

Let's resume our study now in Judges chapter 2. The angel of the Lord appears. Now remember, this is sequential. Really, the chapter break—if I were dividing the book, and while the text is inspired, the verses and chapters are not in terms of their divisions—I would have divided this chapter, chapter 1, after verse 6 of chapter 2. That's where the sequential account ends, and you backtrack. So these first six verses actually belong to the account of chapter 1, because after these partial and incomplete episodes, this is when the angel of the Lord appears and says, look, you've started fouling up, and God says he's not going to give you victory and he's not going to drive out the Canaanites. They're going to remain to be a thorn in your side, and their gods are going to be a snare to you.

Now, ask me this answer, riddle me this: How can God say their gods will be a snare to you? Who chooses? I mean, don't we choose? Didn't Joshua say, "Choose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? So how can God say the gods of the Canaanites will be a snare to you? How can he say that? Don't they have free will? Is he going to cause them to opt for these pseudo-gods, these inferior facsimile imitation idolatrous type of options? Is he going to make them do that? How can God say this, "Their gods will be a snare to you"? Well, think about a snare. There are several different kinds of snare that are spoken of in Scripture, and there are different Hebrew words used for different kinds of traps. And this particular word here is tsad, T-S-A-D. And of all of the different kinds of traps and snares, this particular one has the idea of something that hits you from the side, comes at you from the side.

They had bird snares that weren't—you know, you think, well, I want to catch a bird, I'm going to throw a net over it or I'm going to put a box or a bucket over it—but they had snares that were side-firing snares. And it's basically a really springy stick that is bent over to one side and secured, and when the bird comes up and takes the bait and the snare is tripped, the stick basically just bats the bird sideways into insensibility, and then they come out there and pick it up. But it's basically kind of a batting machine, and it's a side-swiping kind of snare. And so this is the word that's used here. It's going to side-swipe you. The root word from which this type of trap is taken has the idea of side. Side, T-S-A-D means side. It's used for the side of a man. When it was talking about the measurements of the tabernacle, remember we went through Exodus talking about that, and it said, "A cubit on one side and a cubit on the other side of what remains, the length of the curtains of the tent hang over the sides of the tabernacle." It was talking about the sides of those were side—side A is the plural there. It can be the side of a man. Second Samuel 2:16: "Each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in the opponent's side, so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which is in Gibeon." Remember that whole thing with Joab and Abner, that everybody grabs a guy and they stick each other in the sides? That's the word that was used there. It can be used for lying on one side, Ezekiel, when it talked about him lying on one side and then the other, that this is what it was. So their gods, they will become as thorns in your sides, and that's what this is talking about.

Their gods, it says, I think in your—well, New American Standard has a different thing here. "They shall be"—notice thorns is in italics there—"they shall be in your side," is what it literally says. What this is really talking about is this snare, this side-swiping snare. They are going to hit you when you don't think they are going to. People are driving along and they get side-swiped. You don't see it coming. You are blindsided.

They are not going to realize when they go for these false gods what is going to happen. It is going to seem like a good idea. "There is a way that seems right unto a man; the ends thereof are the ways of death." It is going to make sense. It is going to seem practical. It is going to seem reasonable. It is going to blend in with what neighbors and surrounding villagers are doing. This is really important. Think about it.

There would not be any competing options for worshiping God if they had been obedient and if they had been faithful. But because they are disobedient and unfaithful, these options are there. They have not been driven out. They have not been eliminated. And it is going to make sense. Now, we look at things and it makes sense. I will give you an example. Really roused my ire. I got a phone call from a guy, and he said, "Hello there, this is the Texas State Troopers Association, and we are raising money for the troopers and for their families and the fallen troopers, the widows and orphans. Would you make a pledge?" I said, "I think that is a worthy cause. Fallen troopers, widows and orphans, that is a worthy cause."

So I said, "Sure, send me your packet and I will fill it out." He said, "Well, can I count on your commitment of some amount?" I said, "Yeah," and I gave him some relatively small amount because I forget, \$25, \$35, something like that. And I said, "Okay, fine, send your thing." Well then something was nagging at the back of

my mind. I thought, State Troopers Association, I remember seeing or reading something, so I went out and did some research.

