



THE SEEDS OF DEFEAT

Catalog No. 736
Judges 1:1–2:5
Second Message
John Hanneman
January 19, 1992

When people buy a house, one of the first things they do is make a list of the projects they want to accomplish when they move in. I know I did this and, as I recall, my list was both aggressive and optimistic. New homeowners think they can paint the entire inside of the house the first week, plant a new lawn the second week, wallpaper a couple of bedrooms the third week, and so on. Reality soon sets in, however. They begin to make separate lists—a 30-day list, a one-year list, a five-year list, etc. This process is similar to what happens when we become believers in Jesus Christ. We enter into a new and different life and certain projects need to be accomplished—there is work to be done and new territory to be taken.

Last week, we began our study in the book of Judges by comparing Israel's entry into the land with the Christian's entering into the life of Christ. Today, I want to begin by reading the entire first chapter of this wonderful narrative.

Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD, saying, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand." Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you." So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands; and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. And Adoni-bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. And afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland. So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi.

Then from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher). And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife." And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so he

gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife. Then it came about; when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" And she said to him, "Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

And the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people. Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots. Then they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised; and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak. But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Likewise the house of Joseph went up against Beth-el, and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz). And the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly." 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 free. And the man went into the land of Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day.

But Manasseh did not take possession 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; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. And it came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.

Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.

Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or

the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob. So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley; yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalvim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, they became forced labor. And the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akkrabbim, from Sela and upward. (1:1-36, NASB)

Notice that the very first verse is a call to battle, a call to fight. “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?” asked the sons of Israel of the Lord. Joshua had taken the nation into the land, having led a conquest of thirty-one kings. When he died, each tribe was dismissed to their territory, to their inheritance, and there they were to continue the battle and root out the remaining enemies. Thus begins the period of the Judges, a time that covered 1381 BC to 1050 BC (from the first judge, Othniel, to the last judge and the first prophet, Samuel). Now God’s instructions to Israel were quite clear in texts through Deuteronomy and Exodus. Listen to this text, for instance, from Exodus 23:31-33, “I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you” (NIV). Clear instructions: Israel was to drive the enemy out of the land completely.

Why? It was because of the enemy’s moral degradation. God had given the Canaanites and the other peoples living in this land time to respond, yet they chose to worship idols. So now God was bringing about their judgment through the nation of Israel. It was the Lord who did battle on Israel’s behalf, and yet Israel was to join him in the battle. Remember that the land represents for believers in Jesus Christ the abundant and Spirit-filled life that is given to us as a gift when we believe. Just as Israel was given a new land and was to enter into that new land, so we are given a new life and called to enter into that life. But just as Israel had enemies to conquer, so we, too, have enemies in our life. The land needs to be possessed, or appropriated.

What are the enemies we are called to annihilate and destroy? We do not have to face Canaanites and Perezites and Jebusites. The New Testament tells us that these enemies are called sin and the flesh. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:17, “the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (NASB). The enemies we face might be lust, greed or ambition. They might be moods that control us, such as depression or anger. They might be fears—fear of failure,

fear of rejection. They might be patterns that have developed over a long period of time, such as being obsessive-compulsive. Some of these things might result from our family background, but they are enemies that are rooted in our flesh. They seek to control us and lead us into sin. Thus, when we come to Christ, we find as we enter into this new land of milk and honey that we are called to battle.

Three things will help us understand more about this fight. Here is the first one: *Victory in the Christian life is not automatic.* Even though the land is given to us as a gift—our inheritance is allotted and mapped out for us—it still must be conquered in battle. The enemies don’t just run away from us. The spiritual land we enter, unfortunately, is not like the land of Camelot, where all the leaves blow into neat little piles. This is a paradox, isn’t it? Life in Jesus Christ is a gift from God. It is a land of milk and honey, one that is designed to be abundant and restful. But, on the other hand, there is a call to fight, to conquer enemies that would inhibit us from enjoying our inheritance.

Here is the second thing: *According to the Scripture, the enemies that live in this land have already been defeated.* No enemy that you face in life can stand against God. The Lord said to Joshua, “Arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you” (Josh 1:2-3). And here in Judges 1:2, God says, “behold, I have given the land into his hand.” Every place your foot treads, your enemy will be defeated. Just as Israel was promised victory, so we, too, are promised victory in the Christian life by the power of the indwelling Christ. Paul describes it this way: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2).

Here is the third thing that will help us understand this battle: *The abundant life in Christ is provided by God for every one of his people, not just certain advanced saints.* It is not awarded because we take classes in theology. It’s for each and every one of us. But the battle must be entered into by each individual and by each generation. This presented a problem for Israel. They had followed Joshua for a number of years, but then Joshua and all his generation were gathered to the Lord. Judges says that there arose after them a generation that did not know the Lord nor yet the work that he had done for Israel. No one can fight the battles for us; we ourselves must enter into warfare.

