

The Tragedy Of the Unfinished Task - Passing On Your Faith

Judges 2:1-2:23

Intro: Have you ever started something and not finished it? You know what I mean; buy a book begin to read it only to set it aside and never finishing it. Or maybe you have taken up a hobby – gone out and purchased the needed material but today, maybe years later, the project lays half finished in the attic.

How many of you have a little project at home which has been sitting there waiting to be finished. It may be a cross stitch that you've never gotten around to finishing. It may be a picture that you've bought, but you've never gotten around to putting it in a frame and hanging it up. It may be that you are in the middle of making something and well, it has never gotten made?

Maybe you have volunteered to do something but after a little while it became too much and you step away...leaving the unfinished task to someone else. I would imagine all of us have at one time or another started something and not followed it through to completion.

Why do we do that I wonder? Is it because we lose interest – maybe something better comes along. Maybe we have grown tired of struggling to finish it. Maybe we lack the discipline to finish it. Maybe we've chosen to busy ourselves with other things. We could list plenty of excuses, couldn't we – but the fact is that probably we all have things that are not finished.

And you're not alone. The People of Israel failed miserably in one task specifically given to them. We read about it at the beginning of Judges.

[Read Judges 2:1-15/Pray/dismiss Jr. church]

The people of Israel had failed their mission. They knew it and God knew it. And they were distressed.

Let's set the stage for today's text. Judges 2 is written at the end of the conquest that took place after Joshua led the people over the Jordan into the promise land. If you remember when they had come across the Jordan on dry land the Lord told Joshua to have 12 men from each tribe pick up a large stone from dry river bottom as they cross and to stack them on the other side. So these 12 men each did as they were told and stacked the 12 stones on the other side. Joshua told them that the Lord wanted these stones to be memorial stones to what He had done for them that day. He instructed them that when their children asked "...**What mean these stones?**" (Jos. 4:21) they were to tell their kids all that the Lord had done for them so the next generation and subsequent generation would not forget all the Lord had done for them bringing them into the blessings of the Promised Land.

When we arrive in our text for today, however, it appears that somewhere along the line they had failed or not finished their task. In our text we read that after Joshua's generation had all died there rose up another generation "...**which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel**" (v. 10).

Depending on how you count them it took the people less than three generations to turn their backs completely on God. You see Joshua's generation had all been destroyed in the wilderness – only he and Caleb had been allowed to survive. His children would be "...**all the elders that outlived Joshua**" it says they had "...**seen all the great works of the Lord...**" This would bring us to the 3rd gen.

It has been said that...

There is a generation that saw and experienced God – 1st Gen Christians

They rise up a generation that saw the move of God but didn't experience the move of God – 2nd Gen Christians

They rise up a generation that neither saw nor experienced the move of God – 3rd Gen Christians.

Another way of saying this...

The 1st Generation knows the Lord of the Work

They raise a generation that know the work of the Lord

Who raise a generation who knows neither the Lord of the Work or the Work of the Lord.

But another way, the 1st gen is holy, the 2nd is religious and the 3rd is godless.

Pastor Smith would put it this way...

1st Gen Christians are partakers

2nd Gen Christians are caretakers

3rd Gen Christians are undertakers

Regardless what you call it the Israelites within 3 generations buried their faith. In verse 11 ff we see the tragedy... **Read** Vv. 11-15.

So what happened? How did Israel get to the place where as a nation that a generation grew up who "**knew not the Lord**"? This is how it happened. The parents had failed. That's right, I said the parents had failed. You see a nation is only as healthy as the families that combine to make a nation. Throughout history nations have risen and fallen on the moral strength of the family unit. That is how God intended it from the beginning. Remember, in Gen 12:2-3 God told Abraham that "**...I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**" What God is saying is that Israel would be strong only as long as the family unit was strong.

Fast forward to Moses' day, he led the people out of Egyptian bondage, and there at Mount Sinai he receives the law. Contained in those instructions received there on that mountain we find this warning and instruction, both given to the family:

"...take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deu 4:9).

He then gives the Jews the Schema (Heb for plan), "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates**" (Deu 6:4-9).

If the Schema sounds familiar it should be because Jesus refers to it when He is asked what the greatest commandment is.

So what went wrong? The parents had failed to "**Train up a child in the way he should go...**" and the result is that less than 80 years after Moses received the law...less than 3 generations after Joshua told them to "**...choose you this day whom ye will serve...**" a generation that "**...which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.**"

The nation of Israel experienced **Tragedy of the unfinished task** because they failed to **Pass on their Faith**.

