

# Salvation is from the Lord

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, worship team. Good reminder this morning of the songs that we sang, which are kind of an echo of the theme of the passage! or even the book that we're working through.

That second song, Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart. Take and seal it. Seal it for my courts above.

What a gracious God we have. A God that even when we stray, even when we wander, and by the way, even when we actively rebel against Him, there is an invitation.

An invitation that God gives to us to understand who Jesus is, recognize our sin, and come to a place of asking for forgiveness, confessing our sin before Him, believing that Jesus is the only way for us to enjoy the life with God and forgiveness and cleansing from sin and bringing that to Him.

And He delights in forgiveness. He delights in making us one with Him. He delights in drawing us close. And that is the consistent theme throughout the book of Judges.

[ 1 : 19 ] We're going to come to it time and time and time again. We have a God who delights in forgiveness. And one of our stories this morning in the middle section of Judges chapter 3 is a story of a king who's coming from Moab.

Well, Moab, you may or may not be familiar with. Moab was kind of in the region just in front of Jericho. And so when the people of Israel were making their way up through the wilderness and coming into the promised land, they would have stopped right there at Moab.

Kind of trace a straight line from Jerusalem and Jericho straight over to the top part of the Dead Sea and then kind of occupying the region of the Dead Sea just on the eastern side was where Moab was.

So they were one of the closest neighbors but also a proximate enemy. Well, Moab existed because of a descendant of Abraham or kind of part of the family.

Lot was a nephew of Abraham and the descendant of Lot is where we get Moab. And so when Deuteronomy comes into place and the people are ready to make their way into the promised land and Moses is giving his final instructions, we find that those final instructions from Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 5 are actually given right here in the land of Moab.

[ 2 : 50 ] So this is an important place. This is a place of reminder. It's a place of God's covenant promises being captured among the people, reminded among the people so when they enter the promised land, they can remember who they belong to.

It's a reminder to us all as we make our way through this book, the book of Judges, and especially this morning in Judges chapter 3, salvation is from the Lord.

Do you need deliverance today? Do you need rescue? Do you need salvation? Are there things in your life that seem to be falling apart? You need someone to rescue, someone to help?

Well, salvation comes from the Lord. And not just the little things, but also the big things. And the biggest thing is God himself gives his son, Jesus Christ, to provide for our deepest need, our need for a savior, rescue from our sin, the greatest problem that we have, that we bring to the table.

So as we make our way through this chapter, Judges chapter 3, the theme of this chapter is salvation is from the Lord. It's from him.

[ 4 : 05 ] And I would encourage you, if you have your Bibles, to open them with me, Judges chapter 3. And if you're using the Pew Bible, you can find it on page 200. Judges is there on page 200.

We're going to be in Judges chapter 3.

Salvation comes from the Lord. Let me read this opening, these opening couple of verses, and we can see how this is set in place for us. Judges chapter 3, beginning in verse 7, says this, The people of the Lord, excuse me, the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

They forgot the Lord, their God, and they served the Baals and the Ashtoreth. Therefore, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. He sold them into the hand of Cushon Rishathayim, king of Mesopotamia, and the people of Israel served Cushon Rishathayim eight years.

Salvation comes from the Lord, and we're going to see, first of all, it comes when God's people cry out to Him for mercy. They cry out to Him for help. If you want to enjoy and experience salvation and deliverance, it happens only when you cry out to God.

It happens only when you recognize in your own life a need for rescue, and the rescuer is God Himself. You cry out to Him for mercy, and we're going to find through our passage today that God delights in answering and helping His people.

[ 5 : 33 ] But there are things that we need not forget, and the first is this. Do not forget that we live in His sight. If you're going to cry out for mercy, cry out for help, you need to remember that you live in His sight.

Now, that had been something that the people of Israel had forgotten. We find that in the earlier parts of Judges chapter 3, beginning in verse 5. It says, So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and their daughters they took for themselves as wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.

We saw last time that they lived among the people. They were characterized by compromise. They were characterized not by faithful, consistent obedience, seeing it through to the finish line, but when things got hard, when resistance came and opposition was difficult for them, they eased up. They didn't follow through. They were happy to live among the people, and because they lived among the people, then what we find now in Judges chapter 3 is something that will characterize this people, this nation of Israel.

They forgot the Lord. And we find again in verse 7, The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

[ 6 : 55 ] Now, what does that mean? They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Well, we could look throughout the book of Deuteronomy and see this phrase being traced consistently throughout the book, that they were a people that performed wickedness.

They were people who did what in God's sight was wicked. This is a perpetual indictment that God brings against them, and especially against the kings.

We find through the book of Kings 10 times that God says that they did evil in the sight of the Lord. In 2 Kings, we find 28 times where they either did evil or good in the sight of the Lord.

See, God is the evaluator. He is the judge. He is the one to whom we are accountable. And so when we live, when we act, whether it's good or right, we live and act in the sight of the Lord.

It's easy to think and be misled by this phrase, in the sight of the Lord, to suggest maybe there's a time where we could live outside of the sight of the Lord. Maybe there's some things we can do that God can't pay attention to.

