

How God makes Heroes: Judges chapter 3

How many of you have a hero to look up to? Real heroes are hard to find these days. Who do we have to look up to?

These Judges are not perfect. In fact, one of them was an assassin, another one was sexually immoral, and there was another Judge who broke all the laws of hospitality. What does it mean to be God's hero? I would say, a hero is the man or woman who obeys God.

The book of Joshua ends with the nation taking a stand for God. Thirty-one Kings were defeated and now they are ready to experience the wonderful land of Canaan. But there is a great tragedy in the book of Judges.

The Israelites lost their spiritual commitment to God. What happened? It begins with incomplete obedience. In chapters one and two, the Israelites refused to eliminate the enemy from the land. As a result, the people intermarried and worshiped idols. Judges 17:6 says, "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

The best Judge is going to be the first of the 3 we examine today

I. Othniel:

Othniel's story only takes only 5 verses to tell. Othniel is boring. Do you know what that tells me?

God can use boring people to accomplish His purposes. Judges 3:10 says, "The spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel and went out to war."

You see, Othniel simply did what God told him to do. He didn't make a big fuss out of it. Othniel teaches us that we don't need to be impressive to other people in order to be impressive to God. Just go and do what God wants you to do.

In Matt chapter 6:3, Jesus said, "when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

Othniel is one of the few judges where nothing negative is said about him. It's too bad that he is not as highly regarded as Sampson. Verse 11 says, "The land had rest for 40 years."

II. Ehud: His story can be found in Judges 3:12-30

Once again, "The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord." With Othniel gone, they fell

back into evil and idol worship, so God hands them over to Moab for 18 years.

In verse 15, they cry out for help, so God gives them a deliverer named Ehud. With cleverness and strategy Ehud hides a double edged, 13-inch dagger in his clothing.

Verse 17 says, "He brought a tribute to the king and when he had finished presenting the tribute, Ehud asks if he can have a private moment with Eglon, the king of Moab. Ehud says, "I have a secret message for you." The king then foolishly dismisses his bodyguards. We all know what happens next. Ehud takes out his dagger and kills the king.

Ehud leaves the room, locks the door and when it's finally discovered that the King is dead, Ehud is long gone. Shortly after this, an army of Israelites invade, and Moab is defeated. They have peace for 80 years.

Some lessons to take away from Ehud:

Before you go to work, before you go to school, before you get ready for a new day, ask yourself, "What will God do through me today?" We've got one more Judge to look at.

III. Shamgar JDG 3:31

Shamgar struck down six hundred Philistines with an ox goad and saved Israel. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit wants us to focus on this unusual weapon - the ox goad.

1 Sam 13:19 says, "Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, "the Hebrews will make swords or spears!"

The enemy prevented the Israelites from making weapons. Can you imagine being defeated by farming equipment? God and an ox goad is better than 600 Philistines.

I wish we had more details. How long did he rule in Israel? How did he defeat so many Philistine soldiers?

Close: We now come to the most challenging part of the lesson.

What was this chapter trying to say to the ancient Israelites who read it long ago, and what's the message for Christians today? Let's begin with Othniel. The writer of Judges wants us to understand, it is God who gives the victory.

When we read about Ehud with all the gory details, we learn about the unseen hand of God. What's the lesson from Shamgar? God can give His people victory by using unlikely warriors regardless of their weapons. Praise God that He has chosen to use people like you and like me to accomplish His purposes, so that all the glory goes to Him.