In some respects, this is where we find ourselves here at Peninsula Bible Church. In the late Forties and early Fifties, a group of godly men laid a foundation and did a work by the power of God. Battling night and day, they captured new territory. They expounded the scriptures; they led people to Christ; they built up; they encouraged. But now a new generation has arisen. Just as Israel could not depend on the work of Joshua, we can’t live on the work of those who have gone before us. We must enter in, each and every one of us, in our generation.

God has called us into a battle, not against people or nations, but against sin, against our own flesh, against evil and darkness.

“Oh, yuck!” you say, “I don’t want to fight. Can’t I live a comfortable life now that I’m a Christian?” I, too, hate conflict. I avoid it at all costs. I’m scared to enter into battle. I

discovered this as a child. When I was about 10 years old, a boy wanted to fight me. To this day I don't know what he wanted to fight about; he just wanted to fight. I joked around, trying not to take him seriously, trying to avoid conflict and get out of the mess. Suddenly he hauled off and punched me in the nose. I put my hand up to my nose and, lo and behold, there was blood on my finger. You might say that this turn of events made me take that fight very seriously. I chased that kid around the park and through the neighborhood for an hour. He's lucky I didn't catch him! Sometimes we're reluctant to fight because we don't take sin seriously. But then sin lands the first punch and we get a bloody nose. God says we need to be ready to enter into the battle.

And we see in our text that the tribes of Israel got off to a pretty good start, especially Judah and Simeon. They teamed up together (it is a helpful thing to team up with a brother or sister to take on new territory and defeat enemies), and they helped one another in the territories allotted to them. But, despite everything the Lord had given them, problems developed even for Judah and Simeon. They defeated Adoni-bezek, but they did not know what to do with him. So they cut off his thumbs and his big toes, adopting the practice of the pagan nations around them. (That's what Adoni-bezek had done, so they did the same thing to him.) This would be like the United States responding to terrorist activity by taking hostages themselves and tormenting and terrorizing them in kind. This was a failure on the part of Judah. They began to have more victories, driving out more enemies, but another problem arose. They took the hill country, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley. These people were fortified and strengthened by iron chariots; they were deeply entrenched and hard to drive out. Thus, in verse 19, the whole scene changes, and problems really develop.

Let's look at some examples. Verse 21: "the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem." Verse 25: "the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, they let the man and all his family go free." Verse 27: "Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages." Verse 28: "they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely." Verse 29: "Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer." Verse 30: "Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron." Verse 31: "Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco." Verse 33: "Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh." They failed miserably to carry out their assigned task. God had made it clear to them: When they came into the land, they were to drive out completely the inhabitants of the land. They were to destroy them, but they didn't. They compromised; they grew complacent; they allowed them to live next to them; they put them to forced labor. They thought they had the situation under control. Their slogan may well have been, "If you can't beat them, join them."

The spiritual principle is obvious: When we enter into the land of Jesus Christ, the beginning of defeat for us is when we fail to completely eradicate the enemies from our life. We allow sin to live with us. We don't drive it out completely. We grow complacent. We compromise. We think we have our sin under control, and that's good enough for us. Like Israel, we settle for something short of complete destruction and annihilation of sin. Thus begins

the downward slide. Here is how the New Testament teaches this truth, from Romans 13:14, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." Judges gives us the unabridged version of that verse. Again and again the point is driven home: "they did not drive out the enemy completely."

When I was a teenager, I found a copy of Playboy magazine lying in a ditch. Do you know how valuable a treasure a Playboy magazine can be for a 13-year-old boy? I thought to myself, "I can finally go home and read the articles." I put it in my dresser drawer and occasionally took it out—just read the articles, of course. But I noticed something strange happening to me, even as a young man and not yet a Christian: I began to realize that that magazine was having a very unhealthy influence on me. I felt I couldn't let it live in my dresser drawer anymore. One night, I opened that drawer, picked up the magazine, and made the decision to walk down to the end of the street and throw it in a dumpster. I learned this principle very early: If I was not going to be controlled by an enemy, then I had to drive it completely out of my life. That's what God says we're to do with our enemies—drive them out completely. We are to starve the flesh and feed the Spirit. We are to make no provision for the flesh.

