

Judges Devotionals

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Judges Devotionals

Judges 1

The following cycle though not identical to Judges does demonstrate a pattern found in the life of Israel during this 300+ year time period. Here is one historian's "bird's eye view of the cycle of men and nations"

- (1) from bondage to spiritual faith.
- (2) from spiritual faith to great courage.
- (3) from courage to liberty.
- (4) from liberty to abundance.
- (5) from abundance to selfishness.
- (6) from selfishness to complacency.
- (7) from complacency to apathy.
- (8) from apathy to dependency.
- (9) from dependency back to bondage.

Today in the Word

The Book of Judges vs the Book of Joshua

JOSHUA	JUDGES
Victory	Defeat
Freedom	Servitude
Faith	Unbelief
Progress	Declension
Spiritual vision	Earthly emphasis
Fidelity to the Lord	Apostasy from the Lord
Joy	Sorrow
Strength	Weakness
Sense of unity	Declension, anarchy
Sin judged	Sin lightly regarded

The New Unger's Bible Handbook, Merrill F. Unger, Revised by Gary N. Larson, Moody Press, Chicago, 1984, p. 129

Judges 1:1,2,27-36

Theodore Epp

Back to the Bible

Incomplete Victory - We have seen before that we cannot possess what we do not first dispossess. We cannot possess what someone else has control of.

Israel could not possess that portion of Canaan where they coexisted with the Canaanites, even though the Canaanites were their slaves. Instead of destroying the Canaanites or driving them out as God had commanded, the Israelites in many areas allowed them to live in their midst.

It was not a complete victory for God's people. Time after time we are told how they failed to go all the way to accomplish God's purpose. Passage after passage tells us the same story.

This is the story of the seven tribes of Israel that did not completely dispossess the inhabitants and thus possess the land for themselves. God said to drive out these Canaanites, for their cup of sin was full. Israel was to get rid of them and then to dwell where they had dwelt.

There are things that God has told us to get rid of in our lives. And there is no need for us to protest that we cannot, because Christ died and rose again to make it possible for us to do so.

Furthermore, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us so that Christ now indwells us through the Holy Spirit to live out His life in us. Thus day by day we can, by faith, overcome in the spiritual warfare and be victors through Christ.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Ro 6:14-note). ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 1:1-20

Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance. - Joshua 24:28

TODAY IN THE WORD

Flannery O'Connor, one of the greatest American short-story writers, was sometimes criticized for her outlandish characters. She explained that they were intentionally grotesque, because "for the hard of hearing you shout, and for the blind you draw large and startling figures." She could have been describing the characters we'll encounter this month in our study of the books of Judges and Ruth. God has included these stories from the history of Israel in His Word in order to shout some truths to us about His own character.

God has something to teach us in both the structure and the stories in the book of Judges. It sometimes appears to be a string of stories, like a pearl necklace, held together by the common thread of Israel's sin and deliverance. This image is incomplete, however. Judges is one of the most richly textured, crafted, and organized books in Scripture. Rather than a strand of pearls, we'll see the book is designed more like an intricate gold filigree.

We'll see a number of themes emerge: the role of Judah, God's concern for the unity of His people, the relationship between men and women, and the ongoing disintegration of country, family, and individuals as a result of disobedience.

The first phrase of the book, "After the death of Joshua," gives us the historical context for these events (Jdg 1:1). And right away, we see several of our key themes. God designates Judah as the tribe to begin fulfilling His command to be an instrument of justice against the wicked Canaanites. God blesses Judah's obedience with victory.

The story of Acsah is not randomly placed in this passage. We see that she must have been quite a woman, worthy of great and heroic deeds for the right to marry her. We also see her wisdom and initiative in asking her father Caleb for water in addition to her parcel of land, located in the desert. Her story, inserted precisely in the middle of the account of Judah's initiative, illustrates personal initiative that receives a blessing.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Judah took the initiative to obey what God had commanded; Acsah's prudence and wisdom led her to take action to ensure that her family's land would be fertile. Has God called you to obey Him in some area that you've been resisting? Is there some aspect of life where you know that action would be the wise and prudent decision ... but you still hesitate? Trust in His character to bless and reward initiative!

Judges 1:21-2:5

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? - 1 Samuel 15:22

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919 to conclude World War I, imposed restrictions on Germany that Adolph Hitler would exploit to spur the growth of his Nazi Party. Within twenty years, Germany would move from feeling oppressed to invading its neighbors and murdering millions of people, particularly Jews. Throughout history, people who have been oppressed themselves turn into oppressors when given an opportunity—an example of this is in our passage.

Yesterday we saw the obedience of Judah. Today, the story of Judges makes its first downward turn as we read that the Benjamites failed to drive out the Jebusites (v. 21). The chronicle of Israel's failure has begun. Tribe after tribe did not remove the wicked peoples living in the land as God had commanded.

Note that this wasn't due to Israel's weakness. They were clearly strong enough to subdue the people into forced labor (Jdg 1:28). It was partial obedience—but the consequences of partial obedience were the same as of complete disobedience. After their experience of forced labor in Egypt, Israel should have known that this was not a long-term solution to their problem of possessing the land. And in fact, the Canaanites would lead Israel into the grave sin of idolatry.

An observer at the time might conclude that the Israelites looked successful. They controlled large portions of the land, they were strong enough to dominate the Canaanites in most areas, and they had several notable military victories. But material success does not equal spiritual success. Israel had failed to follow the commands of the Lord.

After Israel failed to obey God, choosing the comfort of having forced laborers instead of obeying the Lord, they learned the consequences of their sin: God would no longer drive out the Canaanites. The people responded with loud weeping and sacrifices (“Bokim” means weepers in Jdg 2:5). But the text has no reference to any repentance on the part of the Israelites.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

You may feel like you're reading a geography lesson in this first chapter of Judges! Most modern readers aren't familiar with these ancient places and names. Like every other detail in this book, the geography gives us a richer understanding of the message. One resource that can help you track the geographical movement of the tribes and the surrounding peoples is the Moody Atlas of Bible Lands, available from your local Christian bookstore or online book distributor.

Judges 1:27

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

The Canaanites would dwell in that land.

How persistent evil habits are! They have dwelt in our lives so long that they dislike being dislodged. Why should they quit their dwelling-place and go out into the void? Sometimes, at the beginning of our Christian life, we make a feeble effort against them, and hope to cast them out; but they stubbornly resist. Whenever a remonstrance is addressed to us, we are apt to reply, “Do not find fault; we couldn't help it. These Canaanites are self-willed and persistent, they would dwell in the land.”

But the one point that Israel should have borne in mind was that they had no right there. The land was not theirs, it had become Israel's. And, moreover, God was prepared to drive them out; so that his people would have no fighting to do, but only to chase a flying foe. One man was to chase a thousand (Joshua 23:10).

So these evil habits have no right to persist in the believers life. The whole soil of his heart has been made over to the Son of God, and there should be no part left to weeds. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” said the Apostle. Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit is prepared to lust against the flesh, that we may not fulfil it in the lusts thereof, or do the things we otherwise would. The hasty temper may be natural to you: but seeing that your position is Christ is supernatural, this Canaanite must be conquered. There is a complete deliverance possible to all who will open their hearts to the might of the Spirit of God. Talk no more of these Canaanites who would stay in the land; but say of the blessed Spirit, “He is well able to drive them out.”

Judges 2

Judges 2:1-15; Psalm 2:10-12.

TODAY IN THE WORD

Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, once complained to the President about a fellow army officer. Lincoln advised him to write the man a letter expressing his anger. Stanton did so, and showed it to Lincoln. After approving the letter, the President asked Stanton what he planned to do with it. “Send it,” he answered in surprise.

But Lincoln told him to burn the letter. "That's what I do when I have written a letter while I am angry. It's a good letter. You had a good time writing it and you feel better. Now burn it and write another."

When it comes to human anger, it's almost always a good idea to think twice, count to ten, take a walk, or do whatever it takes to reconsider your response. But God never needs to reconsider or repent for His anger. Because God is holy and perfect, His anger is holy and perfect.

Judges 2:1-15 gives us a clear picture of God's anger in action as He deals with the disobedience and sin of Israel. The time of the judges was a low point in Israel's history, as God's people provoked Him to anger by their sin.

We can be grateful that God is "slow to anger" and ready to forgive. But once His anger is kindled, it burns with a purifying and judging fire (see Judges 3:8). David said that God "expresses His wrath every day" (Ps. 7:11) against sin and disobedience. No wonder the psalmist counseled the nations to "kiss the Son" (Ps. 2:12). That is, we are to give homage to Messiah, the Lord's anointed Ruler.

Divine wrath is real, but it is never petty, vengeful, haphazard, or cruel--traits which so often characterize our expressions of anger. Jesus displayed the righteous anger of God on several occasions, but not to avenge a personal wrong or to justify Himself.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Isn't it embarrassing when you are angry about someone else's transgression, then turn around and do the same thing yourself? It is hard to stay angry at the other person in such a situation. The fact is we need to be forgiven, and we need to forgive (Matt. 6:14-15). Think about what this means in terms of our relationship with God. His anger towards us is always justified. If He were to hold us accountable for all of our transgressions, none of us would be saved. But on the cross Jesus Christ absorbed the blows of God's anger against our sin. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 2:6-12

Secondhand Faith

C P Hia - Our Daily Bread

Our Daily Bread

When I was growing up in Singapore, I remember that some of my school friends were kicked out of their homes by their non-Christian parents for daring to believe in Jesus Christ. They suffered for their beliefs and emerged with stronger convictions. By contrast, I was born and raised in a Christian family. Though I didn't suffer persecution, I too had to make my convictions my own.

The Israelites who first entered the Promised Land with Joshua saw the mighty acts of God and believed (Jdg. 2:7). But sadly, the very next generation "did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel" (Jdg 2:10). So it was not long before they turned aside to worship other gods (Jdg 2:12). They didn't make their parents' faith their own.

No generation can live off the faith of the previous generation. Every generation needs a firsthand faith. When faced with trouble of any kind, the faith that is not personalized is likely to drift and falter.

Those who are second, third, or even fourth generation Christians have a wonderful legacy, to be sure. However, there's no secondhand faith! Find out what God says in His Word and personalize it so that yours is a fresh, firsthand faith (Josh. 1:8).

O for a faith that will not shrink

Though pressed by many a foe,

That will not tremble on the brink

Of any earthly woe! —Bathurst

If your faith is not personalized, it's not faith.

Judges 2:7-19 Unlikely Heroes

David C. McCasland

Our Daily Bread

The Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. —Judges 2:16

The book of Judges is an account of God's people descending into spiritual indifference and rebellion. After the death of Joshua and

his peers, the next generation “forsook the Lord God of their fathers, ... and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them” (Jdg 2:12).

This dismal record of wavering allegiance hardly seems the place to find spiritual heroes, yet four people from Judges—Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah (Jdg 4–16)—are named in the New Testament book of Hebrews 11:32. Along with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other notables, they are commended for their faith.

Judges, however, presents these men as flawed people who nevertheless responded to God’s call during a time of spiritual darkness in their culture. The Bible honors them for their faith, not for their perfection. They were recipients of God’s grace as surely as we are.

In every generation, God raises up people who are true to Him and to His Word. The measure of their lives and of ours is not the absence of failure but the presence of God’s gracious forgiveness and the faith to obey His call. All of God’s champions are unlikely heroes.

Heaven’s heroes never carve their name

On marbled columns built for earthly fame;

They build instead a legacy that springs

Out of a life lived for the King of kings. —Gustafson

Faith in Christ can make extraordinary heroes out of ordinary people.

Judges 2:11-22 Pencil Battle

July 28, 2015

Pencil Battle

They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. —Judges 2:19

As I learned to write my letters, my first-grade teacher insisted that I hold my pencil in a specific way. As she watched me, I held it the way she wanted me to. But when she turned away, I obstinately reverted the pencil to the way I found more comfortable.

I thought I was the secret winner in that battle of the wills, and I still hold my pencil in my own peculiar way. Decades later, however, I realize that my wise teacher knew that my stubborn habit would grow into a bad writing practice that would result in my hand tiring more quickly.

Return to the Lord; He is gracious and merciful.

Children rarely understand what is good for them. They operate almost entirely on what they want at the moment. Perhaps the “children of Israel” were aptly named as generation after generation stubbornly insisted on worshiping the gods of the nations around them rather than the one true God. Their actions greatly angered the Lord because He knew what was best, and He removed His blessing from them (Jdg. 2:20-22).

Pastor Rick Warren says, “Obedience and stubbornness are two sides of the same coin. Obedience brings joy, but our stubbornness makes us miserable.”

If a rebellious spirit is keeping us from obeying God, it’s time for a change of heart. Return to the Lord; He is gracious and merciful.

Heavenly Father, You are loving and gracious, and eager to forgive when we return to You. May we pursue you with our whole heart and not cling to our stubborn tendency to want things our way.

First we make our habits; then our habits make us.

Judges 2:11-23

Free To Do What’s Right

July 4, 1999 — by Dennis J. De Haan

What confusion! I had never seen anything like it. On the road from the Leonardo da Vinci Airport to downtown Rome was an intersection where cars had converged from every direction. Each driver was inching his way forward. Horns were blaring. Passions were flaring. No stoplights or traffic cops were there to bring order to this chaos of cars. But there was one positive note: No one

was breaking the law—there was no law!

Back in the days before Israel had a king, a similar situation prevailed. Although they had God's law, people ignored it and did what was right in their own eyes (Jdg 17:6). What a bitter price they paid for such freedom! The book of Judges tells of their disobedience, which resulted in oppression by pagan neighbors.

Still today, many people, and even some professing Christians, ignore God's clear revelation of Himself in His Word. They think they are free to form their own ideas of what God is like and what He expects. Strongly influenced by a godless culture, they live at the center of their own little world and walk in their own ways. That creates moral and spiritual confusion.

We must take God's Word seriously if we are to show our world that Christ gives us freedom to do what's right.

Christ came to give us liberty

By dying in our place;

Now with new freedom we are bound

To share His love and grace. —DJD

Freedom doesn't give us the right to do what we please, but to do what pleases God.

JUDGES 2:11-12 FAILURE

C. T. Studd, the great missionary to China, India, and Africa, ended his life as a morphine addict. Despite all of his success, his last days were dark ones. His mission board dismissed him; he died a few weeks later.

Israel showed power and promise in escaping from Egypt. The people, however, unlike Studd, displayed their selfish addictions early. Trouble erupted only a few miles from Egypt. The faithless people, grumbling and carousing, played out a drama of disaster and death for forty years in the desert.

Joshua's leadership brought new hope to the nation when the people finally entered the Promised Land, but his successors, the judges, gave Israel a topsy-turvy season of success and failure.

Some judges ruled wisely and in peace, but others did not. And the people were mostly wicked during the whole period.

The failure of the judges led the people to demand an earthly king. Saul, David, and Solomon gave Israel some success, but many of the mad monarchs that followed wrote their stories of failure in blood.

For many, the last pretender to the throne was the greatest failure. He too wrote His story in blood—His own. But as King of kings, He turned failure into victory.

Judges 2:11-23

Theodore Epp

Back to the Bible

Results of Rebellion - What follows when we fail to do God's will is pictured for us in Israel's experience recorded in Judges 2.

The people of Israel did what was wrong in the sight of the Lord and forsook Him who was the God of their fathers. They followed the gods of the heathen around them and thereby provoked the true God to anger.

Their spiritual condition was up and down, a condition that lasted some 400 years while God dealt with them in grace and mercy. He was longsuffering and sent them judge after judge to deliver them.

Then we have the account in Judges 2:20-23, which is the sad condition into which the people of Israel were plunged because they would not follow the Lord.

The lesson is obvious for us. If, after we know the truth of the victory provided for us in Christ Jesus (for the Lord always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus), we do not follow, then chastisement must fall.

If we do not take a definite stand against sin and the self-life, we must face the consequences. It is this rebellious attitude of mind and heart that is the root cause of much of the useless kind of Christianity we see today.

There are Christians who have a ticket to heaven but who are useless to God, failing to accomplish anything for Him.

"But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers" (1 Sa 12:15). ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 2:15 God Fights Against Us

Read: Joel 2:12-17 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 113-115; 1 Corinthians 6

Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him? —Joel 2:14

In Joel's book of prophecy, God declared: "I am in the midst of Israel ... My people shall never be put to shame" (Joel 2:27). But earlier in the chapter God promised to fight against His people. A plague of locusts would descend like a ravenous army on the nation (Joel 2:2-11).

It's hard to fathom that the Lord would fight against His chosen people. But Israel had given their affections to other gods.

In fact, God had fought against them before. "Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity" (Judges 2:15).

I have learned that if my own heart wanders away from God, I can count on Him to fight to bring me back. If I become proud and self-assured, if reading God's Word and spending time in prayer seem like a waste of time, God will step in and deal with me.

God will fight against us for our good. He permits us to experience defeat so that we will listen to Him when He says, "Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Joel 2:13).

Don't wait for God to fight against you before you seek His face. Return to Him today.

Because our Father's heart is grieved

Each time we go astray,

He lifts His chastening hand in love

To help us find His way. —D. De Haan

God's hand of discipline is a hand of love.

Judges 2:18

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

The Lord raised them up judges.

This was better than nothing. It was better to have even the fitful gleam of deliverance than to settle down under a monotony of servitude; but how much better it would have been if their national history had been a steady progression from one degree of prosperity to another, like the sun rising towards the perfect day! It was of God's kindness and grace that the judges created these temporary respites; it was the fault of their own infidelity and sin that they were not always delivered.

This fitful life is too often the experience of the believer. We have our Gideons, and Baraks, and Samsons; times of revival, times of deep and blessed experience, followed by backsliding and relapse; times when the flood-tide of grace rises high in our soul, to be succeeded by the ebb, with long stretches of desert sand. Thank God for the judges; but be on the alert for the reign of the kings, for David and Solomon, Josiah and Hezekiah — for the reign of the King.

The days of the judges were those in which there was no king over Israel. The fitfulness of our experience is often attributable to our failure to recognize the kingship of Jesus. We worship other gods — the gods of the nations around; the idols of the market-place, the studio, the camp, and the bar. The aims and practices of the worldly and ungodly too much engross our thoughts, and sway our behavior. Alas for us! Is it strange that God leaves us to reap much bitterness, recalling us when He can, but longing to be able to do some permanent work of salvation and edification? Oh, let us gladly accord Him what is his right, to "sit and rule upon his throne."

Judges 2

Today in the Word

Those who have interacted with children know that their reckless behavior can sometimes bring about pain. We warn them, but they

do not listen, and sooner or later someone gets hurt. No good parent, however, would refuse to comfort a hurting child simply because it was “their fault.” Today we see that God’s care for us is no different, and how His love should move us toward repentance.

Judges 1:27–36 presents the incomplete conquest of the land. God wanted the occupying nations driven out to protect His people, knowing that they would easily slip back into idolatry if surrounded by them. God had pledged to go before them in conquest, so the fault lay with the Israelites. They were warned (Jdg 2:2), but they disobeyed (Jdg 2:12–14). In turn, they suffered occupation and oppression from their enemies. God acted as He promised He would, and this is no surprise.

God’s reaction to their suffering may surprise us, however. Out of nowhere He “raised up judges” (Jdg 2:16) who delivered them from their enemies. There is no indication that God acted because of any movement back toward God in the text that “earned” them this deliverance. Even in spite of this unexpected gift, the Israelites again “prostituted themselves to other gods” (Jdg 2:17). But God did not leave His people.

In Jdg 2:18 we see the reason for God’s deliverance. He cannot stand to sit by for long and have His people suffer. Again, we should not assume that Jdg 2:28 describes Israel’s repentance, as none of the traditional Hebrew words for “repent” are used here. Simply put, God pities us. One might almost say He looks for excuses to shower us with blessings. True repentance would obviously be best. But crying out, “Daddy, I’m hurt, please help me,” does move the heart of God.

Apply the Word

God will hand us over to the consequences of our own behavior. But such disasters are never what God truly wants for us. If you suffer and are not at the place of repentance, tell God of your suffering. It is a fine beginning. But while we can begin with crying out in pain, we cannot stop there. Without true repentance, the Israelites fell back into destructive habits (Jdg 2:19). God hears us in our suffering—how much more will He hear our cry, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13).