Today it is easy to make the argument that America has raised up a generation "**...which knows not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel**" and the reason is simple...the parents of Christians has failed to do its job. Christian parents have failed to live up to the responsibility given to them in Eph 6:4,

“...fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: *but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*”

So how do we learn from their mistakes and make sure our children won't face the same tragedy?

There are at least 3 things we must do to avoid the ***Tragedy of the Unfinished Task...***

To avoid this tragedy we must pass on...

1 A FAITH THAT IS PERSONALLY POSSESSED

- a) We can't pass on what we don't possess. v.7
 - i) Joshua possessed faith in God.
 - ii) He had experienced the goodness of God and he passed it on.
 - iii) Timothy was influenced by his grandmother, Lois, and his mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5).
- b) Joshua not only possessed his faith he had experienced what it meant to trust his faith.
 - i) The defeat of Jerico
 - (1) He was told by the Lord to ***“...compass the city...”*** one every day for 6 days and the 7 priest were to carry trumpets
 - (2) Then on the 7th day they were to walk around the city 7 times and the priest were to blow their trumpets.
 - (3) He was told if you do it this way the walls will fall down.
 - (4) I don't know about you but that is walking by faith
 - ii) Their defeat at Ai
 - (1) When they tried to defeat Ai by their own plan they were crushed
 - (2) But when later they did it according to the Lord's plan they defeated Ai
 - (3) They did it by ambush (Jos 7 & 8).
 - iii) The defeat of the Amorites

- (1) Joshua saw the Lord kill more of the Amorites by stones coming down from heaven that all that were killed by his army (Jos 10:11).
- (2) Then he asked God to cause the Sun to stand still and it did giving the people time to avenge themselves upon their enemies (Jos 10:12-13).
- c) Not every child will grow up under the influence of a parent who actually possesses faith
- d) But we are going to build a Christian home God's way they we must live out the faith we possess in our children's presence.

To avoid the tragedy of the unfinished task we must pass on **A Faith That is PERSONALLY POSSESSED, Secondly We must pass on...**

2 A FAITH THAT IS PASSIONATELY PROCLAIMED. V.7, Jos 24:14-18
“seen all the great works...”

- a) They had seen.....but failed to “tell it”!
- b) Something went wrong
 - i) How is it that an entire generation comes up not knowing the Lord?
 - ii) The previous generation failed to pass down their faith in God.
 - iii) In our communities today, there are mothers and dads who have decided to raise their children outside of the influence of a Bible believing church.
 - iv) They have chosen another path
 - (1) It is the path called ***“Do As You Please”!***
 - (2) The study of the book of Judges is important because it describes what happens to any nation who turns from God.
 - (3) When you look at the last chapter, last verse in Judges it describes the problem, ***“...every man did that which was right in his own eyes”*** (21:25).
 - (4) It is the problem of America today.
- c) This is a problem that is found in churches today
 - i) Once Joshua sent the people to ***“...posses the land...”***

- ii) They became curious of the people and religions that went on around him
 - (1) They were attracted to the religion of the heathens.....
 - (2) v.11 says they did evil...forsook the Lord God...served the BAALS:
 - (a) Ancient Semitic god:
 - (b) A fertility or nature god worshiped by the Canaanites and the Phoenicians
 - (c) Today those who worship Baal gods are those who worship the human body and worship nature
 - (3) v.17....whoring with other gods
 - (4) God a point in the future God even issues Israel a bill of divorcement because of their unfaithfulness.
- d) Joshua was one who **Passionately Proclaimed** His faith Jos 24:14-15
 - i) ***“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”***
- e) But I guess telling the story about how God led them out of Egypt and delivered them into the Promised Land GOT OLD!
 - i) THE PLAGUES IN EGYPT...
 - ii) THE RED SEA EXPERIENCE...
 - iii) THE GIVING OF 10 COMMANDMENTS...
 - iv) THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE...
 - v) THE MANNA...
 - vi) THE SERPENT ON THE POLE...
 - vii) CROSSING JORDAN...
 - viii) THE BATTLE AT JERICHO...

