

ReGroups 8/18/24

Overcoming the Odds - Judges 3

Ready to Pounce

We've established that Israel's devotion to God was insincere in the days following their conquest. It would have been critical that they maintain a healthy habit of worship, in order to keep their blessings in perspective and properly understand how they might be good stewards. Without this sort of commitment, they would be especially vulnerable against the enemies of God. Even when we are on our game, we are going to face temptation and tests. After all, the devil came against *Jesus* knowing good and well that He wouldn't bend or break. If **Luke 4:13** describes Satan's approach towards Jesus, why should we expect anything different? The book of Judges makes it clear that Israel was most susceptible to the Devil and his schemes because they were not walking with the Lord. But we must not presume that even if we are seeking God as we should, that temptations won't arise. Jesus made it clear, "*Temptations to sin are sure to come...*" (Luke 17:1)

With these thoughts in mind, read the following Scriptures and discuss the need to guard our hearts:

- **Genesis 4:7** - How might we "master" sin? Had Cain been aware of his own weaknesses and trigger-points, do you think he could have avoided such a fatal encounter with Abel?

- **Luke 22:3-6** - Satan entered Judas' heart as if the door was wide open, with a greeting sign to welcome him in. Clearly Judas' heart was not right with God, which allowed for him to be an available-vessel for Satan to fill and use.

- **Luke 22:31-34** - Peter's heart wasn't as vulnerable as Judas', but that didn't stop Satan from demanding and plotting to bring him down. How does Peter's arrogance and pride set him up for his greatest fumble?
- **1 Peter 5:8-9** - Can you detect the sense of urgency in Peter's words? Have you ever underestimated the devil?

Like Clockwork

Judges 3:12-14 reveals that Israel faced off against some pretty familiar foes. Like storm clouds on a humid summer afternoon, Israel going to war against Moab, Ammon, or Amalek isn't too surprising. Moab was a perennial enemy of Israel in the Old Testament era.

Most of our weaknesses and areas of vulnerability are not surprising nor new to us. We know our stumbling blocks. What matters most is whether or not we know that Jesus is our refuge and our help as we face them.

- **1 Corinthians 10:13** promises us that God will give us the strength to endure and escape even the greatest of temptations. Are you quick to lean on God when you're being tested? What happens when we rely on our weak flesh?
- **Revelation 12:11** shows us a universal path forward amidst any trial. How does claiming the blood of Jesus and reciting His Word set us free?

Never Tell Me The Odds

The next deliverer is introduced in **Judges 3:15-23**. Read this passage and discuss the colorful descriptions of the people involved. Ehud is described as a "left-handed" man, which may seem like an odd thing to point out.

Obviously norms and perspectives were different in this ancient world, but being left-handed can't possibly mean Ehud was some kind of enigma. Upon closer look, the Hebrew text reveals that the actual description is this: "***a man with a restricted right hand***". Ehud was left-handed because his right hand was nonfunctional. Whether maimed or disabled, Ehud essentially had one arm tied behind his back.

Needless to say, he wasn't your typical knight in shining armor. God raises up the most unlikely of heroes to accomplish His Kingdom work. Why? Well, check out some of the reasons below:

- **Exodus 7:5** - God used the tiny slave-state of Israel to topple the empire of Egypt. By using the small and insignificant, it would be obvious that there *must* be a great and powerful God behind them.
- **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** - This isn't to say that smart, resourceful people can't be used by God. However, if we find our identity and worth in our skills, blessings, and treasures - we may well render ourselves unfit to serve the Lord. He will not share His glory with someone who's quick to absorb it all for themselves

By unsheathing his sword from his right leg, the Moabite king would've been caught completely off guard. What many assumed was a disability and a weakness, turned out to be a great ally and strength for Ehud.

The same can be said for any of us. Our greatest weaknesses may channel God's great strength in our lives, see **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**.

Read **Judges 3:26-30** to see how this story concludes. What stands out to you about Israel's unlikely victory over the Moabites?

Little Is Much

Judges 3:31 tells us of another deliverer named Shamgar. We don't get much information, but what we have once again emphasizes what God can do through any of us. Shamgar was able to serve the Lord and fight off his enemies with *a piece of farm equipment*. What may seem small or insignificant in our hands becomes something great in the hands of God.

Read **Exodus 4:1-5** and discuss how God can ordinary people and things and do extraordinary things with them. What do you have that could be used to serve God if dedicated and surrendered to Him?