Judges 3

Judges 3:9,10

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

Streams in the Desert

Preparing His Heroes

"And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer... who delivered them, even Othniel... Caleb's younger brother. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him" (Judges 3:9, 10).

God is preparing His heroes; and when opportunity comes, He can fit them into their place in a moment, and the world will wonder where they came from.

Let the Holy Ghost prepare you, dear friend, by the discipline of life; and when the last finishing touch has been given to the marble, it will be easy for God to put it on the pedestal, and fit it into its niche.

There is a day coming when, like Othniel, we, too, shall judge the nations, and rule and reign with Christ on the millennial earth. But ere that glorious day can be we must let God prepare us, as He did Othniel at Kirjath-sepher, amid the trials of our present life, and the little victories, the significance of which, perhaps, we little dream. At least, let us be sure of this, and if the Holy Ghost has an Othniel ready, the Lord of Heaven and earth has a throne prepared for him. --A. B. Simpson

"Human strength and human greatness

Spring not from life's sunny side,

Heroes must be more than driftwood

Floating on a waveless tide."

"Every highway of human life dips in the dale now and then. Every man must go through the tunnel of tribulation before he can travel on the elevated road of triumph."

Judges 3:7-11 Who's That Hero?

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. —Matthew 5:16

Reading the book of Judges, with its battles and mighty warriors, can sometimes feel like reading about comic book superheroes. We have Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and Samson. However, in the line of judges (or deliverers), we also find Othniel.

The account of his life is brief and straightforward (Judges 3:7-11). No drama. No display of prowess. But what we do see is what God did through Othniel: “The Lord raised up a deliverer” (Jdg 3:9), “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (Jdg 3:10), and “the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand” (Jdg 3:10).

The Othniel account helps us focus on what is most important—the activity of God. Interesting stories and fascinating people can obscure that. We end up concentrating on those and fail to see what the Lord is doing.

When I was young, I wished I could be more talented so that I could point more people to Christ. But I was looking at the wrong thing. God often uses ordinary people for His extraordinary work. It is His light shining through our lives that glorifies God and draws others to Him (Matt. 5:16).

When others look at our life, it is more important that they see God—not us.

May the Word of God dwell richly

In my heart from hour to hour,

So that all may see I triumph

Only through His power. —Wilkinson

Our limited ability highlights God's limitless power.

Judges 3:1-11 Something Else To Serve

March 19, 1999 — by Dave Branon

Our Daily Bread

If you were to spend 26 hours a week staring at the same object, what would you call that? If you were so mesmerized by what you saw that you couldn't tear yourself away from it, what would it become to you? If you let it change the way you think and act, would it be too powerful? If you let this object show and tell you things that you knew were wrong and that God didn't want you to be involved with, would it be replacing Him? Wouldn't that be called an idol?

The average American family spends 26 hours a week watching television. It certainly isn't the only idol we have in our society, but it's one of the most powerful. Other things that might be displacing our devotion to God are sports, money, work, hobbies, or even other people. Perhaps music or movies or the Internet has captured our devotion.

Idols come in various forms, and they can control our lives. When they do, we need to look again at God's anger with the Israelites to see what He thinks of idols. They served Baals and Asherahs (Jdg 3:7), and “the anger of the Lord was hot” against them (Jdg 3:8).

Let's check our devotion. Have we given our allegiance to anything other than the Almighty God who created us? We should serve nothing but Him.

The gods of this world are empty and vain,

They cannot give peace to our heart;

The living and true One deserves all our love—

From Him may we never depart. —DJD

An idol is anything that takes the place of God.

Judges 3:12-30

You, O Lord, laugh at them; you scoff at all those nations. - Psalm 59:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Alfred North Whitehead declared that the Old Testament didn't contain anything funny: “The total absence of humour from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all of literature.” Given our story today, one doubts that Whitehead read much of the book of

Judges!

Our passage opens with Israel again doing evil and the Lord delivering them into the hands of Eglon, the king of Moab. After eighteen years, God provided a deliverer, Ehud from the tribe of Benjamin (see 20:16). God wasn't satisfied with just a boring, ho-hum mode of deliverance. Instead, He used Ehud for one of the funniest overthrows of an oppressor recorded in Scripture.

The plot to assassinate Eglon included Ehud leading a group to bring tribute to the king. Presumably the Moabite guards checked the Israelites for weapons, but since Ehud had strapped his sword to the right thigh instead of the customary left, it went undetected. After the presentation of tribute, Ehud offered a secret message to Eglon. The Hebrew word for "message" here, *dabar*, can refer either to a word or a thing. Ehud had a secret *dabar* from God for Eglon, all right—only it was message by sword (cf. Heb. 4:12).

The story contains details that demonstrate God's mockery of Eglon and his power. His name means "young bull," but instead, he became like a fatted calf slaughtered to deliver Israel. His immense girth became instrumental in his demise (Jdg 3:22).

As attendants waited, the stench of Eglon's eviscerated intestines wafted out. Assuming that the king must be relieving himself, his servants stayed outside the door to give him privacy. Not only was it embarrassing that the king was engaged in his toilet ... but it was taking a really long time (Jdg 3:25). Not content to simply remove King Eglon from the scene, God allowed him to suffer humiliation even in the eyes of his own attendants. While Eglon lay dead, Ehud escaped and rallied the Israelite troops. God had defeated Eglon, and now it was their turn to flush the Moabite troops from stronghold into subjection (Jdg 3:28-30).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God is not impressed by the power of petty dictators, the clout of criminals, or the strongholds of Satan. He will have the final victory and exercise judgment—sometimes with a hilarious dose of humiliation—over all of them. Do we cower when we should rally? Do we give evil more credit than it deserves? The story of Eglon should remind us that our Father is in control, and He laughs at evildoers. No matter what we are going through, God can provide deliverance.

Judges 3:20

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

I have a message from God unto thee.

God's Messages are often secret. — When Eglon was assured that Ehud had brought a Divine message, which could only be delivered in secret, "a secret errand" (Judges 3:19), he fearlessly bade all his retinue go forth from the audience chamber. And in utter loneliness the one passed to the other the message of death. So there are crises in our lives when God's messengers bring us the secret message, in which none can intrude or interfere.

God's Messages must be received with, reverence. — When Ehud said, "I have a message for thee," Eglon rose out of his seat. This was a mark of respect, the attitude of attention. It is with similar awe that we should ever wait for the revelation of the Divine will. "What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

God's Messages leap out from unexpected quarters. — Ehud was left-handed; his sword was therefore on his right side, and he appeared unarmed. No one dreamed of looking for his sword, except on his left side; he was therefore allowed to pass unchallenged into the presence of the king. So Nathan strode into David's presence, who thought his sin was undiscovered, and said, "Thou art the man." Cultivate this surprise with sinners.

God's Messages are sharp as a two-edged sword, and cause death. — A scimitar is sharp at the edge, and blunt at the back to strike; whilst a two-edged sword is made to pierce. God's Word pierces as a two-edged sword to the dividing of soul and spirit in the recesses of the being, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the Eglon of self has received its death-wound, the glad trumpet of freedom is blown on the hills.

Judges 3:31

Warren Wiersbe

Back to the Bible

Use The Tools You Have

Only one verse (Judges 3:31) is devoted to Shamgar in the Book of Judges. What was significant about Shamgar was the weapon that he used. An ox goad was a strong pole about eight feet long. At one end was a sharp metal point for prodding the oxen and at

the other end a spade for cleaning the dirt off the plow. It was the closest thing Shamgar could find to a spear because the enemy had confiscated the weapons of the Israelites (Jdg 5:8; see 1 Sam. 13:19–22).

Here was a man who obeyed God and defeated the enemy even though his resources were limited. Instead of complaining about not possessing a sword or spear, Shamgar gave what he had to the Lord, and the Lord used it. To stand his ground against the enemy, having only a farmer's tool instead of a soldier's full military equipment, marks Shamgar out as a brave man with steadfast courage.

Charles Spurgeon once gave a lecture at his Pastor's College entitled "To Workers with Slender Apparatus." Shamgar didn't hear that lecture, but I'm sure he could have given it! And I suspect he would have closed his lecture by saying, "Give whatever tools you have to the Lord, stand your ground courageously, and trust God to use what's in your hand to accomplish great things for His glory."

Don't forget: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23–24, niv).

Read: Judges 3 - Action assignment: What are some of the tools you can use to serve the Lord? A pen, to write a letter? Or better, a computer? Your kitchen? Your hands? Think about a way you can use one or more of these tools to reach out in love to someone. ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 3:31; 7:19-23 The Power Of A Few

April 28, 1999 — by Henry G. Bosch

Our Daily Bread

God often accomplishes great and powerful things through a few weak people. In that way He is glorified and we are humbled. The victories won can only be credited to His power and guidance.

Shamgar, for example, had nothing to rely on but his ox goad and the Lord. The goad was a long pole with a point on one end that was used to prod the oxen. However, he did not shrink from the job at hand. He went ahead with trust in God and won a tremendous victory, slaying 600 Philistines.

Someone has noted: "During the time Noah was building the ark, he was only one—but he won. When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, he was only one—but he won. When Gideon and his 300 followers with their broken pitchers and lamps put the Midianites to flight, they were only a few—but they won."

You too are only an individual, but you can be a mighty power for good. You may think you don't have much to offer, but God can use you if you will yield yourself to His will and to His Spirit.

Don't be discouraged or question your humble position or talents. Remember, mighty things are done by those who depend on God's power. —Henry G. Bosch (ODB Editor 1956-1981)

God uses weakness to reveal

His great sufficiency,

So if we let Him work through us,

His power we will see. —Sper

Our limited ability accents God's unlimited power.

Judges 3:31a

Henri Rossier

From Meditations on the Book of Judges

Shamgar, the son of Anath, who followed Ehud, gained a signal victory over the Philistines: he also delivered Israel. Ehud's sword was mighty, though short. Shamgar wrought deliverance by the means of a weapon which seemed wholly unsuited to such a work; a contemptible instrument, to all appearance only suitable for goading brute creatures. Without wishing to press unduly here a typical meaning — a tendency to do which in teaching is dangerous in more ways than one — I would like to compare the ox-goad of Shamgar with the short sword of Ehud. We have one weapon, the Word of God; it may be presented in different aspects, but it is the only one that the man of faith makes use of in the warfare. To the intellectual and unbelieving world it is like an ox-goad, fit, at the best, only for women, children and uneducated persons, full of fiction and contradictions; yet it is this instrument, despised by men,

that God uses to gain the victory. In making use of it, faith finds a weapon where the world only sees folly, for the weakness of God is stronger than men. Doubtless, it is written for the unlearned and suited to their needs and to their walk; but this very ox-goad can kill six hundred Philistines.

Let us, then, make use of the Word with which God has entrusted us, always remembering that faith only can make it effectual, and that, too, when the soul has found therein for itself communion with God, the knowledge of Christ, and, therewith blessing, joy and strength,

Click [here](#) for Henri Rossier's meditations on the entire book of Judges

Judges 4

Judges 4-6

Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Judges 4-6, Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: Judges 6:12

Mighty Man? - The name Gideon strikes a few notes in our brain, such as "mighty man of valor" and "hero of the faith." Then the notes sound sour as we can then think, "Not like me." Gideon is seen as a great man, while we often feel like much less.

Yes, he is included in the list of heroes in Hebrews 11. Yes, he was a mighty man of valor. It was not always that way, though. He started out quite fearful.

When we first meet Gideon, he is threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites (Jdg 6:11). He's hiding out. Then when the angel tells him that he is being sent to save Israel, his reply is not a mighty one. "How can I?" he asks (Jdg 6:15).

After a great deal of "coaxing" and encouragement from God, Gideon did finally lead the fight to drive out the Midianites. God patiently worked with His reluctant warrior.

God can meet us where we are and lead us to where He wants us to be. Our lack of self-confidence may seem insurmountable. Remember, though, that our God is the same as Gideon's. The One who saw a mighty man of valor in Gideon sees a choice servant in you. He has equipped you and challenges you to serve Him.

Don't think God works only through "super saints." He uses ordinary believers made extraordinary by being available, teachable and useable ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 4:1-16

TODAY IN THE WORD

What sort of bravery makes a person a hero or a heroine? The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission in Pittsburgh has the charge of making that decision and presenting awards for extraordinary courage. The prizes include a medal, a \$2█ grant, and in some cases, a scholarship or a pension. The Commission reviews 800 to 1 heroic acts each year to select individuals it wants to honor.

There weren't many heroic figures in Israel in the days of the judges. This dark period bears the infamous motto: ""Everyone did as he saw fit"" (Judges 21:25).

But at least it's easy to see a shining light when it's dark. That's the case with the prophetess and judge Deborah, whom God used to liberate His people from the oppression of Jabin, a Canaanite king (Jdg 4:2). She was a wise and capable woman who shines even brighter when compared with judges such as Samson, whom we will study tomorrow.

Deborah initiated the plan to defeat Jabin's army, led by his commander, Sisera. In addition, she had to ""hold the hand,"" as it were, of Barak, the man she designated to lead the Israelite army into battle. Jdg 4:6, 9 and 14 show that Deborah had no doubt that the Lord would give His people victory, but Barak himself was reluctant. The exchange between Deborah and Barak in Jdg 4:8-9 sounds like a conversation between two siblings in which the younger says something like, ""I'm not going into that dark room unless you go with me.""

Deborah appears to have all the courage and godly confidence in the world, and Barak apparently senses that. Whatever emotions he was feeling, they did not include an excess of either courage or confidence!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Maybe you know a Barak, a person who needs someone to go with him or her for support or encouragement before trying anything new or taking a step of faith.

Such people can try our patience, especially if we see what needs to be done and can't understand why the other person would hesitate or draw back.

Judges 4:1-16

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TODAY ALONG THE WAY Maybe you know a Barak, a person who needs someone to go with him or her for support or encouragement before trying anything new or taking a step of faith. Such people can try our patience, especially if we see what needs to be done and can't understand why the other person would hesitate or draw back. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 4:9

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

The journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour.

Barak preferred the inspiration of Deborah's presence to the invisible but certain help of Almighty God. It was Jehovah who had commanded him to draw his forces towards the River Kishon, and had promised to deliver Sisera into his hand. But he seemed unable to rise to the splendor of the situation. If only he could have Deborah beside him he would go, but otherwise not. He is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of faith; but his faith lay rather in Deborah's influence with God than in his own. Thus he missed the crown of that great day of victory.

It is the mark of the carnal Christian that he has no direct dealings with God for himself, but must needs deal with Him through the medium of another's prayers, and words, and leadership. Barak must have Deborah. It is faith, though greatly attenuated and reduced by the opaqueness of the medium through which it passes. Such do not attain "unto the first three." God cannot honor them as He does those who have absolutely no help or hope save in Himself. "Them that honour Me, I will honour; and those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

If God tells you to go alone to a work, be sure and obey. Go, at whatever cost. Dare to stand by yourself if God is with you. In such hours we realize what Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it." Yet if you are unbelieving, your unbelief cannot make God's faith of none effect. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. He will still deliver Israel.

Judges 4-5

U.S. Army General George Patton was an avid student of history who believed that a knowledge of the past is critical to success in the present. After the D-Day invasion in 1944, Patton wrote to General Dwight Eisenhower that a German battle plan from World War I could be used successfully against Germany in Normandy. About a month later, a plan like the one Patton had described brought victory. That same year, Patton wrote to his son: To be a successful soldier, you must know history.

Deborah knew the God of history. This knowledge was crucial during the time of the judges, since Israel kept forgetting God and His deliverance and kept falling into sin and bondage. Throughout the Bible, God's people are commanded to remember the ways He has shown His love and faithfulness in the past, presence today and that knowledge will help keep us from trying to take things into our own hands. examples of God's faithfulness to you. Write them down and then share them with your family or friends today, and you can all praise God together. Then reaffirm your trust in Him this year.

Judges 4:9 A Woman's War

Spurgeon Devotional

"The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of awoman."—Judges 4:9

RATHER an unusual text, but there may be souls in the world that may have faith enough to grasp it. Barak, the man, though called to the war, had little stomach for the fight unless Deborah would go with him, and so the Lord determined to make it a woman's war. By this means He rebuked the slackness of the man, and gained for Himself the more renown, and cast the more shame upon the enemies of His people.

The Lord can still use feeble instrumentalities. Why not me? He may use persons who are not commonly called to great public engagements. Why not you? The woman who slew the enemy of Israel was no Amazon, but a wife who tarried in her tent. She was no orator, but a woman who milked the cows and made butter. May not the Lord use any one of us to accomplish His purpose? Somebody may come to the house today, even as Sisera came to Jael's tent. Be it ours not to slay him, but to save him. Let us receive him with great kindness, and then bring forth the blessed truth of salvation by the Lord Jesus, our great Substitute, and press home the command, "Believe and live." Who knoweth but some stout-hearted sinner may be slain by the gospel today?

Judges 5

Judges 5:12 Awakening Praise

C H Spurgeon

"Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."—Judges 5:12

Many of the saints of God are as mournful as if they were captives in Babylon, for their lives are spent in tears and sighing. They will not chant the joyous psalm of praise. If anyone requires of them a song, they reply, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" However, we are not captives in Babylon. We do not sit down to weep by Babel's streams. The Lord has broken our captivity. He has brought us up out of our house of bondage. We are free men, not slaves. We have not been sold into the hand of cruel taskmasters, but "we which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3). (from his book Perfect Praise)

Judges 5:3NLT The Power Of Music

The Power Of Music

Read: Psalm 59:6-16

I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. —Psalm 59:16

In Wales, the music of men's chorus groups is deeply engrained in the culture. Prior to World War II, one Welsh glee club had a friendly yet competitive rivalry with a German glee club, but that bond was replaced with animosity during and after the war. The tension was gradually overcome, though, by the message on the trophy shared by the two choruses: "Speak with me, and you're my friend. Sing with me, and you're my brother."

The power of music to heal and help is a gift from God that comforts many. Perhaps that is why the Psalms speak so deeply to us. There we find lyrics that connect with our hearts, allowing us to speak to God from the depth of our spirits. "But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble" (Ps.

59:16). Amazingly, David wrote this song as he was being hunted down by men seeking to kill him! Despite his circumstances, David remembered God's power and mercy, and singing of them encouraged him to go on.

May our God give us a song today that will remind us of His goodness and greatness, no matter what we may face.

This is my story, this is my song,

Praising my Savior all the day long;

This is my story, this is my song,

Praising my Savior all the day long. —Crosby

"I will make music to the Lord, the God of Israel." —Judges 5:3NLT

JUDGES 5:16

ARE YOUR PLANS STILL IN THE BOTTLE?

When Deborah, Israel's fourth judge, sang her song in celebration of Israel's victory over the Canaanites (Judges 5:2-31), she mentioned the people of the tribe of Reuben. They had "great resolves of heart," she said; but, she noted with dismay, they were content to sit "among the sheepfolds." They had not turned their plans into action.

The tribe of Reuben was like the boy who sat at his mother's desk, carefully drawing a picture. Soon he laid down his pen and proudly showed his mother his sketch of the family dog. She commented on the fine likeness, then noticed that something was missing. "Where is Rover's tail?" she asked. "It's still in the bottle," the boy explained.

Many important things in the Christian life are left undone because we don't put our plans into action. We decide to devote more time to the reading and studying of the Word of God, then get sidetracked by other activities. We resolve to be more faithful in praying for others. And for a while we do just that. Then, gradually, other things take priority.

No matter how noble our plans, no matter how good our intentions, they can't glorify God if they are "still in the bottle." —P. R. Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**We may be on the right track,
but we won't get anywhere if we just sit there.**

Judges 5:31

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

So sang Deborah; and we may take up her strain, making it our prayer for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We desire it for his sake. — It cannot be for his glory that his followers should be weak-kneed and decrepit, waning and flickering, backsliding and inconstant. Men will judge Him by them, and will count his light a vanishing luminary if He cannot maintain the glow and fire in those that follow Him. Besides, how great the anguish of his heart must be when those on whom He has expended pains and care deceive and fail Him!

