

A Righteous Warfare

Book of Judges

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That hymn is a good introduction to our study in Judges 1 and I want to read for us from verse 3 all the way down to verse 11. Judges 1, let's begin with verse 1 for the context. The title of this message is simply "A Righteous Warfare."

1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? 2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. 3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. 4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. 5 And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. 7 And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. 9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. 10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. 11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher:

So a story here of warfare. Here we have the children of Israel in the land that God had promised to them and yet very much a bloody scene that we see here. There are some, I know, that you talk with that believe it is never right to wage a war. Their mantra is "peace not war," but what it comes down to many times is "peace at any cost" and you've heard certain ones state, "Can't we just get along?" That's true in politics. It's true between

cultures and it's particularly true in being stated between various religious denominations. Spiritually and particularly in regard to unity, there are many whose ambition is the same: "peace at any cost." Now, the Scriptures call upon us to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers. There is a difference. Keeping the peace at all cost where it involves compromise is never taught in the Scriptures. Making peace, true peace, how do we do that as sinners? By pointing other sinners to Christ who is our peace and therefore those who are the Lord's children are peacemakers.

I can remember back in high school what they called the ecumenical movement and it was designed to try to get all religions together. This has been going on ever since the Tower of Babel. A lot of people think they have come up with some new idea but I'll tell you, when the Lord scattered back there in Genesis 11 the nations from that tower, that was a worship center that was being built and the Lord scattered them, divided them and every attempt at false religion to come together, it may appear that it has God's blessing for a while but the Lord will always cast a fire in the midst of it to spread it out. And never in Scripture do we find any kind of instruction that regardless of what men believe, like people say, "There are many roads that lead to Rome but at least they all lead to Rome," that might be true of Rome but that's not true of God and how he is pleased to save sinners.

So when it comes down to the cause of the Gospel, the cause of Christ, this is a cause higher than even any earthly reason for going to war. Men have their reasons for going to war and I believe that it's just an evidence of our depravity but when it comes to where we take our stand with regard to the Gospel just as we read in the Scripture reading in 2 Timothy, Paul's instruction to Timothy was to stand in the truth and to expect that there would be persecution and there would be opposition, in other words, a warfare. So we should not be surprised here in the book of Judges where we read in Joshua that the Lord brought them into the land and everything that he had promised he gave them and yet now we still find particularly these enemies, an ongoing warfare. The Lord purposed it that way and just as we sang that hymn, "The Banner of the Cross," this is the banner under which all who are truly the Lord's redeemed and brought to him stand. You think of a banner; it's a flag. This is where we take our stand, it's in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the cross where he shed his precious blood.

So it's against this backdrop here that we find this title "A Righteous Warfare." Now, I say righteous, it's not because these going to battle were any better inherently than those that they were fighting. We know that none of us is better than the other so when Judah calls for Simeon here to go up and help fight against these other kings and enemies that we read about in these verses, it's not because they're any better than these enemies but these were objects of the Lord's mercy. They represent the church as we saw last time. They represent those that Christ came to redeem. But the very first thing that I would bring out to you here in this study is that in this matter of righteous warfare, is that there are enemies of righteousness that abound everywhere.

If you look over in Matthew 5, our Lord laid out the map of what those who were his could expect in this life. Everybody likes to read the Sermon on the Mount and get a

warm, fuzzy feeling reading it but if you're reading it with eyes that the Spirit gives, you'll see that it's not a life of ease. Just beginning even with verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," we don't like to be poor. But one who has been made poor in spirit is one who has been made to see that they have nothing with which to recommend themselves before God. This is the life of one that the Lord has redeemed.

