

The Book of Judges, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: An Unfinished Conquest and a Compromised People

Judges 1:1–2:5

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson is about the seriousness of obedience and the deceptive ease of compromise. Israel was not commanded to hate the Canaanites as people; they were commanded to remove the corrupting, idolatrous influence of Canaanite religion from the land of promise, because God knew that what is tolerated will eventually be embraced. The text refuses to let us treat partial obedience as a smaller version of obedience. When the tribes 'did not drive out' but settled for coexistence, that was not a softer faithfulness; it was disobedience dressed up as practicality. At Bochim God Himself draws the line: because you did not obey, the nations and their gods will become thorns and snares. The covenant God is faithful, just, and holy, and His warnings are an expression of His love, not a contradiction of it.

There is a guardrail to keep in place here. We do not read this passage as if the Canaanites' descendants inherited guilt or as if anyone is born condemned; Scripture is clear that the soul who sins shall die and that each person bears his own iniquity (Ezekiel 18:20). The consequences in Judges flow from Israel's own free, repeated choices to disobey, not from an inherited fate. And when the closing chapters of Judges lament that there was 'no king in Israel,' we point reverently forward, not to a future earthly throne, but to the true King already enthroned. The kingdom God promised has come; Christ reigns now over His church and over the hearts of His people, and the answer to a compromised, kingless people is found in submitting fully to Him.

Where the lesson aims, finally, is the student's own heart. Every reader of Judges has Canaanites they have chosen to keep around: a habit profited from, a relationship not surrendered, an attitude managed rather than mortified. The goal is not information about ancient Israel but conviction and change in us, because these things were written for our instruction (Romans 15:4). We want each student to leave Bochim not merely informed but weeping in the good way, the way that leads to repentance and to the first concrete step of finishing what God has commanded, in the strength Christ supplies.

Question 1

Student Question:

According to Judges 1:1–2 and 1:19, what was the relationship between Israel's victories and the Lord's presence, and what does the text mean when it says the Lord was 'with Judah' yet Judah 'could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley'?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The book of Judges opens 'after the death of Joshua,' a phrase that sets the entire tone. A generation of leadership has passed, and Israel stands in a land that is theirs by promise but not yet fully theirs in fact. Their first recorded act is admirable: they inquire of the Lord, 'Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites?' This is the posture of a people who still remember that the battle belongs to God and that initiative without inquiry is presumption. The Lord answers plainly, 'Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand' (1:2).

Notice the explicit linking of victory to divine presence. Verse 19 says, 'And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country.' Israel's successes in this chapter are never credited merely to military skill or numbers; they are the gift of God's accompanying presence. This is consistent with the whole biblical pattern, where God fights for His people and the glory is His. The same verse, however, introduces the tension that will dominate the book: 'but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.'

That little word 'but' deserves careful attention. The same chapter that says 'the Lord was with Judah' also says Judah 'could not' finish the job in the valley. How can both be true? The text does not say the Lord abandoned Judah at the valley; it exposes a failure of faith and resolve in the face of intimidating obstacles. Iron chariots were fearsome, but they were no match for the God who drowned Pharaoh's chariots in the sea. The 'could not' is less about God's power and more about Israel's willingness to trust that power when the cost rose.

So the doctrinal note to fix at the outset is this: the Lord's presence guarantees that obedient faith will not fail, but it does not override human responsibility. God gave the land 'into his hand,' yet the hand had to close around the gift. Grace and human response are not rivals here. The Lord supplies the victory; the people must walk in it. When they shrink back at the iron chariots, the failure is theirs, not God's, and the seeds of the whole tragic book are planted in that first hesitation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The proper relationship between God's sovereignty in giving victory and Israel's responsibility to take it, neither cancels the other.
- Inquiring of the Lord before acting as the right and humble starting posture for God's people.
- The danger of allowing intimidating obstacles (iron chariots) to shrink a faith that God's power could easily have carried.
- How God's faithful presence accompanies obedient faith without removing the need for courage and follow-through.
- The pattern that spiritual victories are God's gift and never grounds for self-congratulation.

Discussion Prompts

- Read 1:1-2 aloud and discuss what it looks like in practice to inquire of the Lord before a major decision rather than after.

- Compare 'the Lord was with Judah' (1:19) with 'he could not drive out... because they had chariots of iron.' How do you hold both statements together?
- Identify one 'iron chariot' in your life, an obstacle that intimidates you into stopping short of obedience, and pray about it as a group.