We desire it for their sakes. — Think of the beneficent ministry of the sun — awakening bird and blossom; painting the rich colors of natural beauty; ripening fruits; gladdening children and grandsires; carrying everywhere healing with his beams. If he were conscious of the good he imparts, what blessedness would be his! Would he grudge the expenditure of his vitalizing forces, when from millions of upturned lips he heard himself blessed! Such may the bliss of the Christian worker be if, without diminution of light and heat, his life grows to the perfect day. Blessed are they who bless. If it is happy to receive, it is far happier to impart. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

We desire it for the sake of others. — The world is sunless enough! Many are perishing for a bath of sunshine! Darkness broods chill and deathly. Let no clouds dim your pathway, or, if they do, transmute them to gold. Shine forth, ye righteous, in the kingdom of your Father, satellites of the greater central Sun of Righteousness!

Judges 6

Judges 6:1-24

TODAY IN THE WORD

He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

The Christmas season is near. The time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the ""Prince of Peace"" prophesied in the Old Testament. He is God's final revelation of peace (in Hebrew shalom) to a world that is openly hostile toward God and in desperate need of His peace.

Gideon wasn't living in open hostility toward God, but this fearful Israelite needed God's assurance. We think of Gideon as a mighty deliverer, but when we meet him in Judges 6 he is hiding from the powerful Midianites just like the rest of his Israelite brethren (Jdg 6:11).

Wheat was normally threshed out in the open, not in a winepress. But the Midianites and their allies had such a free hand in Israel they came whenever they felt like it and ruined the crops. Gideon was trying to salvage his small harvest.

The anonymous prophet, sent by God, pinpointed the reason for Israel's misery. The people had not obeyed the Lord, and were suffering for their sin. But God had heard their cries, and was ready to raise up a deliverer--timid Gideon (Jdg 6:15).

In fact, God Himself came down to call Gideon into His service. The visit by ""the angel of the LORD"" was another Old Testament appearance of Christ. Gideon realized who his Guest was when the Lord burned up Gideon's meal in answer to his request for a sign. As soon as the meal went up in flames, the angel of the Lord disappeared.

Gideon's first reaction was fear, because the common belief was that to see God was to die. But God spoke an all-important word of peace, or shalom, to Gideon (Jdg 6:23). So like Moses before him, Gideon built an altar to the Lord and gave it a name: ""The LORD is peace"" (Jdg. 6:24).

Gideon needed assurance, because as far as he was concerned the nation's enemies were too powerful to be conquered. God's message of peace to Gideon was a guarantee that His plans for Israel's deliverer would be carried out. God's plans for us include His peace too. In Jeremiah 29:11, the word translated ""prosper"" is the same Hebrew word shalom.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY The Lord is our peace, no matter what our circumstances are. But chances are that all of us have friends or family members who have not experienced the peace of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. Do you have unsaved people on your daily prayer list? We hope so. With about six weeks between now and Christmas, this is a good time to begin praying that God will use the holiday season to open the hearts of lost people to the Savior. Pray also for opportunities to share Christ with an unsaved friend or relative. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 6:11-16

Unlikely Servants

August 15, 2003 — by Joanie Yoder

Our Daily Bread

We often hear people say things like: "I'm only a housewife." "I'm only a janitor." "I'm only an average student."

Underestimating one's usefulness to God is nothing new. In Old Testament times, for example, when God looked for someone to conquer the troublesome Midianites, He chose unimpressive Gideon, calling him a "mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12). Gideon responded, "How can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jdg 6:15). But God persisted, saying, "Have I not sent you? ... Surely I will be with you" (Jdg 6:14-16).

Gideon became God's man for the task, because there's no such thing as a "nobody" in His eyes. The Lord gave Gideon just 300 men to help him, rather than thousands (Jdg 7:1-7), so that God alone would receive the glory.

The apostle Paul also taught that God chooses and uses things that the world calls foolish, weak, lowly, and despised. He shames the wise and the mighty so "that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29).

If you feel that you're "only a nobody," review God's call to Gideon. The Lord wants to use you more than you ever thought possible.

Gladly take the task God gives you,

Let His work your pleasure be;

Answer quickly when He calls you,

"I am willing, Lord, use me." —Darch

God uses ordinary people to carry out His extraordinary plan.

Judges 6:11–16 Ordinary People

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. —2 Corinthians 4:7

Gideon was an ordinary person. His story, recorded in Judges 6, inspires me. He was a farmer, and a timid one at that. When God called him to deliver Israel from the Midianites, Gideon's initial response was "How can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jdg. 6:15). God promised that He would be with Gideon and that he would be able to accomplish what he had been asked to do (v. 16). Gideon's obedience brought victory to Israel, and he is listed as one of the great heroes of faith (Heb. 11:32).

Many other individuals played a significant part in this plan to save the Israelites from a strong enemy force. God provided Gideon with 300 men, valiant heroes all, to win the battle. We are not told their names, but their bravery and obedience are recorded in the Scriptures (Judg. 7:5-23).

Today, God is still calling ordinary people to do His work and assuring us that He will be with us as we do. Because we are ordinary people being used by God, it's obvious that the power comes from God and not from us.

Lord, I am just an ordinary person, but You are an all-powerful God. I want to serve You. Please show me how and give me the strength.

God uses ordinary people to carry out His extraordinary plan.

Judges 6:11-23 Facing Our Fears

June 22, 2011 — by Albert Lee

Our Daily Bread

A mother asked her 5-year-old son to go to the pantry to get her a can of tomato soup. But he refused and protested, "It's dark in there." Mom assured Johnny, "It's okay. Don't be afraid. Jesus is in there." So Johnny opened the door slowly and seeing that it was dark, shouted, "Jesus, can you hand me a can of tomato soup?"

This humorous story of Johnny's fear reminds me of Gideon. The Lord appeared to Gideon, calling him a "mighty man of valor" (Jdg. 6:12) and then telling him to deliver Israel out of Midian's hand (Jdg. 6:14). But Gideon's fearful reply was, "My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jdg 6:15). Even after the Lord told Gideon that with His help he would defeat the Midianites (Jdg 6:16), he was still afraid. Then Gideon asked the Lord for signs to confirm God's will and empowerment (Jdg 6:17,36-40). So, why did the Lord address fearful Gideon as a "mighty man of valor"? Because of who Gideon would one day become with the Lord's help.

We too may doubt our own abilities and potential. But let us never doubt what God can do with us when we trust and obey Him. Gideon's God is the same God who will help us accomplish all that He asks us to do.

The Lord provides the strength we need

To follow and obey His will;

So we don't need to be afraid

That what He asks we can't fulfill. —Sper

We can face any fear when we know the Lord is with us.

Judges 6-8

A B Simpson

Christ in the Bible

Simpson in his book "Christ in the Bible" has the following chapter entitled "Lighthouses of Faith" based upon the verse in Hebrews 11

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson,

and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Heb. 11:32).

Lighthouses indeed they were, these men of faith that illuminated the darkest periods of Old Testament history, from the time of the Judges to the great reformation under Samuel. Sad as was the story of the wilderness when Israel wandered for forty years, it was not half so sad as the declension after Joshua's conquest of Canaan and the glorious inheritance of the Land of Promise, which was not for forty, but for four hundred years. But the lighthouse is not kindled for placid seas and sunlit skies, but for starless nights and raging storms. And so these troublous times brought out the highest and noblest types of faith and character in all the story of the past. In like manner it will be found that in our own experience faith is born not of favorable circumstances and comfortable surroundings, but of deep afflictions, temptations, and sorrows.

Out of this humiliating chapter of Israel's history, the apostle selects half a dozen unique examples of the highest faith and the noblest achievement. Each is a distinct type, and all together form a third series and reach a still higher climax.

I. GIDEON; OR FAITH FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

1. We see this illustrated in Gideon's call. Hiding from the Midianites in his threshing floor, and trying by stealth to thresh a little grain for his daily supply, Gideon is visited by the angel of the Lord and greeted with this surprising message: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Never was mortal more startled and mortified by such a message. It seemed as if even God was mocking him. He a mighty man of valor, indeed! Rather might he be called a miserable coward. And very naturally he began to remonstrate and tell of his own insignificance and the overwhelming trials that had fallen upon his people. But God quickly reminded him that it was not his might, but the might of Jehovah in which he was to go, and that taking this by faith he was, notwithstanding all his insignificance, a mighty man of valor. "Go in this thy might," said God, "and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" And so Gideon put on the strength of God by faith, and a little later we find this striking expression regarding him: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon [clothed] Gideon" (Judges 6:34), and henceforth the feeble coward was the mighty man of valor.

2. We see this illustrated in Gideon's company. At his summons thirty-two thousand men gathered from Israel to fight the battle of freedom. But God told him that he could not use so many. And so the sifting process began. Reduction is not always loss. When that diamond is cut back from six hundred carats to less than one hundred, its value is multiplied ten times over, and every new facet cut in its form adds to its glorious luster. And so when God would strengthen His work He often reduces its apparent proportions. First, He allowed them to sift themselves as He still often does with us. Gideon was ordered to tell all the timid ones that they might go home, and soon twenty-two thousand men were marching back. In like manner, still, God often frightens away from a work the people that are in the way. He makes the reproach so heavy and the sacrifices so great that they cannot stand it, and they leave to find something easier and more honorable.

But there are still too many. It is necessary that they be sifted again. As they drink from the brook all those are set aside who drink with weariness and caution, dipping up the water like a dog from hand to mouth and watching meanwhile against surprise, while the rest, who go down upon their knees and drink with reckless abandon as though there were no danger and no foe to watch are sent away. These men will not do for the Lord's work. He wants hearts that are alert, minds that are wide awake, and soldiers that He can depend upon. Let us not think that faith means dullness. God does not need a great many men, but He must have the right kind. So Gideon's three hundred are all that are left, but these are enough, and with this little host Midian's myriads are hurled back in disaster and destruction.

3. Again we see this principle illustrated in Gideon's conflict and victory. The battle must be fought by faith as well as the army prepared. First, Gideon must get his token from the Lord and know that it will be victory. With a single companion he is sent to Midian's hosts to reconnoiter, and as the two listen on the borders of the camp, lo! a Midianite has awakened from his sleep and is telling his comrades the dream he has just had of Gideon's cake of barley tumbling into the host of Midian. That is enough. It is God's token of coming victory. Gideon hastes back to prepare for the assault. Surely the weapons of that warfare are weapons of faith: fragile pitchers, useful only when they are shattered into broken fragments; flaming torches and rude trumpets proclaiming the name of God and the sword of Gideon -- this is all. And these are still weapons of our victorious warfare. We, ourselves, must become as broken vessels, and then the light will shine through our displacement, and the message which we ring out will become the power of God to the salvation of men and the destruction of the enemy. It is still as true as ever that the greatest hindrance to God's working is dependence on human genius, wealth, influence, and power, and that the men whom God is using today are the men who have learned to say with Paul, "Therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." When tens of thousands were thronging Mr. Moody's meetings in London, the leading journal of England sent an experienced reporter to find out the secret of his power. He listened for several days and then declared that he could see nothing in the manner or the matter of the evangelist's addresses to interest such multitudes of people or to explain this movement. When Mr. Moody heard of it he laughed quietly and said:

"Why that is the very secret of the movement, that there is nothing in it that can explain it but the power of

God."

It is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." (Zechariah 4:6)

Judges 6:11-40

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty. - Zechariah 4:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

In November 2006, a 9-year-old girl in Las Vegas ran out into a busy boulevard and was hit by a Cadillac. A group of homeless men were sitting and drinking across the street when one of them, a one-eyed alcoholic named Stanford, saw the little girl trapped under the car. The men ran over and miraculously lifted the 5,000-pound car, saving the girl's life. Even the police spokesman called the rescue "incredible."

From what we know about Gideon, his selection to be the deliverer of Israel was equally incredible. In his first appearance in Scripture, he was hiding in a winepress to keep his wheat a secret from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared and addressed him as a "mighty warrior"—hardly the address we would expect given Gideon's location and actions (Jdg. 6:12).

Gideon's response didn't sound very mighty. Essentially he asked, "Where is God?" Given the situation of God's people, there didn't seem to be much evidence of God's presence. The Lord responded to both issues implied in the question. First, He was selecting Gideon to deliver the people. Second, as to His whereabouts, He was right there, present with Gideon (Jdg. 6:14). But Gideon was locked into his defeated viewpoint. He didn't even recognize the Lord, complaining, "I can't do it! My clan is weak! I'm weak!" Notice that this wasn't untrue from a human perspective. But God was offering Gideon a divine perspective.

Gideon did finally recognize, worship, and obey God—but he was still plagued by fear (Jdg. 6:22, 24, 27). When the men of the town threatened him for destroying their idolatrous altars, Gideon's father defended him—and included a subtle mockery of Baal (Jdg. 6:31). Gideon had obeyed, however tentatively, and God's Spirit came upon him to empower him for his calling (Jdg. 6:34). The Lord remained patient with Gideon as he requested yet additional confirmation that God's promised deliverance would come. Whether Gideon believed it himself, God would use him to be a mighty warrior in a legendary defeat of Midian.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

What do you believe as truth about yourself? Do you think too highly of yourself, falling into the trap of the Pharisees? Or do you think you're too weak, too young or old, or too limited in some way to be effective? God determines the truth about us. Begin with the truth about your creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Then remember your identity in Christ as a redeemed, loved child of God (Rom. 1:7). And finally, remember that the Holy Spirit fills and equips us for what He has called us to do (Eph. 2:10).

Judges 6:11-16,33-40

From Worms To Wars

It was 10-year-old Cleotis' first time fishing, and as he looked into the container of bait he seemed hesitant to get started. Finally he said to my husband, "Help me, I-S-O-W!" When my husband asked him what the problem was, Cleotis responded, "I-S-O-W! I'm Scared Of Worms!" His fear had made him unable to act.

Fear can paralyze grown men too. Gideon must've been afraid when the angel of the Lord came to him as he was threshing wheat in secret, hiding from his Midianite enemies (Jdg 6:11). The angel told him he had been chosen by God to lead His people in battle (Jdg 6:12-14).

Gideon's response? "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jdg 6:15). After being assured of the Lord's presence, Gideon still seemed fearful and asked Him for signs that He would use him to save Israel as He promised (Jdg 6:36-40). And God responded to Gideon's requests. The Israelites were successful in battle and then enjoyed peace for 40 years.

We all have fears of various kinds—from worms to wars. Gideon's story teaches us that we can be confident of this: If God asks us to do something, He'll give us the strength and power to do it. —Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you're afraid of what's ahead,
Remember, God is near;
He'll give you strength and joy and hope
And calm your inner fear. —Sper

To take the fear out of living, put your faith in the living God.

[What Can I Do With My Worry?](#)

Judges 6:14

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might.

The strength-giving power of a look from the eyes of Christ! Gideon was weak enough. He said, quite naturally, "My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15, r.v.). But from the moment of that look, accompanied by that summons, he arose in a strength that never afterwards faltered. How truly "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

It was a look of expectation. — Gideon felt that the angel expected him to save Israel. It is a great matter to excite hope in a man. Tell him that you are anticipating some noble deed from him, and you may light a spark that will set his whole soul aglow. It is of immense importance to stir the timid and retiring with fresh conceptions of the possibilities of their lives.

It was a look of encouragement. — Those gentle, loving eyes said, as though they spoke, "I will be with thee; do not hesitate to look for Me in every hour of need." Such looks Christ still gives us across the battlefields of life; and if our eyes are fixed upon Him, we shall surely hear Him saying to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee: go in this thy might!"

It was a look of strength-giving might. — It carried help with it. On its beam new spiritual force sped from the speaker to the listener; from captain to cadet. So from the excellent glory one look from Jesus will bring reinforcement. As He looks on us He imparts his strength to us, and says, Go in this thy might. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Judges 6:14

One Look from the Lord!

Spurgeon Devotional

"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"—Judges 6:14

WHAT a look was that which the Lord gave to Gideon! He looked him out of his discouragements into a holy bravery. If our look to the Lord saves us, what will not His look at us do? Lord, look on me this day, and nerve me for its duties and conflicts.

What a word was this which Jehovah spoke to Gideon! "Go." He must not hesitate. He might have answered, "What, go in all this weakness?" But the Lord put that word out of court by saying, "Go in this thy might." The Lord had looked might into him, and he had now nothing to do but to use it and save Israel by smiting the Midianites. It may be that the Lord has more to do by me than I ever dreamed of. If He has looked upon me, He has made me strong. Let me by faith exercise the power with which He has entrusted me. He never bids me "idle away my time in this my might." Far from it. I must "go," because He strengthens me.

What a question is that which the Lord puts to me, even as He put it to Gideon! "Have not I sent thee?" Yes, Lord, thou hast sent me, and I will go in thy strength. At thy command I go; and, going, I am assured that thou wilt conquer by me.

Judges 6:15

In well-managed organizations, power is shared, given away to other talented members of the team. It may take a while to figure out who is the boss. One writer puts it this way: A leader is best when people barely know that he or she exists. Not so good when people obey and acclaim him. Worse when they despise him. If you fail to honor people, they fail to honor you: but of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they all say, "We did this ourselves."

Judges 6:28

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Discouragement - And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.

The book of Judges recounts the history of Israel during the centuries which followed the conquest of the land of Canaan. These were checkered years in Israel's history, which frequently saw relapses into idolatry. After each time Israel turned aside from the Lord, Jehovah would graciously raise up a judge, who was a military not a judicial leader, to bring His chosen people back to Him. The cycle of relapse, repentance, and restoration occurred frequently during these turbulent centuries.

The narrative of Judges 6 opens with a record of the renewed idolatry of Israel. This time judgment came from the Midianites who swept down through the plain of Jezreel, terrorizing Israel as far south as Gaza. They did not permanently occupy the land, but each harvest season they would arrive unexpectedly and plunder the harvest. What spoil they could not carry away they destroyed. So insecure were the Israelites that they lived in dens, caves, and strongholds to seek safety for their possessions and for themselves.

But suddenly things changed. An angel of the Lord appeared under the great oak by Ophrah, a little township on the southwestern border of the territory of Manasseh. There Gideon, the son of Joash, was beating out wheat with a stick. He did so secretly and with constant apprehension that a wild band of Midianite bedouins might sweep down on him, taking his grain and his life.

Gideon is typical of many believers today. Although the angel of the Lord called him a "mighty man of valor," Gideon's clandestine operations at his father's winepress did not exhibit great valor. For seven years his people had been oppressed by the enemy and this mighty warrior was despondent and discouraged. The angel of the Lord appeared unto him at his lowest ebb to encourage him.

Gideon was startled at first by this stranger, not certain who he was. When the angel proclaimed that the Lord was with him, Gideon's questioning response was, "If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judges 6:13). Gideon believed that if Jehovah had not withdrawn Himself from Israel, the present Midianite calamity would never have occurred. As well, this mighty man of valor, like Moses of old, questioned why the Lord would choose him to deliver Israel. His family was poor in Manasseh and he was the least of his father's household. But in the midst of Gideon's concern the Lord God promised, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon was still not convinced. How did he know this person was really the angel of the Lord? Thus Gideon asked for a sign and the angel of the Lord flash-fired the flesh of a kid and unleavened cakes which Gideon had placed on a rock.

Having felt the hand of God upon his life and claiming the promise of divine presence and power, Gideon proceeded to be the delivering judge of Israel. At the command of the Lord he threw down the altar of Baal his father had built. In its place he built an altar unto Jehovah God. "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down" (Judges 6:28). Who had done such a thing? The answer--Gideon, the son of Joash. The fearful men of the city stormed the house of Joash and demanded that he hand over his son to be slain. But the acts of an encouraged Gideon bred encouragement in the heart of his father as well. Joash challenged the men to allow Baal to plead for himself, if he truly was a god. It was becoming increasingly evident to the men of Ophrah that Baal was not a god to be feared, as was Jehovah.

All that was necessary for a discouraged people to rise up against their oppressors was for the heart of one man to be impressed with the presence and power of the Lord. How much the Gideons of the twentieth century need to recognize the still small voice of the Lord saying to them, "Surely I will be with thee." Be encouraged and let God do something courageous through you today. ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

MORNING HYMN

Take my life and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee
Take my hands and let them move,
At the impulse of Thy love,

Take my feet and let them be,
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only, for my King.

(Play - [Take My Life and Let It Be](#))

Judges 6:33-40

Hoping to relieve him of financial pressure and enable him to write more freely, the first publishers of American writer Sherwood Anderson offered to send him a weekly check. After a few weeks, however, Anderson took his latest check back to the publisher's office. "It's no use," he explained. "I find it impossible to work with security staring me in the face."