[ 8 : 05 ] Maybe there are things that we can do in secret and in private. Well, God makes that quite clear throughout the course of the scriptures. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 14, says this, For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 13, says, And no creature is hidden from his sight. We are all naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Proverbs 15, verse 3, says, The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. In Luke chapter 12, verses 2 and 3, we see this, Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden, that will not be known.

Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light. Whatever you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. Everything that is done is done in the sight of the Lord.

But it's easy for us to forget, isn't it? When we forget that we are in the sight of the Lord, we begin to see in the lives of Israel in this nation, we begin to see the results.

[ 9 : 18 ] When we feel like we can do things that God is unaware of, when we think we can do things in private, when we can do things in secret, then it leads to a certain kind of life. We find that this in the sight of the Lord is a reference to the special relationship that God wanted to have with His people.

The kind of relationship that warranted favor. The kind of relationship that they enjoyed engendered blessing. You're familiar with Numbers chapter 6 verses 24 and 25.

It says this, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

When we are aware of the presence of the Lord, when we are delighted in the favor of God and we participate in the countenance of God, we're looking to please Him, then it leads to a certain kind of life.

You see, Israel had forgotten in this moment that they lived in the sight of the Lord and even though it was a reality, even though it was true, their forgetting led to a posture of rebelling.

[10:32] They need not forget that they lived in the presence of the Lord. Second, don't forget that this is an issue of worship. Forgetting God is an issue of worship.

We find that again in verse 7 of chapter 3. It says, And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord, their God, and served the Baals and the Ashtra.

Israel forgot Yahweh. they forgot the Lord and what happened? It's a reminder to us that forgetting is never neutral. Forgetting is never neutral.

When we choose to forget, we don't awaken our hearts and stimulate ourselves to remembrance. It always leads to some moral decline. It always leads to coasting.

It leads to compromise in our life. And when we choose to forget God, it's never neutral. It begins the slippage of our life.

[11:35] And here it's described in terms of service. This word, this Hebrew word, eved, is to work, to labor, to serve, to be a slave. And so many, a couple of the teens who taught during the week of soccer camp talked about the significance of worship.

That you are always worshiping. You want to just worship here in church? You don't worship when you're singing songs and playing music or reading the Bible or deciding to pray in private.

That is worship, but worship happens through the course of life. 1 Corinthians 10 and 31, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you do all to the glory of God.

That's our worship. That's our posture. That's our service to God. That's the way we show affection for Him, devotion to Him, love for Him. It is our worship.

This was a people who worshiped, but their worshiping was corrupted. It was polluted. Instead of worshiping God, they chose to worship the Baals and the Asherah.

[12:43] They went after them. They abandoned God. They bowed down to them. They provoked God to anger. We find the posture of their heart was one of worship.

Jesus Himself addresses this. He wants us to understand the significance of worship. Worship that happens all the time and you have to choose. Matthew 6, verse 24, Jesus says this, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God in money. That's just one example. You can't serve God in Baal. You can't serve God in comfort. You fill in the blank. You serve or devote attention and energy to anything that is not oriented in a way that is an affection for the Lord Jesus.

It's worship. How do we worship? How is God helping us to worship rightly? So we need to make sure we don't forget that we're in His sight.

Don't forget that you are living in such a way that worship is the pattern of your life. Whether you choose, like Joshua says, choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

[14:07] That's the decision we have in front of us. There's no neutral ground. There's no middle ground. God also wants His people to understand and not to forget that His discipline is mercy.

God's discipline is mercy. And we come to a very hard section here. We come to a part of Judges chapter 3 and we begin to wonder, okay, I guess this is the kind of God we serve.

He's the God who brings the hammer down. But we recognize through the course of the New Testament that God disciplines those He loves. God's discipline is an instrument of invitation.

God's discipline is an instrument of drawing us in. It's an instrument of correction so that God can help us to enjoy the benefits of His relationship, relationship with Him.

And so we find in Judges chapter 3 verse 8 the beginnings, the beginnings of discipline. It says, therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. He sold them into the hand of Cushon Rishathayim, king of Mesopotamia.

[ 15 : 15 ] And the people of Israel served Cushon Rishathayim eight years. This is a king of Mesopotamia. And those of you who are not familiar with ancient geography like me have no idea like where in the world is Mesopotamia.

Well, Mesopotamia is 750 miles north of Jerusalem. It's in the area that is kind of the now Turkey. Okay? So imagine this ruler who's coming from 750 miles away and he's actually making his way down to Israel to try to take over.

Now, to give you a concept of 750 miles, if you go from Columbus east 750 miles, you're going to end up in the Atlantic Ocean. If you go 750 miles to the west, you're going to end up in Kansas. Okay? So we're not talking about a little bit of distance. We're talking about many, many, many hours of driving and many days of traveling. This king of Mesopotamia was not a regional leader. Not like a leader of a Moab or Midian or Canaan or the Hittites. No. He was the kind of leader that demonstrated strength. And as a matter of fact, this means that the very first oppressor of Israel was the strongest leader that judges will speak of.

