

"Unfailing Love"

RUTH LESSON 1

*"The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy."
Psalm 147:11*

The story of Ruth stands out as a bright spot during a dark age in the history of Israel. During this time God appointed judges over His people to establish the teachings of His law, and righteousness in a time of political, spiritual and moral degeneracy.

In order to gain a better understanding of this time in Israel's history, let's spend some time in the book of Judges prior to our study in Ruth.

DAY #1

- 1) Read Deuteronomy 7:1-5

What were the children of Israel told to do according to these verses?

- 2) Read Deuteronomy 7:6-8

Why were they to do this?

- 3) Read Deuteronomy 7:9-11

According to these verses, why is it that God wanted these nations wiped out?

- 4) Read Deuteronomy 7:12-15

What were the blessings to be for their obedience?

- 5) Read Deuteronomy 7:16

Again, what was God telling them to do?

- 6) Read Deuteronomy 7:17-24

What encouragement did God give them?

- 7) Read Deuteronomy 7:25-26

Again what were the children of Israel commanded to do?

Is there any question in your mind regarding what God was commanding Israel to do?

Should there have been any question in Israel's mind, or doubt as to what God was telling them to do?

What are some clear commands that God has given, or is currently giving you in your own life?

Are you being obedient? If you are, what are some of the encouragements and blessings God has given you along the way?

If you are struggling with or simply ignoring His commands, prayerfully consider the reasons.

No matter how hard you try to justify your lack of obedience in your own mind or how convincing your reasons may look on paper, the ugly reality of it is, it's sin. There is no good reason or justification for disobeying the Lord. (How many times have you said that or something like it to your kids??) When we disobey and sin against God, we can count on the fact that we will be disciplined, suffering the consequences of our disobedience. Israel was no different. During this week will be looking a little bit at Israel's disobedience and the consequence of that disobedience.

May the Lord fill your heart with joy and anticipation as you continue in His Word throughout the week.

DAY #2

Read Judges 1

- 1) According to verses 1-3, what was the first sign of disobedience?

- 2) What did Judah and Simeon (and their men) do to king Adoni-bezek according to verse 6?

Look back to Deut. 7:24. What did God command them to do?

At first glance these two tribes seem to be doing all the right things. They are conquering the nations placed before them. God is delivering the enemy into their hand just as He had promised He would in spite of the lack of faith in verses 1-3 on Judah's part and the disobedience in verse 6. However as we continue reading chapter 1 we see a downward trend.

- 3) God had promised to deliver them from the enemy and up till this point He had kept His promise (imagine that!). So why did Judah, all of a sudden, decide to leave the "lowlanders" alone? (verse 19)

- 4) When faced with the dilemma of "chariots of iron" what should the men of Judah and Simeon have done?

- 5) What pattern do you see in verses 21-36 as a result of the example Judah and Simeon set for the rest of Israel?

Fear is a very powerful emotion – but not more powerful than God! When we allow fear to creep in and set up house in our hearts, we begin to make compromises and decisions we otherwise would never make. Think of a time when you allowed fear to settle in your heart and the consequences that followed. God tells us over and over in scripture to not be afraid. ****CHALLENGE**** Find and write down a couple of verses that pertain to fear and how those verses minister to your heart.

We will see, as we continue to skim the surface of Judges and study Ruth, some of the devastating consequences we bring upon ourselves when we allow ourselves to make decisions based on fear (which is a sin). We will also see the contrast when making decisions based on love (the opposite of fear - *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18*) and the blessings that follow.

DAY #3

Read Judges 2:1-5

- 1) In your own words, describe what is happening in these verses.

- 2) Describe a time in your walk with the Lord when He reminded you of His promises, showed you your sin, and revealed to you the consequence of that sin. Spend some time with the Lord in this one and allow Him to search your heart.

Read verses 6-23

These verses give us greater detail on what has happened up until this point, a more in-depth look, if you will.

- 3) Give verses 6-9 a title.

- 4) In your own words describe the Nation of Israel at during this time.

- 5) Give verses 10-15 a title.

- 6) In your own words describe the Nation of Israel at during this time.

- 7) Give a title to verses 16-23

- 8) Describe the cycle that is happening in these verses.

We will see this same cycle throughout Judges chapters 3-18. It is so easy for us to shake our heads and make comments such as “How many times does God have to show these people His Mercy before they get it!” or “After everything that God has done for the Israelites up until this point how can they keep making the same stupid mistakes...” God help *us* and have mercy on *us*, for we are no different! Praise God that ***the unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction.***
²³***Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. Lamentations 3:22-23***

DAY #3

Read ***Judges chapters 3-7***. Choose at least one of the judges in this section and comment on how the Lord spoke to your heart during your time of study.

DAY #4

Read *Judges chapters 8-12*. Choose at least one of the judges in this section and comment on how the Lord spoke to your heart during your time of study.

DAY #5

Read *Judges chapters 13-16*. Choose at least one part of this familiar story and comment on how you can relate it to your own life.

The cycle is always the same: Trusting in the Lord, falling into sin, crying out to the Lord, the Lord giving us Grace and Mercy, trusting in the Lord, falling into sin, crying out to the Lord, the Lord giving us Grace and Mercy... How often do I start out trusting in the Lord, get lax in my walk, fall into sin, wallow in it for a time, cry out to the Lord for help, only to find the loving arms of Jesus right there, reaching out to me, pulling me out of the mess I created, ready to pick up in our relationship where I left off. How am I any different from the children of Israel we just read about during the time of the Judges.

I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to continuing on next week in the book of Ruth where we move from darkness to light, disobedience to obedience, fear to love. May you experience the love of Jesus throughout the rest of your week in ways you never thought possible.