Unlike Anderson, the Israelite leader Gideon found that he couldn't work without security staring him in the face. It was Gideon's

insecurity which caused him to ask God for two miraculous signs aimed at strengthening his faith. From a human point of view, Gideon's fear is understandable. After all, his tiny force of 300 armed men was about to face an army of 135,000 Midianites. Gideon's band seemed to have little or no chance against such a superior force.

However, Gideon knew that God had sent him against the Midianites (Jdg 6:12-16). But the fear of defeat had paralyzed Gideon's faith. That's why he asked God to prove His presence through the two familiar requests we read about today. On the first night, Gideon put a fleece on the ground. If it was wet the next day while the ground was dry, he would know God would give him victory (Jdg 6:36-38).

But that wasn't quite enough for Gideon. Perhaps he realized that a fleece could remain wet even after the ground had dried. So he asked God to keep the fleece dry and the ground wet on the next night (Jdg 6:39-40). God did as Gideon requested, and God's servant went on to lead the Israelites in the defeat of the Midianites (Jdg 7:1-25).

The miracle of Gideon's fleece demonstrates that ours is a God of compassion. God's command and promise were clear: He would be with Gideon, and they would "strike down all the Midianites" (Jdg 6:16). Instead of rebuking Gideon for his fear, the Lord buoyed his faith with a miracle. God allowed security to stare Gideon in the face so Gideon could accomplish God's purpose.

Today in the Word, May 8, 1993

Judges 6:33-7:8

I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! - Mark 9:24

TODAY IN THE WORD

Many children (and not a few adults) are afraid of the dark—or what might be lurking in the darkness. One four-year-old informed his mother that he had outgrown this fear, announcing, "Sometimes the dark is just the dark." That night, though, as his mom tucked him in, he declared that he still wanted his nightlight on: "That way, I'll know for sure that the dark is just the dark!"

Gideon understood this desire to be sure that what we believe is really true. God had promised to be with him and that he would be the instrument of deliverance. But Gideon wanted to double check. Graciously, God assented to Gideon's requests and miraculously demonstrated that He would be faithful to His word.

In relating this account, the writer of Judges draws our attention to the increased hesitation to obey what God has said. In chapter one we had examples of Judah and Acsah seizing initiative and being blessed. In chapter four, Barak resisted the command to fight unless Deborah went with him. Now in chapter six, Gideon is repeatedly testing God to confirm that the Lord won't back out of the deal. Note that Gideon wasn't ignorant of the history of God's deliverance (Jdg. 6:13). But his fledgling faith needed some props.

After reassuring Gideon, the very next thing that God does is weaken him. At least no human military strategy would involve reducing one's forces from 32,000 to 300 troops to take on a foe who was as numerous as "sand on the seashore" (7:12). Gideon had tested God twice; now God reduces Gideon's forces twice. It seems that Gideon's faith wasn't shaken by this, as he readily complied with the command to release thousands of men from battle duty.

The key to this account is found in Jdg. 7:2, as God says, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands." This deliverance isn't about Israel's battle savvy, or the skill of the remaining 300 men, or even the faith of Gideon. It is all about God's work on their behalf. He uses weak, doubting instruments precisely to demonstrate His gracious strength.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If you have ever struggled with doubt, you are not alone. If you feel too weak to attempt any great acts of faith, you are not the first. We serve the same God who understood Gideon's desire for miraculous confirmation. He is the same Savior who accomplishes our deliverance from sin when we are helpless (see Eph. 2:8-9). The Lord told Paul, "My power is made perfect in weakness." These words found in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 can encourage you in times of doubt and testing.

Judges 6:39, 40

Who can shut his eyes to the sad fact that in days of revival there are some who are unblessed? I am anxious about you who are like Gideon's fleece—dry when the floor is wet (Jdg. 6:39, 40)! You remain in a barren spot of ground when all the earth is filled with fertility!

Judges 6:34

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Fleece or Faith - And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

Discouraged and pathetic, Israel needed a champion. God had chosen His man. The angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, a mighty man of valor, and encouraged him with the promise of God's presence and power. Gideon had broken down the altar to Baal. Idolatry throughout the land of Israel was pounded with a heavy blow. Jehovah alone was now worshipped in Ophrah, and the fame of Gideon spread throughout the land. It was apparent that Gideon was the man behind whom all Israel could rally.

Once again the Midianite Bedouins swarmed across the land. Gideon knew that the time for battle had come, but this time he was ready. Judges 6:34 says, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon." Literally the Spirit of Jehovah clothed Gideon like a garment. The once discouraged and despondent young farmer of Ophrah was now suited up for battle in the armor of the Spirit of God. When he sounded the mustering trumpet, immediately all of the clan of Abiezer gathered around him. Messengers were sent throughout all the land. From Naphtali, Zebulun, Asher, and Manasseh they came, prepared to fight under the leadership of Gideon.

All was ready for the mighty battle, but one thing more troubled Gideon. Again he asked a sign from the Lord. Seeking a sign from God was characteristic of Jewish behavior (1 Corinthians 1:22). With troops arrayed for battle, Gideon spread a fleece of wool on the ground and said to the Lord God, "If the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said." A heavy dew is very common in the highlands of Palestine. Even today clothes left outdoors overnight must be wrung out in the morning. Although energized for battle, the entire camp of Israel waited throughout the night for the sign from God.

The Scripture records that Gideon rose up early on the next morning and wrung enough dew out of the fleece to fill a bowl full of water (Judges 6:38). Miracle accomplished! However, Gideon entreated the grace and patience of the Lord again and asked Jehovah to reverse the sign. One more night the Israelites waited before entering battle. In the morning the ground was saturated with dew but the fleece was entirely dry. This was proof positive that God was in this battle and that Gideon was His chosen leader.

Frequently much indecision and lack of courage is camouflaged under the guise of "putting out the fleece." Such a practice is not always an admirable one, nor does it always produce admirable results.

When John Wesley was a 32-year-old missionary in Georgia, he fell deeply in love with a young woman he wanted to marry. Some of his friends suggested that perhaps God would have the evangelist remain unmarried and devote his life to his work. One even suggested they draw lots in order to discern God's will for Wesley. The evangelist agreed. Three small slips of paper were prepared: one said, "Marry"; the second, "Think not of it this year"; and the third, "Think of it no more." Wesley drew a slip and with much sadness read, "Think of it no more." Heartbroken, he ended his courtship. Fifteen years later Wesley married a wealthy widow who became a hindrance to his ministry. After 20 years of mutual misery, she left him. He had allowed a fleece to determine his fortune.

When God sets up the parameters, encourages us in a given situation, and calls us to action, let's not be guilty of "fleecing" Him. How much better if Gideon had been remembered for his faith, as was Abraham, than for his fleece. For what will you be remembered? ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

MORNING HYMN

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus
Trusting only Thee;
Trusting Thee for full salvation, Great and free.
I am trusting Thee to guide me,
Thou alone shalt lead,
Ev'ry day and hour supplying All my need.
(Play - [I Am Trusting Thee](#))

Judges 6:39

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

Streams in the Desert

Degrees of Faith

"Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece" (Judges 6:39).

There are degrees to faith. At one stage of Christian experience we cannot believe unless we have some sign or some great

manifestation of feeling. We feel our fleece, like Gideon, and if it is wet we are willing to trust God. This may be true faith, but it is imperfect. It always looks for feeling or some token besides the Word of God. It marks quite an advance in faith when we trust God without feelings. It is blessed to believe without having any emotion.

There is a third stage of faith which even transcends that of Gideon and his fleece. The first phase of faith believes when there are favorable emotions, the second believes when there is the absence of feeling, but this third form of faith believes God and His Word when circumstances, emotions, appearances, people, and human reason all urge to the contrary. Paul exercised this faith in Acts 27:20, 25, "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away." Notwithstanding all this Paul said, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

May God give us faith to fully trust His Word though everything else witness the other way. --C. H. P.

When is the time to trust?
Is it when all is calm,
When waves the victor's palm,
And life is one glad psalm
Of joy and praise?
Nay! but the time to trust
Is when the waves beat high,
When storm clouds fill the sky,
And prayer is one long cry,
O help and save!

When is the time to trust?
Is it when friends are true?
Is it when comforts woo,
And in all we say and do
We meet but praise?
Nay! but the time to trust
Is when we stand alone,
And summer birds have flown,
And every prop is gone,
All else but God.

What is the time to trust?
Is it some future day,
When you have tried your way,
And learned to trust and pray
By bitter woe?
Nay! but the time to trust
Is in this moment's need,
Poor, broken, bruised reed!
Poor, troubled soul, make speed
To trust thy God.

What is the time to trust?
Is it when hopes beat high,
When sunshine gilds the sky,
And joy and ecstasy
Fill all the heart?
Nay! but the time to trust
Is when our joy is fled,
When sorrow bows the head,
And all is cold and dead,
All else but God.--Selected

Judges 7:1-25

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. - Judges 6:12

To begin today's devotional, it might be useful to distinguish between "doubt" and "unbelief." "Unbelief" does not accept what God says as true. It rejects the truth, choosing instead to follow another way or hold on to other ideas. This is clearly sinful.

Honest "doubt," on the other hand, simply cannot grasp the truth of what God says. It wants to believe, but does not understand. So it pushes and questions and wrestles, trying to satisfy the mind in order to strengthen faith. Many of the heroes of faith we're studying this month doubted, but they all believed. Gideon, despite his weaknesses, can be numbered among them.

If you've been feeling a little overwhelmed by biblical giants during our study, Gideon is the man for you—a man who doubted and wavered, yet still obeyed. God patiently worked with and graciously rewarded him, to the point where he's mentioned by name near the end of "Faith's Hall of Fame" (Heb. 11:32).

When an angel addressed Gideon as "mighty warrior," he responded, "But sir ... " He was full of excuses about personal and family shortcomings. He asked for a sign—the famous fleece—to prop up his faith.

In today's reading, Gideon was finally ready to go. But God told him to allow anyone who was afraid to return home. Perhaps Gideon was a fair sample of the spirit of the times, for 22,000 men bailed out at this point. Gideon ordered the remaining soldiers to drink from the river, and after this test all but a handful were sent home. The chosen ones had brought their hands to their mouths, probably showing alertness or readiness for battle. The others, by contrast, had not prepared themselves mentally for the task at hand.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY The example of Gideon's somewhat wobbly faith might encourage you today if you also find yourself plagued with doubts. The wonderful message of this story is that God isn't constrained by our own inadequacy. In fact, He often chooses to demonstrate His power through just such unlikely prospects as Gideon. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 7:1 Glory to God

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Then Jerubbaal who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

Natural man has a penchant for trying to explain away God. The theory of evolution was developed in an attempt to remove God from the arena of creation. Liberal theologians have attempted to demythologize the Bible in order to remove the miraculous works of God from it. Man does all he can to explain naturally the divinely originated phenomena in our world.

God has always been aware of man's desire to usurp His position and authority. Frequently in Scripture can be found accounts where God places men in deliberate situations so they must recognize that their deliverance is solely of Him. When God removes the possibility of any natural explanation, man is left with the inevitable conclusion that God is in the miracle business. Such was the case in our Scripture today.

Israel was assembled and ready for battle. Already the fight had been stayed two days by the dewy and dry fleece so that Gideon could receive a token of God's presence with them. Now the fight was to be delayed again.

On the morning following the second test with the fleece, Gideon and all the people with him "rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod" (Judges 7:1). Anxious for the battle, they had already moved into military position when God told Gideon he had too many people in His army. Jehovah wanted to be certain that Gideon, as well as Israel and the nations watching, would understand that Israel had won the battle by the hand of God. Therefore he instructed Gideon to command any of the 32,000 troops who were afraid to return home from the front. Much to the surprise of Gideon, 22,000 admitted their fear and retreated. Surely if a battle was won by 10,000 Israeli troops against 135,000 Midianites (Judges 8:10), this would indicate that the victory was the Lord's. But again Jehovah surprised Gideon by indicating that these 10,000 troops were still far too many.

Gideon was to take the troops to the spring of Harod for a strange and severe test. The soldiers were divided into two groups, those who lapped water as a dog and those who dropped to their knees to drink. Whatever the purpose of the test, only 300 soldiers were selected for Gideon's army.

Next God instructed Gideon to go with his servant, Phurah, down to the perimeter of the Midianite encampment and eavesdrop on the Midianites. They overheard one soldier telling another of his dream about a cake of barley bread that rolled into the Midian camp, against the king's tent, and flattened it. His fellow soldier interpreted the dream that this was none other than the sword of Gideon and that God was about to deliver Midian into Gideon's hands. So evident was it that this dream and the interpretation had both come from God that Gideon immediately returned to the host of Israel and said, "Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Three hundred men defeated the entire Midianite army and the glory belonged entirely to God.

We must never shy away from impossible situations. When the odds seem least favorable for our success, that is when God can gain the greatest glory from our success. Large armies are not as admirable as dedicated ones. The recruiting slogan of the United States Marine Corps includes the words, "A few good men." God is looking for the same. Will you be one today? ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

MORNING HYMN

On every hand the foe we find
Drawn up in dread array;
Let tents of ease be left behind,
And onward to the fray!

Salvation's helmet on each,
With truth all girt about:
The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread
And echo with our shout.

([Play - Faith is the Victory](#))

Judges 7:2-8 The Enemy Of Trust

March 8, 2012 — by David C. McCasland

Our Daily Bread

Military commanders always want to have enough troops to accomplish their mission. Most would prefer having too many not too few, but not everyone agrees on just how many troops will be enough.

When Gideon recruited an army of 32,000 men to stand against those who oppressed the Israelites, the Lord told him, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me'" (Jdg. 7:2).

So the Lord began to reduce Gideon's army. When the fearful were allowed to leave, 22,000 men went home (Jdg. 7:3). A second reduction cut the force from the remaining 10,000 to 300 troops, of whom the Lord said, "By the three hundred ... I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand" (Jdg. 7:7). And so it happened (Jdg. 7:19-23).

In our life of faith, our resources can become the enemy of trust. God wants us to depend on Him, not our own strength, whether physical, financial, or intellectual.

When the Lord reduces our resources from "32,000 to 300," it is not punishment. It is preparation for Him to be glorified through our lives as we acknowledge and trust His power.

Trust in God and you will know

He can vanquish any foe;

Simply trust Him day by day—

He will be your strength and stay. —D. De Haan

When God gives us an impossible task— it becomes possible.

Judges 7:9

C H Spurgeon

From chapter entitled "Godward qualities for soul winning"...

It may be, however, that the Lord will consider that it is too good to be blessed because there is too much in it. It is like the host of

men that were with Gideon: they were too many for the Lord. He could not give the Midianites into their hands lest they should vaunt themselves against Him, saying, "Our own have gotten us the victory." When twenty-two thousand of them had been sent away, the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are yet too many" (Judges 7:4), and all of them had to be sent home except the three hundred men that lapped. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand" (Judges 7:9). So the Lord says about some of your sermons, "I cannot do any good with them; they are too big." That message with the fourteen subdivisions—leave seven of them out, and perhaps the Lord will bless it.

Some day it may happen, just when you are in the middle of your message, that a thought will come across your mind, and you will say to yourself, "Now, if I utter this, that old deacon will make it hot for me. There is a gentleman who just came in who keeps a school; he is a critic and will be sure not to be pleased if I say this. Besides, there is here a remnant according to the election of grace, and the 'hyper' up in the gallery will give me one of those heavenly looks that are so full of meaning." Now, brother, feel ready to say just anything that God gives you to say, irrespective of all the consequences and utterly regardless of what the "hypers" or the lowpers or anybody else will think or do.

One of the principal qualifications of a great artist's brush must be its yielding itself up to the artist so that he can do what he likes with it. A harpist will love to play on one particular harp because he knows the instrument, and the instrument almost appears to know him. So, when God puts His hand upon the very strings of your being and every power within you seems to respond to the movements of His hand, you are an instrument that He can use. It is not easy to keep in that condition, to be in such a sensitive state that you receive the impression that the Holy Spirit desires to convey and are influenced by Him at once.

If there is a great ship out at sea and there comes a tiny ripple on the waters, it is not moved by it in the least. A moderate wave comes, but the vessel does not feel it. The ship sits still upon the bosom of the deep. But just look over the bulwarks, and see those corks down there. If only a fly drops into the water, they feel the motion and dance upon the tiny wave. May you be as mobile beneath the power of God as the cork is on the surface of the sea!

I am sure this self-surrender is one of the essential qualifications for a preacher who is to be a winner of souls. There is something that must be said if you are to be the means of saving that man in the corner. Woe unto you if you are not ready to say it; woe unto you if you are afraid to say it; woe unto you if you are ashamed to say it; woe unto you if you do not dare to say it lest somebody up in the gallery should say that you were too earnest, too enthusiastic, too zealous! (Spurgeon, C. H. *The Soul Winner*)

Judges 7:13

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

A cake of barley bread.

Like most dreams, incoherent and grotesque! Who ever heard of a cake of barley bread upsetting a tent! To the dreamer and his comrade, there was no sense in it. But how much it meant to the two Hebrews, who had crept up to the other side of the curtain, in the thick darkness, and were drinking in each word!

The dream was very humbling. — It brought Gideon back to the simplicity and helplessness of his own resources. In the gathering of these crowds of warriors, in the notoriety he had achieved, in the loyalty of the three hundred, there was much to inflate his pride. Therefore God brought him face to face with himself. He was only a cake of barley bread at the best. Before God can uplift, use, and anoint us, He must show us what we are, humbling and emptying us, bringing us into the dust of death. Before God can use thee to work a great deliverance, He must convince thee of being only a cake of barley bread. "Five barley loaves, and two small fishes."

It was full of hope. — A cake of barley bread might be a worthless thing; but if God were behind it, it would upset a tent! So when the weakest life is placed at the disposal of the Almighty, and taken in hand by Him, it becomes mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

It is full of teaching. — How much has to be learned by us on these lines! We are too strong for God. We vaunt our might, we count our warriors, we magnify our generalship. This may not be! So God brings us down to the brook and tests us there; and reduces our force to three hundred men, and ourselves to barley-cakes, and there gets the victory with his right hand, and his holy arm.

Judges 7-8

Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Judges 7-8, Luke 5:1-16

Key Verse: Luke 5:16

A Quiet Place - To read about the life of Jesus is to read of a life filled with activity. His public ministry began with His baptism. Then 40 days of solitude in the wilderness immediately followed. After that, His was a full schedule.

Two interesting observations can be made about the pace of Jesus' ministry. One is that He never hurried anywhere. Jesus was never in a rush. His purpose was so clear that other things were not allowed to put him in a rush.

The other is that He consistently found the time and the quiet to pray. A healthy prayer life needs those two things: time and quiet.

How can you have a healthy prayer life without taking time to pray? You can't. Some praying we do "on the run." It may be that we pray while driving or while working around the house. Still, we need quality prayer time, undistracted by any other activities.

The other need is for quiet. Finding a time and place where you are undistracted is vital to a healthy prayer life. For some, those times and places are easy to find. For others, it is a challenge.

Jesus set the example. He took time and found a quiet place to pray. Will you?

