

The Element Of Surprise

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Date: 24 September 2023

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[0 : 00] It was Homer, who was the Greek poet, Homer, who was the first one to tell the mythical story of the Trojan horse. Do you know that story?

As the story goes, the Greeks unsuccessfully sieged the city of Troy for about 10 years. But Odysseus had devised a brilliant plan to finally take the city and bring a close to the Trojan War. And you know what he did? His idea was to trick the Trojans into thinking that he'd given up on the battle, that he'd given up on seizing the city. So he had a huge wooden horse constructed, according to the myth.

He had a huge wooden horse constructed, and they left it outside of the city of Troy as if it was a gift to the goddess Athena. And then after they leave the horse outside of the city, of course, that doesn't mean anything in and of itself, until the Trojans look out from the city.

And they find that Odysseus and all of the soldiers have boarded the ships in the water, and they are actively sailing away. And as they see the ships of soldiers sailing away from Troy, they feel a sense of safety and victory.

[1 : 15] So they go out and they bring the giant wooden horse inside the city as their victory trophy, and they celebrate and they feast. And they believe this 10-year war has finally come to an end.

But what they did not know is that hidden inside of that giant wooden horse was a special company of trained soldiers who, after everyone went to bed and night had fallen and people felt comfortable and safe in their homes, they slipped out of the giant wooden horse and they went to the gates of the city and they opened them from the inside.

And lo and behold, the Grecian ships had sailed back to Troy under cover of night. And at that moment, all of the Grecian soldiers invade the city of Troy, and this 10-year siege comes to an end. Trojans were defeated from the inside rather than the outside. And for them, for the Greeks, victory was won through the element of surprise.

That's the point of the story, right? There's the element of the surprise coming in and unexpected results come as a result of what was happening in the story. Well, this dynamic of surprise, this element of surprise, is a central theme to the Ahud cycle of Judges chapter 3.

[2 : 35] Everything about this, if you sit down and you really begin to think about it, think it through, everything about this story is surprising. It's unexpected. Israel's oppressor is an unexpected foe for many reasons, but most notably in this passage, he's an unusual and unexpected foe because he's caricatured really as a total buffoon.

There is no hiding the fact of what the author of Judges' thoughts are on this King Eglon from Moab. He goes out of his way to make this man look as foolish as he can possibly make him look.

And there's other reasons for us to consider him as being a surprising foe, and we'll get to that in a minute, but that's at least part of it. Ahud is a surprising figure in the story as well.

Not only is he unique among the judges for his particular skill set, but his entire strategy for victory is dedicated and relies on the element of surprise.

He acts alone. He needs for Eglon to trust him. And this element of surprise comes to the surface again. And then undoubtedly, the most astonishing feature of all of these narratives is how God continually pours out mercy and grace on people who continually turn away from him to pursue other gods.

[4 : 07] Everything about this is unexpected. Everything about it is surprising. It's exciting, but surprising. The Eod Psycho is a remarkably entertaining story.

It's filled with fascinating characters and plot lines, but it's more than a story. That's the thing. It's not just a story. Every passage of Scripture we believe is inspired by God, that it serves a particular purpose in his revelation to us.

None of it is wasted space. None of it is gap filler in God's mind. It is all revelation. It is all meant for us to understand something particular about God and about his plan of redemption and the way that he works in salvation.

And this narrative, it not only contains every facet of the pattern that we find in chapter 2, but it is God's salvation of his covenant people that carries the emphasis in the Ahud cycle.

There's not a huge amount of emphasis on Israel's sin. There's not a huge amount of emphasis on battles that were fought or things that came as a result. There is a massive emphasis on the fact that God uses Ahud to deliver his people.

[5 : 23] 16 of the 19 verses is dedicated specifically to the way that God delivered Israel. What we need to see in this text is not a caricature of a king, nor is it the efforts of an assassin that we are to primarily see.

We need to set our eyes on the God who delivers his people in extravagant and sometimes unexpected ways.