Secondly, look at verse 4, "Blessed are they that mourn." You say, "Where is all the happiness of this Christian life?" Well, it's "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." But there is a certain mourning and I would say here not just over the evil that you see in the world but the evil that exists in ourselves. The closer you get to the light with eyes to see, you're not seeing yourself as getting better and better. In fact, the more corruption you find within yourself, it causes you to mourn. But here is the comfort, "they shall be comforted," because one who has not been taught of the Spirit doesn't mourn so there's no comfort. The comfort comes as the Spirit shows us our sin and causes us to look outside of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Look at verse 5, "Blessed are the meek." We live in a generation where "meek" means "weak." "Stand up for yourself," is what people are being taught. No, we have no stand. The Scriptures teach that the grace of God humbles us and so this is a position which natural man detests, the idea of being meek. The word there is one of "docile," of "quiet; quietude; resignation to the will of God," much as what Eli said when asked about the death of his sons that the Lord took. The enemy took away the Ark of the Covenant, all that was precious, "It is the Lord. Let him do what he will." Job where it says, "He sinned not with his mouth but bowed and worshiped." That takes the grace of God. That's that quiet resolve to the will of God which is described here as being "meek" and it says, "for they shall inherit the earth." What it is is committing our lot to the Lord. It's his anyway. I remember reading about, toward the end of the war when Robert E. Lee was on a horse with one of his generals in one of the last big battles that was fought and he had a sense that this was going to be a defeat and it is written that he said to his general, "Well, let's put it in the Lord's hands," and then he paused and stopped and said, "No, it's already in his hands." That's the resolve of knowing that we're not putting anything into the Lord's hand or taking it out, it's in his hands anyway. And, "they shall inherit the earth." The Lord has purposed that his redeemed ones have this earth. It won't be this sin-cursed earth but when he makes all things new, he has purposed to give us that earth wherein righteousness dwells but in the meantime we wait. "Blessed are the meek."

Verse 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." There again, not promoting a self-righteousness. That's not the hunger and thirsting here but there is only one true righteousness and that is which is in accord with God's righteousness and justice and holiness and that's the righteousness we desire. We don't even seek vengeance for our own sake. The Lord said, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." But to hunger and thirst after righteousness is to hunger and thirst after that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ himself came and established, earned it, and God with favor upon that people that he came and represented, once for all put to their account that very righteousness. That's the righteousness that one taught of the Spirit, born of the Spirit, hungers after, thirsts after. When you see those words "hunger and

thirst," it means there is life. A dead person doesn't hunger for anything. He doesn't thirst for anything. He doesn't need water. When you run into people that have no need of this Gospel, no need of the message of righteousness imputed in the Lord Jesus Christ upon completion of his death, there is one thing that you can say: they are dead else they would hunger and thirst after that righteousness.

But notice how it's put here: "they shall be filled." You know, when I look at myself, I by the grace of God see nothing. I'm impoverished. I'm poor in spirit and I mourn over what's in here yet I'm filled when I consider that one true righteousness that the Lord Jesus Christ came and established and earned. So all of this is the Lord describing the life of one who is the Lord's.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Merciful in that as they look outside themselves and see other sinners in as desperate a need as they are, they're reminded of the mercy of God toward them and so it causes us then to exercise that mercy toward others. Not be condescending. You see, this is one of the things that in religion we're taught to be condescending toward those that don't line up with our walk and our talk and how we perceive they ought to be. No, "blessed are the merciful." The Lord told the Pharisees that when they accused the disciples of eating on the Sabbath day because walking through a cornfield they happened to get hungry and they grabbed corn on the cob and started eating it to satisfy their hunger and the Pharisees jumped all over them and said, "Ah, they are harvesting on the Sabbath." The Lord told them, "Go and learn what it is to be merciful. I will have mercy and not sacrifice," is what the Lord said.

Well, as the Lord teaches you, you tend to be, as time goes on, you learn more and more that regardless of what other men say it is, it's not us trying to straighten them out that's going to do anything but we're reminded how has the Lord dealt with us, it's been in mercy and all I can say is mercy is God withholding from me what I justly and rightly deserve. So blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. It's not a condition but it's just saying that these that are merciful, they've not only already obtained but God continues to be merciful to them in that needy state.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." There again, this is a stone of stumbling for the self-righteous because they're all about trying to clean up their heart but the pure in heart, the word there means "transparent"; it means "nothing hidden." And we know the state of our heart. We know our desperate need before a holy God and whether men ever see it or not, we know that God sees us just as we are so we're not hiding anything. There's nothing to hide. I can remember many times growing up thinking, "Well, I hope God didn't see that," and it was an action when in reality our very hearts are already exposed before him, naked before him. What a foolish thought even to think that it depends on an act.