Well, guess what? The Texas State Troopers Association has nothing to do with TexDOT, state troopers, or any form of law enforcement or troopers anywhere in the state of Texas. They are a completely independent organization. They are neither endorsed nor approved by any of the troopers in the state of Texas. Troopers hate their guts because these people are civilians who impersonate officers, who get on the phone and say, "Hello there, I am Larry Doyle with the Texas State Troopers Association," and you think, well, this guy is a trooper, like he is off duty and he is calling up to help the widows and orphans of his fallen comrades. Not at all.

He is just a guy on the phone. It is telemarketing, and these people have been exposed. They have been investigated, and there is no money that winds up at the troopers at all. But the other thing is, they say, "Well, you know, we will send you a sticker for your car window," and the implication is, of course, if you have "I support the Texas State Troopers" in your window, well, if one of these guys does happen to stop you, they are going to look kindly on you because, hey, you are a booster, you are a supporter, and, well, we will let you off of the warning there, Mr. Hall, type of thing. And it is kind of nudge, nudge, wink, wink. Well, we can't formally promise that there is going to be any, but wouldn't it be a great thing to have this sticker? It is a scam. It is bilking people based on their intentions.

It seemed like a good idea to give to this organization. Thankfully, I figured them out before I sent them anything. But based on the information I had, because I didn't look into it closely before I made any kind of a commitment—and this is what the guy—they called me back today. They called back today and said, "Mr. Hall, we have not received your check in the mail." And I said, "Well, let me tell you why," and I basically told the story I just told you, and I said, "I think it is flim-flam, and I think it is highly irresponsible and unethical to misrepresent yourselves as being something you are not and gaining commitments from people under false pretenses, and you are never going to see my check." And I said, "I think this whole operation is shameful." And he said, "Well, what is shameful is people who make their commitments and don't keep them." And I thought, well, you gained that commitment under false pretenses. You made out like my money was going to go to the troopers, and it turns out my money is not going to go to the troopers. When they did the investigation, they found out that better than 80% of all the money goes back into the organization to pay all the telemarketers. It is just kind of a self-sustaining organization, and there is a little bit of money that pays the salary of a lobbyist who ostensibly is in Austin lobbying for better things for the troopers.

What does that mean? It means there is one other guy in the payroll who is sitting there reading comic books or something, drawing a salary. I have no evidence or any indication that he has done anything for the troopers other than draw a big fat salary based on misrepresenting things. But it seemed like a good idea. It seemed like a good cause. It seemed to make sense. This is my point. God says these things are going to be a snare to you. They are going to be in your side. You are going to be up here reaching forward trying to do something, and it is going to stick you in the side like a spear. It is going to knock you off the road like a pigeon hit by a spring trap, because you are going to take the bait and you are just going to be swept away. It is going to hit you from the side and you are just going to be gone.

One minute, think about those little birds, little dove, little round plump dove, cooing, coming up, getting the grain. Poof! Little puff of feathers, nothing left, just rolling in the dust, in the pot within minutes. God said these gods that you have refused to drive out are going to poke you in the side. It is going to be your undoing. It is going to be your finish, your denouement. And that is exactly what happened.

So it was when the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel that they bawled. They cried. They had a big pity party.

Now, does this hark back to any previous episode you can think of in the history, the relatively short history of national Israel at this point? When was the last time they got a message from God of a disappointing nature and they all sat down and bawled? Moses sent spies into the land. Twelve came back. Ten said, "Oh, we are like grasshoppers in their sight. We can't take this land. Nice grapes here, but no way." Caleb and Joshua: "It is a good land. We can take it." "No, we can't. The giants." And they sat down and they bawled all night because they believed the report of the spies. And so Moses said, "Because you have no faith, you are not to go into the land." "We are not going? We are going to have to stay? We can't go in?" And everybody cried.

