

## "Perils of Idolatry" Judges 2:6-23

With the death of Joshua, a new generation of Israelites arises who forsake the God of their fathers for the gods of the Canaanites. The opening introduction to Judges shows the nature, motivation, and surprising devastation that result from false worship of idols in one's life!

### I. Pursuit of substitutes

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people!"  
—Karl Marx

### II. To ensure prosperity

"Canaanite religion was an elaborate system that resulted from the need to ensure regular crops in an uncertain climate ... The key god was Baal, who was god of the storm, springs, and water ... The Canaanites believed that the gods could be helped to bring about fertility of the soil if the people fertilized one another in the places of worship ... Every Canaanite sanctuary had its own prostitutes for that purpose ...

"The Canaanites were sophisticated and successful by comparison, and seemed to know what should be done to ensure good crops. When such feelings of inferiority were aided and abetted by excuses for sexual license, it is not difficult to understand why the Canaanite religion had so great an influence."

"It came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely."  
—Judges 1:28

"Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. Yet ... they played the harlot after other gods and ... turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked."  
—Judges 2:16-17

"*Another* shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house. Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises *it*

for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. Then it becomes *something* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." They do not know, nor do they understand, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!" ... And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"  
—Isaiah 44:13-20

### **III. Yet discover opposite**

#### A. "Freedom" to slavery

"They exchanged the glory of God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of ... animals ... Therefore God gave them over ... For they exchanged truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator ... For this reason God gave them over ..."  
—Romans 1:23-26

"Freedom cannot be defined in strictly negative terms, as the absence of confinement and constraint. In fact, in many cases, confinement and constraint is actually a means to liberation."  
—Tim Keller

"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways ... that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord may bless you in the land. But if your heart turns away & you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish ... I have set before you life and death, the blessing & the curse."  
—Deut 30:15-19

#### B. God becomes enemy

#### C. God still gives grace

### **In uncertainty ...**

- Where do you turn? To whom?
- Why do we experience trouble?
- Are you raising up the next generation?