That's what I want us to think about this morning. Here's the first surprise that I want you to see. I want you to see the surprising consequences of sin. The surprising consequences of sin.

Look with me again at verse 12. The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of Palms. And the people of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, for 18 years.

[6 : 29] Now, the fact that there are consequences to sin is not a surprising thing. That's not what we're surprised by here. It's not unexpected.

We know that, right? What is surprising is how quickly we tend to turn back to sinful practices after already having dealt with their effects.

Twice we're told in verse 12 that the people again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So that after a relatively short time period, the Israelites had again forgotten Yahweh and were following wholeheartedly after the ways of the world.

We're not far removed from the Othniel cycle. And they've already moved to do the same exact thing that they were doing before. They have left Yahweh. They've left worship of Yahweh.

They're no longer committed in any way to obeying his law. And they have turned once again to the bells. This issue of worship comes to the surface once again.

[7 : 38] We don't have to look very far to see this same pattern in our own lives. How many times do we have to deal with the destructive consequences of sin before we finally learn to live in righteousness?

How many relationships must we destroy before we finally realize that we've got to get a grip on our anger or we've got to get a grip on our tongues? How many times are we going to go through ups and downs in our relationship with our spouses because we can't control our minds?

We can't control where we're putting our eyes over and over. We go through these cycles, don't we? We're just like Israel. We cry out for God's deliverance when his correction comes and then he delivers us and he provides mercy and he gives us forgiveness and we rest in those things for a little while until the ways of the world once again become more attractive to us.

Then God's ways are attractive to us. We pursue them all over again. The consequences themselves aren't surprising. What's surprising is that the consequences were necessary. And we're going to find it over and over and over in the book of Judges just like we find it over and over and over in our lives as well.

Sometimes the particular instrument of judgment can come as a surprise as well. Moab, the Moabites are an unforeseen foe in this narrative.

[9 : 04] Kind of like Cushan Rishathame of the earlier cycle, they were not inhabitants of Canaan. Sometimes we get in our mind that all of the enemies that Israel is fighting in this moment are the enemies that God left in the land.

Well, the Moabites weren't ever, they weren't ever inhabitants of Canaan. Their land was outside of Canaan. They're not listed in the group of nations in chapter two that, or at the beginning of chapter three, that God intentionally leaves in the land to test Israel.

Moab's not a part of that. They kind of come out of nowhere here. Not only that, but they're distant relatives of Israel. The Moabites were descendants from Abraham's nephew Lot.

We don't expect this particular instrument of judgment in the story. But then Eglon, the king of Moab, is a surprising weapon of God's judgment.

As I said, the author really goes through great lengths in this story to mock this particular king. Even the language of verses 12 and 13 here imply his weakness as a leader.

[10:11] I want you to think about it in contrast to who we studied last week, Cushan Rishathame. Cushan Rishathame appears to be a mighty leader whom God allows to overcome Israel temporarily.

Eglon, on the other hand, appears to be a weak leader who must be uniquely strengthened by God in order to succeed at all.

It's a very different scenario here. And all of this is meant to embarrass Israel. Surrounding nations used to melt in fear over Israel and their God.

But now they're being conquered by the most unlikely of kings. Again, God is the primary agent of activity in these cycles.

He's working out his particular plan in unique and unexpected ways. And even the instrument of judgment comes as a bit of a surprise. A surprising consequence in that sense.

[11:13] With God's help, Eglon joins forces with the Ammonites and the Amalekites and succeeded in conquering the city of Palms or the city of Jericho.

Or is maybe at least trying to rebuild the city of Jericho at this point. So it's not that Israel is being prevented from moving forward in the possession of Canaan.

This is a complete reversal of conquest. This is reversal. It was Jericho where God does this incredible work on behalf of the Joshua generation.

You remember it. The people of Israel, they march for seven days around the city. And then God miraculously and powerfully destroys the walls. And the people go in and they're able to conquer the city. An amazing story.