Question 2

Student Question:

Israel began this chapter by asking God 'Who shall go up first?' before they acted. When you face a new season or a hard decision, do you genuinely seek the Lord first, or do you tend to move and then ask Him to bless what you have already chosen?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Israel models something easy to miss in our hurry: they asked God first. Before a sword was drawn, the question went up, 'Who shall go up first for us?' (1:1). This is not a small thing. It is the difference between a people who treat God as the source of their direction and a people who treat Him as the rubber stamp on decisions already made. The very first act of the book is an act of dependence, and it is rewarded.

It is worth pausing on how counter-cultural this is for us. We live trained to move fast, to decide, to act, and only later, if at all, to bring God into it. We pray about decisions after we have emotionally committed to them, then ask Him to bless what we have already chosen. That is not seeking God; that is seeking approval. Israel here does the harder, humbler thing first.

But there is also a warning folded into this chapter for the self-examining heart. The same people who asked so well at the start drifted so badly by the end. A good beginning is not a finished obedience. It is possible to inquire of God sincerely on Monday and compromise comfortably by Friday. The question this passage presses on us is not only whether we start by seeking God, but whether we keep walking in what He shows us when it gets costly.

Self-examination here is not morbid introspection; it is honest stewardship of our own hearts. Scripture commends the kind of person who examines himself (2 Corinthians 13:5). The aim is not anxiety but alignment, bringing our actual practice of decision-making into the light and asking whether God is genuinely first or merely consulted.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The practical difference between seeking God's direction and seeking God's approval for a choice already made.
- How a strong spiritual start can lull us into assuming the rest will take care of itself.
- The discipline of bringing decisions to God before emotional commitment hardens them.
- Honest self-examination as a healthy, ongoing Christian practice rather than morbid introspection.

Discussion Prompts

- Describe a recent decision. Did you seek God first, or did you ask Him to bless a choice already made?
- What would it look like this week to bring one upcoming decision to God genuinely before you commit?
- Why do you think a good start so often fails to become a faithful finish?

Question 3

Student Question:

Judges 1 repeats again and again that various tribes 'did not drive out' the Canaanites but instead settled for coexistence and forced labor. What does this teach us about the nature of partial obedience, and why does Scripture treat it as real disobedience rather than partial success?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The literary heartbeat of Judges 1 is repetition. Tribe after tribe is introduced with the same somber refrain: Manasseh 'did not drive out' (1:27), Ephraim 'did not drive out' (1:29), Zebulun 'did not drive out' (1:30), Asher 'did not drive out' (1:31), Naphtali 'did not drive out' (1:33). The reader is meant to feel the accumulation, like a drumbeat that grows heavier with each repetition. This is not careless reporting; it is deliberate theological accusation.

Crucially, the text frequently adds what Israel did instead: they 'put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely' (1:28). They found a workable compromise. They turned the people they were commanded to remove into a labor force and a source of profit. From a worldly standpoint this looks shrewd. Why destroy what you can exploit? But God had not commanded efficiency; He had commanded obedience, and the two parted ways.

Here is the doctrinal weight of the passage: partial obedience is presented as disobedience, not as a lesser grade of faithfulness. God's command had been clear (Deuteronomy 7:1-5): make no covenant, show no mercy to the corrupting idolatrous system, tear down the altars. To obey ninety percent of that command is to disobey it, because the ten percent left standing was precisely the part that would metastasize. Saul would later learn the same lesson when he spared what God said to destroy and was told 'to obey is better than sacrifice' (1 Samuel 15:22).

We must be careful and clear here. The command to drive out the Canaanites was not a license for ethnic hatred; it was God's surgical removal of an idolatrous influence that would, if tolerated, destroy His people from within, as the rest of the book proves. The principle that carries forward for us under the New Covenant is not territorial conquest but the refusal to make peace with sin in our own lives. We are not told to manage our sins as forced labor; we are told to put them to death (Colossians 3:5).