- ix) THE DAY THE SUN STOOD STILL...
 - f) They got tired of telling the old, old story.
 - g) They didn't passionately proclaim their story.....their testimony meant very little to them.
 - i) They were more concerned with possessing the land than they were in proclaiming their faith
 - ii) They essentially caught up in the pursuit of happiness
 - h) The New Testament church eagerly told their story
 - i) They told how Jesus had made a difference in their life
 - ii) The first Century Church **PASSIONATELY PROCLAIMED** their faith
 - iii) They told the people what they had experienced and what they had seen
 - (1) "...we must speak that which we have seen and heard..." Acts 4:20
 - (2) Judges 2:7 says that they *had seen all the great works*
 - (3) The next generation heard about it but they failed to tell it to their next generation
 - (4) The third generation ***“...knew not the Lord”***
 - i) How about your Testimony!do you have one?
 - j) We need to give it...tell it...share it...
 - k) Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God....Romans 10:17
 - l) If faith is to come alive in the heart of our kids and grandkids if first must be alive in our hearts
 - m) Then we must proclaim God's Word and make sure our kids and grandkids are always under the hearing of the proclamation of the Word of God.
- To avoid the tragedy of the unfinished task we must pass on **A Faith That is PERSONALLY POSSESSED, PASSIONATELY PROCLAIMED**
Thirdly, we must pass on...
- 3 **A FAITH THAT IS PUBLICLY PRACTICED...vv1-4**
 - a) *“but you have not OBEYED my voice...*
 - b) They did not drive out the inhabitants of the land.
 - i) They adopted their lifestyle

- ii) They followed after their false gods.
- iii) They became worldly in their thinking.
- iv) The outcome of this failure is found vv.11,12 **"They Forsook the Lord"** and in v.17 **"they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in"**
- c) Your children are watching you!
 - i) To see if your lifestyle matches what you say you believe.
 - ii) They won't do as we say, they will do as we do
- d) If we make church attendance and Bible study unimportant by the way we live out our walk they will get the message loud and clear.
 - i) You can talk until you are blue in the face about how important God is to you
 - ii) But if you lay in bed on Sunday morning rather than get up and take them to Bible study and service they what we say on Sunday mornings will speak louder than any words we speak throughout the week.
 - iii) Our talk, talks, and our walk, talks; but our Walk talks more than our talk talks...
- e) The key to practicing our faith publicly is CONSISTENT living for the Lord.
 - i) Living for Jesus every day.
 - ii) Example: Reading the Bible one day.....Reading from a questionable magazine the next.

Inconsistent. Talking about Jesus one day and then using bad language the next day.

Granted, we are NOT PERFECT. We should make apologies to our children. We should say "I blew it" Children need to see us being humble, and show that we don't always do it right.....

We are persistently demonstrating the right kind of VALUES.....holding up the right kind of behaviour.

Day after Day.....Week after Week....Month after

- Month....Year after Year...persistently...consistently practicing our faith in front of our children.
- f) V. 19 says **"...they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way"**.
 - i) They did not consistently walk with the Lord...
 - ii) They kept on going back into sin
 - iii) Throughout Israel's history this was the scene; one of the nations leaders would rediscover the Lord, he would bring the people back to worship him
 - iv) But within the next 2 generations they would fall back into their sinful ways and the Bible said they would do evil in the sight to the Lord.
 - v) Throughout the books of 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles that is the recurring theme.
 - g) It is the sin nature in us that convinces us that by casual contact with church, Bible, and things of the Lord will keep us out of hell.
 - h) I have news for you...if you are not **Practicing your Faith Publicly** in front of your kids then reread Vv. 14ff
 - i) If you love your kids then the best thing you can do for them is show them what it means to live as a Christian
 - ii) What it means to walk by faith
 - iii) The importance of Church, Bible reading and study.

A Faith that is Worth passing on down to your children...is one that is: **Personally Possessed, Passionately Proclaimed, Publicly Practiced**

Conclusion: WHAT KIND OF FAITH DO YOU HAVE? Is it for real? That's what the next generation is asking.

Has your faith been proven true?

Is your faith in church membership? It won't stand the test.

Is your faith in name over the door? It won't stand the test.

Is your faith in your good deeds? It won't stand the test.

The only faith that will prove to be true, is faith in the Living Lord...Lord Jesus!!!

It will Prove true... when the money is gone... (Stock Market crashes); Prove true... when friends desert you; prove true... when you lose a job; prove true... when your health is failing; prove true... when you need wisdom in making important life-changing decisions; prove true...when you come down to the end of life and you need some assurance about the hereafter...

What kind of faith are you passing down?

Are you a parent who is determined to not face the ***Tragedy of the Unfinished Task?*** If so then you are one who is passing on a faith that is... **Personally Possessed, Passionately Proclaimed, Publicly Practiced**