An amazing moment coming into the land of Canaan. And God proving that he's going to fulfill his promise to his people. And now we get to this chapter and we find that it's in this same place.

[12:11] That God has taken away this very area, this very region. That was so powerfully given to his people before. It's not just that Israel has grown to be able to stop.

They can't move forward anymore in their conquest of the land. Now they're losing land. They're moving backwards. It's conquest reversal. And this is always the case when we choose to live in sin.

Always. It doesn't merely prevent us from moving forward in our walk with God. It puts us in reverse.

Moving us away from God. Moving us away from his blessing. Remember here, their sin is a... The way it's presented in the book of Judges, it's a sin of worship.

It's a sin of the heart. The whole direction of their lives. Their heart, their soul, their mind, and their strength was not being dedicated to Yahweh.

[13:14] Their heart and their soul and their mind and strength is now being dedicated to the bells, to the culture around them, to all the things that they wanted. This isn't just about acts of sin.

It is about the internal pursuit of one's life, which produces then sinful behavior. And when we live that way, it's not just about when we mess up sometimes.

Some of us are living our lives in a complete internal disposition that is not concerned about obeying God. We're not concerned about knowing God. We're not concerned about worshipping Him.

We're just concerned about ourselves. We just want to do our own thing. We just want to follow our own way. This is more than I told a lie this week or I raised my voice at my kids.

This is not what's happening here. This is complete reversal because the people are completely reversing course in their entire worship, their entire purpose and pursuit of life.

[14:11] And this is exactly what happens to us when we take this same reversal, of course. And we start to turn away from a pursuit of God.

We start to pursue anything else that we can possibly pursue. It's not just that God holds our spot in line there so that whenever we're ready, we just pick up where we left off.

You can't do that when you live in sin like this. It doesn't work that way. You start to move backwards. We call this apostasy. It's why the writer of Hebrews warns over and over and over about this particular way of sin.

It's where Israel's at. And they're facing the consequences of this sin. And there's surprising consequences, but necessary ones. Let's move on.

Secondly, I want you to see the surprising choice of Savior. A surprising choice of Savior. Now, Ahud stands out in this book due to his unique set of skills and method of deliverance.

[15:20] I want you to think about it. Whatever you know about judges, you will surely know that they generally act as leaders of armies. That was Othniel's case. It's going to be Barak's case in the next story.

It's going to be the case with Gideon and so on, Jephthah, as we go on through. Samson's a little bit different, but basically the same. The only one that stands out as different than that is Ahud. He doesn't act as a leader of an army primarily.

He acts as a rogue assassin. He's like the James Bond of the book of Judges. He's got a license to kill. And he mostly acts alone.

And to many people, his methods are objectionable. Maybe even to you, as we read through that story, maybe you cringe a little bit that God would include this in the Bible. That we would look at this with any kind of positive bent at all, right?

This makes Ahud a surprising choice for God to use. But again, God delivers his people often in unexpected ways, doesn't he? Let's just work through the story a little bit.

[16:23] First, I want you to see Ahud the man. Ahud the man. Verse 15. Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer. Ahud, the son of Gerah, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man.

And the people sent tribute by him to Eglon, the king of Moab. It's this brief description of Ahud that sets the stage for what's about to unfold with Eglon.

And there's a few things we need to note before we move forward. First, he is God's deliverer. He's God's chosen deliverer, meaning that the author intends for us to see the ultimate agent of salvation to be the Lord God, not Ahud.

Ahud. And we're going to say this every week. In every study, we're going to say the same thing because it's so important for us to see. If we come here and we just get so fascinated by Ahud that we want to put Ahud's poster up in our bedrooms now, then we've missed the point.

This is not about Ahud delivering Israel. This is about the Lord delivering people. And Ahud is just the instrument that he has chosen to use. It was God who strengthens Eglon to prevail against Israel, and it's God who empowers Ahud to overcome Moab.

