

Judges Chapter 2 Part 6

We will start with some points on a topic called “reversionism.”

Reversionism

These points are based upon the work of R. B. Thieme Jr, Robert Dean and Warren Doud (Gracenotes.info). I have edited the notes extensively to better reflect the audience at Spring Valley Bible Church. In some places I have kept the original wording of Robbie Dean since I could not improve on the clarity of the explanation. The point is to give a term for what happened to the sons of Israel in the book of Judges.

1. “Reversionism is an act of reversing or backing up or going in the opposite way, or a state of being so turned.
2. “Reversionism is the act of reverting to a former state, habit, belief, or practice of sinning. Reversionism is the status of the believer who fails to execute the plan of God for the Church Age [or in the case of Judges in the Age of the Jews]. He returns to his pre-salvation modus operandi and modus vivendi. Reversionism must be distinguished from carnality.

“Carnality is an absolute which describes the believer out of fellowship with God and in a state of sin under the control of the sin nature like Romans chapter 7.]

“Reversionism is relative. It is a relative state of apostasy and decline described by the various categories of retrogression. In reversionism, you are perpetually carnal, constantly operating in the realm of the sin nature.]

3. “There are eight stages in reversionism. We start off with our spiritual advance and then we start into the decline.”

A. Reaction and distraction.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The presence of reactor factors in the life result in distraction from doctrine. These include:

Wrong Priorities

Rejection of authority

Personality conflict

Lack of Objectivity

others

- B. **Frantic search for happiness.** “We start shifting our focus and value in life away from doctrine and away from God and on to the details of life.” We are continuously outside of the Plan of God for our lives.

2 Timothy 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2 Timothy 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 Timothy 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

2 Timothy 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

Lovers of pleasure. This is a single word used only this once in the New Testament. It is made up of *philos* + *hedones*. *Philos* is love or friend. **Hedones.** The TDNT says, “In the NT ηδονη represents one of the many forces which belong to the world of unsanctified carnality, which strive against the work of God and His Spirit and which drag man back again into the kingdom of evil.” Note this friendship with pleasure drags man back again into the kingdom of evil.” Reversionism drags us back into Satan’s world.

Lovers of God. Lovers is from the word *philos* for love or friendship. This is contrasted to the lovers of pleasure. A topic which someday I wish to continue is the Christian relationship with God. One aspect of that is being a “friend of God.”

2 Timothy 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these

- C. **Soul poverty (Robbie Dean) or Operation Boomerang (Thieme).** We see this in Psalm 106:15. Let us read the entire Psalm. Herman asked us to read a Psalm as homework. So let us accomplish some homework during the study period. In particular, note verse 15 when we get there:

Psalm 106:15 So He gave them their request, But sent a wasting disease among them (literally leanness or wasting into their soul, in other words, soul poverty. This word is used only

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three times in the Old Testament. This is the first of those usages).

- D. **Emotional revolt of the soul.** “The soul is made up of five components and they all interrelate:
1. self-consciousness, the seat of our identity, who we are;
 2. mentality, which is where we think, reason;
 3. volition, where we make our choices;
 4. conscience, where our norms and standards reside; and we have
 5. emotion, the responder to what goes on in the mentality of the soul.

Our actions are to be initiated by thinking, not by emoting. We think, and the result is that our emotions follow along based on what we think. What happens in emotional revolt is that emotions start driving the soul and you start making decisions based on how you feel. The emotions start becoming the criterion for life and so you start making decisions based on how it is going to make you feel. That is enslavement to emotion. This leads to an intensification of the whole process of reversionism. You are now down to the point where you are emoting all the time and it is very hard for you to concentrate and think and use doctrine, so you become ingrained in negative volition. At this point it is more and more difficult for you to ever get a focus on the Bible. In fact, what happens is that whenever you hear doctrine you immediately reject it because it doesn't make you feel good.”

Emotional revolt of the soul is described in

Philippians 3:18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

Philippians 3:19 whose end is destruction (sin unto death), whose god is their appetite (Sometimes translated stomach or belly.), and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

Philippians 3:19 (God's Word translation) In the end they will be destroyed. Their own emotions are their god, and they take pride in the shameful things they do. Their minds are set on worldly things.

Look around us today. What do we see? People driven by their emotions. I sometimes use the phrase, "sex, drugs and rock and roll" to describe this. People are focused on what makes them feel good.

- E. **Blackout of the soul.** "At this stage the Scripture says that our souls become enshrouded in darkness again, and rather than operating on the truth of God's Word we have sucked in so much false doctrine that we are walking in darkness again.

"Ephesians 4:17 gives the technical Greek word for the blackout of the soul: MATAIOTES. MATAIOTES is a vacuum that sucks in false doctrine."