And then they got up the next morning and said, "Oh, yes, we can," and they went up there and got their nose bloodied trying to go into the land down there by Kiriath-sepher. Remember that? Well, here, they lifted up their

voice and wept. Now, think about this. After they lifted up their voice and wept, did the angel of the Lord come back and say, "I have seen your tears. I have seen your heartfelt sorrow. I have seen your abject, self-pitying, bawling, snuffling, shoulder-wetting parade of helpless anguish and sorrow, and behold, it will be fine. Go on in and weep outside each city and behold, they will fall at your feet."

Is God impressed with this abject, pitiable display of tears? No. Crying is not the answer. They lifted up their voice and wept.

Why didn't they lift up their voice and repent? Why didn't they lift up their voice and rededicate themselves to fulfilling the covenant? If God says, "I will not drive the people out. I will not cleanse the land and drive my wasps in there and drive the people out before them," what's the answer? "Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo." Useless, pointless, waste of water and salt. Completely. It does nothing except exhibit another symptom of the problem.

They are self-centered. If they had an ounce of spiritual fiber, they would say, "We've got to get back into the good graces of the Lord. Let's fall down on our knees and repent. Let's inquire of the Lord. Let's beseech Him. Let's offer a sacrifice. Let's get back on track and back in gear. Let's turn back into the people who served under Joshua and never lost a battle. We can do this thing. The only reason God has withdrawn His promise is that we have withdrawn our obedience. Well, let's get back to being obedient."

Now, which is easier? To fall down and cry or to stand up and be obedient? And this is the problem. It's spiritual laziness. It is spiritual apathy. It's like a cancer. It's sucking the spiritual life out of them. They cannot be blessed by God. You've got to stand up to be blessed. You can't lay there groveling. You can't lay there sobbing and sorrowing and rolling over and doing the dying cockroach. You have to stand up. Stand up and be blessed.

"Stand therefore in the liberty with which Christ has set you free." Stand, having girded on. Remember the Ephesians 6 passage we memorized? Stand, stand, stand. Having done all, stand. It doesn't say, having done all, fall down and bawl. What a pathetic display.

And you can only imagine that the angel of the Lord just stomped off in disgust. Because the warning is given to change minds. The purpose of the warning—this is a warning. This is a wake up. This is a slap upside of the head. God is going to withdraw his blessing. He's not going to fulfill his end of the covenant. What should the response be? This is what I think of in terms of child training. A child is supposed to do a thing, like eat their peas. They don't eat their peas. You say, "Eat those peas." They don't do it. "Let me make sure you heard what I said. Eat the peas. If you don't eat the peas, bad things are going to happen." Just dawdling, pushing them around on a plate with a spoon. "Go to your room. I will meet you there momentarily." Discipline ensues. Child returns to the table. What do you expect? Do you want the child to sit there and cry, or do you want them to eat the peas? I ask you.

I don't want to see abject sorrow and self-pity over what a horrible turn of events. I want to see that spoon flying into those peas. I want to see peas disappearing down the esophagus until they are all gone with zest, with enthusiasm, with vigor and with motivation. Because if you don't eat those peas, we are going back to your room. Any sensible child will find a way to disappear those peas. These children of Israel do not respond to the chastening of the Lord with the proper response.

Now, as a midshipman, all the rest of us who are midshipmen, the first thing you learn day one: five basic responses. Anybody asks you a question, anybody gives you a command, anybody speaks in your direction, there are five and only five possible appropriate responses: "Yes, sir." "No, sir." "I'll find out, sir." "Aye aye, sir." And "No excuse, sir." That is it. There is no "I don't know, sir," "but I thought"—there is none of that. It's either yes, no, aye aye, meaning I have heard the command and will comply, "I'll find out, sir." "What is the missile configuration of F-4 Phantom?" "I'll find out, sir." "What is the weight of a 155 mm high explosive projectile?" "I'll find out, sir." That's the answer. You don't say, "A what?" There are appropriate responses, and they are the only acceptable responses. Any other response brings discipline, wrath, and the entire weight of dismal consequences on your head.

This is not the correct response. Do you see anywhere in the Bible, "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord, but fall down in tears and bawl your eyes out when you receive the"—it doesn't say that. It is to engender, it is to evoke, it is to produce, it is to motivate obedience, and they don't. They just fall down and weep.