So the lesson reframes how we measure our own faithfulness. We tend to grade ourselves generously: I have dealt with most of it, surely that counts. But Judges 1 will not allow that arithmetic. The sin we keep around 'as forced labor,' the one we have learned to profit from and live beside, is not a footnote to our obedience; it is the breach through which everything else will eventually pour.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Partial obedience defined biblically as real disobedience, not as a lesser form of faithfulness.
- The temptation to exploit and manage sin (forced labor) rather than remove it.
- Why God commanded the removal of Canaanite idolatry as protection of His people, not arbitrary cruelty.
- The New Covenant application: putting sin to death rather than negotiating coexistence (Colossians 3:5).
- How we wrongly grade our obedience generously while Scripture grades by completeness.
- The parallel of Saul's partial obedience and 'to obey is better than sacrifice' (1 Samuel 15:22).

Discussion Prompts

- Read the 'did not drive out' verses in sequence. What effect does the repetition have on you as a reader?
- Why is turning a Canaanite into 'forced labor' more dangerous than it first appears?
- Where are you tempted to grade your obedience as 'good enough' when God measures it by completeness?

Question 4

Student Question:

Name a specific 'Canaanite' you have chosen to put to forced labor rather than drive out, a sin or habit you have decided to manage and profit from instead of removing. What has that arrangement cost you so far?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The passage hands us a mirror. Israel did not refuse to fight altogether; they fought, won real victories, and then, when they 'grew strong,' settled for arrangements with the very things they were told to remove. That is the precise shape of most of our compromises. We do not usually abandon obedience wholesale; we obey enough to feel righteous and then negotiate a livable peace with the one or two sins we would rather keep.

Each of us has a personal Canaanite we have put to forced labor. It is the sin we have decided is useful, manageable, even productive: the anger that gets results, the dishonesty that smooths the path, the indulgence that relaxes us, the relationship we know is wrong but cannot bring

ourselves to end. We tell ourselves we control it. Judges 1 quietly warns that the thing you refuse to drive out is the thing that will one day rule you.

The honest question is about cost. Every such arrangement charges rent. The anger costs you intimacy; the dishonesty costs you peace; the indulgence costs you time and clarity; the wrong relationship costs you your conscience. We often refuse to drive out a sin because removal feels expensive, while never tallying what coexistence is already costing us day by day.

This is where self-examination becomes deeply practical. Naming the Canaanite is the first act of obedience. As long as it stays unnamed, vaguely filed under 'nobody's perfect,' it cannot be driven out. The goal of this question is not shame but specificity, because God does not deal with us in generalities, and neither can we deal honestly with ourselves.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Identifying the specific, personal sin one has chosen to manage rather than remove.
- The illusion of control over a tolerated sin versus the reality that it gradually gains control.
- Honestly counting the ongoing cost of coexistence with sin, not just the cost of removing it.
- Naming sin specifically as a necessary first act of genuine repentance.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific sin you have chosen to manage rather than drive out?
- What has coexistence with that sin already cost you that you may not have tallied?
- Why is it easier to keep a sin vague than to name it plainly, and what changes when you name it?

Question 5

Student Question:

In Judges 1:7 Adoni-bezek confesses that what he had done to seventy kings has been done to him, and in 2:1–3 the angel ties Israel's coming troubles directly to their disobedience. How does this passage display God's justice and the principle that we reap what we sow, without teaching that God is cruel or arbitrary?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter opens with a stark scene of justice. Adoni-bezek, a Canaanite king who had cut off the thumbs and big toes of seventy kings and made them grovel under his table, is captured and given the same treatment. His own confession is striking: 'As I have done, so God has repaid me' (1:7). Even a pagan king recognizes a moral order built into the world: what is sown is reaped. The narrative places this at the front of the book as a quiet signpost for everything that follows.

This principle is not vindictive arbitrariness; it is the reliable justice of a holy God. At Bochim the same logic appears, but now aimed at God's own people: 'because you have not obeyed my

voice... I will not drive them out before you' (2:2-3). The consequences Israel will suffer are tied directly and fairly to their choices. God is not capricious. He warned them, He was faithful, and the trouble that comes is the harvest of their own disobedience.

We must hold this firmly against any caricature of God as cruel. The doctrine of personal accountability runs through Scripture: 'The soul who sins shall die... the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father' (Ezekiel 18:20). No one in this passage is being punished for someone else's sin or for an inherited condemnation. Adoni-bezek reaps his own cruelty; Israel reaps its own compromise. God's justice always operates on real, personal responsibility.

At the same time, the seriousness of reaping should drive us not to despair but to repentance. The same God who warns is the God who, throughout Judges, raises up deliverers when His people cry out. Justice and mercy are not opposites in His character; His justice tells us the truth about our choices, and His mercy provides a way back. The cross is where both meet fully, where sin is taken with absolute seriousness and grace is offered without compromise.