Ephesians 4:17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

Ephesians 4:18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God

**because of the ignorance that is in them,
because of the hardness of their heart;**

**Ephesians 4:19 and they, having become
callous, have given themselves over to
sensuality for the practice of every kind of
impurity with greediness.**

Here are some notes from Kenneth Wuest that may be helpful:

For Ephesians 4:17, futility (NASB) or “vanity” in other translations. “Vanity” is mataios, “that which is in vain, aimless, resultless, futile.”

For Ephesians 4:18, “Darkened” is the perfect participle of skotoo, “to darken or blind the mind.” The perfect tense speaks of a process completed in past time having present results. Paul uses the perfect tense here to show the finished and permanent result of the blinding of the mind by sin.”

For Ephesians 4:19 callous “The word “blindness” is porosis, “hardness.” The word is formed from poros, “hard skin or induration.” It means literally “the covering with a callous.” The word occurs in Mark 3:5; Romans 11:25, and here, and is used of mental or moral hardening. These Gentiles were alienated from God through their culpable moral and spiritual ignorance and through the hardening of their hearts.”

- F. **Scar Tissue.** This in turn produces a situation in the soul called the hardness of the heart in Scripture. We saw that in Ephesians 4:19. It produces calluses of scar tissue on the soul so that you become less and less sensitive to God's leading in your life. So now to get your attention God can't just tap you on the shoulder, He has to pick up a baseball bat and hit you soundly between the eyes just to get your attention. What happens is you go further and further in negative

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volition and the hardness of heart until that baseball bat doesn't even phase you, and as soon as God stops hitting you with the baseball bat you say, I managed to survive that so I guess life is going to work out after all. You have distorted the whole practice.

- G. Scar tissue of the soul leads to **reverse process reversionism** when you are so sunk in pagan thought that you don't know light from darkness anymore, right from wrong, you have totally reversed everything and you are living, operating and thinking no different from any unbeliever.

These points on reversionism are given as a warning. Each one of us is tempted every day to abandon life with God for the pleasures of the world.

When we get to look at Israel, they have gone through this process and so God is going to respond to their apostasy. [Judges 2:14](#), "And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel." Life is going to be miserable for them. Everything in between these words and verse 20 is a description of God's anger. The anger of the Lord is a function of His justice, His integrity, and the operation of divine grace. In the middle of this we will see that God still deals with the apostasized, pagan Israelites in grace, v. 18. The interesting thing about this is that there is no repentance in Israel when God raises up the judge.

OK, that is one way to look at the depravity of the sons of Israel after they settled into the land.

The point of this exercise is to demonstrate the process whereby even a Christian with some doctrine can turn into a monster. Then, understand that a nation of monsters will receive the anger of God. The United States today is at a tipping point.

Now let us look at the Hebrew words and understand the process from that perspective. I like following the Hebrew. Let's see where it takes us.

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I struggled how best to present this. A table seemed the easiest way to show this from an overview perspective.

Verse	Phrase	Meaning
11	Did Evil	“It can mean something that is just destructive, a non-moral sense of something that is just disagreeable, bad or doesn't work; but it also, in most places, has a spiritual sense and it illustrates the violation of the will of God.” (Dean) In this context, it seems to function as a title or introduction to the anti-God activities of the sons of Israel.
11	Served the Baals	In this kind of context it is worship. The verb can also mean work or be in the service of. When out of fellowship we are in the service of the flesh, the world and the Devil.
12	Forsook the Lord	The verb means to abandon. This is the abandonment of the filling of the Holy Spirit, doctrine, the plan of God for our lives and even acknowledgement of our Savior.
12	Followed after other gods	Literally, “walked after.” If you are a Christian, once you go down this path, you change the manner of your life, your behavior. This starts with what you think.
12	Bowed themselves down to them	Means prostrate. But it is more than that. It is reverence. You value the object of your worship.

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I see a process here:

Evil (sin)

Service to the local gods

Abandonment of God, doctrine

Behavior changed to conform to indigenous sinful anti-God customs

Reverence for other gods

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Judges	Offense	Enemy
3:7	The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.	Served King of Mesopotamia Delivered by Othniel
3:12	Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.	Served King of Moab Delivered by Ehud
4:1	Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died.	Lord sold them into the hand of King of Canaan. Delivered by Deborah
6:1	Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord;	Gave them into the hands of Midian. Delivered by Gideon
10:1	Now after Abimelech died, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar arose to save Israel	
10:3	After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years	
10:6	Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashraroht, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him	Lord sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon. Delivered by Jephthah
12:8	Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him	
12:11	Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him;	
12:13	Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him	
13:1	Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.	The Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. Delivered by Samson

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Judges 2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Anger ...burned. Literally His nose burned. Here is an anthropomorphism, God's nose, which combined with the word for burn turns into an anthropomorphism, anger.

He gave them. Here is our word for "give," natan. Instead of giving to Israel, God is now giving them to the plunderers.

Plunderers who plundered them. The NASB got it right from a literal Hebrew perspective. The noun and verb for plunder are from the same root. It's like saying the baseball player hit the ball hard hitting it out of the park. This adds some emphasis to the statement.