They memorialize their gigantic failure by calling the name of the place Bochim. They call the name of the place—they just lifted up their voices and they wept. The word for weeping there is Baka, B-A-K-A, Baka, Baka. It's like boo-hoo in Hebrew. Boo-hoo in Hebrew is Baka. And so they call the name of the place Bochim. And this is a derivation from the very same root, and it basically means tears. When Rebekah—remember Isaac's wife Rebekah—she had a nurse, a lady that took care of her and was her companion and so on. Her name was Deborah. It's the first occurrence of that name in the Bible. You've got a couple of other Deborahs in Scripture, but the first Deborah was Rebekah's nurse.

When Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died in Genesis chapter 35, she was buried below Bethel. Deborah was buried below Bethel under the terebith tree, and the name of it was called Alon Bakuth. Bakuth, Bakoth—that's the feminine plural from Baka. This is the masculine plural because the men are down there crying like babies.

There is a time to cry. Weep with those who weep. There is a sorrow you share. There is a bear each other's burdens and that sort of thing. But this is pitiable. This is pathetic. This is despicable. They call the name of the place men's tears, men weeping, men bawling. And they sacrifice there to the Lord.

And that's where the chapter should end. And my New King James has got a very poor division there, where there is actually a major division at the beginning of verse 7. It says “Death of Joshua” in bold. Is that what your Bible has? That's just awful. That is just awful. There should be—the major division is after verse 5, because that is the first episode of our downward trend. Then the chapter ends. Now this is going to be—that should have been the end of chapter 1. Now we should have the beginning of chapter 2 at verse 6.

“Now when Joshua had dismissed the people.” Now Joshua, in the previous verse, Joshua has been dead for a long time and the tribes have gone up and started to take their inheritance. Now we are backing up. Remember, this is the way they tell stories. You tell a story until it is finished, and then you are going to tell a new story, and so you back up and start at a different point. So there is like a big break there.

And you have this indicated. There is a waw at the beginning of verse 6, which is just what you would expect. And this is the—you have an imperfect, the waw followed by an imperfect, and it is a waw conversive. It converts it to a perfect. This is the past tense. “When Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.” Obviously, just read the verse. It is earlier than what we just talked about. We are backing up and telling a different—if this was in a storybook, the weeping and calling the name of the place Bochim, that would end on a page, and then you would have a blank page, and you would turn the page, and there would be a new chapter and a new paragraph. Now we are going to tell another story.

If you have ever read Albert Payson Terhune's books on Lad of Sunnybank and Collie stories that he told, his books are episodic. It is not a novel from beginning to end. Each chapter is its own little thing. And they jump back and forth in time. You can have some when Lad is middle-aged and some when Lad is an older dog, and then you will have a chapter and it jumps back to when he was a younger dog. Then there will be a later book that goes back to before the previous book, and he just jumps around to whatever happens to strike him, and he tells these little stories, and they are not sequentially linked and they are not chronological. Sometimes they are, and sometimes they are not. Same thing here.

This jumps back. So, you ought to draw a big line right between verse 5 and verse 6. Now, you can almost say, “Now back when Joshua had dismissed the people, all Israel went to possess the land.” It says “so the people,” but it should be “and the people.” Joshua dismissed the people. This goes right back to the tail end of the book of Joshua. He dismissed the people. They went each to his own inheritance to possess the land, and the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua.

He is telling this by way of contrast. You already see this imperfect obedience, this apathy, this compromise, this loss of covenant, this dismal message from the angel of the Lord, and the weeping at Bochim, the weeping at man-tears. But back when Joshua had dismissed the people, look at the potential that was there. They went to their land, they were ready, and they served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua. They had seen all the great works of the Lord that he had done for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at 110 years old. They buried him within the borders of inheritance. We have seen all of this before. We have already talked about the place name. We have already talked about the inheritance. This is old history. But he backs up and covers this because of the contrast. That is the purpose of this early part of the book, is to contrast what could have been and what should have been with what is.

And so he started out with Judah and what they could have done and what they actually did. And then the house of Joseph. Could have, should have, but didn't. End up weeping. Back in the days of Joshua, they were serving the Lord. All the elders that outlived Joshua, they served the Lord. But then Joshua died and was buried in his inheritance.

