

Ehud

Judges 3:12-30

Introduction

1. The book of Judges takes its name from the thirteen men God raised up to deliver Israel over the turbulent years following the death of Joshua which saw the people subjugated by one foreign power as a consequence and punishment for their unfaithfulness to God – Note Judges 2:11-19
 - a. This tells us of another theme of the book which is the cycle of sin that came to characterize the people of God during this period.
 - b. The people sin – God punishes them through foreign oppression – people cry to God in repentance – God raises up a deliverer / land enjoys rest.
 - c. Complacency leads to compromise. Sin brings bondage. Misery drives us to repentance. God grants relief.
 - d. These things are written as a reminder and a lesson for us today; let us take note – Rom. 15:4
2. In our story Israel has fallen into sin again and God in judgment sends against them Eglon, the king of Moab, a region to the south of Palestine.
 - a. In our passage, Israel has once again fallen into sin. In judgment, God allows Eglon, king of Moab, to oppress them. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew, making them distant relatives of Israel. Through Israel’s disobedience and God’s providence, Eglon forms an alliance with the Ammonites and Amalekites. Together they conquer Israel, and the people remain in subjection for eighteen long years.
 - b. Eighteen years. Why so long before they cried out? Do we similarly delay to repent?

I. Ehud – Judges 3:15

- A. Ehud is introduced briefly but meaningfully. He was a Benjamite and left-handed. He is an unlikely hero for a number of reasons.
 1. He was from one of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, second behind Manasseh – Numbers 1:34-37
 - a. If you were selecting a national deliverer, you might choose from a larger or more militarily distinguished tribe.
 - b. In fact, the Benjamites had earlier failed to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem (Judges 1:21). They were not known for dominance or strength at this point in Israel’s history.
 2. The term translated “left-handed” may imply that Ehud’s right hand was restricted or disabled. In a culture that valued physical strength and ability—especially right-handedness—this would have marked him as deficient.
 - a. Elsewhere, Benjamites are described as ambidextrous warriors (Judges 20:16; 1 Chronicles 12:2).
 - b. But here the language may suggest limitation rather than skill.
 3. If so, Ehud was physically disadvantaged. And yet God chose him.
 - a. God has never been impressed by what impresses people. He consistently chooses servants the world would overlook so that His power — not human ability — is clearly seen.
 - b. That truth should both comfort and challenge us. Comfort, because our weaknesses do not disqualify us. Challenge, because we can no longer use them as excuses.

II. Ehud – King’s Assassination and Overthrow of Israel’s Oppressors – Judges 3:16-30

- A. As a vassal state, Israel was required to send yearly tribute to King Eglon—produce, livestock, and wealth. This tribute mission becomes the stage for God’s deliverance.
 1. Some suggested that rather than being called by God that Ehud took the role of judge upon himself and thus show a flaw in his character – cp. Judges 3:10; :31 cp. 4:6
 2. Yet, the conspiracy that was formed seems to involve a wider group of conspirators and that all understood that Ehud was God’s chosen instrument – cp. 3:15-16
- B. Ehud’s bravery is seen in the fact that he would lead from the front – he bring the tribute and kill the king with a knife crafted by himself large enough to inflict a fatal wound but small enough to conceal on his body without detection.

- C. After presenting the tribute to Eglon, described as “a very fat man”, Ehud dismisses his men and returns to Eglon with a claim “I have a secret message for you, O king.” - vs.17
1. When Ehud tells the king he has a message from God, Eglon dismisses his attendants. Alone and vulnerable, he receives judgment.
 2. Having sent away his men, the king is alone with Ehud who reaches down to his right thigh, pulls out a dagger, which he plunges into deep into the king, whose ‘fat’ swallows up the knife, releasing refuse from his gut, leading to a horribly low and certain death.
 3. With the king assassinated and the doors to his chamber firmly locked this gives Ehud enough time to make good his escape and emboldened by the success of his secret mission rallies the Israel to follow and overthrow the Moabite army
- E. The land then had rest for eighty years.

III. Ehud – Lessons for us Today

A. God uses people, even those with limitations

1. Ehud could have made excuses and said: “I’m from the wrong tribe”, “I have a disability”, “Send someone else”.
2. He could have used his inability in this area as a reason for doing nothing. Instead he gave what could be used in the Lord’s service. Ehud challenges those of us who only focus on our weaknesses and use them as excuses for not taking part. Instead he offered what he had.
3. How often do we disqualify ourselves? How often do we hide behind perceived weaknesses?
4. God is not hindered by weakness – 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 2 Cor. 12:8-10
 - a. Moses protested his speech
 - b. Rahab – harlot – secured safety of those from Israel / saved her family from destruction
 - c. Gideon – ‘my family is least among tribe; I am youngest in the family’ – one of greatest judges.
 - d. Peter – impulsive / hot head – yet became a leader
5. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 that God chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong. In 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, he writes that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.
6. It is not about our ability. It is about God’s ability. Stop letting your limitations silence your obedience.

B. Faith turns weakness into victory

1. Ehud didn’t just assassinate a king — he led a nation. That takes faith.
2. Faith isn’t head knowledge or mere belief. It’s active trust (Hebrews 11:1, 6).
 - d. Noah built for a century
 - f. Abraham left everything familiar
 - g. David faced a giant
 - h. Moses led a stubborn people
3. Faith is what overcomes the world (1 John 5:4–5).
 - a. The question is not whether faith worked for them.
 - b. The question is whether it is working in us.
 - c. Are we showing faith when the odds are against us? When obedience cost us something?

Conclusion

1. Ehud’s story confronts us with some uncomfortable questions:
 - a. What excuses have we been hiding behind?
 - d. What weaknesses have we allowed to silence our obedience?
 - e. How long will we stay in cycles of sin before we cry out to God?
2. Will we offer God our limitations, or keep offering Him our excuses?