

Falling from Faithfulness: The Book of Judges

Othniel and Ehud

Judges 3:7-31 (ESV)

⁷ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.⁸ Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.⁹ But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.¹⁰ The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.¹¹ So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

¹² And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord.¹³ He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms.¹⁴ And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

¹⁵ Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.¹⁶ And Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes.¹⁷ And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.¹⁸ And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who carried the tribute.¹⁹ But he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he commanded, "Silence." And all his attendants went out from his presence.²⁰ And Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat.²¹ And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right

thigh, and thrust it into his belly. ²² And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung came out. ²³ Then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them.

²⁴ When he had gone, the servants came, and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, "Surely he is relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber." ²⁵ And they waited till they were embarrassed. But when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them, and there lay their lord dead on the floor.

²⁶ Ehud escaped while they delayed, and he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was their leader. ²⁸ And he said to them, "Follow after me, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and did not allow anyone to pass over. ²⁹ And they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men; not a man escaped. ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

³¹ After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad, and he also saved Israel.

Introduction

- the verses about the judges of Israel come to us as a story, a narrative
- basic plot structure for any story: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion
- Shamgar gives us the narrative or story of a judge in one concise sentence
- Not sure why the author stuck this in here? 12? 7?

Main Idea:

Salvation is all of God!

- We will use it to get our minds thinking about the kind of stories we will be encountering
- These are stories with heroes and heroines
- And though we, as humans, want to elevate the hero to a place of worship, the two main stories in this passage reinforce an idea that occurs throughout

Othniel as the Pattern

The cycle



The ideal

- **Best example**
 - Othniel already represented as a courageous and strong warrior
 - Related to one of the greats of Israel
 - No negative qualities indicated
 - The Spirit was on him
- **Complete example**
 - All aspects of the Deliverance/Apostasy Cycle
- **Employed to show the pattern**
- **Employed to emphasize the degradation – starts clean, moves to chaos**

The people rebel - And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

- **Forgetting is not passive but active and intentional**
- **It includes a disregarding of what you knew; it no longer captivates your heart, it no longer compels**
- **It also includes a replacing with something else that now compels: idols**

God is angry - Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel

- What God's wrath is not:
 - Reactionary, flippant, arbitrary, malicious, vindictive, spiteful, irrational
 - In other words, it's not like ours
- Definition: The wrath of God is His steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising, antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations. G
- **Dale Ralph Davis**: "We must confess that Yahweh's anger is not good news nor is it bad but good bad news. It shows that the covenant God who has bound himself to his people will not allow them to become cozy in their infidelity. 'Steadfast love' pursues them in their iniquity and is not above inflicting misery in order to awaken them. The burning anger Yahweh is certainly no picnic, but it may be the only sign of hope for God's people even though they may be yet unaware of that fact."
 - Angry coach > indifferent coach

This quote is helpful in regards to God's wrath as it pertains to God's people!

Oppression by enemies - and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years

- God's judgment on God's people is not ultimately for punitive purposes, but rather for redemptive purpose; God gives Israel tribulation to draw them back to him
- God uses whomever he pleases as his instrument of judgment (sovereign)

The people cry out - But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord

- Not a penitent plea, but a cry of pain coming from deep distress or an unbearable circumstance; if used to mean repentance it is qualified by another clause
 - Crying during spanking to make it end quicker
- God's response is not a response to repentance but to the suffering of his people – this deepens the appearance of his pity, mercy, and grace
- Don't let God's response here slide by unnoticed or overlooked because of familiarity

If we take this approach

- **Groaning – Flavel:** “Alas! To cut off your comforts one after another, and make you live a groaning life, the Lord hath no pleasure in it; but he had rather you lose these things, than that he should lose your hearts on earth, or company in heaven.”

Salvation through chosen judge - the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim

- **Othniel the ideal leaders:** raised up by God and empowered by God
- **Jeremiah 27:5 (ESV)** “It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. → *It is not the judge who saves Israel, but God. God uses the judge to bring about salvation ⇒ SOVEREIGN*
- Our best response is to see God’s hand behind our troubles

Peace - So the land had rest forty years.

- It seems there was a physical peace; free from war and chaos
- But was there a spiritual peace? Was there freedom from the futile service of idols? Was there release from the bondage of worshipping sticks and stones?

Judge dies - Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died

- The end of the judge is the end of the cycle

Seeing Christ

- Keller notes two Christ-revealing truths in this episode:
 - “Restoration and revival only come to God’s people when God works through his chosen deliverer.”
 - “For permanent restoration, and unending peace serving the Lord, God’s people need a leader who does not die.”

- and the apostasy/salvation cycle

Ehud as an Example

The cycle

- People rebel.
- God is angry. Not explicitly stated this time but inferred in his strengthening of Eglon.
- Oppression by enemies. With the assistance of Ammonites and Amalekites, Eglon of Moab subjugates a portion of Israel, taking possession of Jericho.
- The people cry out.
- Salvation through chosen judge. We come back to this later.
- Peace. The land had rest for 8 years.
- Judge dies. 4:1

We will focus our attention on the aspect of the cycle that the author focuses on.