Then verse 11, pick it up in verse 11. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. Baal is the word for Lord. It is the word for serve. Baal-zebub, Lord of the flies. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them. Remember our fourfold aspects of worship from Joshua? What do you do when you worship? Remember Him, take oaths in his name, bow down, making requests is the idea, and serve. Remember that? Don't forget it. It's important.

There are many aspects to worshipping another god. And if you get rid of the word worship, which sounds like some sort of formal idolatry, and think of who do you look to and make appeal? Where do you look for the answers to your problems? Some people look to the internet. Some people look to their families. Some people look to their friends. I mentioned last week, we are built to be a social animal. We colonize. There are two prominent examples of colonial organisms on this earth. One is the ants. The other is the bees.

If you look at bees, wasps are a much smaller version. You see them around their little paper thing under your eaves. But if you look at the bees, they divide the labor. They are a colony. Everybody knows their job. Some of them tend to little larvae. Some of them are out collecting pollen and coming back. There are others that are workers that are taking care of the queen and grooming her. How do they know this? I would like to know. I have been doing research on the web trying to figure out how the evolutionists explain the programming. This is information. You look at a bee colony. There is information there. Depending on the way a particular larva is treated and fed, it can turn into a queen or it turns into a worker. How do they know to not turn them all into queens? Wouldn't that be a—you know, this whole African bee thing, Africanized bees, where the African bees can be wiped out. There is another kind of bee that comes in and fools the workers into thinking that they are a queen. They become a clone and they can wipe out African bees. It's a colony. How do you get that information?

There is sophisticated programming for ants. Ants know to leave a little dot trail when they are out foraging. When they find food, they come back and leave a solid trail of chemical marker. They have been able to get this to show up under a special kind of light. They put these ants in a Plexiglas environment. They can shine this light on. You can see the little dotted trail that the ant leaves as he is going out. You can see the solid trail he leaves when he is coming back. He goes and tells his friends. He communicates chemically with them. How does this evolve? What if he only leaves a partial trail? What if he can't leave the other ants to the chow? It has to all be working at once. You can't have ants who sort of find the food. You can't have ants who sort of remember to leave a trail. This complex amount of information and programming and interaction between separate individuals—not only that, but that all has to be encoded into the DNA. It has to be written into the programming of the DNA. They can't just learn it as they go. You don't start out with ants who are just walking around bumping into things and then gradually learn how to lay down these trails and come back and communicate with their peers. They know it when they are born. They know it when they come out of the anthill. How? How does that behavior get coded?

Well, the evolutionists have no clue because obviously there is no way. There is no way for that to evolve. You can work a million years and you are never going to solve that equation because it doesn't happen by chance and it doesn't happen by slow evolution. It's not like the ants lived in just a one square inch area and they learned how to navigate that and they gradually evolved to bigger and bigger. You either function as a completely independent, fully operational ant colony or you die. That's the only two options.

The following of other gods, this is an instinct. Human beings have an instinct to look outside themselves for answers. We know we can't figure it all out. We know when the car breaks, we have to call a mechanic. When the plumbing breaks, we have to call a plumber. When bugs break out, we have to call an exterminator. You call in a specialist. Air conditioning breaks, get the AC guys out. Some of us do a limited amount of self-help, but there comes a point when you say, "The pool needs replastering. I don't believe I will tackle that myself. I think I will call the pool company. Let them come and replaster the pool. My XYZ thing in my car is broken. I'm going to get the mechanic to fix the XYZ thing. Master cylinder, whatever it is."

We have an instinct. We recognize that we turn outside ourselves, and everyone has that God-seeking aspect in their soul. God has put eternity in men's hearts. This is why I'm answering the question now. How can the angel

of the Lord say that gods of the land will be a snare to you? Because God knows, speaking through that angel, that men have this instinct, this compulsion to look for the answers, to look for someone to serve, someone to send requests to, something to depend upon for the things they can't do themselves. They can't control the weather. "I'll pray to God. God will bless my crops." Or, "I'll pray to Baal and Baal will bless my crops. I need a good calving season with my herds and my flocks," and so on. Same thing.