[17:39] So as we read what transpires between the two men, we need to understand that God is acting sovereignly over all of it. For every event of their lives and over every event of mine in your life as well.

That's the first thing. The second thing I want you to see is that God uniquely prepared Ahud for this task. And we see that especially in the note of Ahud being left-handed.

Left-handed. This is how we typically understand Ahud. Well, that's the left-handed guy. I spoke to a guy at a meeting earlier this weekend, and he was asking me where I was preaching from right now.

And I sent him to Judges, and this Sunday we're in Judges chapter 3 with Ahud. And the first thing he says, oh, the left-handed guy. That's how we know him, right? There's a reason we know him as the left-handed guy.

That's the thing God uses about him to bring deliverance for his people. Now, what does this actually mean here? Is it just like, what's the whole point of bringing this up here?

[18:41] Why do we need to know which dominant hand he had? We need to think about this for a moment because it matters to the story. Some people have suggested that Ahud was maybe crippled or disabled in his right hand.

I don't find that convincing. I don't think that's the case for a couple of reasons. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, it's called the Septuagint. It translates this with the word ambidextrous, right?

Ambidextrous, which means usefulness, equally useful with both hands. But then support for this comes later in the book as well. I think the verse is on the screen for you.

In Judges chapter 20 and verse 16, this is what it says about a group of Benjaminite soldiers. Among all of these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed.

And in their being left-handed, it describes it this way. Everyone could sling a stone at a hare and not miss. Clearly, this is not to be understood as a disability.

[19 : 42] This is a trained proficiency for hunting and fighting. That's what this is a reference to. It's not that he was dominant in his left hand.

It's that he could use either hand. And that was unusual for them, just like it's unusual for us today. There's not many switch hitters playing baseball, right? There are very few.

Ahud's a switch hitter. He can do that. He can handle that. So God uses him. Now, at some point along the way in his life, Ahud began training himself to skillfully use both hands.

And that unique facet of his life was used to bring deliverance to Israel and bring glory to God. Do you see where I'm going with this? Do you see it yet?

I find this wonderfully encouraging. I hope you do too. That God orchestrates the minutest details of our lives so that we may glorify him best in the ways that he has uniquely gifted us in the unique qualities of what make us who we are.

[20 : 55] I find this incredibly encouraging. He is God of the little things. And when we submit our lives, our whole self to him for living for his purposes, he uses our individual interests.

He uses our individual skills and abilities to benefit his people and to glorify his name. How many times have you ever sat in a room of people and something needed to be done and you felt totally intimidated by the other people in the room?

And you sit down and you look around and you say, I'm not like these people. I can't communicate like this person. I'm not strong like this person. I'm not witty like this person. And I don't have all the other things.

In fact, I'm a little strange, to be honest with you. I'm a little weird. Tom raises his hand. We all know Tom's the weird one here. You know what that's like. We get insecure about who we are, right?

And what do we do when we get insecure about who we are? We try to be like everybody else. We try to find somebody and we mirror our lives after then and we try to be like them and then we try to cover up who it is.

[22 : 00] And God's not interested in that. This is a helpful reminder that we only need to be who God created us to be to experience joy and usefulness in God's plan.

Young people, listen to me. Teenagers, kids, give me your eyes for just a second. You don't need to be anybody else. God created you to be you.

He gave you unique characteristics to your personality. He gave you unique interest. He's going to develop in you unique skill sets that you think he has nothing else to do with in your life.

That this is just the path that you've chosen. But I'm telling you, he's going to oversee the minutest details of your life just in the way that he's overseeing the minutest details of Ahud's life. And in the end, you don't need to be somebody else to be used by God.

You only need to live out your unique life for his honor and for his glory. And when you do that, you'll be an Ahud.

[23 : 02] You may not be ambidextrous and you may not have to kill a fat king. But the Lord will find a way to use you in this church. It doesn't matter if you're an adult or a kid or who you are.

It doesn't matter. God will use you, the unique you, to deliver his people, to build up his people, and ultimately to glorify his name.