Do you take time to pray? Why not right now? Jesus did. You should also [Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Judges 7:18-21 BROKENNESS

I have been reflecting on the inestimable value of "broken things." Broken pitchers gave ample light for victory (**Judges 7:19-21**); broken bread was more than enough for all the hungry (Matthew 14:19-21); broken box gave fragrance to all the world (Mark 14:3, 9); and broken body is salvation to all who believe and receive the Savior (Isaiah 53:56, 12; 1 Corinthians 11:24). And what cannot the Broken One do with our broken plans, projects, and hearts? V. RAYMOND EDMAN

Broken Things in the Bible

Five broken things in the Bible and the results achieved by them:

- 1) Broken pitchers (**Judges 7:18, 19**) and the light shone out
- 2) A Broken Box (Mark 14:3) and the ointment was poured out
- 3) Broken Bread (Matt 14:10) and the hungry were fed
- 4) A Broken Body (1Cor 11:24) and the world was saved
- 5) A Broken will (Ps 51:17) and a life of fulfillment in Christ

Source unknown

Judges 7:20 Morning and evening

Spurgeon Devotional

"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." — Judges 7:20

Gideon ordered his men to do two things: covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break the pitcher and let the light shine, and then sound with the trumpet, crying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon! the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" This is precisely what all Christians must do. First, you must shine; break the pitcher which conceals your light; throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine. Let your light shine before men; let your good works be such, that when men look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus. Then there must be the sound, the blowing of the trumpet. There must be active exertions for the ingathering of sinners by proclaiming Christ crucified. Take the gospel to them; carry it to their door; put it in their way; do not suffer them to escape it; blow the trumpet right against their ears. Remember that the true war-cry of the Church is Gideon's watchword, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" God must do it, it is his own work. But we are not to be idle; instrumentality is to be used—"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" If we only cry, "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption; and if we shout, "The sword of Gideon!" alone, we shall manifest idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh: we must blend the two in practical harmony, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" We can do nothing of ourselves, but we can do everything by the help of our God; let us, therefore, in his name determine to go out personally and serve with our flaming torch of holy example, and with our trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony, and God shall be with us, and Midian shall

be put to confusion, and the Lord of hosts shall reign for ever and ever.

Judges 7:1-23

Midnight Encouragement

The Midianites and their allies had invaded Israel. It was the time of the judges, and Gideon could muster only 32,000 men against an army "as numerous as locusts" (Judges 7:12). Then God cut the army down to 300 (Jdg 7:2-7). Gideon was afraid, so God sent him into the enemy camp at night. Crouching behind cover, the Israelite captain heard one soldier tell another about a dream (Jdg 7:13-14). A loaf of barley bread had tumbled into the Midianite camp, destroying one of its tents. His friend saw it as a sure sign that Gideon would win the battle.

Gideon was greatly encouraged. After worshiping God, he returned to the camp, organized his 300 men with their trumpets and lamps, and routed the superior Midianite forces (Jdg 7:15-22).

As Christ's followers we're not battling armies, but we are at war. Spiritual foes attack us (Ephesians 6:10-12). They undermine our confidence and sap our strength. We're also battling ourselves—our weaknesses, fears, doubts (Romans 7:15-25-notes). After a while, we can get discouraged.

But our God is the great Encourager. When our resolve weakens or vision fades, by His power He will give us the strength we need (Ephesians 3:16)—even when the enemy seems more numerous than a swarm of locusts. —Dave Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

As we meet fierce foes on the pathway of life,
Whether Satan or self or sin,
Let us look to the Lord for encouragement;
If we do, the battle we'll win! —Fitzhugh

To trust is to triumph, for the battle is the Lord's

Judges 7:24–8:3

Talk Low, Talk Slow

March 29, 2011 — by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Our Daily Bread

John Wayne, famous American actor and film icon, once said, "Talk low, talk slow, and don't say too much." His advice is hard for me to follow since I'm a fast talker and I don't always speak quietly or limit my words. However, this idea of controlling our speech can be a useful tool when dealing with anger. The Bible says we are supposed to be "slow to speak" (James 1:19), and that "a soft answer turns away wrath" (Pr 15:1).

Gideon gave a soft answer during a verbal scuffle with some fellow Israelites (Jdg. 8:1-35). Just after his army defeated the Midianites, a group of his countrymen criticized him sharply (Jdg 8:1). They were miffed because they missed out on the main part of the battle. Gideon did not fling back a rough response. Instead, he reminded them that they had captured and killed the Midianite princes. He also honored the men by asking, "What was I able to do in comparison with you?" Finally, "their anger toward him subsided when he said that" (Jdg 8:3).

With the Lord's help, we can defuse heated situations by reining in our words. Responding gently and carefully to angry people can promote unity, for God's glory.

Lord, set a guard upon my lips,

My tongue control today;

Help me evaluate each thought

And watch each word I say. —Hess

Bite your tongue before your tongue bites others.

Judges 8

Judges 8:18

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

As thou art, do were they; each one resembled the children of a king.

It was a magnificent tribute to the royal bearing of this illustrious family. All the children had the stamp of kingliness on them, which had impressed even these barbaric princes. Would that a similar confession could be extorted from those who behold the members of the royal house of Jesus!

The children of a king! It is within the reach of any who aspire to it. By the second birth we become the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and the Spirit witnesses to our sonship, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father. As children of the great King we should bear the sign of our high lineage in our bearing and walk.

Royalty of Demeanor. — There is an aristocratic bearing in the scions of noble houses among men. The head is lifted high, the mien is proud, the manner distant and reserved. But in the family of God, meekness and lowliness, humility and contriteness, are marks of family likeness. We walk as Jesus walked, of whom the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

Royalty of Dress. — The king is marked by the brilliant orders glittering on his breast. Purple and ermine become those who date their descent from a line of kings. But the emblem of our family is the cross; our color is scarlet; our insignia is the towel and basin that speak of lowly service.

Royalty of Occupation. — The earthly king does nothing servile. He is waited on with lowly obeisance. But they who are of the same family as Jesus are found performing the lowliest acts of service, in jails, hospitals, and slums. In this they follow closely on the steps of Him who went about doing good.

Judges 8:22-27

Good Intentions

January 18, 2003 — by Dave Branon

Our Daily Bread

Have you ever had one of those “I was just trying to help” moments? Maybe you offered to carry the cake to the table and you dropped it. Or perhaps you offered to dog-sit your neighbor’s pooch and the little guy ran away.

In Judges 8, it appears that Gideon tried to do a good thing. But the result was tragic. Impressed by his military exploits, the men of Israel asked Gideon to be their king. To his credit, he refused (Judges 8:22-23). But then he asked them to donate gold earrings, which he made into an “ephod” (Judges 8:27). This was either a sacred garment worn by the high priest or some type of image. Why did he do this? We don’t know for sure, but Gideon may have been trying to provide spiritual leadership. Whatever his motive was, God hadn’t told him to do this.

When Gideon set up the ephod in Ophrah, it drew the people’s attention away from worship of the Lord and led them into idolatry (Judges 8:27). And as soon as Gideon died, the people found it easy to go back to worshipping the Baals (Judges 8:33).

Gideon may have had good intentions, but he made the mistake of acting without consulting the Lord. Let’s be careful not to allow anything to take our eyes off our loving, holy God—or it will lead us and others astray.

The Word of God provides the light

We need to see the way;

If we obey what God has said,

We’ll not be led astray. —Sper

Good intentions are no substitute for obedience.

Judges 8:33-35

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Web of Conspiracy - And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." Conspirators against those who are righteous are ultimately destroyed by their conspiracy. How this is evident in the tragic days following the triumph of Gideon and his 300 men!

Judges 8:33-35 records the failure of the Israelites to live after the defeat of the Midianites as they had during the battle. As a result of Israel's forgetting the God who delivered them, internal strife became more damaging than their external enemies. The royalty which Gideon had refused was coveted by Abimelech, his son by a handmaiden of Shechem. Attempting to trade on his father's reputation, Abimelech harangued the men of Shechem, claiming that it was far better to be ruled by one man, a Shechemite, than by all 70 of Gideon's sons. With money stolen from the sacred treasury of Baal-berith, Abimelech hired "vain and light persons," a band of desperadoes, to slay Gideon's other sons. Miraculously, however, one son, Jotham, escaped the conspiracy.

Abimelech reigned over a limited area in Israel for three years. But his reign did not go unchallenged by Jotham, who fled to Mount Gerizim, where he pronounced a curse on Abimelech and the men of Shechem. This curse came in the form of a parable about the tree that wished one of their number to rule over them. They asked the olive tree, fig tree, and vine in succession, only to be rebuffed each time. Then they turned to the worthless thorny bramble, which accepted their offer to rule over them.

The meaning of this parable was obvious to all. The trees, which are themselves producers, are more interested in fruit than in control; but the thorn, which has nothing to give, seeks to be the leader sheerly for personal gain. Abimelech was a thorn. Jotham cried, "Let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech" (Judges 9:20).

Jotham's curse was not long in being fulfilled. After three years God sent an "evil spirit" between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. The Shechemites revolted and plotted against his life. But Zebul, the governor of the city and an Abimelech loyalist, informed Abimelech of the plot to dethrone him; and a counter plan was hatched. Zebul counseled Abimelech and his men to lie in wait for the Shechemites during the night in the fields before the city. "And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early and set upon the city" (Judges 9:33). Abimelech massacred the inhabitants of Shechem.

Having treacherously murdered his pseudo-subjects, Abimelech turned his attention to the neighboring city of Thebez. Some of the Shechemites, the men and women of Thebez, fled to a strong tower for safety. Again Abimelech prepared to burn them out, but a woman cast a piece of millstone out of the tower. In ironic reciprocation, the stone found its target the head of Abimelech and broke his skull. Jotham's prophecy was fulfilled.

Abimelech, the would-be-king conspirator, and the Shechemites, his would-be subjects, were caught in the middle of their web of conspiracy. Having destroyed the righteous, they were themselves destroyed by each other. Deception always brings destruction. How much better we are passively to accept the will of God as good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12:2) than to conspire self-promotion without the blessing of God. ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

MORNING HYMN

The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days
And God of love.

Jehovah, great I AM,
By earth and Heav'n confessed,
I bow and bless the sacred
Name forever blest.

([Play The God of Abraham Praise - Fernando Ortega](#))

[Vocal Version](#)

Judges 9

Judges 9:1-25

TODAY IN THE WORD

One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. - Judges 9:8

In medieval thought, each order of living creatures had an imagined king. Every "king" possessed an innate majesty, authority, and power qualifying him to rule. The king of the four-footed creatures, for example, was the lion; the king of the birds, the eagle; the king

of the planets, Jupiter. These majestic creatures were often used to represent human royalty, as with the English king, Richard, the Lion Heart.

Scripture uses trees to symbolize kings. In today's reading, for example, Jotham uses symbolism in his parable, but his tree imagery is designed to undercut Abimelech's rule, not to support it. After Abimelech conspires with the citizens of Shechem (his mother's relatives) he murders his seventy brothers, who were all sons of Gideon; only Jotham, the youngest, escapes.

It happened during the time of the judges. Abimelech crowned himself king. His ambition defied God; he not only murdered his brothers, but he instituted a form of government not yet ordained by God, Israel's true king (Jdg. 8:23). Even worse, he relied on Baal and his worshipers (v. 4), the very forces his father Gideon had rightly sought to destroy. Abimelech was the very opposite of what God's judge had to be.

Jotham's prophetic parable of the four trees highlights this fact. The olive, fig, and vine, all producing important fruit, refuse to be king, though they are kingly trees. They recognize that their function is to grow fruit, not to rule. Only the scraggly, unfruitful thornbush, an irritant to farmers and a cause of brush-fires, agrees to be king. Given Abimelech's destructive reign, the thornbush appropriately symbolizes his kingship.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY This tree was a benchmark for gauging Israel's relationship with God. Is there a similar benchmark in your spiritual pilgrimage? Perhaps a place, symbol, or verse that you have returned to, imaginatively or literally, in your journey with the Lord? Return there today and ask God to show you if you have been faithful like Joshua or if you have lapsed like Abimelech. Renew your commitment with Joshua's words: "Throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel" (Josh. 24:23). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 9:1-24

Do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. - Proverbs 1:15-16

TODAY IN THE WORD

Gideon is known mostly for his service as a judge over Israel. He tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah, a wooden idol representing a female deity the Midianites worshiped (Judges 6:26-27) which earned him the name Jerub-Baal, meaning "Let Baal contend against him" (Judges 6:32). He defeated the Midianites with his army of 300 men (Judges 7-8). Gideon's legacy to Israel was his belief that God, not man, should reign as King over Israel (Judges 8:23).

But Gideon's legacy was short-lived. He had over 70 sons, only two of which survived. Abimelech, the son of Gideon by a concubine, rallied his mother's relatives in the city of Shechem to make him their king and then slaughtered the sons of Gideon by execution (v. 5) Only Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, escaped the scourge. This wasn't a crime of passion or an angry outburst. Abimelech used selfishness, hatred, fear, and division to manipulate people and to seize power for himself. And God used those same qualities to exact His wrath upon Abimelech and the entire city of Shechem. The sword by which he lived would become the sword by which he died.

It's disconcerting to read about God sending an evil spirit or demon to invoke His will (v. 23). But it reminds us that even evil spirits cannot elude God's sovereignty. Everything is under His control, and He can direct as He pleases. Secondly, God wasn't turning anyone against the desires of their heart or the nature of their wills. He was provoking their wickedness to avenge sins they had already committed.

The rest of the chapter chronicles the rebellion of Shechem, Abimelech's destruction of the city, and the woman who crushed Abimelech's head with a millstone. But the lesson of the passage goes beyond the details of the battles. God administered His justice by allowing Abimelech's thirst for violence and power to destroy him and his collaborators. Abimelech's crimes brought natural consequences in the hands of a supernatural Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

For the rest of this day (or in any day) reconsider the word natural. Remember that God created this world, and nothing in it is independent of His control. The systems, rules, and results that are so familiar within the natural world are still the handiwork of our Lord. The food we eat, the warmth of the sun, and the practical consequences of our actions don't come from "Mother Nature." They come from God. Praise Him for the wonders big and small that He provides in every moment.

Judges 9:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother.

Is not this the reason why God has set us in families? Had He so chosen, each of us might have been created alone as Adam was, and sent out with no special connection with others of our race. But instead, we are closely connected. It is very rarely that a man is so utterly bereaved as to be destitute of some relative.

Between a man and his brother there is a special tie. It may be truly said, in the case of brothers, that a doorway has been made through the walls which ordinarily part men, which may be bricked up or filled with debris; but the wall there will always be thinner than anywhere else, and some day the doorway may be opened for the passage of the messenger of peace. Men are always more inclined to follow the man of whom they can say, "He is our brother." Brotherhood, sisterhood, relationship of any kind, is therefore a very precious talent; and it becomes us solemnly to ask ourselves whether it has been put to use. Have you ever spoken or written to your brother or sister about Christ?

As soon as Andrew had found Jesus, he started off to find his own brother Simon; and Simon was glad to follow him because he was his brother. Had another tried, it is as likely as not that he would have repelled him. But what could he say to the man who had shared his childhood's sports, and had helped him haul in a net of fish many a time after a night of hard work?

This is the reason that Jesus has so strong a hold on human hearts. He is our brother, bone of our bone; not ashamed to call us brethren; and this constitutes a moving argument why we should be inclined to follow Him.

Judges 9:1-25

One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. - Judges 9:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

In medieval thought, each order of living creatures had an imagined king. Every "king" possessed an innate majesty, authority, and power qualifying him to rule. The king of the four-footed creatures, for example, was the lion; the king of the birds, the eagle; the king of the planets, Jupiter. These majestic creatures were often used to represent human royalty, as with the English king, Richard, the Lion Heart.

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Jotham's prophetic parable of the four trees highlights this fact. The olive, fig, and vine, all producing important fruit, refuse to be king, though they are kingly trees. They recognize that their function is to grow fruit, not to rule. Only the scraggly, unfruitful thornbush, an irritant to farmers and a cause of brush-fires, agrees to be king. Given Abimelech's destructive reign, the thornbush appropriately symbolizes his kingship.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This tree was a benchmark for gauging Israel's relationship with God. Is there a similar benchmark in your spiritual pilgrimage? Perhaps a place, symbol, or verse that you have returned to, imaginatively or literally, in your journey with the Lord? Return there today and ask God to show you if you have been faithful like Joshua or if you have lapsed like Abimelech. Renew your commitment with Joshua's words: "Throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel" (Josh. 24:23).

Judges 10

Judges 10:16

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

This is a very strong way of stating the pitifulness of God. It is applying to Him terms borrowed from our own experiences as men; and in no other way could we realize the tender love and compassion of our Heavenly Father. Israel's miseries were due to the sins with which their history was marked; but God's love brooded over them, longing to deliver.

This is the explanation of God's first words to Adam — One of the versions substitutes for "Where art thou?" the words "Alas for thee!" as though God were treading the glades of Eden with a broken heart, grieved for the misery of his children.

This was the lament of God's Spirit throughout the Old Testament.— "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Mine heart is turned within me; my compassions are kindled together." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"

This led to the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord. — He looked, and there was no man; He wondered that there was none to help, therefore his own arm brought salvation.

This characterized our Lord's earthly life. — When He beheld the city, and foresaw all the evil that would accrue to it, He could not hold back his tears. "His soul was grieved." In all likelihood, you, my reader, may be suffering keenly the result of your own mistakes and sins in earlier life. The troubles that hem you in are the direct outcome of your having forsaken God. He could, and would, have saved you; but you made it impossible, because you withdrew yourself from his care. And now He grieves over you. If only you would forsake your sins and turn to Him, He would assuredly raise up a Jephthah for your help.

Peace of Heart

Mary Wilder Tileston

Source: Joy and Strength

Scripture Reference Judges 10:15

Peace of Heart

Do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee.

JUDGES 10:15

DEAR Lord, whose mercy veileth all

That may our coming days befall,

Still hide from us the things to be,

But rest our troubled hearts in Thee.

HARRIET MCEWEN KIMBALL

PEACE of heart lies in perfect resignation to the will of God. What you need is true simplicity, a certain calmness of spirit which comes from entire surrender to all that God wills, patience and toleration for your neighbor's faults, and a certain candor and childlike docility in acknowledging your own faults. The trouble you feel about so many things comes from your not accepting everything which may happen to you, with sufficient resignation to God. Put all things, then, in His hands, and offer them beforehand to Him in your heart, as a sacrifice. From the moment when you cease to want things to be according to your own judgment, and accept unconditionally whatever He sends, you will be free from all your uneasy retrospects and anxieties about your own concerns.

FRANCOIS DE LA MOTHE FÉNELON

Judges 10:16 **His Pain**

Our Daily Bread

READ: Judges 10:6-16 (Isaiah 63:9).

They put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel. — Judges 10:16

The Old Testament book of Judges is a somewhat depressing account of God's people locked in a recurring cycle of rebellion, punishment, repentance, and deliverance. After every divine intervention, the process was repeated. It was always their pain that caused God's people to call on Him: "The children of Israel said to the Lord, 'We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray'" (Judges 10:15).

Six times in Judges they cried out to God, and each time He came to their rescue. But the Lord Himself was also in pain. In a remarkable statement, the Bible says of Almighty God, "His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel" (Jdg 10:16).

The misery we suffer because of our spiritual rebellion will always cause pain to the Lord. As the prophet Isaiah wrote: "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9).

God's suffering reached its zenith when His Son Jesus Christ went to the cross to die for our sin. We will never fully understand what it meant for the intimacy of the Father and the Son to be broken (Matthew 27:46-50).

It's good to ponder the pain of God even as we praise Him for the marvel of our salvation. —David C. McCasland

Your love, O God, would spare no pain

To conquer death and win;

You sent Your only Son to die

To rescue us from sin. —D. De Haan

Sin brings pain—to us, and to God.

Judges 11

Judges 11-12

A B Simpson

Christ in the Bible

Simpson in his book "Christ in the Bible" has the following chapter entitled "Lighthouses of Faith" based upon the verse in Hebrews 11

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (see note Hebrews 11:32).

Lighthouses indeed they were, these men of faith that illuminated the darkest periods of Old Testament history, from the time of the Judges to the great reformation under Samuel. Sad as was the story of the wilderness when Israel wandered for forty years, it was not half so sad as the declension after Joshua's conquest of Canaan and the glorious inheritance of the Land of Promise, which was not for forty, but for four hundred years. But the lighthouse is not kindled for placid seas and sunlit skies, but for starless nights and raging storms. And so these troublous times brought out the highest and noblest types of faith and character in all the story of the past. In like manner it will be found that in our own experience faith is born not of favorable circumstances and comfortable surroundings, but of deep afflictions, temptations, and sorrows.

Out of this humiliating chapter of Israel's history, the apostle selects half a dozen unique examples of the highest faith and the noblest achievement. Each is a distinct type, and all together form a third series and reach a still higher climax.