So this passage teaches us to live in a moral universe ruled by a just and faithful God. We are neither the helpless victims of fate nor the lucky beneficiaries of a God who shrugs at sin. We are responsible agents whose choices have real consequences, addressed by a God whose warnings are mercies and whose justice is the floor beneath the whole moral order.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The biblical principle of sowing and reaping displayed in Adoni-bezek and at Bochim.
- God's justice as reliable and personal rather than arbitrary or cruel.
- Personal accountability and the rejection of inherited guilt (Ezekiel 18:20).
- How God's warnings are an expression of mercy, giving His people the truth before the harvest.
- Justice and mercy meeting fully at the cross rather than standing as opposites in God's character.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Scripture place Adoni-bezek's confession at the very front of Judges?
- How does this passage guard us from thinking of God as either cruel or indifferent?
- Where have you seen the principle of sowing and reaping at work in your own life, for good or for ill?

Question 6

Student Question:

Compromise usually feels like strength, not weakness, as it did when Israel 'grew strong' and made deals with the Canaanites. In what area of your life are you most tempted to mistake a comfortable arrangement with sin for spiritual maturity?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The text says Israel made these compromises specifically when they 'grew strong' (1:28). The danger arrived not in weakness but in strength. While they were vulnerable, they fought; once they felt secure, they negotiated. This is a profound and uncomfortable observation about the human heart: we are often in the most spiritual danger precisely when we feel the most capable.

Compromise rarely announces itself as compromise. It wears the costume of maturity, balance, realism, even wisdom. 'I'm not a legalist anymore.' 'I've learned to be less rigid.' 'I can handle what would have tripped me up years ago.' Sometimes that is genuine growth. But sometimes it is the exact moment Israel was in, mistaking a comfortable arrangement with sin for spiritual maturity.

The searching question for each of us is where we have begun to call compromise 'growth.' The area where we feel most spiritually accomplished may be the area where we have quietly lowered the standard. Strength is not the enemy, but unexamined strength is dangerous, because it stops asking the humble first question Israel asked in verse 1 and starts assuming it already knows.

The antidote is not to manufacture weakness but to keep ourselves under the word and under accountability even, especially, in our areas of strength. 'Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall' (1 Corinthians 10:12). The strong Christian who keeps inquiring of the Lord stays safe; the strong Christian who stops asking is one comfortable arrangement away from Bochim.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The counterintuitive danger of spiritual compromise arriving in seasons of strength, not weakness.
- How compromise disguises itself as maturity, balance, or realism.
- The need to keep our areas of strength under the word and under accountability.
- The warning of 1 Corinthians 10:12 against confidence that stops watching.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that Israel compromised when they 'grew strong'?
- In what area do you feel most spiritually mature, and how might that be the very place to watch most carefully?
- What practical accountability could guard your strengths from becoming blind spots?

Question 7

Student Question:

At Bochim the angel of the Lord recounts God's covenant faithfulness ('I brought you up from Egypt... I will never break my covenant') before naming Israel's failure. What does this reveal about how God confronts sin in His people, and what does it teach us about the relationship between His kindness and His warnings?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At Bochim the angel of the Lord does not open with accusation. He opens with grace: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you' (2:1). Before God names a single failure, He rehearses His own faithfulness. This is the consistent pattern of how God confronts His people; He grounds the rebuke in the relationship, reminding them who He has been before He tells them what they have done.

Only after establishing His own covenant loyalty does the charge come: 'But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?' (2:2). The contrast is the whole point. God has kept every promise; Israel has kept few. The rebuke lands all the harder because it is set against the backdrop of unfailing divine kindness. Sin looks small until you see it against the faithfulness it betrays.

This teaches us something vital about the character of God and the nature of His warnings. God's confrontations are not the outbursts of a short-tempered deity; they are the grieved words of a faithful covenant partner. His kindness and His warnings are not in tension. It is precisely because He loves and has bound Himself to His people that He will not let their compromise slide. 'God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance' (Romans 2:4), and so are His warnings.

There is a pastoral pattern here for how we confront one another and how we hear God's word ourselves. Rebuke divorced from love wounds; love that never warns flatters. God models the union of the two. When His word exposes our sin, we are not hearing rejection; we are hearing the faithfulness of a God who refuses to lose us to a comfortable arrangement.