So whoever you are and whatever you are, be that for the glory of God. And let him use your life.

That's Ahud the man. Now let's look quickly at Ahud the assassin.

Ahud the assassin. Verse 16. This is where it gets exciting, guys. Ahud made for himself a sword with two edges. This is a dagger, 18 inches in length.

And he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. So if you're trying to picture this in your head, as you understand the details of the story working out here, he fashions this himself. He's not involving other people.

[24 : 02] He does this himself. He probably doesn't put a cross piece on the dagger because he knows he's going to have to jab and run. That's the goal of the game here. It needs to be concealable.

It doesn't need to stick out in any way. It's probably basically just a straight sword with no cross piece in the middle. He fashions it about 18 inches in length. And he presented the tribute to Eglon,

king of Moab.

Now this is interesting. The people of Israel have no idea what Ahud is doing. He's acting alone. He's a rogue assassin. Yet God sees fit to orchestrate the events of Ahud's life so that Ahud is chosen by the leaders of Israel to send their taxes to Eglon, to present tribute to Eglon.

Interesting the way the Lord works, right? Now Eglon was a very fat man. The implication being here that he had grown fat because of his oppression of the Israelites.

He's humiliated these people. And when Ahud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people that carried the tribute. He's not involving anyone else.

[25 : 13] And he himself turns back at the idols near Gilgal and he says, I have a secret message for you, O king. And the king commanded silence and all his attendants went out from his presence.

Now there's so much we could get into here and I will spare you and let you study it out for yourselves. You're reasonable people to do that. But I want you to just see how the author is contrasting the character of these two men.

Okay? They're exact opposites here. Eglon is presented as a foolish glutton who enjoys the luxuries he's been afforded through oppressing Israel.

That's how he's presented here. And again, the implication is that he has grown obese because of the extreme taxation that he has enforced on those subjugated to his rule.

Everything he does here in this text is careless. He's grown so prideful that he sees no Israelite as a reasonable threat to him.

[26 : 13] So he recklessly sends out all of his guards and he retreats to a private roof chamber alone with Ahud. What are we supposed to see about Eglon?

Eglon is a fool who has now spent 18 years humiliating God's people, extorting them. That's who Eglon is.

Now, Ahud is completely different from that. He's the antithesis of Eglon. Ahud is clever. He's calculated as he plans his assassination of the king.

He was careful not to include other people in his plan, else it would be discovered potentially or someone else would get hurt. He acts entirely alone. He fashions a dagger that's large enough to be fatal, but small enough to be concealed on his thigh.

But he doesn't go with the right hand. He goes with the left hand. Why? Because the left hand would have been unanticipated by anyone who might have stopped him. So he conceals it on his right thigh.

[27 : 20] He's clever. He's calculated. He took advantage of his ambidexterity. Something the guards wouldn't have thought about.

And he executed the assault at precisely the right time. These two men couldn't have been more different. I think we need to see something in that. I think the author intends for us to see such a marked difference between those who belong to God and those who do not.

It's the way the Lord's working out his plan here. Look at verse 20. And Ahud came to him and he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ahud said, I have a message from God for you. And he arose from his seat.

Ahud reached with his left hand. He took the sword from his right thigh and he thrust it into Eglon's belly. Think about this. A potential oracle from a God would have been taken very seriously by any king of that time.

There's no atheist in antiquity. Everybody has a God. Everybody believes in multiple gods. So it's not that they've got a problem with Yahweh. They just don't like the exclusivity claim that the Jews have with him.

[28 : 26] It's the same thing with our pluralistic environment today. It's the same thing with Eglon. Somebody comes and says, I have a secret message for you from God. He's going to listen because he thinks this is good news for him.

Or at least he needs to care about it. And Eglon played right into Ahud's hand. God's man was able to escape an arm.

You see, what Eglon didn't realize is that there was actually a message from Yahweh. But what he didn't realize is that the message was a sword. Two-edged sword. As soon as he begins to stand up as if to receive this in some type of reverential manner, Ahud takes advantage of the moment and immediately thrust his dagger in.