"The pure in heart." You've heard some people talk about somebody else being pure and innocent. In other words, they are who they are. They can't lie without people knowing about it. Well, this is what this heart is before the Lord: open, naked, exposed. And it says "for they shall see God." These are ones that the Lord has tenderly dealt in.

Then in verse 9 is what we already discussed, "Blessed are the peacemakers," not peacekeepers. The Lord is pointing one another to the Lord Jesus Christ who is our peace, to his death, is the only way of forgiveness and justification. "For they shall be called the children of God." Those are the true children of God whose peace has been made by the Lord himself.

But verse 10 through 12 then where we see that such that are the objects of God's grace can expect there to be a warfare. Just like in this story of the judges, the Lord had brought this nation into this land through the headship of Joshua and established them so that's a picture of Christ and his church, but the enemy stands against him. They are real enemies and here in verse 10 the Lord said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, when it says "persecuted for righteousness' sake," it's not being persecuted for being kind to your neighbor. I don't know anybody who would be persecuted for that. But in the context, to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, notice it's singular so *the* righteousness' sake, the righteousness of God, the one way in which God has saved his people through the righteousness of a substitute of another. Not requiring it at their hand but at the hand of his substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it says very definitively "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That's the only righteousness that will ever be accepted for entrance into heaven. It's not something you do or I do or strive to do. All that is vanity. It is the one righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he says, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Even back here in Judges, why is it that these so opposed the children of Israel that had been brought into the land? Well, there was a different way of worship and that distinction was clear and the 2 cannot coexist. You can't have light and dark together. Paul brings that out in writing to the Corinthians that you cannot serve at the table of the Lord and the table of Beelzebub, devils, demons. Alright, so there's this natural opposition. This enmity goes all the way back to the fall between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This warfare is expected.

But here in verse 12 we read, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great," notice it doesn't say "are your rewards in heaven." There are not individual rewards but "great is your reward." What is the reward of the child of God who has been so redeemed? Well, go back and look at it in the context. When it says there in verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart," one in whom the Spirit of God has revealed Christ, "they shall see God." You stop and think about a reward. The greatest blessing I could ever think of would be to as a guilty, lost, wretched sinner, be accepted in the presence of a holy God forever. You say, "On what basis this righteousness for which men contend and argue?" But it is our peace. It is our rest. It's our hope. And when it comes down to thinking how it is that the Lord is going to take me out of this world and it's often on my mind and I think what it is to be ushered into his presence, I look for no other reward than that which the Lord Jesus Christ himself has obtained on my behalf, that eternal redemption that he obtained. And the idea of reward is not on merit but it is a gift. It's actually his reward that he shares with us because when he came and lived, died and rose again and ascended on high, God

honored him with the blessing of having every one for whom he laid down his life. His reward is his people that he has redeemed and that's why he said, "Of all that the Father has given me, I will not lose one." But lest we think that this is anything particular to us, it says, "for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

So what I want you to see here in the book of Judges, particularly in the beginning here, the picture of Judah being a type of Christ as we saw last time but joined here with Simeon, a type of the church and joined together. Notice in Judges 1:3 where, "Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him." It shows a communion and particularly the word "brother" there, "Judah said unto Simeon his brother," they are natural brothers but there are those that are brothers in Christ because they have the same father. You think about what a natural relationship would be but also they have the same elder brother. You see, this is one thing when everybody makes a profession, you sit down and, "Well, describe your father to me." If I was trying to find out, someone would come up to me and say, "I am your long lost brother." "Really? I didn't know I had one. As far as I know I've got one sister." And so he starts describing his father to me and the more I listen, I'm sitting there thinking, "That doesn't even come close to my dad. You're saying he has blonde hair, my dad had dark hair and dark eyes."

So based on that, you draw a conclusion: we must not be talking about the same father. And when someone comes up and again in this matter of Christ and the Gospel, the elder brother, "Describe who he is to you. Describe the Christ you profess." Well, if someone starts describing their Christ as being one who would really like to save everybody and he's on a mission to try to get everybody saved and he lay down his life for everybody, "Can you imagine shedding your blood and not being able to have everybody that you shed your blood for." If someone talks in that manner, I'm going to quickly pull up and say, "We must not be talking about the same Christ. That's not my elder brother because my elder brother, when he lay down his life, he said he would not lose one of all that the Father had given him."