And we should hear, even in the Old Covenant setting, the forward pull toward Christ. The God who would 'never break covenant' kept that word ultimately by sending His Son, in whom every promise of God finds its Yes (2 Corinthians 1:20). The faithfulness rehearsed at Bochim is the same faithfulness that nailed our sin to the cross and calls us, kindly and seriously, to come and be free of it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's pattern of grounding rebuke in covenant faithfulness before naming sin.
- The unity of God's kindness and His warnings rather than a tension between them.
- How seeing sin against God's faithfulness exposes its true seriousness.
- A model for loving confrontation: neither flattery without warning nor rebuke without love.

- The forward pull to Christ, in whom every covenant promise of God is fulfilled (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God rehearse His faithfulness before naming Israel's sin at Bochim?
- How does seeing your sin against the backdrop of God's kindness change how you feel about it?
- How can we imitate God's pattern when we need to confront someone we love?

Question 8

Student Question:

When the people heard God's rebuke at Bochim, they wept and named the place 'Weepers.' When God's word exposes something in you, what is your honest first response: tears that lead to changed obedience, or sorrow that fades by the next morning?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the angel finishes speaking, 'the people lifted up their voices and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim,' which means weepers (2:4-5). The response is immediate and emotional. They were genuinely moved; they cried out loud enough to name a place for it. On the surface this looks like exactly the response God wants, and tears in the presence of God's word are not nothing.

Yet the rest of the book casts a long shadow over these tears. The very next chapter records that Israel did evil and served the Baals (2:11). The weeping at Bochim did not translate into the obedience God had actually asked for, which was to drive out the nations they had spared. This is one of Scripture's sober pictures of emotion without repentance, sorrow that feels real in the moment but does not change the direction of a life.

The Bible distinguishes two kinds of sorrow: 'godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death' (2 Corinthians 7:10). The difference is not the intensity of the tears but the change in the life. Esau wept bitterly and was not restored; Peter wept bitterly and was. The question is never how moved we felt under the word, but what we did when the meeting ended.

This presses each of us with uncomfortable honesty. We can have powerful experiences in worship, real lumps in the throat during a sermon, sincere tears at a confession, and walk out unchanged by Friday. Bochim warns us not to mistake the feeling of conviction for the act of obedience. The tears that please God are the ones that get up and drive out the Canaanite.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between godly grief that changes a life and worldly grief that merely feels (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- How emotional response to God's word can be sincere yet fail to produce obedience.
- The danger of mistaking conviction's feeling for repentance's action.
- Bochim as a warning against worship experiences that do not alter daily conduct.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between the tears of Bochim and the obedience God actually asked for?
- When God's word moves you, how do you tell whether it led to real change or only to feeling?
- What is one place your recent conviction needs to become concrete obedience?

Question 9

Student Question:

The angel warns that the nations Israel refused to drive out 'shall be thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you' (2:3). Drawing on the whole passage, explain how incomplete obedience opens the door to entanglement and idolatry, what this reveals about God's holiness and covenant faithfulness, and how the gospel both takes our compromise seriously and provides the only real deliverance from it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the gravitational center of the whole passage. The angel pronounces the consequence of Israel's incomplete obedience: 'So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you' (2:3). The nations Israel refused to remove will not stay neutral neighbors; they will become two things, thorns and snares, a constant irritation and a deadly trap. The very compromise meant to make life easier will make it painful and perilous.

Trace the logic of how incomplete obedience leads to idolatry, because the book of Judges is a four-hundred-year demonstration of it. First, Israel tolerates the Canaanites instead of removing them. Then they live beside them, trade with them, intermarry with them. Then they adopt their gods. What began as a practical arrangement ends as spiritual adultery. The sin you refuse to drive out does not stay where you put it; it spreads, it entangles, and eventually it captures the heart. 'A little leaven leavens the whole lump' (Galatians 5:9).

This reveals the holiness of God and why He commanded what He commanded. God is not insecure or petty about rival gods; He is holy, and He knows that idolatry destroys the people He loves. His insistence on complete separation from Canaanite worship was not the cruelty of a tyrant but the protectiveness of a Father who refuses to watch His children walk into a trap. His holiness and His love are the same disposition seen from two sides.