So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. What does it mean to serve? This means they turned to them. They forsook the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods from among the gods of the people all around them. They bowed down to them. What does it mean to bow down? Remember that worship study we did? This is where they're sending their requests. "I want a healthy son. I want a great crop. I want more livestock. Oh, Ashtoreth. Oh, Baal. Oh, name your poison." They provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths, the consorts of Baal.

The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. Now, observe, interpret, apply. We are the people of God, but we're in the church age and God doesn't really care what we think and where we turn for our answers, right? God's oblivious. We're all saved. We're under the blood of Jesus. Everything's great, right? Do you seriously believe that God has changed in this regard, that the anger of the Lord does not burn hot against an individual believer who serves and follows and bows down to other gods? You say, "I don't have an idol." Yes, you do. And yes, I do. And any of us does, if we turn for answers, if we invest ourselves, if we put our trust in and if we follow something else.

"Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength." Cursed is the man who gets all of his medical advice off the internet. Cursed is the man who trusts in the peach pit diet or the Scarborough diet or any other piece of man-made wisdom, and it becomes more than advice. It becomes more than a suggestion. It becomes the obsession. You begin to depend on this. "This will be my happiness. This will be my foundation." These people that you see on television—all you have is reality TV left—who depend on plastic surgery and cosmetic reconstruction to change their life. Is God glorified in that? Is God glorified more if somebody with an asymmetrical nose gets it fixed and suddenly gets a modeling job, or if they learn to be happy?

Now, I'm not talking about medically necessary surgery. I'm talking about purely vain surgery. And I think we all ought to try to look nice. Nothing wrong with looking as good as we can. But there is some invisible line that is crossed. You see this woman that wanted to look like Barbie, and she's had like 17 different plastic surgery procedures to look like Barbie. And you look at her and it is grotesque. People have begun to serve and follow and bow down to their plastic surgeon. People serve and follow and bow down to certain things. They get into the organic mode. "I'm going to do everything organic. I'm going to get back to nature," and so on.

Well, just remember this. God is provoked to anger by any believer who starts looking other places, bowing down, following, and serving. It is fine to exercise wisdom and common sense and good judgment and do things that make sense. But to cross that line into subservience and dependence and an overweening emphasis on a thing, this is going to raise the anger of God. And God is going to do something about it because you and I belong to him. We have been bought with a price. And God says, do you remember that verse? "You are not your own, but you are bought with a price. Therefore," what? "Glorify God in your body." It doesn't say glorify yourself in your body. It says glorify God. What you do with your body ought to glorify God. You ought to reflect faith in God. You ought to reflect respect for God.

Now, that may mean looking as nice as you possibly can because you are someone's wife and the woman is the glory of the man, just as Christ is head of the church and the church is the glory of Christ and ought to reflect his glory. The woman ought to reflect the glory of the man. You ought to look as great as you possibly can. You reflect on your husband. If you are not married, you reflect on your father. And you ought to look as nice as you possibly can. I take nothing away from that. But speaking from the Word of God, there is a point where that is no longer the purpose and that is no longer the motivation. And that is the point of vanity. And that is the point of entering into cosmos. And women should not be adorned in that way, the New Testament tells us. Your true adornment ought to be the beauty of your soul. And that will then reflect itself in other things that you do.

They provoked the Lord to anger. The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, so he delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them. And he sold them into the hands of their enemies all around so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Many times we think, what has happened? I don't seem to have any sort of protection from vagaries. I get depressed. I get worried. I get upset. My mind is like a ship without a rudder. I can't seem to control my thoughts. I can't get anything going. I can't execute a plan. I can't organize my day. I'm not making any forward progress. I'm just being buffeted on every side. Stuff is happening. I'm getting worried. I'm fretting. I'm getting distraught. I'm getting people testing on every side. Guess what? That's exactly what happened to Israel when they forsook the Lord. He sold them into the hands of their enemies.