A fatal blow to the fat king of Moab. And the details here of what happened in his death. Why are they recorded? Why are they so graphic? Well, they're meant to humiliate him. They're meant to humiliate the Moabites in the same way they had been humiliating the Israelites. For 18 years, they've humiliated the people of Israel.

[29 : 31] Literally growing fat on extortion. He and the Moabites grew very prideful. But in the end, their king, their savior, was reduced to a pile of fat and excrement.

God may use this wicked world to correct his people. No wicked ever goes unpunished. God always answers last.

He always wins victory. We've seen Ahud the man. We've seen Ahud the assassin. But what about the true and better Ahud?

That's the common theme through all of these stories, right? They point us to Jesus. Jesus is the true and better Ahud who does not initiate victory by taking a king's life, but giving his own life as a king.

Ahud's unique ambidexterity led to temporary deliverance from Israel. But what Jesus does in his righteousness, not in any physical ability, but in his righteousness brings eternal salvation for all who believe and follow him.

[30 : 48] The Ahud story makes a mockery of the Moabite king, but Jesus defeats and humiliates a far greater enemy, death and hell and spiritual powers that work against us.

Isn't this Paul's point in Colossians 2? When he says, You who were dead in your trespasses, the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive with him, having forgiven us all trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

And how did he do it? This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Through the death of our king, we receive life. But our king doesn't stay dead.

Our king comes back to life. And then what does Paul say he does? He disarms the rulers and authorities, and he puts them to open shame, triumphing over them.

I know the ladies just studied this in their Phoebe Collective meeting a couple of Saturdays ago.

This is a picture of a Roman army coming back into a city after winning great victory and literally putting the kings, the powers that were against them, on public display, in public shame.

[31 : 58] We get to the Ahud story and we see the author is putting the Moabites, or putting Eglon in public shame, and then we see Jesus does the same thing. He humiliates the enemies that are fighting against us, the powers of this world.

Ahud is a surprising savior. So is Jesus. That's what Isaiah says. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him.

Finally, let's look at the surprising nature of salvation. So we've seen the surprising consequences of sin. We see the surprising choice of savior, God's deliverer. Now let's just consider this salvation and the way that it's worked out here.

Final paragraph here paints a vivid picture of God's work in salvation. And just as we find those elements of surprise in other places, there is a measure of surprise regarding the simplicity of salvation here.

It's very plain. We tend to complicate things, at least I do, and we tend to complicate salvation even with religious works or doctrinal mystery.

[33 : 11] But it's actually quite simple. And there's two things about God's salvation here that I want to point out to you. Number one, salvation is conditioned on faith. Salvation is conditioned on faith.

Verse 26, Ahud escaped while they delayed and passed beyond the idols, escaped to Sarai. When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was their leader.

And he said to them, listen to what he says, Follow after me, for the Lord has given your enemies, the Moabites, into your hand. So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites, and did not allow anyone to pass on.

So I want you to think about what's happening here. God has graciously provided salvation for Israel through his chosen deliverer, Ahud. But the salvation that they receive in the end of this paragraph is conditioned on their faith in Ahud's message.

Ahud blows the trumpet. They all gather to him in Ephraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and he says, listen, let me tell you what just happened. I went into the fat king of the Moabites, and I did this thing, and now he's dead. Now, God has delivered these people into your hands.

[34 : 34] Let's go take care of business. Now, it wouldn't have been enough for the people of Ephraim, for the people of the hill country, to have intellectually agreed with the fact that Ahud assassinated Eglon.

That's not enough. They couldn't have just stopped in the mountains there and just had a celebration. How wonderful that Ahud did this thing. It's not enough. They needed to act in faith by following Ahud, trusting in God's promise of deliverance through him.

