

Bible Stories

EHUD

The Left-handed Deliverer

Judges 3:15

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The book of Judges diverges dramatically from the relative faithfulness of the people in the book of Joshua. Through obedience and trust in the power of God, Canaan was mostly – but not completely – conquered.

- **Joshua 13:1** - Now Joshua was old *and* advanced in years, and Yahweh said to him, "You are old *and* advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed..... {see Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12}

Before Joshua died, he asked the people to make a choice:

- **Joshua 24:14-18** - "Now fear Yahweh and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve him. ¹⁵ But if serving Yahweh seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh."

And people responded:

- "Far be it from us to forsake Yahweh to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was Yahweh our God who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. ¹⁸ Yahweh drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve Yahweh, because he is our God."

After Joshua died, however, Israel's connection to Yahweh went on life support and the following verses give us a clue as to what we can expect in the next 5 sermons:

- **Judges 2:10** - After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who did not know Yahweh or what he had done for Israel.
- **Judges 17:6** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
- **Judges 18:1** - In those days Israel had no king.
- **Judges 19:1** - In those days Israel had no king.
- **Judges 21:25** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

In other words – the people chose to "self-govern" themselves and did what "felt right" to them. Truth was relative and morals became a moving target.

- **Proverbs 16:25** - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.
- **Jeremiah 17:9** - The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Israel pursued the gods of the nations around them and the consequences were catastrophic – thus beginning a cycle of:

- Evil
- Oppression
- Begging for deliverance
- The raising up of a judge
- Deliverance
- Death of the judge
- Evil

WASH – RINSE – REPEAT

Now, when it comes to the Deliverers God chose, we would expect them to be of a certain caliber of person. We would expect them to be men of moral strength and courage – leaders and pillars of virtue in their communities..... However, one was a handicapped assassin. One was... wait for it... a woman. One was a coward. One was an outlaw and illegitimate son of a prostitute. One was a carousing womanizer – obsessed with his own power....

God took these people, people we would never consider to be *“Deliverer”* material and He made them just that ---- the heroes – the deliverers – the judges – of His people.

Our story today is found in **Judges 3:12-30** – Othniel, the first Judge had died:

- The sons of Israel once again did evil in the sight of Yahweh.
- The Lord strengthened Eglon King of Moab – who oppressed Israel for 18 years.
- The sons of Israel grew weary of their situation and cried out to Yahweh for deliverance.
- Yahweh raised up a **deliverer**

Which brings us to Ehud

Ehud was the son of Gera, a Benjaminite. He was left-handed.

The Hebrew expression *“left-handed”* literally refers to a handicap.

So, Ehud was either an oddity amongst his fellow Benjamites – *“son of the right hand”* – and was, therefore, viewed as handicapped, or his right hand was deformed in some way that forced him to use his left hand. Either way, his *“handicap”* will prove to be a significant advantage.

The Israelites sent Ehud to pay the yearly tribute to the king of Moab.

Before his journey, Ehud made a short {12-18 inches long}, two-edged sword and fastened it under his clothes to his right thigh.

The Eglon’s guards, expecting a weapon on the left thigh, might not have even noticed or paid attention to Ehud’s right thigh.

Eglon, *“little calf,”* was a very fat man.

{The story that would go around Israelite campfires in the years to come would be that of the *“slaughter of the fatted calf”*}

When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he started for home.

At the boundary markers near Gilgal, he sent his entourage home, turned around and went back to Moab.

When he arrived, he whispered in Eglon’s ear, *“I have a secret message for you, O king.”*

Eglon declared, *“Everybody out!”* All Eglon’s people left the room leaving Eglon and Ehud alone.

Ehud said, *“I have a message from God for you,”* and got up from his chair. As he did, he reached with his left hand for the sword on his right thigh, and he thrust it into Eglon’s stomach.

Eglon was so huge that the handle of the sword went *in* after the blade, fat closing over it. The sword came out Eglon’s back.

Ehud went out into the hallway, locked the doors behind him, and casually walked away.

When Eglon’s servants returned, they saw *that* the doors *were* locked. They thought, *“He must be going to the bathroom,”* so, they waited.

After a long wait, folks started to get a little embarrassed, so they got the key and opened *the doors*.

There, on the floor, was Eglon.... Dead.

While Eglon’s servants waited at the locked doors, Ehud made his escape.

He crossed the Jordan near the boundary markers and reached Seirah.

When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim and the Israelites joined him.

“Follow me!” he shouted, ***“Yahweh has given Moab into your hands.”***

So, Israel went down and captured the fords of the Jordan toward Moab. They attacked the Moabite garrison – killing about 10,000 strong and able men – no one escaped.

Moab was subdued that day and the land rested 80 years.

What do we do with this story?

Something we need to remember is that ***“Judges”*** is a history not a commentary. It is a no-holds-barred, unapologetic, ugly and graphic tale of what happens when the Law of God and God Himself are cast aside and people do as they see fit.

God's ways do not make sense to us sometimes and He is constantly doing the unexpected. We look at the direction God is leading and we decide that because we don't think a thing can be done – therefore IT CANNOT BE DONE. But it is a dangerous thing to resist the working of God just because it doesn't fit with our ideas or plans. God works in His own way and according to His own devising and He doesn't require our approval before proceeding.

Ehud was from the smallest tribe – Benjamin – and had a perceived handicap. Yet, it was that very ***“handicap”*** that qualified Ehud for the mission God had chosen for him to carry out.

God can use anyone – yes, even you – to carry out his will.