Our enemies are largely mental. Our enemies are largely spiritual. We're not going to be invaded by Canada any time soon. Mexico is not going to rise up and march an army up here like Montezuma or anything of that nature. Our enemies are spiritual. We wrestle against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. Now, if God is going to deliver us because of our apathy and indifference and our disobedience and our loss of focus, serving and obeying and bowing down to other gods, if he's going to turn us over to our enemies, what are our enemies? Principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. Where do they hold sway? Where do they do their damage? In the heart and in the soul.

We are going to be confused. We are going to be misled. We are going to be deceived. We are going to be diverted. We are going to be neutralized. We are not going to bear spiritual fruit. We are going to be a dead, dry branch in the tree of God's plan and purpose in this life. We are going to be snapped off, gathered in bundles, and burned. That's what's going to happen.

He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them, took what they had. Even what you have will be taken away. You can lose the work of years. You can lose your doctrinal perspicacity. You can lose your ability to perceive and interpret and apply the Word of God. You can lose what you have built up over time through a pattern of disobedience and a pattern of apathy. You can't just claim 1 John 1:9 and be right back where you were. You can't.

It's as though you were a great runner that was trained or a great bodybuilding weightlifter. Have you seen Arnold Schwarzenegger with his shirt off lately? Gracious sakes. It's shocking. Somebody ought to throw something over him. Why? For one thing, he's older, but he's not working out anymore. It's use it or lose it. He's pushing 60, or maybe he is in his 60s. But he is not the muscle man that he used to be because he doesn't work out anymore. People might be great runners. They might be able to run. There was a time when I actually ran 3 miles in 18 minutes in a few seconds, and I was thrilled. It was the fastest I've ever run. I can't do it now. I can't run anymore. Why? Because I don't run that way. I don't cultivate and condition that kind of thing.

If we do not cultivate and condition ourselves spiritually, we will lose it. Just suddenly saying, "You know what? I think I'll be a great runner." If I go out tomorrow and put on a pair of sneakers and get the very same outfit on and try to run 3 miles in 18 minutes, I will die at about the 2.5 minute mark. I will be gasping and clutching the air and hoping for the ambulance. Because you lose over time what you have built up.

Don't think that spiritual indifference, we can recover from it in just a moment, just by a decision. You can't. You have to start all over. You work out and get in great shape, and you quit working out, get out of shape, you have to build it all back up again. It doesn't come overnight. He delivered them. They were despoiled. They were sold into the hands of their enemies. They could no longer stand before their enemies. Whenever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity. What a great thing. Here's the people of God delivered out of Egypt, Exodus, Red Sea, Joshua, and now they're being delivered into the hands of their enemies by the very same God that delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. Why? Is God just perverse and vindictive? No. This is a result of disobedience.

The angel of the Lord has come and spoken to make it clear, this is their fault. If you and I are defeated, if you and I are plundered, if you and I are despoiled and delivered into the hands of our enemies, if we find ourselves victims of whatever it is we're victims of, whatever is not of God, whatever isn't love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, whatever else occurs in our soul by way of defeat, that's our fault. There is no excuse for worry. There is no excuse for fear. There is no excuse for getting wrapped around the axle as we so often do. God gives us the victory, and if we don't take the victory, it's our fault. That's the message of these first two chapters in the book of Judges.

And of course, when we are not victorious and we are delivered over, we're greatly distressed, and that's what happened to them. They were greatly distressed. Nevertheless, the Lord raised up Judges. This is where we will pick up next time at verse 16. Nevertheless, God has not disappeared. God is going to raise up a Deliverer.

Your homework for this week is to muse and meditate and speculate on this particular development. God raises up Judges who deliver them out of the hands of those who plunder them. What is the nature of this deliverance? Think about Gideon. Think about Samson. Think about Deborah and Barak. Think about these six great Judges we're going to see. There are six primary stories here that we're going to see. And you know these stories. You've heard them before. Think about the quality and the nature of these Deliverers and the kind of deliverance they bring. And we'll pick up here at verse 16 next week.

Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for this portion of it, the book of Judges and the clear warning and the clear illustration that it provides for us. May God the Holy Spirit find us ready students and impress these truths on our hearts so that our lives will reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name. Amen.