Do you see it there? What if they had just decided, you know what, that's great, Ahud, but I think we're good. We're gonna stay here. You got it. There's no salvation for them if they don't follow him, if they don't believe the message, if they don't receive the Savior God has sent.

And such is the case for us. You can see it. God has graciously provided forgiveness of sin and eternal life through his chosen Savior, Jesus Christ.

But that salvation is conditioned on faith. It is not enough for you to intellectually agree with the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and that he lived a perfect life and that he died on a cross and rose from the dead.

[35 : 50] You can believe all of those things and it doesn't mean anything. Even the devils believe and tremble, James says. They know the truth. They believe the truth. That's not saving faith.

We too must act in faith, following Christ, trusting in God's promise of salvation through him alone. If we don't actually trust him, if we don't actually follow him, then it doesn't matter what we agree to about his life and his story.

This is what the reformers emphasize so much in their standing against the church of Rome. We are justified by faith alone, apart from any works, apart from any intellectual agreement.

It's not that. That's not saving faith. Secondly, salvation is total. It's complete. It's conditioned on faith and it's complete.

[37 : 02] Verse 29, they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men. Not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel and the land had rest for 80 years.

The point is, when God delivers, he delivers all the way. Not a man was left of the Moabites that had invaded Israel's territory. God gave his people total and complete victory, which is also what he's given to us through Christ.

On the cross, Jesus takes the wrath of God for all the sins of his people. Not a single one remains unatoned for. Guilty, vile, helpless we.

Spotless lamb of God was he. Full atonement. Can it be? Hallelujah.

What a Savior. God doesn't give us a partial salvation and then expect us to hold up this certain condition of works or whatever it is in order to fully deliver that salvation later down the road.

[38 : 21] That's not what he does. When Jesus says, it's finished on the cross, he means it's finished. There's nothing left. Everything that must be paid for has been paid for. Does that not come as a comfort to you when you reflect back on the surprising consequences of sin from the beginning of this story and you start to think about all the cycles that you go through?

And you start to think about how much you love Jesus, how grateful you are for them, but then you get a little bit depressed when you think, I'm just as foolish as the Israelites are. And I keep falling over and over and over and my faith isn't as strong as it should be and I've got these other things going on in my life and man, you just wouldn't believe the way I blew it and then you start beating yourself up a little bit and you get discouraged and then you go to this part of the story and you find out, you know what?

There's nothing I can do now to remove myself from the grace of God. Nothing. When Jesus paid the price for your sin, He paid the price for every one of your sins.

Not just what you've committed up to this point, but what you'll commit today and what you'll commit the rest of the way. Isn't that not a blessing? Isn't that not an encouragement that when everybody else looks at us and they think there's no way that person's serious, look at their life, they are an absolute wreck.

That you can look to Jesus in the song that we sing so often, I love the song so much. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free.

[39 : 56] For God the just is satisfied to look at Him and pardon me. Not to look at the best way that I can live up to the Christian standard after my moment of conversion, but He doesn't look at me anymore.

He looks at Him. He looks at Him. This atonement is full. The victory given to Ahud and to Israel is complete. Not a man was left. And if you're a Christian today, if you know Christ, not a sin is left. It's all been paid for. Praise God. Let me finish this way. There's at least two things in this account that are not surprising at all.

First one is that sin kills. That's not surprising at all. We know that. Second one is God saves. God saves.

That's not surprising at all either. That's the point. The problem is, is that we know these two facts so well that we tend to lose sight of their significance from day to day. We forget how offensive our sin is to God.

[40 : 59] How destructive its consequences are to us and to the people around us. But God is so faithful over and over to provide forgiveness and restoration that we sometimes take that for granted as well.

And we need to praise God that he gives us passages like this that help us to see and to understand. Again, it jogs our memory.

Jogs our memory. That yeah, our sin is a big deal. We need to care about that. But we have a Savior unlike any other. So that every time we find ourselves back in one of these cycles, every time we experience his grace, may it produce in us a profound sense of gratitude.

Gratitude. Because our God saves. .