It also reveals His covenant faithfulness in a sobering way. God keeps His word both in blessing and in warning. He had said through Moses that nations left in the land would become 'thorns in your sides' (Numbers 33:55), and at Bochim He keeps even that word. A God whose warnings come true is a God you can trust completely, which is precisely why His warnings should be heeded rather than tested. His faithfulness is not only comfort; it is summons.

And here the gospel speaks the final word. Our compromise is real, our entanglement is real, and we cannot, by managing our Canaanites better, free ourselves from the snare. What Israel could not finish, and what we cannot finish in our own strength, God accomplishes in Christ, who came to 'destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8) and to free us from sin's dominion (Romans 6:6, 6:14). The gospel takes our compromise with full seriousness, seriously enough to require the cross, and then provides the only real deliverance from it. The risen King now reigns over His church, and under His reign the call is not to coexist with our sin but to drive it out in His power, by the obedient faith expressed in baptism into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4) and a life of ongoing, repentant fidelity. We do not save ourselves by rooting out compromise; rather, having been saved by His grace, we now finish the conquest in the strength He supplies, refusing to make peace with what He died to destroy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- How incomplete obedience opens the door to entanglement and, finally, idolatry (the whole arc of Judges).
- The holiness of God as protective love, not insecure cruelty, behind the command to separate from idolatry.
- God's covenant faithfulness shown in keeping even His warnings (Numbers 33:55 fulfilled at Bochim).
- The gospel taking our compromise seriously enough to require the cross (1 John 3:8; Romans 6:6).
- Christ's present reign and our call to drive out sin in His power, expressed in obedient faith and baptism (Romans 6:3-4), not faith-only self-effort.
- Why we cannot deliver ourselves from the snare by managing sin better, and where real deliverance is found.
- Guarding against once-saved-always-saved presumption: the saved still must refuse coexistence with sin and walk in ongoing fidelity (Hebrews 3:12-14).

Discussion Prompts

- Walk through the steps by which tolerating the Canaanites becomes worshiping their gods. Where do you see those steps in your own struggles?
- How does the command to drive out idolatry reveal God's love rather than contradict it?
- Since we cannot free ourselves from the snare by willpower, what does it mean to drive out compromise in the power of Christ rather than in our own strength?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across the whole passage, from Judah's bold start to the tears at Bochim, name one specific compromise in your life that the Lord Jesus is calling you to stop managing and actually drive out, and describe what taking the first concrete step of obedience would look like this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

We end where the passage ends, at Bochim, with tears, and the question is what we will do with them. The whole sweep of this lesson, from Judah's confident 'we will go up' to Israel's weeping at the angel's rebuke, has been quietly building toward your own life. Every reader of Judges 1 has a Canaanite still standing, a compromise managed rather than removed, and the King is asking the same question He asked at Bochim: 'What is this you have done?'

The aim of this final question is not vague resolve but a single, named, concrete step. Israel's failure was never a failure of feeling; they could weep. Their failure was that they would not drive out what God said to drive out. So the question is not 'do you feel convicted?' but 'what is the one specific thing you will actually do this week?' Repentance lives in the specific. The leaven gets driven out one named compromise at a time.

And this is where the Lord Jesus is the difference between Judges and the gospel. Israel was left to weep over a conquest they could not finish. We are not. The risen Christ reigns now, and He does not merely command us to drive out our sin; He supplies the power to do it and walks with us into the very valley where the iron chariots are. The same Spirit that raised Him from the dead works in His people to put sin to death (Romans 8:13). We finish the conquest not in our strength but in His, as those already claimed by His grace and learning to walk in step with Him.

So name it. Not 'I should be a better person,' but the actual Canaanite: the habit, the relationship, the attitude, the indulgence you have been managing. Then name the first step of driving it out, and take it this week. That is how Jesus forms us through this passage, not by leaving us at Bochim in tears, but by leading us out of it in obedience, one finished act of faithfulness at a time, until the whole land of our lives belongs fully to our King.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from felt conviction to a single, named, concrete act of obedience.
- Christ as the one who both commands and empowers the driving out of our sin (Romans 8:13).
- Living out of grace already received rather than trying to earn standing by self-reform.
- Refusing to stop at Bochim's tears and instead taking the first finished step of repentance this week.

Discussion Prompts

- Name the one specific compromise the Lord is calling you to stop managing and drive out.
- What is the single concrete first step of obedience you can take this week?
- How does knowing Christ supplies the power change the way you approach that step?