives. We must show them graciousness and mercy and give ourselves in service to them. Service to the people of this world wins their trust and opens opportunities to engage them with the Gospel.
 4. Living as the light of the world demands that we be among them where they can see it. We must not deny all contact with a self-righteous attitude. **Martin Luther** condemned such an attitude – “The kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies. And he who will not accept this does not want to be of the kingdom of Christ. He wants to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people. Oh, you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing, who would have ever been spared?”
- B. But we must not become intertwined with them
1. While we enter into their lives we must not enter into their sin. They hate the God we love. We must guard against developing close relationships with them.
 2. The Bible command separation from us. We are to remain distinct from this world.
2 Corinthians 6:14-18 NAS - "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷ "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."
 3. We must not forget that they are capable of doing us great harm
 - a. Spiritual harm – when we allow their ways to lower our absolute standards. This is why sin must not be allowed to permeate the church
 - b. Physical harm – the loss of job, friendships, persecution
Wolves have a natural taste for the blood of the sheep
Matthew 10:16 NAU - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."
 4. We are not allowed to develop close relationships with them
 - a. We are not permitted to intermarry with them. This was one of the sins of Israel.
Judges 3:6 NAU - " they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods."
 - b. We should not enter into close business relationships with them. Their principles of behavior are not rooted in God’s Word.

- c. While we must enter into their lives they must not become our best friends.

Matthew Henry – “Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing, and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for our bosom-friends.”

II. As Christians we too are being progressively strengthened – trained for war

A. Christians are soldiers in a great war

- 1. **Matthew Henry** – “Israel was a figure of the church militant, that must fight its way to a triumphant state. The soldiers of Christ must endure hardness”

2 Timothy 2:3-4 NAU - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

- 2. The Christian life is not a life of ease. The battle is always raging
- 3. Our enemy is threefold

- a. We are warring against this present world. It is always wooing us with its culture. It is often subtle. It seems so natural. Too often Christians look and talk just like the people of this world. They seek the same things the people of this world seek.

- b. We are at war with Satan. It is a terrible battle that never ends. His tactics are cunning and his resources large. He wars on the level of our mind. He sows seeds of doubt, envy, lies. He tempts us to sin. **Acts 5:3 NAU** - "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"

Calvin – “Truth (Satan) assails with lies, light he obscures with darkness. The minds of men he involves with error; he stirs up hatred, inflames strife and war, and all in order that he may overthrow the kingdom of God, and drown men in eternal perdition with himself.”

Further Calvin says, “God employs unclean spirits in exercising believers by warring against them, assailing them with wiles, disturbing, alarming, and occasionally wounding, but never conquering them.”

- c. We are at war with our own flesh.

Romans 8:13-14 NAU - " for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

B. We learn the warfare of the faith little by little. We become stronger and stronger.

- 1. Paul describes our armor in **Ephesians 6**

- a. Our helmet of salvation – we become more powerful warriors as our assurance is increased. God increases our confidence that we belong to Him. This makes us valiant in the battle.

- b. Our breastplate of righteousness – also increased through assurance and our hearts are fixed more and more upon our Savior

- c. Our loins girded with truth – We become more powerful warriors as we become more fixed in our understanding of truth
 - d. Our gospel shoes keep us moving forward in the war with confidence in the Gospel
2. And then our powerful sword becomes sharper and more fearful to the enemy as we grow in our knowledge of the Word of God. This is a mighty weapon if we learn to use it well.
In ancient warfare a soldier became skillful in the use of the sword. We too must grow in our use of this powerful weapon.
 3. Our shield of faith shields us from the enemies weapons. Are you growing in your confidence in Christ? Do you trust Him absolutely? Will you follow your Commanded into the greatest of battles?
 4. Finally, we must grow more and more in our use of prayer.

Conclusion:

1. As Israel entered into Canaan they were valiant at first but quickly fell into sin. Achan immediately fell in love with worldly possessions. They quickly made agreements with the people of the land. Instead of growing more and more powerful, they became weaker and weaker.
2. This serves as a warning to us. We are the weakest when we turn away from Christ. We are most powerful when we look to Him.
2 Corinthians 12:1 NAU - " And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. "