So there is a dividing but here in Judges 1:3, where there is a common cause, where there is a common headship that we see between Judah and Simeon, I believe it's a perfect picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they went up to fight against the Canaanites. This is the point I wanted you to see in his righteous warfare. Not only are there enemies everywhere but we can expect that this warfare continue until Christ comes again.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:25, here's a parallel. You know, this is a puzzle to some because they say, "Well, if Christ fought the battle and won, he said 'It is finished,' he said 'Now is the prince of this world cast out' with regard to his death and the judgment that would be rendered, why is there this ongoing warfare?" Well, look here in 1 Corinthians 15 and I'll start back here in verse 22. It's comparing or contrasting rather, Adam and Christ, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now, don't pull things out of context. As in Adam, all who are in Adam die. That's all that Adam was able to pass on to his descendents. Even so in Christ shall all who are in Christ, his seed, be made alive.

So you can see the contrast. In Adam nothing but death, condemnation. In Christ, life and justification.

Verse 23, "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits." When you think of firstfruits, it's the first harvest that comes in but that doesn't mean the whole harvest is in. Christ is the firstfruit. He was the first to come live, die and rise again and ascend on high. Now following comes all those that are of his seed. It says, "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." What does that tell you in verse 24? Christ has won the victory. Everyone that he has redeemed will most certainly be gathered in like wheat into the barn but until then, then shall the entire kingdom be delivered up to God, even the Father when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. That means there's still those that are yet to be put down.

Now, does that mean he's not reigning? Well, look at verse 25, "For he must reign." It doesn't say he shall reign. But he must reign, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Now, just note that there are 2 ways in which these enemies, every enemy will be put under his feet either in grace or in judgment. If it's in grace, it's because Christ has paid the debt and he has already purposed the time in which he will subdue those that he has purposed to save and bring to himself in grace. All others will be subdued in judgment. And we see that in the Old Testament. As Israel went into these lands and conquered, there were certain ones who were objects of God's grace, the Rahab's that were singled out in his grace and mercy that were subdued in grace and were spared from the sword, the judgment that was to fall. We're going to see that going through the book of Judges. All the way through, there's that remnant according to the election of grace.

But it says here in verse 26, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Notice, "For he hath put all things under his feet." That's the entitlement that is the Lord's. All authority has been put into his hand to give eternal life unto as many as the Father has given to him. So "he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him," when that last one is brought in in grace and God purposes then to destroy the world and all that is in it, "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." So I don't see any contradiction. Moreso, I see it as a picture here as we see in the book of Judges that the Lord gave them this land. He brought them in but there is an ongoing battle. There is a warfare that God has purposed to distinguish in this world his people from the rest.

And certainly if you look in 2 Thessalonians 1, you see, we keep looking for a nice little pocket of rest. If you're like me, I get tired of the battle and you go along for a little while and have a little peace and quiet and you're just thankful to be able to rejoice in the Gospel and then the Lord puts you up next to somebody that starts punching away and you think, "Give me strength." But look what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians here in 2 Thessalonians 1 and you talk about people that were exercised. In verse 3, Paul says, "We

are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith," notice, "in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." Notice, "Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled," there is that nice word we look for, "rest with us," but when? "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." So, when can we expect rest? When he takes us out of this world or he comes at the end of time if we're still alive and takes us unto himself. But until then, expect that there's going to be a battle.