Why can't God and sin live together in our lives? Why do we have to remove sin completely? Our text is helpful here. If we let sin live, if we do not crush it completely, then it will begin building building up in some other area of our lives. The tribe of Joseph took Bethel, but they let the man and his family go free. What was the result? "And the man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day" (1:26). They let him go so he went someplace else and built a city, even calling it by its original name. If we think we have control of some area of our lives, say, our home, but if we don't completely drive out sin, it's going to surface somewhere else—at work, perhaps; it's going to make itself manifest in some other area in our life. This is the lesson of our text. Some of the tribes thought they had victory, they thought they had control because they put the Canaanites into forced labor, but then we come to verse 34: "The Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley." They were not really in control; rather, their enemy was controlling them. Sin inhibits, limits and restricts our movement. If we let it live in our lives, then we end up in idolatry, just like the nation of Israel. This was God's warning to the nation time and time again: "Go in and drive out those enemies completely, because I don't want you to say, 'How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.'"

Now God doesn't want us to drive out the enemies for the purpose of being nice, neat Christians. He doesn't want us to merely toe the line as an end in itself. He knows that when we allow sin to live in our lives, it will take away from our relationship with him. Our love for God will grow cold; our worship will wander; our relationship will sputter. He does not want us to be controlled and defeated by sin because he wants us to enjoy the abundance of the land. Driving sin out of our lives is the means to the end, which is entering into the holiness of God, knowing him fully, and enjoying him completely. He calls us to make a choice: God and sin cannot coexist. We cannot serve two masters.

At this point, the angel of the Lord rebukes the nation for what they've done. 2:1-5:

Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought up 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, 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? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" And it came about when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD. (2:1-5)

We understand that this angel is none other than the Lord himself, the pre-incarnate Christ. (We will encounter the angel of the Lord again in this book.) He gives Israel a command: "You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land." But Israel had sinned and disobeyed. "What is this that you have done?" asks the angel. God is the covenant maker, but man is the covenant breaker. As a result, God says, "I will no longer drive this enemy out before you. They shall become a snare to you." (Next week, we'll study in more detail why God wants the enemy to remain in the land and be a snare.) The people respond by lifting up their voices and weeping.

Gilgal and Bochim, the two places identified here, are highly significant. "Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim," says our text. Gilgal was where Israel crossed the Jordan, the place where they renewed the practice of circumcision, where they kept the Passover. This was where God appeared to Joshua and told him that he was the commander-in-chief of the Lord's army and that he would lead Israel to victory. In other words, Gilgal represents victory, blessing, obedience. "Bochim," on the other hand, means weeping. In the book of Joshua, the people lived in victory, but here in Judges they are miserable and sorrowful. What is the lesson for us? It is this: The path of partial obedience leads to Bochim. We think that by doing this or having that that we will enter into life, but then we discover that we are defeated and controlled by sin. Sorrow, not victory, becomes our portion. If we want

something badly enough, God will give it to us. Our dreams become nightmares as disobedience leads us into slavery. One commentator wrote, "The most miserable people in the world are professing believers who will not commit themselves to the Lord Jesus."

We have learned three important truths today. First, there is a call to battle when we enter into the Christian life. We may not like it, nonetheless it's a call to battle. Second, we must recognize that we can be defeated. And we begin to taste defeat when we become complacent, when we compromise and allow sin to live in our lives, not because we lack the power to destroy the enemy. And third, if we allow sin to remain, we will end up in Bochim, the land of weeping, rather than in Gilgal, the land of victory.

We all face problems with sin. We can't defeat all of these enemies at once any more than we can paint all the rooms in our house at the same time. Some of the enemies that we face have iron chariots; they're deeply entrenched and they're fortified. But let us not feel overwhelmed and guilty this morning. Rather, let us be conscious of these truths, and let us begin to take sin seriously and resolve to enter into this battle. Augustine said, "We don't have the power to do, but we have the power to choose." We must be willing to take responsibility for these areas of our lives, to look them squarely in the face and decide against them.

Charles Osgood made an interesting comment about the events surrounding Magic Johnson and the revelation that the famous athlete had tested HIV positive. "Perhaps we will never find a way to deal with this very serious illness that has come into our midst until we attempt to put right and wrong back in our vocabulary," said Osgood. Israel did what was right in their own eyes. Their motto might well have been, "If it feels good, do it." They disobeyed God and failed to drive the enemies out of their land. What about about us? Are we willing to drive the enemies out of our land, to not compromise or grow complacent? Our hope lies in the promise of God. The Lord is with us. Just as no enemy could stand before Israel in 1381 BC, no enemy can stand before the power of Christ in your life. The cross could not defeat him. The tomb could not contain him. And that very resurrection power is ours if we will but decide to enter the battle. The question we face this morning is this: Are we willing to drive these enemies out completely and take this land that is already ours in Jesus Christ our Lord?

© 1992 Peninsula Bible Church/Cupertino