Sold them. The implication is that He sold them into slavery. But as we see, it is for a time limited by God. He is always in control whether we want to admit it or not. Here is what the TDOT says, "Yahweh "hands over" (*yimkerem*) the Israelites to their enemies for a period of eight (Jgs. 3:8), twenty (Jgs. 4:2f), or eighteen years (Jgs. 10:7f.). The translation "to sell" suits none of these passages, for the notion of selling implies an absolute transfer of the property and not merely a usufruct limited to a predetermined number of years." Usufruct according to the on-line Merriam Webster dictionary means, "the legal right of using and enjoying the fruits or profits of something belonging to another." I find the statement by the TDOT intriguing. From God's perspective, the Israelites were only allowed to be subdued for a period of time, not forever. God still "owns" the Israelite people. He has only given them into the hands of their enemies to discipline them until they return to Him. As I keep saying, "God wants to bless you if you will only let him.

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Trust Him.” We belong to God. Discipline is to encourage us to return to Him in faith.

Could no longer stand before their enemies. They are now defenseless and can no longer stand as a separate entity in opposition to their enemies.

Enemies. Per TDOT, “From a theological point of view (esp. in Deuteronomistic history) the attacks of enemies on Israel are manifestations of divine punishment for Israel’s apostasy. God gives the Israelites into the hand of their enemies (Jer. 21:7; 34:20f.); they will be smitten by their enemies (Dt. 1:42; 1K. 8:33); they must even go into the land of their enemies (1 K 8:46), and serve their enemy in his land (Jer. 17:4).”

Judges 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

God has already told them, and us, that believers out of fellowship will be disciplined. Yes, I am repeating myself. It is important to understand what discipline is in your life. The purpose is to get us back into fellowship. The longer you stay out of fellowship, the stronger the discipline to get your attention. It may start with a tap on the shoulder. If disregarded, it becomes a baseball bat. If we turn our backs on God and refuse to listen, it can end with the sin unto death. God already told them. Here is the fabric of Scripture. The Lord spoke in His Word and it is recorded both previously in the Torah and in the future (to this book) in the Book of Hebrews which quotes the Proverbs.

Leviticus 26:17 I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule

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over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

Deuteronomy 28:25 “The Lord shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

HEBREW 12:6/PROVERBS 3:12 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

There was a hint in the word “sold” that this would not be a permanent situation (following the TDOT).

Judges 2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

Robbie Dean, commenting on Judges 3:9, which we have not yet gotten to, about the meaning of the Hebrew word translated judges (shaphat), says, “We are in the first of several cycles; in terms of large cycles there are six major cycles of disobedience, discipline and deliverance in the book of Judges and we are looking at the very first one which has to do with the deliverance from the judge, the Hebrew term shaphat, refers to a deliverer, not a judge in the sense of a magistrate in the judicial system such as we are familiar with in our system, but it has to do with someone who is a deliverer, a leader. And in some cases that took the course of action of rendering some judgments judicially in the case of Deborah, which we will cover in Judges 5, but it often took the course of military

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leadership, recognizing the principle that freedom comes through military victory.”

“The word there for "raised up" is the Hebrew word in the hiphil stem which indicates that God causes the action. The word for "delivered" is ysha and it is transliterated yeshua in the noun, which is also transliterated Joshua, and is the Hebrew rendering for the name of Jesus. It means to deliver or to save and is a picture of God's saving grace in the nation. We must remember when we look at this that is always God in His grace who exercises the initiative to save man. God's grace is not dependent upon human action or human volition, it is motivated exclusively by His character and His love and not by man's actions. So God in His grace exercises the deliverance option for Israel in order to take the pressure off to give them the opportunity to get back on positive volition.”

Judges 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do as their fathers.

“Scripture always uses sexual analogies to represent man's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God. Israel is in a covenant relationship with God, His love is described as *chesed* which means covenant faithfulness, and it is the same concept as what takes place in a marriage contract. When we get married we basically enter into a covenant with our spouse. When we are unfaithful to that covenant that is called adultery, and so God uses that term "adultery" to relate to any kind of covenant unfaithfulness and it is applied to God and His relationship to Israel. Israel has broken the

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covenant and become unfaithful to God and so He uses the image of adultery and prostitution to illustrate the seriousness of that action.”

Notice the list of offenses against God.

they did not listen to their judges, Did not listen, as we have seen previously, means they did not obey or follow the commands of the judges.

they played the harlot after other gods This is addressed above in the quote from Robbie Dean.

bowed themselves down to them. Again, this is giving reverence to the other gods.

They **turned aside** quickly from the way in which their fathers **had walked** in obeying the commandments of the Lord;

they **did not do** as their fathers.

“The interesting thing here is that the word for "turning aside" is the piel of the Hebrew word *shub* which means to turn. This word is sometimes used in analogy with "repent," and is used sometimes to refer to God as it is in v. 18. But this is the only time that this concept is used in this section. It is not to describe Israel turning to God, it is used to describe their turning from God to idols.”