IV. JEPHTHAH OR THE FAITH THAT KEEPS FAITH WITH GOD

Jephthah was an outcast. He was born under discouraging circumstances, repudiated by his father's house, and covered with a stigma of reproach from his mother, for which he was not responsible. But instead of giving up to discouragement, he turned to God for help, and God always loves to take up the cause of the wronged one. Is there a soul within reach of this message whose life has been crushed by some misfortune, wrong, or hereditary entail for which you were not to blame? Beloved, Jephthah's God will be your Vindicator and your almighty Friend. Nay, even if there has been wrong and fault and folly, and you are suffering from the effects of your own mistake, still there is One that will "restore the years that the locust hath eaten," and undo the bitter past. And so the time came when Jephthah's brethren turned to him to lead the forlorn hope of their country's struggle, and with his brave freebooters to give them back their freedom. Jephthah was not slow to respond, and in due time his courage was crowned with victory. As he prepared for the battle he vowed to give to God the first thing that he should meet, and the sequel gave a singular opportunity for illustrating another of the highest qualities of faith. It was his own and only daughter whom he met leading the triumphal dance of Israel's maidens in celebration of his victory. "Alas, my daughter!" he cried, as he rent his clothes, "thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." We do not believe that this sacrifice meant the literal immolation of his child on an altar of blood, but rather the dedication of her life in perpetual virginity to the service of God. This is confirmed by the later references (Judges 11:37, 40). What all this meant to Jephthah and his daughter can only be understood by one who realizes all that posterity meant to an Israelite, especially to a ruler

like Jephthah, who longed for an heir, and more especially to every Hebrew woman, who felt herself the possible mother of the coming Messiah.

But Jephthah was true to his pledge. Not for a moment did he falter in his purpose of obedience, and so he stands to latest ages a type of the man who not only can count upon God, but a man upon whom God can depend.

Beloved, if you expect God to keep faith with you, how can you forget that God expects as much of you? Therefore, faith and obedience go hand in hand. Oh, to live so that God can say of us as He said of Abraham, "I know him," I can depend upon him, I can fulfill to him all that I have promised.

Judges 11:12

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon.

Jephthah's procedure was admirable in his quiet expostulation, before resorting to force in the defence of home and country against the aggression of Amalek. It was quite clear that Ammon had no right to the lands of which Israel, at God's command, had dispossessed the Amorites. "Thou doest me wrong to war against me." But before repelling the invasion, Jephthah did his best to show the unreasonableness of Ammon's pretext.

Thus our Lord expostulated with the servant that smote Him. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

It is in this way that we are to act still. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

In the Masters judgment, the wrong-doer injured himself much more than any one else; and therefore earnest words of expostulation were desirable to stay him from his own destruction.

How admirable it would be if we would act in such a spirit of meek conciliation! Then our cause might fairly be submitted to the Judge of all (Judges 11:27); and we should be strong in after-times to stand for the sacred rights of others.

There is no need to bribe God's help, as Jephthah did, by his rash promise. He will give gladly and freely out of his own heart of love the help and deliverance we need, if only our cause is rightly ordered before Him. "Who delivered, ... and doth deliver; ... He will yet deliver" (2 Corinthians 1:10). When we are right with our fellow-men, we can confidently count on God's almighty helpfulness.

Judges 12

Judges 12:6

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And he said Sibboleth.

It was only the omission of "h," but it meant the death of the man who missed it. One little letter, and the whole wonder and beauty of a human life was forfeited. It is only recently that the peace of an empire was in jeopardy, because a full-stop was misplaced. This scene has become proverbial of those who exact compliance with some arbitrary test, before admitting their fellows into their sect or church. But how thankful we should be, that our admission to the privilege of the Kingdom of God does not depend upon our pronunciation; that the reality of the new-birth is not tested by the accuracy with which we utter the creed; that we shall not be excluded from the gates of the New Jerusalem because we fail in the utterance of an "h"!

Our acceptance with God does not depend on how much we believe. The woman who was healed had very inadequate notions of faith and Christ. She thought that his garment would communicate blessing, yet she was cured. The dying thief had but a glimmering ray of knowledge of the majesty and power of Jesus, but he entered Paradise in His company. The prime necessity with us, is not faith in the sense of creed, but as standing for trust. It is not our belief about Christ, but our trust in Him; not our ability to answer the questions of the Catechism, but our coming to Him, and finding rest to our souls — this only is necessary to pass us across the fords of Jordan. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10).

Judges 12

Today in the Word

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a system for marking pronunciation in any language. It was first published in 1888 by a group of French language teachers and is used by singers, dictionaries, and language-learning textbooks to transcribe sounds from any language into a consistent, universal system. Anyone using it properly should be able to pronounce sounds correctly even if they don't know the language.

The IPA might have helped the Ephraimites pass the deadly pronunciation test in today's narrative. Jephthah is presented as a mighty warrior who was also a social outcast due to his mother being a prostitute (the story begins in Judges 10:6). He defeated the Philistines and Ammonites and rescued Israel from their oppression, but he also made a foolish vow to sacrifice the first thing he saw when he returned home (it turned out to be his daughter).

The conflict in today's reading took place because the Ephraimites were upset about being left out of this victory. Perhaps they were irritated that God had used people whom they saw as disreputable renegades. Jephthah argued that they hadn't responded to his call for help and gave God the credit for the victory. Somehow this petty conflict escalated into a battle in which Jephthah's Gileadites soundly defeated the Ephraimites. The Gileadites may have been forced to defend themselves initially, but in victory things got ugly. They slaughtered the Ephraimites (an extreme violation of today's verse). In this story, words and language became a vehicle for the worst human impulses. If a person pronounced the word "shibboleth" with the wrong accent, they were identified as the enemy and killed, even though the battle was over. A single word fueled this grotesque revenge.

Apply the Word

Pronunciation or accent remains a source of sinful prejudice in today's world. In the United States, this is particularly true of ethnic variations, such as African-American or Hispanic English, but it can also occur with geographical variations, such as a Southern accent. We should love our neighbors whatever they sound like.

Judges 13

Judges 13:23

The Sacrifice Has Been Accepted

Spurgeon Devotional

"If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things."—Judges 13:23

THIS is a sort of promise deduced by logic. It is an inference fairly drawn from ascertained facts. It was not likely that the Lord had revealed to Manoah and his wife that a son would be born to them, and yet had it in His heart to destroy them. The wife reasoned well, and we shall do well if we follow her line of argument.

The Father has accepted the great sacrifice of Calvary and has declared Himself well pleased therewith; how can He now be pleased to kill us? Why a substitute if the sinner must still perish? The accepted sacrifice of Jesus puts an end to fear.

The Lord has shown us our election, our adoption, our union to Christ, our marriage to the Well-beloved: how can He now destroy us? The promises are loaded with blessings, which necessitate our being preserved unto eternal life. It is not possible for the Lord to cast us away and yet fulfill His covenant. The past assures us, and the future reassures us. We shall not die, but live; for we have seen Jesus, and in Him we have seen the Father by the illumination of the Holy Ghost. Because of this life-giving sight we must live forever.

Judges 13:1-14 Becoming A Parent

October 13, 2002 — by David H. Roper

Our Daily Bread

What a great day it is when a couple discovers they're going to be parents! It's even more exciting for those who have been unable to have children. Such was the case for Manoah and his wife, the parents-to-be of Samson.

The "Angel of the Lord" appeared to Manoah's wife and told her that she would bear a son, one who would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). He also told her how she was to live and that her son was to be a "Nazirite to God"

(Judges 13:4-5).

When she told her husband about it, he asked the Lord to send the Angel again and give them further instructions. Manoah's question was: "What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" (Judges 13:12). But the Angel's answer pointed primarily to the obedience of the mother (Judges 13:13-14).

As parents, the question we should ask ourselves is not "How can we produce a godly or successful child?" but rather "How can we be more godly parents?" The first question has to do with the end result over which we have no control; the second has to do with a process over which we do have control. Our prayer should be: "Lord, make us the kind of parents You want us to be." —David Roper

Lord, help us to be what You want us to be

In character, actions, and will,

For You are the potter and we are the clay—

Your purposes we would fulfill. —Fitzhugh

Children's ears may be closed to advice, but their eyes are open to example.

Judges 13:15-23 Our Mysterious God

March 22, 2005 — by Herbert Vander Lugt

Our Daily Bread

In today's Scripture, we read that a mysterious and awesome visitor appeared to Manoah and his wife (Samson's parents). When Manoah asked, "What is Your name?" the visitor didn't answer the question directly but instead "ascended in the flame of the altar" (Judges 13:17-20). Then Manoah knew he had seen God in human form.

Who can understand such a God—the God who wrote the 3-billion-letter software code in the DNA molecule of every human cell? Who can fully comprehend the God who knows everything, even our inner thoughts? Yet many Old Testament saints knew and loved this God. They experienced the joy of His grace and forgiveness, even though they didn't completely understand how a holy God could forgive their sins.

As Christians, we too stand in awe before the majesty and mystery of an incomprehensible God. But we have a great advantage because we see Him revealed in Jesus, who said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). And when Jesus hung on the cross, He revealed God's compassion and love, for He died there for us.

A mystery? Yes. But how wonderful that we can know the love of this incomprehensible God!

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious—Thy great name we praise. —Smith

To understand God is impossible—to worship Him is imperative

Judges 13:23

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received an offering.

Manoah was a pessimist, given to dark foreboding, fond of anticipating misfortune. So soon as he realized that he had seen the face of God, he made sure that his wife and he would die. His wife, on the contrary, was prone to look on the bright side of things, and she must have been an admirable helpmeet. How much some of us owe to the temperament of those with whom we live! Many a time would Christian sit down to die, and succumb in the dark waters of the river, if it were not for Hopeful, who pierces the gloom, and beholds the light shining beyond the cloud.

Often enough Foreboding whispers, "We shall surely die." It is the voice of conscience, dreading the result of sin. It is the voice of

mistrust, which fails to look beyond the hills for its help. It is the voice of human frailty. At such times let us look back and recount the blessings of the past. Did not God receive our burnt-offering? Did He not conspicuously answer our prayers? Did He not give his only begotten Son? Has He not led us by his right hand and holy arm? Has He not delivered us in seven troubles? Besides, has He not pledged Himself for the future? Has He not showed us "all these things"? It is impossible to believe that He will allow us to be overwhelmed.

His love in time past forbids me to think, He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.

Trust Him, O suffering saints, doing his will in the teeth of opposition and hate! Fear not the faces of men; be not dismayed before their threats — He is with you to deliver you. They may fight against you, but they shall not prevail; their proudest threats shall fail of their fulfillment.

Judges 13:24-15:20

But [Samson] did not know that the Lord had left him. - Judges 16:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

The successes and scandals of televangelist Jim Bakker are well-known. By the early 1980s, the PTL Club had over twelve million viewers and Heritage USA was the third most popular theme park in the United States. Yet somewhere along the line, the Bakkers lost sight of the Lord. In 1989, Jim Bakker was convicted of fraud and tax evasion. A journalist wrote: "[The Bakkers] epitomized the excesses of the 1980s; the greed, the love of glitz, and the shamelessness."

That comment could well apply to Samson, Israel's final judge. The book of Judges presents the following cycle. First, the people fall away from the Lord and are oppressed by foreigners. Then they cry out the Lord, who sends a "judge," or deliverer. Once delivered, the people enjoy rest ... until they rebel again.

In the midst of this depressing cycle, the Lord faithfully provided leaders upon whom His Spirit rested, such as Gideon, Deborah, and Samson. Samson's birth was a miracle, because his mother was barren. Despite being led by the Spirit early on (Jdg 13:25), Samson was a man driven by his own lusts.

An ominous omission begins the Samson cycle—the people do not cry to the Lord for deliverance! Apparently they're content to live with the Philistines. Even worse, Samson wants to marry a Philistine instead of delivering the Israelites from them! Later, when he kills thirty Philistines, it's for his own revenge (Jdg 14:19), not the Lord's name. The same is true in the incident involving the foxes.

It is also significant that Samson fails to give glory to God for his Spirit-enabled strength; when he kills a lion, he keeps the incident to himself (Jdg 14:6). Later, when the Israelites bind their "deliverer" to hand him over to the Philistines, Samson takes credit for breaking the ropes, when it was clearly the Spirit's work. Although he eventually destroyed many Philistines (Jdg 16:30), it was again for his own revenge. Samson's life is a sad picture of greed, glitz, and shamelessness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Of all the judges, Samson had the greatest potential, but his lack of concern for spiritual things and his misappropriation of God's gifts eventually caused the Lord to depart from him. After Pentecost, the Spirit no longer rests on individuals temporarily, but is always with a believer. Even so, it's still possible for a Christian to stumble badly. Thankfully, even after our most grievous, embarrassing, public falls, repentance and restoration is possible if we call out to the Lord.

Judges 14

Judges 13-16

A B Simpson

Christ in the Bible

Simpson in his book "Christ in the Bible" has the following chapter entitled "Lighthouses of Faith" based upon the verse in Hebrews 11

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Heb. 11:32).

Lighthouses indeed they were, these men of faith that illuminated the darkest periods of Old Testament history, from the time of the Judges to the great reformation under Samuel. Sad as was the story of the wilderness when Israel wandered for forty years, it was not half so sad as the declension after Joshua's conquest of Canaan and the glorious inheritance of the Land of Promise, which was

not for forty, but for four hundred years. But the lighthouse is not kindled for placid seas and sunlit skies, but for starless nights and raging storms. And so these troublous times brought out the highest and noblest types of faith and character in all the story of the past. In like manner it will be found that in our own experience faith is born not of favorable circumstances and comfortable surroundings, but of deep afflictions, temptations, and sorrows.

Out of this humiliating chapter of Israel's history, the apostle selects half a dozen unique examples of the highest faith and the noblest achievement. Each is a distinct type, and all together form a third series and reach a still higher climax.

III. SAMSON; OR THE FAITH THAT BRINGS PHYSICAL STRENGTH

If Samson had lived today he would have been the leading man in all our college clubs, and no price would have been too high to secure him for the football team, and the athletic tournaments that so rapidly are turning American brains into heels, hands, punch bags, and prize fights. But Samson's strength was not that of material brawn, but a far more subtle and supernatural power. It came to him through the touch of faith and the Spirit of God. Away back in those Old Testament times we have three object lessons of this kind of strength that even a material age can appreciate: the strength that enabled Abraham and Sara to defy the decaying power of age and natural infirmity, and claim the fulfillment of the great promise of a child when naturally it was impossible, and the strength that clothed Samson with more than Herculean power when probably his own frame was not materially stronger in himself than any of his fellows. Samson's strength could not have come from gigantic stature or exceptionally developed muscle, for we know that in a single moment he lost it, and yet he had probably not lost an ounce of weight, but had touched the forbidden earth and lost the secret of the Lord. Samson's physical strength was a vital principle that came to him from the unseen world and the living One, and it came to teach us that there is for our mortal frame a life and strength in God which we may claim as surely as the power that quickens our soul. For One has lived on earth since Samson's day who contained in His own human frame the power that could raise the dead and heal the sick, and who has become for us, in His resurrection life, the second Head of redeemed humanity and the living Source from which we can take our perfect life for body and for brain. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

But Samson teaches us one lesson more; namely, that the supernatural life of God in the human body is dependent upon our separation from the world and sin. We can only retain it while we live in His holy will, and we lose it whenever we touch the forbidden world of evil. There is nothing that is so sanctifying as the life of Christ in your mortal flesh. There is nothing that so holds you to a life of separation and dedication. If Christ is dwelling in your body that body must be used as His holy temple and for the things that Christ Himself would do if He were living in your place. This then, beloved, is one of the providences of faith, to take the Lord for supernatural strength, and give it back to Him in living sacrifice and loving service.

Judges 14:1-20

And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him. - Judges 13:25

TODAY IN THE WORD

When Joseph's brothers sold him to Midianite merchants, there was nothing good about their actions. Nevertheless, God redeemed those actions to save many lives. As Joseph would later tell his brothers after they were reunited, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done" (Gen. 50:20).

Understanding how God uses the wicked actions of men to achieve His holy purposes can be both comforting and confusing. We know that God can use the worst circumstances for good, but many people wonder if God is actually justifying sin in the process. God never justifies sin, He works through imperfect people. Samson's life is a dramatic example of imperfection. He served God mightily and led Israel with legendary exploits of power against the Philistines. He was set apart to God according to the Nazirite restrictions (Jdg 13:5), but he violated that law by touching the lion's carcass (cf. Num. 6:6). Yet, as today's key verse and passage indicate, the Spirit of God was active in Samson—to what degree we can't precisely know.

Another short-lived love story began with what appeared to be a promising start. Samson's plans to marry a Philistine woman were actually of God—His intention was not to give Samson true love, but rather to spur conflict with the Philistines to begin Israel's deliverance from their oppression (Jdg 13:4, cf. Jdg 13:5). The conflict was imminent. True love was not.

What doomed this relationship? Samson and his bride-to-be were not unified in their dedication to God. Samson's entire life was to be consecrated for God's service, while his bride remained loyal to the Philistines. Her betrayal in order to win a bet helped the cause of God and hurt the Philistines, and it also nullified Samson's marriage. The Philistines lost thirty men when the Holy Spirit empowered Samson to slaughter them, and Samson's would-be wife married his best man instead.

As this failed attempt at a union shows, it isn't enough for one partner to have a relationship with God. A couple must be united in love and in mutual dedication to the Lord for ideal love to reign.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God uses fallen people to accomplish His ends—what other kind of people are there? It's a reality of living in a sinful world. A converse of that reality is true as well: people who serve God's purposes cannot escape the collateral damage sin causes. Samson's marriage failed before it began because of his wife's sinful allegiance to her people. When sin causes you to suffer, will you stay true to God or multiply sin to ease the pain? Seek the Lord's help for the strength and courage to follow Him no matter what.

Judges 14:3

SELF-INDULGENCE or SELF-DISCIPLINE?

Failure to exercise self-discipline can ruin a person's health and happiness. A girl I know will probably die young if she doesn't control her eating habits. And I'm acquainted with a young man who is destroying himself because he never learned self-discipline. He grew up in a wealthy family and inherited a position that pays a high salary, but he is on the brink of financial disaster because of his drinking and gambling.

Lack of self-discipline caused Samson to make the mistakes that led to his capture by the Philistines, who put out his eyes and forced him to work like an animal. His downfall began when he wanted to marry a heathen girl and wouldn't listen to the objections of his parents. His demand, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well," set the pattern of self-indulgence that ruined his life.

Without self-control, we can squander great talents and waste wonderful opportunities. Our appetites for food, our sexual desires, our enjoyment of recreation, and our drive to succeed can become all-consuming if we fail to hold them in check. People who excel in their sport for many years do so because they eat properly, exercise, and practice regularly. Likewise, people who consistently walk with God discipline themselves to read the Bible, pray, and obey Him.—H. V. Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Self-indulgence guarantees failure; self-discipline assures victory.
Discipline yourself so others won't have to.**

Judges 14:14

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Out of the eater came forth meat.

Young lions roar at the saints. The lion of hell gives them no little trouble. Though he may not come upon the path of holiness — for no lion shall be there — yet he comes very near it. "He goeth about like a roaring lion." Temptation may well be compared to the attack on Samson by the young lion of Timnath.

The lion's carcass, lying where Samson had rent and cast it, became the home of honey-bees. And as the hero went back to look at it in after-days, he obtained meat and sweetness.

How apt the parable! Every conquered temptation yields these two things — strength and sweetness. We are more than conquerors, not only vanquishing the foe, but dividing the spoils of victory.

It yields strength. — Each time we overcome sin, the strength of the temptation passes into our hearts; as the Indian warrior supposes that the might of each warrior whom he levels to the dust, enters into himself. To resist impatience, makes us more patient in proportion to the strength of the temptation we resist. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

It gives sweetness. — There is a new gentleness to those who have been tempted; a humility, a modesty, a consciousness of the presence of God, through whom the victory has been secured; a new zest for the Word of God. How sweet are thy words to my taste! sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The life that is hid with Christ in God is full of sweetness and gentleness. "The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness."

Judges 15

Judges 15:18

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And now shall I die for thirst?

It had been a great victory. With the jawbone of an ass Samson had smitten a thousand men. But he knew where to attribute the glory. It was not he, but the Spirit of the Lord which had come mightily upon him. This is distinctly recognized when he called unto God, and said, "Thou hast given this great deliverance by my hand." It was because he had been expending his strength for God, had been, so to speak, burnt up by the Divine fire, that he was able to claim God's interposition for his thirst.