Now, when the Lord is pleased to exercise this righteousness and to execute judgment, coming back here to Judges 1, notice that "Judah went up," in verse 4, but it says, "the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand." So it's not by our strength; it's not by our might. You know, I hear people coming up with programs and churches going out and winning the neighborhood or winning a city or campaigns. That's not how God works. If there is to be any work of God accomplished whether in salvation or judgment, it is the Lord who does that work and the one thing that I do know, though, it's like Christ said, the gates of hell. Christ said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Whatever he has purposed to do, hell itself is no barrier and that's what we see here in this righteous warfare is that the outcome is sure. Some might look on some battles lost, if you looked down through the history of the church, particularly when you read books like Fox's "Book of Martyrs" and some of the other ways in which men have devised means to torture other human beings because of their faith, this is the depravity of man. If God ever turns men loose, they'd be like wild beasts devouring. I think about that almost every day, the freedom and the peace that we enjoy relatively right now in this culture and it may not always stay that way but right now, if someone gets mad at you over the Gospel, they just go down the street. They don't talk to you anymore. You know, you might see them and they look the other way in the grocery store and they are gone. But there are some in certain parts of the world where they are not privileged to meet as we are with the lights on, the doors open, the sign out welcoming people to come and hear the Gospel. They've got to meet in private, in secret, in hideaway places because they are not recognized by the official government or religion of the land. Either way, the Lord is at work. Whether we enjoy this freedom here right now or whether he ever...and it might come to that one day, where if we don't register this congregation with the official religion of the land, that they'll send the police to shut the place down. Then it's a matter of determining how it is we're going to worship.

I know the Lord has made his people to desire fellowship with one another and so they seek out that fellowship. I don't care if it's at the end of a dirt row in a cornfield, if that's where the Lord has purposed that his people gather as it was in the day of John Bunyan.

He was excluded outside of the mainline religion. In fact, he spent over 12 years in prison because he refused to take a letter of ordination from the organized religion of the day. You talk about persecution, they put him in a cell and put his blind daughter outside the window where he could hear her crying and weeping every day from hunger. But he was put in a situation where he could not compromise his conscience.

This is a very real warfare that we see here but I do know that the Lord gives the victory as we see even here in the book of Judges, this one king. This is just one example. This was a fearful king and he had menaced and reigned with terror. He himself admits it in verse 7. When they caught him, they cut off his thumbs and toes. That's what the method of the land was at the time. If you cut off a man's thumb, he could no longer hold a spear. He could no longer, it's to disarm him. Cut off his toes and he can't run. And he admitted in verse 7 when they caught him, he said, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table." In other words, he made them just eat crumbs off of his table like dogs. That's how he treated his enemies and he knew, having been captured, "as I have done, so God hath requited to me." Isn't it interesting that he saw even this after all of his running was an act of God. It wasn't conversion. It didn't bring him to repentance but it says, "they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died." He died the death of an unrighteous man but it was all in the Lord's time.

So God is going to get the glory. God is going to get the honor in one way or another but one thing is sure: through it all, he will keep his people. He will establish them and in spite of the warfare, he is going to distinguish them from all other enemies of righteousness and all in pride and haughtiness. Really, the stand isn't against the Lord's people so much as it is against the Lord himself.

And you'll see here in verse 8, "Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem." That's interesting because at this point, Jerusalem was still in the enemy's hands. It actually wasn't until some 250 years later when David was established as king that Jerusalem was fully conquered. You say, "Well, what does that picture?" Well, Jerusalem being a type and picture of the Lord's church, people, there are some of the Lord's people that are still in darkness; those that he has redeemed who are rebels to the truth, rebels to the Gospel. But in the Lord's time, he'll conquer them. He'll draw them. We can be sure of that.

So when we talk about this righteous warfare, we're instruments in the Lord's hands to go out and preach the Gospel but whose battle is it? It's the Lord's. He knows those that are his, I don't. We have to be careful not to write this one off or that one off just because they appear to be reprobate. We know of the case of Saul of Tarsus breathing out hatred and persecution against the church and then suddenly the Lord crossed his path and brought him low and drew him to himself. He was one of the Lord's all along.

So it's the Lord's battle. What we do is seek his guidance day in and day out and pray for the wisdom that we read about in Matthew 5 in the Beatitudes of, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," commending to the Lord this our lot, if you will, that

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay." And in quietude before him, bowing before him and thanking him for that mercy and that grace that he has been pleased to show us and praying the same for our enemies. That's what the Lord said, "Pray for your enemies." That's one of the toughest things to do but if we understand how he has been merciful to us, certainly our desire is going to be that he would exercise that same sort of mercy toward even the worst of sinners. And I just know this: there is no case too hard for God because when I consider how he saved me, I can see that there is no case too hard for God and I'm sure that each of you looking at yourself when you understand who you are and how the Lord should have just cast us into hell but didn't, we know it's for one reason and it's because of his mercy and grace in Christ Jesus.