Salvation through the chosen judge.

- With each of the judges after Othniel, the author will focus on a particular aspect of the cycle. In the case of Ehud, the author focuses on the details of how God brought about deliverance. I believe it is important to ask ourselves why the author chose that ~~a~~ focus. Before we do that, let's summarize the salvation that come through Ehud:
 - In keeping with their status as subjects, the Israelites send Ehud to deliver their tribute payments to Eglon.
 - After the tribute has been delivered, Ehud returns alone, and, getting Eglon into a one-on-one situation in his own house in Jericho, he assassinates him.
 - Meanwhile the king's bodyguards wait outside for their master. When he fails to come out, they enter the throne room and find him dead on the floor.
 - Ehud returns to his people and marshals the Ephraimites to battle.
 - The Moabite army is soundly defeated.

The focus

- Why did the author emphasize this scene of Israel's deliverance? Why did he include some of the more sordid details? There are clearly rhetorical devices being used: "ambiguity, irony, satire, hyperbole, puns and caricature. Why does the author get into this type of story-telling?"
- The degradation of Israel:
 - The clean and concise story of Israel's deliverance through Othniel is significantly different than the grimy and gritty, real-life drama involving Ehud and Eglon. This is yet another indication of the downward spiral that Israel is travelling, and it is going to continue getting worse.
- The messiness of life:
 - Perhaps another reason that the author chose the details he did was to demonstrate that God, though in some senses is high and lifted up and a great distance from us, is also involved in the gory details of our messy lives.
 - **Dale Ralph Davis:** "And that is the glory of this passage: it tells us that Yahweh deals with the dirty, mixed-up affairs of life in which his people find themselves. Here we are - some in family situations we have messed up; some in emotional trauma; some in grief and sorrow or in the clutches of temptation. Life seems to be a mass of twisted coathangers and disconnected doorknobs. And the glory of this text is that it tells us that Yahweh is not a white-gloved, standoffish God out somewhere in the remote left field of the universe who hesitates to get his strong right arm dirty in the yuck of our lives. The God of the Bible does not hold back in the wild blue yonder somewhere waiting for you to pour Clorox and spray Lysol over the affairs of your life before he will touch it. Whether you can comfortably put it together or not, he is the God who delights to deliver his people even in their messes and likes to make them laugh again; he is the God who allows weeping to endure for a night but sees that joy comes in the morning."

What mess have you got yourself into?
 What quagmire has someone else dragged you into?

Seeing Christ

- One of the ways that will help us see Christ more clearly—one of my hopes for this series and something I'm excited about—is by gaining clarity by contrasting THE Deliverer with the deliverers in Judges.
- In Ehud we see a man with flaws (left-handed) and foibles (deceptive and less than noble in the assassination of Eglon). Unlike Othniel about whom we know nothing negative, the rest of the judges will fall short of the ultimate Deliverer of God's people.

By contrast,

- Christ didn't use deception like Ehud, he won't need assistance like Deborah and Barak, he won't display selfish ambition like Gideon, or devastating rashness like Jephthah, or sexual weakness and impetuosity like Samson.
- The judges in the book by that name delivered God's people through spectacular victories despite their sinful character. The Son of God delivered God's people through an apparent crushing defeat despite his sinless character. Christ is a deliverer of the sort that humanity's best saviour^s pale in comparison.

Application

- Some of the commentators suggest that the crying out of the people WAS true repentance. In fact, true renewal, and true renewal on a corporate level which might be called revival, requires repentance. And the renewal which we call rebirth definitively requires repentance. So I wanted to spend a few moments taking the idea of repentance from the stories of the judges and apply it to our lives. GOSPEL *→ If you are unfamiliar with the Christian concept of spiritual renewal or rebirth, know that it includes the idea of repentance.*
- Puritan Thomas Watson wrote is helpful on repentance. He wrote, *↓ GOD. SIN. CHRIST*
- “Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.” *↓ RESPONSE*
- Watson saw repentance as being made up of 6 ingredients:
 - Sight of sin
 - Sorrow for sin
 - Confession of sin
 - Shame for sin
 - Hatred for sin
 - Turning from sin
- “A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is, and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it. ... Hence I infer that where there is no sight of sin, there can be no repentance. Many who can spy faults in others see none in themselves. They cry that they have good hearts. Is it not strange that two should live together, and eat and drink together, yet not know each other? Such is the case of a sinner. His body and soul live together, work together, yet he is unacquainted with himself. He knows not his own heart, nor what a hell he carries about him.”

How can we see sin? *- who wants to be a millionaire? lifelines. 3 lifelines to help you answer the question:*

1) Pray for help

- a. Ask God to, by the Holy Spirit, show you your sin.
- b. **John 14:15-17 (ESV)** “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 16:13 (ESV) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...

2) Read God's Word

- a. **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- b. Do this in conjunction with #1

3) Call a friend

- a. Not saying "Go tell someone about the sin in their life" but "Go ask someone"
- b. **Hebrews 3:12-13 (ESV)** Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.