This is the great law of prayer. We have no right to count on God in the agony of a crisis, unless we have been walking in fellowship with Him previously, or are exhausted in fighting his battles. There is nothing that we may not claim of Him when we are living in the current of his life, or when we are exhausted in his service. "Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst?"

God's springs burst out in unlikely spots. He is never at a loss. If there is no natural spring, He can create one. If all around the mighty rocks reflect the sultry heat, and our spirit seems on the point of exhaustion, then in the wilderness He will cause streams to break out. Be of good courage, fainting warrior! The God who made thee, and has used thee, knows thy frame, and what thou needest before thou askest. Hereafter the place shall be known as "the spring of him that called!" He can cause the refreshing stream to pour forth from the flinty rock; He can turn the bitter water sweet for thee to drink thereof; He quenches thy soul-thirst with the water of life.

Judges 15:18

Morning and evening

Spurgeon Devotional

"He was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst?" — Judges 15:18

Samson was thirsty and ready to die. The difficulty was totally different from any which the hero had met before. Merely to get thirst assuaged is nothing like so great a matter as to be delivered from a thousand Philistines! but when the thirst was upon him, Samson felt that little present difficulty more weighty than the great past difficulty out of which he had so specially been delivered. It is very usual for God's people, when they have enjoyed a great deliverance, to find a little trouble too much for them. Samson slays a thousand Philistines, and piles them up in heaps, and then faints for a little water! Jacob wrestles with God at Peniel, and overcomes Omnipotence itself, and then goes "halting on his thigh!" Strange that there must be a shrinking of the sinew whenever we win the day. As if the Lord must teach us our littleness, our nothingness, in order to keep us within bounds. Samson boasted right loudly when he said, "I have slain a thousand men." His boastful throat soon grew hoarse with thirst, and he betook himself to prayer. God has many ways of humbling his people. Dear child of God, if after great mercy you are laid very low, your case is not an unusual one. When David had mounted the throne of Israel, he said, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." You must expect to feel weakest when you are enjoying your greatest triumph. If God has wrought for you great deliverances in the past, your present difficulty is only like Samson's thirst, and the Lord will not let you faint, nor suffer the daughter of the uncircumcised to triumph over you. The road of sorrow is the road to heaven, but there are wells of refreshing water all along the route. So, tried brother, cheer your heart with Samson's words, and rest assured that God will deliver you ere long.

Judges 15

Today in the Word

The vow of a Nazirite was a special form of consecration in Israel. The purpose was to separate oneself as a living offering to the Lord (Nu 6:1–12). The method involved considerable lifestyle restrictions. A Nazirite was to steer clear of any fruit of the vine. They could drink no wine, no grape juice, and no vinegar. They could eat neither grapes nor raisins. Their hair was to remain uncut for the entire period of consecration (it wasn't traditionally a lifelong vow). They were also to avoid contact with or even close proximity to any dead body so that they would remain ceremonially clean and holy to the Lord at all times.

Samson was a rare case, dedicated to be a Nazirite from the womb to the grave (Jdg. 13:7). He was also careless about upholding the terms of this vow—he broke them all. Samson is hardly the example of godly leadership, but God used him powerfully to lead Israel against the opposition of the Philistines. Samson's use of animals, however, appears to have been less than godly.

Today's reading begins with Samson getting the unwelcome news of his intended bride's marriage to another man. He exacted revenge against the family (despite fighting the Philistines, he had no reservations about marrying one of their ranks) by essentially torturing three hundred foxes and setting fire to the property of the Philistines. Note that nowhere in that account is the Spirit of God to have come upon Samson (Jdg 15:3–5). It unleashed a vicious cycle of revenge and retaliation (Jdg 15:6–8).

Samson was ultimately taken captive by his own people. He may have been leading them as a judge, but they were afraid he would bring more Philistine wrath than he could conquer. Only then did the Spirit come upon him as he broke free from the ropes that had bound him. Even then, he used part of a dead body, the jawbone of a donkey, to strike down the thousand men attempting to apprehend him. His tendency to use animals in his battles with the Philistines was almost certainly not guided by God—his obedience to the call to judge often included a disobedient lack of judgment.

Apply the Word

Looking only at the immediate repercussions, we could come to the conclusion that God overlooked Samson's misdeeds, including his brazen disregard for the welfare of animals. But surveying the big picture, we can see that Samson's pattern of following his own impulses ultimately led to the loss of his strength followed by his death in one final blow to the Philistines. His disobedience should break our hearts, not harden them against sins against God, man, and animals alike.

Judges 16

Judges 16:1-31

TODAY IN THE WORD

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. - Proverbs 16:18

Some of the most respected people in America have recently fallen prey to moral failure. Individuals in government, the media, and the church have had to admit to moral lapses that have forced them from positions of influence. Those of us who watch from a distance might be inclined to ask, "Is it possible to resist temptation and practice self-control?" If we listen to social analysts, we will hear that tolerance, not condemnation, is what is needed. But the Bible teaches us that we can learn to grow in self-control by learning from the lives and events of those who have not always been the best moral examples (1 Cor. 10:6).

Samson is one such individual. He was one of Israel's great heroes during the period of the judges. Samson was specifically raised up to deliver God's people from their enemies. To facilitate this, he was endowed with tremendous physical strength. Even when he was outnumbered by enemy soldiers, Samson was able to defeat those who came against him by God's Spirit (Jdg. 15:14-15; 16:1-3).

However, Samson had several fatal flaws. As time passed, he came to assume that he was invincible. His dialogues with Delilah reveal the attitude of a man who assumed that his strength would always be there to empower him to do whatever he wanted to do. Although Samson had great physical strength, he also possessed moral weaknesses, especially the inability to practice self-control (cf. Jdg 16:1).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Maybe you have assumed like Samson that the gifts and talents you possess will always be there. If so, take some time to list all of the ways God has blessed you to serve His church and the people around you. Then at the bottom of the list write a sentence such as the following: "Father, I thank you that you have given me (gift, skill, talent). I desire to use this (gift, skill, talent) to serve you." ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 16:1-4,15-20 Sin Saps Us

October 10, 2002

Read: | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 34-36; Colossians 2

Return to the Lord. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously." —Hosea 14:2

Sin saps us of our God-given strength. We become spiritually weak and decrepit, but often we imagine that we're just as hardy as ever.

That's the deceitfulness of sin. Gradually we drift away from God. We lose our desire to spend time in His Word and in prayer. The current of this world carries us away from friends and godly influences. We drift deeper into sin—our pathetic, feeble state evident to all eyes but our own.

I think of Samson, that man of towering strength who pillowed his head in the lap of sin, then rose from his sleep and said, "I will go out as before ... and shake myself free!" (Judges 16:20). But he didn't know that the Lord had taken away his strength.

Many years later, the prophet Hosea confronted the people of Israel and said that they too had lost their strength because of sin, and they didn't realize it (Hosea 7:8-16). So Hosea commanded them to "return to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously'" (Jdg 14:2).

Sin can sap us too. That's why we must deliberately take time to ask the Lord to expose our sin (Psalm 139:23-24). When we turn in repentance to Him, He will receive us graciously, set us free from sin's domination, and arm us again with strength. —David Roper

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;

And see if there is any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting. —Psalm 139:23-24

Sin adds to your trouble, subtracts from your energy, and multiplies your difficulties.

Judges 16:1-31

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book, *From the Shadows*, former CIA director Robert Gates relates a near-catastrophe that took place during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter.

Carter's national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was once awakened and informed that the Soviet Union had launched an all-out nuclear attack. One minute before he was to have called the President, word arrived that the first information had been in error. Someone had accidentally inserted military exercise tapes into the missile-defense computer system.

Thankfully, Brzezinski's wake-up call was a false alarm. He remained calm and in control in a situation in which he might have fallen prey to fear or panic. He knew that if we fail to control our passions, our passions control us.

That's what happened to Samson. Unable to control himself, in the end he fell victim to an "enemy attack."

After toying with the Philistine temptress Delilah, Samson finally succumbed to her charms and revealed the secret of his great strength (Jdg 16:17). His enemies pounced on him as he slept and made him their slave (Jdg 16:20-21).

The entire saga of Samson seems bigger than life, the kind of story people make movies about. John Milton, one of the greatest of English authors, wrote a dramatic poem about him: "Samson Agonistes." Although Samson's story is a powerful one, his spiritual character left much to be desired.

It's not hard to find the root of Samson's downfall. Delilah was not his first illicit love. Samson the strongman was as weak as a kitten when it came to women, and he paid dearly for his lack of self-control.

Samson's ending was as tragic as his life. His final exploit of strength in destroying the Philistines may have signaled some sort of spiritual renewal in his life. After all, his strength symbolized God's presence in his life (note v. 20b). But he still paid with his life.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Samson had allowed himself to be influenced by the world for so long that he couldn't tell when he had gone too far.

Are you and your family being influenced by the world? That can happen in many hidden or indirect ways. Our homes are under bombardment by the world, and there are plenty of ways for the enemy to make sure his message is seen and heard.

Judges 16:1-4,15-20 Sin Saps Us

October 10, 2002 — by David H. Roper

Our Daily Bread

Sin saps us of our God-given strength. We become spiritually weak and decrepit, but often we imagine that we're just as hardy as ever.

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Judges 16 Sensuality

The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease... Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace. - William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 100. Written by Oscar Wilde.

JUDGES 16:1-21

Our Daily Bread

"Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

When we repeatedly give in to a particular sin, we become a slave to it. A man dying of AIDS admitted that he had felt guilty about his homosexual way of life. But he couldn't carry out his resolve to give up his immoral lifestyle. Another young man admitted that his wife left him because of his preoccupation with pornographic literature. He's unhappy, but he can't stay away from smut shops. Similarly, many people who take cocaine know they are ruining their lives, but they feel powerless to give up the habit.

Samson too had become a slave to sin. He continued an affair with Delilah even though he knew she was bent on betraying him to his enemies. Samson was not stupid, but he was a slave to his lust. Like the homosexual, the pornography addict, and the drug user, he could not do what he knew he should.

Once we start down the wrong path, turning back is difficult. Jesus said that whoever keeps on sinning will become a slave to sin (John 8:34). Some of the most dangerous practices bring temporary pleasure. That's why they are so ensnaring. Freedom, however, is found in becoming a slave of Jesus Christ.

When we are in the grip of an evil practice that is ruining our life, we can acknowledge our sin and helplessness to the Lord, submit fully to Him, and be assured that He will deliver us. —H. Vander Lugt.

The pleasures of sin are for a season, but its wages are for eternity

Judges 16:1-31a

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book, *From the Shadows*, former CIA director Robert Gates relates a near-catastrophe that took place during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter.

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TODAY ALONG THE WAY Samson had allowed himself to be influenced by the world for so long that he couldn't tell when he had gone too far. Are you and your family being influenced by the world? That can happen in many hidden or indirect ways. Our homes are under bombardment by the world, and there are plenty of ways for the enemy to make sure his message is seen and heard. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 16:4-19

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. - Exodus 15:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Dumbo believed he possessed a magic feather that gave him the power of flight. So when Dumbo lost the feather during a free-fall, his friend Timothy Q. Mouse had to convince him that the feather wasn't really magic at all, just a psychological trick to make him believe he really could go airborne.

The idea of Samson's hair being the source of his superhuman strength seems no more likely than a single feather putting an elephant in flight. To ascribe his power to his hair alone ignores the fact that his displays of strength were typically attributed to the power of the Spirit (Jdg 14:6, 19; 15:14). But his hair must have had some connection to his strength, if only that it represented his consecration to the Lord (Nu 6:7). One of the things that makes interpreting this passage difficult is that almost every single verse is riddled with the characters' deception, lies, and trickery!

To call Samson and Delilah's relationship a love story stretches the term. She sold Samson out to the leaders of the Philistines, plotting a way to discover the secret of his strength. We should note that their curiosity about his strength indicates that Samson was probably not a towering figure with gigantic muscles (as he is usually depicted), for then the source of his strength would have been no secret. He must have appeared ordinary, and his enemies wanted to know what made him extraordinary.

After meeting Delilah, Samson acted with little regard for his relationship with God and little respect for Delilah. He treated her requests as a game of cat and mouse. He may not have realized the extent of her treachery, since the text tells us only that men were repeatedly hidden in their room (Jdg 16:9, 12); they likely remained in hiding when he easily broke free from what bound him. But when Samson finally gave in and told Delilah about the command that his head remain unshaven, he practically invited her to cut it, forsaking his commitment to God. His love for Delilah was as spiritually lopsided as his first marriage, except this time, he abandoned the influence of the Spirit and deservedly lost his strength.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Do you believe with Paul that "the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th. 3:3)? Do you look to Him for strength? It is impossible to live the life God desires for us without His strength, but we are often guilty of a sin like Samson's. We betray our commitment to God to satisfy our own desires or to comply with people who have no heart for Him. Profess to God your commitment to serve only Him and relinquish your hold on all else.

Judges 16:4-17 A Lock Of Hair

October 27, 2010 — by Dennis Fisher

Our Daily Bread

After his return from the moon, Neil Armstrong was often plagued by the media. Seeking greater privacy, he moved his family into a small town. But notoriety was a nuisance even there. Armstrong's barber found out that people would pay good money to get a lock of his hair. So after giving the space hero several haircuts, he sold the clippings to a buyer for \$3,000! Armstrong was shocked at the barber's opportunism.

The Scriptures tell of another story of disloyalty and a haircut. As a symbol of God's calling of Samson as a Nazirite, he was never

to cut his hair (Jdg. 13:5). When the Spirit of God came upon him, he was given super-human strength over his enemies (Jdg 15:14). Wanting to overpower him, the Philistines hired Delilah, a woman who had a relationship with him, to find out the secret of that strength. He foolishly told her that his power would be gone if his hair were cut. She lulled him to sleep and had him shorn (Jdg 16:5,19).

Greed can drive us to be disloyal to others and to God, causing us to make sinful choices. Our desire should be to exhibit a heart that is fully committed to love the Lord and others. He shows “Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2Chr 16:9).

O Lord, may my heart be loyal to You

In all that I say and all that I do;

When a trusted person is not a true friend,

I know that on You I can always depend. —Hess

Loyalty is the test of true love.

Judges 16:6-20 Going Bald?

June 6, 2001 — by Richard De Haan

Our Daily Bread

Barney had always been proud of his thick, wavy hair. But then he began to lose it. Finally just one lone hair remained on top of his shiny dome. One morning Barney awoke, looked at his pillow, and was shocked to see that last hair lying there. Jumping out of bed, he ran downstairs crying, “Martha, Martha, I’m bald!”

That story reminds me of Samson, who “did not know that the Lord had departed from him” (Judges 16:20). A similar thing happens to the Christian who dabbles in the things of the world. He goes deeper into sin, slowly sliding away from the Lord, without knowing what is happening. It is not until he has had some startling experience—perhaps due to God’s discipline—that he sees his true condition. When brought under the searchlight of the Word of God, the deceived one is shocked to realize how Satan has stripped away his spiritual power and discernment.

Television, movie, and home video habits reveal how far some people have slipped. Suggestive words and immoral themes, once considered offensive, are tolerated as acceptable entertainment.

To avoid the kind of shock that Barney experienced, it’s important to examine ourselves daily. Say, are you going bald spiritually?

O Lord, help us to recognize

When we begin to compromise,

And give us strength to follow through

With what we know is right and true. —Sper

Most often, falling into sin is not a blowout but a slow leak.

Judges 16:20

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

Beware of unconscious deterioration! Grey hairs may be here and there upon us without our knowing it. The Lord may be gone out on feet so noiseless, that we are not aware that his Spirit has glided along the corridor, and through the doorway, whispering, Let us depart.

Deterioration is unconscious because it is so gradual. The rot that sets in on autumn fruit is very gradual. The damp that silences the violin or piano does its work almost imperceptibly. Satan is too knowing to plunge us into some outrageous sin at a bound. He has sappers and miners engaged long before the explosion, in hollowing subterranean passages through the soul, and filling them with explosives.

Spiritual declension blunts our sensibility. The first act of the burglar is to gag the voice that might alarm, and poison the watch-dog. So, sin blinds our eyes, and dulls our keen alertness to the presence of evil. Thus, the stages of our relapse are obvious to all eyes but our own. We are drugged as we are being carried off captives.

The progress of evil within us is a matter of unconsciousness, largely because we are quick to discover reasons to justify our decadence. We glaze over the real state of affairs. We call sins by other names. We insist on considerations which in our eyes appear to justify our conduct. We still attend to our religious duties, and try to persuade ourselves that it is with us as in times past. To avoid deterioration we must ever watch and pray, and realize that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Then shall the peace of God as a sentry guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Judges 16:6

Morning and evening

Spurgeon Devotional

"Tell me I pray thee wherein thy great strength lieth." — Judges 16:6

Where lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies what the promise is—an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God; and faith says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain his Word will be fulfilled." Then faith thinketh, "Who gave this promise?" It considereth not so much its greatness, as, "Who is the author of it?" She remembers that it is God who cannot lie—God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludeth that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she advances in this firm conviction. She remembereth, why the promise was given,—namely, for God's glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe, that he will never stain his own escutcheon, nor mar the lustre of his own crown; and therefore the promise must and will stand. Then faith also considereth the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfil his word. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Moreover faith looks back upon the past, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her; nay, that he never did once fail any of his children. She recollecteth times of great peril, when deliverance came; hours of awful need, when as her day her strength was found, and she cries, "No, I never will be led to think that he can change and leave his servant now. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me, and he will help me still." Thus faith views each promise in its connection with the promise-giver, and, because she does so, can with assurance say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!"

Judges 16-18

Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Judges 16-18, Luke 7:1-30

Key Verse: Judges 16:20

On Our Own - One of the easiest temptations to which people succumb is self-sufficiency. We take on tasks in our strength with our own abilities and ingenuity. The more we are self-sufficient, however, the less we are God-dependent.

Sampson demonstrated this. His strength was from God, but after a while he forgot that. Then came the day when the Lord left him, "but he did not know that" (16:20). When Delilah called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" he thought nothing had changed. Yet everything had changed.

Whatever physical ability Samson had was insufficient. His resourcefulness could not undo the cords that bound him. The Philistines were able to overcome him and, after blinding Samson, humiliated him.

His final act against the Philistines came when he prayed, "O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more" (v. 28). Samson was no longer self-sufficient but was once again God-dependent.

Someone has said that "the Holy Spirit could be removed from the world and most Christians would not even notice." The point is that we tend to live, work and even serve God in self-sufficiency.

Are you dependent on God or independent of Him? The easiest tests to measure this are your prayers and your thoughts. Do you pray for God's help regularly, or only when up against a wall like Sampson was? Do you think about needing and receiving God's help, or do you just get things done in your own strength?

Don't be foolish. Why be self-sufficient when you can be God-dependent?

Think about what you will be doing today or tomorrow. Now ask God to help you with those tasks. Do this every day and experience not only God's help but learn to remember that you need His help ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

JUDGES 16:13

ARE YOU "LEANING THE WRONG DIRECTION?"

SEVERAL years ago a severe ice storm hit southern lower Michigan, causing great damage to trees. As I surveyed the destruction, I checked the two large white birches in my backyard. One had lost some of its limbs, but its partner had suffered a worse fate. The entire tree had toppled over and was completely uprooted. Why the one and not the other? The answer was simple. Instead of standing straight up, this thirty-five-foot tree had grown at a pronounced angle. So when the heavy ice accumulated on its branches, it fell in the direction it was leaning.

Samson was leaning in the wrong direction. As a result, he had a great downfall. Although he is numbered among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 and was one of Israel's great judges, a sad note is sounded throughout the story of his life due to a serious weakness in his character. He had an eye for women, and he insisted on taking a wife from a heathen nation (Judges 14:3). His down-fall came because his life was inclined toward fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

If we don't live in fellowship with the Lord each day, our lives will lean toward some weakness or besetting sin. Then, when a crisis comes or if we are caught off guard, we will be unable to resist the pressure. Samson's fall is a tragic example of what can happen to a leaning Christian. —D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 16:20

The Lord Departed

"And he knew not that the LORD was departed from him"

We bear within us the seeds of our own disintegration. Our moral imprudence puts us always in danger of accidental or reckless self-destruction. The strength of our flesh is an ever present danger to our souls. Deliverance can come to us only by the defeat of our old life. Safety and peace come only after we have been forced to our knees. God rescues us by breaking us, by shattering our strength and wiping out our resistance. Then He invades our natures with that ancient and eternal life which is from the beginning. So He conquers us and by that benign conquest saves us for Himself.

With this open secret awaiting easy discovery, why do we in almost all our busy activities work in another direction from this?

Why do we build our churches upon human flesh?

Why do we set such store by that which the Lord has long ago repudiated, and despise those things which God holds in such high esteem?

For we teach men not to die with Christ but to live in the strength of their dying manhood. We boast not in our weakness but in our strength. Values which Christ has declared to be false are brought back into evangelical favor and promoted as the very life and substance of the Christian way. How eagerly do we seek the approval of this or that man of worldly reputation. How shamefully do we exploit the converted celebrity. Anyone will do to take away the reproach of obscurity from our publicity-hungry leaders: famous athletes, congressmen, world travelers, rich industrialists; before such we bow with obsequious smiles and honor them in our public meetings and in the religious press. Thus we glorify men to enhance the standing of the Church of God, and the glory of the Prince of Life is made to hang upon the transient fame of a man who shall die. (**A W Tozer**)

Judges 17

Judges 17:10

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Dwell with me, and be unto me a priest.

Men crave for a priest. In every age of the world's history, where there has been a tent indicating the presence of human life, there has been an altar indicating man's consciousness of God, and a priest suggesting his consciousness of unworthiness to enter into the Divine presence. Man has perpetually taken one of his fellows whose character seemed less blemished than that of others, and after setting him apart with special rites from the ordinary engagements of life, has promised him maintenance and honor, if only he will act as priest. Be my priest; say for me to God what I cannot say. The sacrifices offered by thy hands are more likely to avail with Him than those rendered by mine.

(1) Let us beware of the religion which ignores man's craving for a priest.— The world abounds with attempts at religious systems, from which the conception of the priest is eliminated. These reduce the worship of God to a system of high-thinking, but fail to deal with man's consciousness of sin, and his yearning for a settled basis of peace.

(2) Let us remember that all human priests must ultimately fail.— God has put them all aside, setting up the priesthood of the blessed Lord. "We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." Stars are needless when the sun has arisen. The human priesthood is rendered unnecessary since the Son of God has passed into the heavens to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. No one has a right to pose as a priest to others, except in the sense that all Christians are such.

Judges 17:6 Free To Do What's Right

July 4, 1999

Free To Do What's Right

Read: Judges 2:11-23 | Bible in a Year: Job 28-29; Acts 13:1-25

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. —Judges 17:6

What confusion! I had never seen anything like it. On the road from the Leonardo da Vinci Airport to downtown Rome was an intersection where cars had converged from every direction. Each driver was inching his way forward. Horns were blaring. Passions were flaring. No stoplights or traffic cops were there to bring order to this chaos of cars. But there was one positive note: No one was breaking the law—there was no law!

Back in the days before Israel had a king, a similar situation prevailed. Although they had God's law, people ignored it and did what was right in their own eyes (Jud. 17:6). What a bitter price they paid for such freedom! The book of Judges tells of their disobedience, which resulted in oppression by pagan neighbors.

Still today, many people, and even some professing Christians, ignore God's clear revelation of Himself in His Word. They think they are free to form their own ideas of what God is like and what He expects. Strongly influenced by a godless culture, they live at the center of their own little world and walk in their own ways. That creates moral and spiritual confusion.

We must take God's Word seriously if we are to show our world that Christ gives us freedom to do what's right.

Christ came to give us liberty

By dying in our place;

Now with new freedom we are bound

To share His love and grace. —DJD

Freedom doesn't give us the right to do what we please, but to do what pleases God.

JUDGES 17:6

CONFUSION

WHAT confusion! Never had I seen anything like it. On the road from the Leonardo da Vinci Airport to downtown Rome was an intersection where a host of cars had converged from every direction. Each driver was inching forward. Horns were blaring. Passions were flaring. No stoplights or traffic cops were there to bring order to this chaos of cars. A first-come-first through principle prevailed. But there was one positive note: no one was breaking the law—there was no law!

Something like that marked the time of the judges. God's people did what was right in their own eyes. And what a bitter price they paid for such freedom. The book of Judges is a sad tale of repeated waywardness requiring God to use oppression by their heathen neighbors to bring them back to their senses.

Still today, professing Christians ignore God's clear revelation of Himself in His Word. They form their own ideas of what God is like and what He expects. Strongly influenced by humanistic thinking, they live at the center of their own little world. Though claiming to be people of God, they actually walk in their own ways. And it creates moral and spiritual confusion.

When we take God's Word seriously and live by it, we will show the world the value of doing what God says is right. —D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Judges 17

Today in the Word

After Emperor Nero's suicide in A.D. 68, Rome found it had no clear leadership. Different generals vied to take control of Rome in this "Year of Three Emperors." In the end Vespasian won, and most historians agree that he ruled well. But a dangerous precedent had been set. Ultimate control could now simply go to the strongest, and this dynamic contributed to Rome's instability for centuries to come.

This same sense of appearing to find solutions, while in reality establishing destructive patterns, pervades our reading today. To establish context, we need to understand what sin fully entails. Judges 20:16 states that some Benjamites "could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." The Hebrew word for "miss" here is frequently means "sin." Language is flexible, but the concept of sin as "missing the mark," seems to be the intent. To clarify, this, though, we should not think of sin as specific misdeeds a tad off-center, but rather something that involves our whole being. We do not have bad aim; we orient ourselves in the wrong direction and cannot "hit the mark." We need continual repentance to find the right path.

Right from the start in Judges 17 things seem strangely amiss. Micah steals silver from his mother, and she blesses him (Judges 17:2). They dedicate the silver to God ... to make an idol (Judges 17:3-4). A wandering Levite stumbles into town, and Micah makes him his priest. Judges 17:13 reveals the extent of Micah's confusion. Levites served as priests in Israel, but this did not guarantee God's favor. Aaron, for example was a Levite and he made the golden calf (see Exodus 32). This same Levite later becomes a priest for the Danites, who used him to sanction their brutal conquest of Laish (Judges 18:27), and they worshiped the same idol Micah made.

First Kings 12:25-33 indicate that Dan was probably a center for idol worship in the northern kingdom, and idol worship contributed to their conquest by Assyria. Some scholars wonder whether this is part of the answer to the mystery of why Dan is not listed in the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4-8. Actions oriented in the wrong direction have disastrous consequences.

Apply the Word

The refrain throughout the last four chapters of Judges, "In those days Israel had no king" (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25) describes more than political instability. Israel lacked a spiritual center, so actions that seemed to flow from good motives were rotten from the inside out. We need to see ourselves like the Israelites if we want to avoid their fate. We must change the direction of our aim to live in God's light, according to His plan, not according to what we think is right in our own eyes.

Judges 18

Judges 18:9,10

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

Streams in the Desert

Appropriating Faith - "Arise ... for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good; and are ye still? Be not slothful to go, and enter to possess the land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth" (Judges 18:9, 10).

Arise! Then there is something definite for us to do. Nothing is ours unless we take it. "The children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance" (Joshua 16:4). "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (Obad. 17). "The upright shall have good things in possession."

We need to have appropriating faith in regard to God's promises. We must make God's Word our own personal possession. A child was asked once what appropriating faith was, and the answer was, "It is taking a pencil and underscoring all the me's and mine's and my's in the Bible."

Take any word you please that He has spoken and say, "That word is my word." Put your finger on this promise and say, "It is mine." How much of the Word has been endorsed and receipted and said "It is done." How many promises can you subscribe and say,

"Fulfilled to me."

"Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." Don't let your inheritance go by default.

"When faith goes to market it always takes a basket." [\(Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved\)](#)

Judges 18:24

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Ye have taken away my gods, and the priest.

Whatever can be taken from us has the mark and signature of man upon it. Since the Jewish priests were not permitted to continue, by reason of death, it was evident that they were men at the best; and nothing that man makes is adequate to supply the immortal cravings of the soul which, having come from God, craves for God.

Change cannot take away our High Priest. — All around us is in a state of flux. No two days in the most brilliant summer are quite the same. The hues are deepening towards autumnal decay. But He continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood. All that He was years ago, He is still, and will be. What to our forefathers, that to us — "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

The concerns of other souls cannot take Him away. — It is not difficult to conceive of the attention of a human priest being diverted from those who once claimed all his help, to fresh interests and younger generations. But, however many they be who flock as doves to the windows of Christ's mercy, they will never be able to divert an atom of his love and sympathy from us.

Sins and failure cannot rob us of Him. — Indeed, they make Him nearer, dearer, more absolutely necessary. The bands of Danites left Micah wailing when he wanted the comfort of his priest most, lo, he was gone; but neither principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate us from Him who ever liveth to make intercession. "Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Judges 19

Judges 19:1

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel.

It will be sufficient to ponder these words, which occur four times in this book, without reading further in this terrible chapter, which shows the depths of depravity to which man may sink apart from the grace of God. Where Christ is not enthroned as King, drunkenness, impurity, cruelty, selfishness, are supreme, and pursue their ravages unchecked. How different where He reigns in righteousness, and where his will is done as it is done in heaven!

The Book of Judges depicts the state of the heart which has not admitted the Kingship of our Savior. Where there is no recognition of this, and a man does as he likes, then the heart breeds all manner of uncleanness; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

In connection with the present marvellous movement afoot in our colleges, five hundred, Japanese students met recently under the motto, "Make Jesus King." Oh that this might be our life-motto! We must crown Him lord of all.

Let young men and women, who may read these words, specially ponder this suggestion. Perpetual failure in life indicates failure in consecration. If you are continually broken in upon by raids of evil, it is certain that you have never enthroned the Son of God. He is never Savior in the fulness of his power till He is acknowledged King. Directly the coronation has taken place, He assumes the responsibility of putting down all rule, authority, and power; overcoming the evils that had held sway; and bringing every thought into captivity. Such are the warnings and appeals of this chapter and the next. "Make Jesus King."

Judges 19 Hospitality and Inhospitability

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Back to the Bible

Judges 19:5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

In the family life of the ancient Near East, two important and contrasting features stand out in bold relief. They are the hospitality of the common folk and the inhospitality of those who are evil and cruel. The story of Judges 19 portrays both these features.

According to the historical account a certain Levite who resided in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem-judah. Having proven unfaithful to him, the woman returned to her father's house in Bethlehem and there remained four months. After this separation the Levite decided to propose a reconciliation and thus traveled south to Bethlehem to speak with the woman and her father. Apparently the reconciliation was accomplished immediately, for the father was quite happy to see his son-in-law.

The house of the Bethlehem father-in-law is a prime example of hospitality in the ancient Near East. Three days the son-in-law remained in the house and there "they did eat and drink." It was now time to leave. On the fourth day they arose early in the morning in order to escape the punishing rays of the Palestinian sun (Judges 19:5). But the damsel's father invited his son-in-law to stay and have bread with him one more time. Soon the day had worn away and the invitation to tarry all night and wait for the morrow was given. Again the next day he arose early in the morning with the intent to leave, but the same thing happened (Judges 19:8). As the day wore on, the man received a second invitation to tarry throughout the night, but this time he refused. With his wife he left Bethlehem and began to journey, even though he knew he could not reach Mount Ephraim by nightfall.

Bypassing Jerusalem because the Jebusites lived there, the man chose to travel three miles further north to Gibeah, where he anticipated a more hospitable reception. He found none and thus made preparations to spend the night in the street. Finally he and his wife were taken in by a former resident of Ephraim who now lived in Gibeah.

At this point the story begins to sound like Sodom and Gomorrah all over again. Base men, sons of Satan, encircled the house and began to beat on the door, demanding that these men engage in a homosexual relationship with them. Perhaps taking his cue from Lot (cf. Genesis 19:1-11), unbelievably the master of the house offered his daughter and the Levite's concubine to the vicious mob in place of his house guest. This pacified the bisexual mob who abused the concubine all night long. When the Levite rose up in the morning and opened the doors of the house, there he found the woman lying on the threshold (Judges 19:26-27).

Hospitality and inhospitality, both are seen here. What is it that causes one man to open his home in a gesture of hospitality and another man to beat down the door of a home to perform an act of homosexuality? What brings one man to do what is delightful in the eyes of God and another to do what is despicable in the eyes of God? Perhaps the answer is that we are made in the image of God and therefore have a desire to do good but have been marred by our own sin and have an innate bent toward evil. The Bethlehem father-in-law and the Ephraimite from Gibeah both sought to please others. The homosexual mob of Gibeah sought only to please themselves. Seeking one's own pleasure at the expense of all others arises out of a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There is no control over such a heart, only a cure found in the grace of salvation. ([Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

MORNING HYMN

Now incline me to repent,
Let me now my sins lament;
Now my foul revolt deplore,
Weep, believe, and sin no more.

([Play Depth of Mercy](#))

Judges 20

Judges 20:13

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

And put away evil from Israel.

The earnestness and promptness with which Israel dealt with and put away this evil thing were very commendable. They had gathered from all the land, even from Gilead beyond the Jordan. They were knit together in a perfect unity of feeling and action. They resolved to subordinate all things beside to the excision of this evil.

So must it be in the Church. The Lord Himself took Ananias and Sapphira out of the infant Church, and the Apostle very earnestly besought and commanded the Corinthians to put away from among them the wicked person, who had committed a sin that would not be named among the Gentiles. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

At the close of this age God will send forth his angels, to sever the wicked from among the just, and to cast them into the furnace of fire.

In our own life it is impossible altogether to avoid contact with such people. Indeed, to do so, as the Apostle says truly, we must go out of the world. But we can abstain from their friendship and company. It is an altogether different thing to have dealings with a worldly man in business, and to admit him into bosom fellowship and comradeship in our leisure hours. The first is permissible, but not the second; else our companions will seduce us from our loyalty to God. Beware of taking on the color of the ground on which you lie. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Judges 20:29-48

If God is for us, who can be against us? - Romans 8:31

TODAY IN THE WORD

The popular phrase, "I have your back," is intended to let someone know that you're on their side, looking out for them, protecting their vulnerabilities. In today's reading, we might apply this phrase to Israel's battle strategy of using an ambush (see v. 29), but more important, we'll see how it applies to the work of God.

Yesterday we saw that Israel sought the Lord's direction, obeyed His instruction, and then was pummeled by Benjamin. It's important to be honest about this reality: even when we are seeking the Lord, things may not seem to go well. We don't know exactly why God allowed Israel to suffer two massive defeats at the hand of Benjamin. What we do know is that those first two battles weren't the end of the story.

The dramatic battle strategy and details of the action might distract us from what God is doing. Israel had the responsibility to obey God's instruction to fight, but it was God who won the victory (Judges 20:35).

God had faithfully answered the calls of Israel for direction (Judges 20:18, 23, 28). Now He faithfully executed His judgment and gave them victory. God "had their back," and even Benjamin's left-handed sharpshooters were no match for the Lord.

The sin of Gibeah resulted in its total destruction (Judges 20:37). And for standing in solidarity with sin, the entire tribe of Benjamin paid a heavy price. Their fighting force was decimated, their towns were leveled, and even their animals were destroyed (Judges 20:48).

This account raises two issues. First, the wages of sin is death; God cannot allow this to go unpunished (Rom. 6:23). Second, we have an example of Israel dealing with a sinful people and destroying them—unfortunately, it ends up being one of their own tribes instead of the pagan Canaanites. Judges has a sense that this victory comes at the end of a battle that didn't have to happen if Israel had obeyed God from the beginning.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When we face important tests in life, it's completely appropriate to ask the Lord for direction. So what do we do when our situation seems to get worse? First, remember that our current trials are not the end of the story. God is still working. Second, continue to seek His face, pray with other believers, and repent if you are convicted of any sin. Third, hold on to what we know of God: He is gracious, He is faithful, and He will not fail.

Judges 21

Judges 21:7

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

We have sworn by the Lord.

Amid the gross evils of this time, the people of Israel were very tenacious of their vows, which had been ratified in the presence of God, and under the solemn sanctions of the Tabernacle. Because they had sworn not to give their daughters in marriage to Benjamin, they had to devise an expedient to obtain wives for the six hundred who had escaped massacre, that the tribe should not become extinct.

The same spirit was manifested by Jephthah, when he said, "I have opened my mouth to the Lord; I cannot go back." No doubt there was the implied conviction that God would avenge the violation of an oath solemnly taken in his name.

What new emphasis is added by this conception to the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “God, willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” Since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, that He would bless and multiply Abraham and his seed. If then you are of the faith of faithful Abraham, you have the right to claim the fulfillment of God’s promise in this double aspect: He will bless and multiply. And it is impossible for Him to alter or fail in the word He hath spoken.

The Psalmist said that God’s statutes, i.e., the things which He established, were his songs. Surely we have every reason to sing, who know that the covenant of God’s love is as steadfast as his throne. Let us turn his statutes into songs. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises; and we can rejoice that “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” “The word of the Lord endureth for ever.”

Judges 21:1-24

“O Lord, the God of Israel,” they cried, “why has this happened to Israel?” - Judges 21:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his short story, “The Sobbin’ Women,” Stephen Vincent Benet tells the story of women taken to the Oregon Territory in 1850 to be wives for the frontier men. His story inspired the 1954 musical *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and was based on the mythic account of the abduction of the Sabine women by the early Romans.

The problem of finding suitable wives wasn’t isolated to Romans or American pioneers. After the sin of Gibeah and civil war, the men of Benjamin found themselves in this predicament as well. The rest of Israel had sworn not to give their daughters to marry anyone from Benjamin (Jdg 21:1; cf. Deut. 7:1-3). But they weren’t happy with the result: with no wives, the tribe of Benjamin would soon die out. The Twelve Tribes of Israel would be forever reduced.

In order to have the right perspective on events in this chapter, we must read the last verse, an echo of the theme of these last chapters in the book: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Jdg 21:25). The writer is recounting this story as yet another example of the chaos and confusion that pervaded Israel during this leadership vacuum.

Not everything that Israel did is necessarily wrong; the writer doesn’t say that. Based on the sin and the approval of sin demonstrated by Benjamin, they deserved the harsh oath taken against them. And Israel’s compassion for one of their own—a tribe of God’s own people—is understandable. But sin often creates messy situations. Israel could only keep the oath if they allowed Benjamin to abduct the girls of Shiloh, for then their fathers hadn’t really given them away to marry (Jdg 21:22).

Miraculously, we still see God’s grace. He allowed Benjamin to survive, instead of being destroyed like Sodom. Indeed, despite their sin, rebellion, idolatry, chaos, and ethical lapses, He had allowed Israel to survive. As we shall see in the next few days, He was working out His plan of salvation even in the darkest days.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

At some point in our spiritual lives, we will go through dark times. If you haven’t yet encountered a challenging period—whether a battle with sin or a struggle with difficult circumstances—prepare yourself through the disciplines of prayer and Bible study. If you are in the middle of dark days, lean on the Lord and pray that He will show you His light. And if you have come through darkness, praise the Lord and encourage others by sharing your story of His grace.

Jdg 21:25 The Owner’s Manual

Read: Psalm 119:1-8 | Bible in a Year: Jeremiah 51-52; Hebrews 9

Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! —Psalm 119:5

The Bible is much like the owner’s manual of a car. If the driver doesn’t service his automobile according to the instructions in the little book in the glove compartment, he’s going to run into trouble. But if he carefully follows that guide, he should enjoy many trouble-free miles.

J. I. Packer changes the analogy but makes the same point. In his book *Knowing Man*, he says, “Keep the law, and in thus serving God you find freedom and delight, because human nature is programmed for fulfillment through obedience.”

We don’t know what circumstances motivated the author of Psalm 119. No doubt he was keenly aware of the consequences of disobedience, but I believe he saw the positive side as well. He knew that the statutes and precepts of God held the key to a full and happy life.

We are living in a time when people everywhere are doing what is right in their own eyes (Jdg 21:25). Life has become cheapened, debased, and joyless. What's needed is a return to the moral standards of Scripture.

If we want our life to run well, even through stormy situations and rough circumstances, we must take the time to study the "Owner's Manual."

Blessed book, God's Living Book,

Through its pages help me look;

May I behold from day to day

New light to guide me in the way. —McClelland

Your life will run smoother if you go by "The Book."