[ 16 : 44 ] He is a leader of an alliance of a Canaanite city. And this exploit that he has helps us to understand the significance of what he's doing.

He's not a regional leader. He is a leader from a ways away. the most powerful of all the enemies of Israel named in the book of Judges. Here he is.

The Israelites had a nickname for him. Rishathayim. Rishathayim is a nickname that was bestowed upon him and it means doubly wicked. You might say he was double trouble.

This name Kushan appears to be Hittite. He was a foreigner. And he came to exert authority and power. His kingdom extended southward and he is given the authority by God to subject Israel to service for eight years.

Israel was supposed to see this as a hand, an instrument of the Lord for mercy. This was God's mercy to help them understand that what they were doing was wicked, was evil.

[ 17 : 56 ] It was an invitation that God had not cut them off. God had not passed them over. He was not trying to crush them. He was trying to invite them to enjoy the benefits of salvation.

And that's what we see next in verses 9 to 11. Don't forget that salvation is from the Lord. Salvation is from him. We see this in verse 9.

It says, but when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. Now see what judgment did. See what discipline did. It turned the people's hearts to God. They remembered him again.

And the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them. Otniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, the spirit of the Lord was upon him and he judged Israel.

He went out to war and the Lord gave Cushon, Rishathayim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushon, Rishathayim. So the land had rest for 40 years.

[ 18 : 55 ] Then Otniel, the son of Kenaz, died. The people cried out. The people cried out and the Lord had mercy. What a mercy that is to us.

That when we find ourselves in rebellion, when we find ourselves distanced from the Lord, when we find ourselves as enemies of him, God graciously disciplines those he loves not to shut us out, not to cut us off, but to draw us in.

And when we cry out, the Lord answers. The Lord delivers. The Lord saves. He delights in saving. We have a saving God. So the people cry out.

They cry out. Clearly they knew who God was. But they had laid aside all of that and they failed to act on that knowledge. They forgot. You see, they forgot God, but God had not forgotten them.

So God raises up a deliverer. This word delivered is the Hebrew. It's the Hebrew word Moshe. And if you hear the word Moshe, you might think the word Moses. And the two are related, but it's not coming from the same root.

[ 20 : 12 ] It sounds like Moses, but the actual word Moshe comes from Yassah. And it's the word for salvation. It's the same word for Joshua.

So we find kind of stitched together, kind of Moses and Joshua right here in the deliverance that God wants to give to his people, but it comes by the hand of God.

It comes by his hand. Moses always wanted to make that clear. Deliverance comes from God.

Joshua always wanted to make that clear. Deliverance comes from God.

And judges will also make that clear. Deliverance comes from God. You want deliverance? You want rescue? You want salvation? Look to God. He delights in saving.

So he saved them. He rescued them. He delivered them. The Lord has done this consistently for his people. They cry out and the Lord saves them. We saw that back in Judges 2 verse 16.

[ 21 : 13 ] Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. We see that in verse 18. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge. He saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.

For the Lord was moved to pity. He was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. God delights in saving but he saves.

He saves because of his compassion. He saves because of his mercy. He saves because he's a God of pity. And so who does he raise up? He raises up Othniel, Caleb's younger brother.

We've seen his story a bit back in Judges chapter 1. Remember Joshua has died and the people are asking who's going to lead us?

And God says well Judah will lead you. Judah shall go up and certainly that's what happens. Judah goes up. We find in verse 8 of chapter 1 Judah fights against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and then he goes down and he fights against those in the southern part of Israel.

[ 22 : 17 ] And now Caleb who is from the tribe of Judah wants to take this town called Kiriath Sefer. We find in chapter 1 verses 12 and 13.

It says Caleb said he who attacks Kiriath Sefer and captures it I will give Aksa my daughter as a wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz Caleb's younger brother captured it and he gave him Aksa his daughter as a wife.

Now the name Caleb should sound familiar to you. Remember who Caleb was? Caleb and Joshua one of two of the twelve spies that spied out the land of Canaan.

They came back to give a report and only two Joshua and Caleb said God can give this to us.

There are people they are strong. There are cities they are large and they are fortified but God can do this.

We can trust him. Caleb trusted the Lord. Joshua trusted the Lord. And now you find in Caleb's younger brother the same example of courage and bravery and faith and perseverance.

[ 23 : 23 ] He does the seeming impossible because he does it through the hand and the work and the promise of God. And now Caleb's younger brother Othniel is presented.

Verse nine again when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord the Lord raised up for them a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them Othniel the son of Kenaz Caleb's younger brother the spirit of the Lord was upon him and he judged Israel.

When we think about leaders we think about the kinds of people we would put in charge. We think about the kinds of individuals we might raise up to provide rescue and deliverance.

We might think ha ha Othniel what a great candidate. He's full of faith. He's full of courage. He's demonstrated great leadership abilities. But notice there are only two qualifications that God gives for Othniel.

Why he raised him up. These two qualifications for this leader. One the Lord raised him up and two the spirit of the Lord was upon him. Those were the qualifications.

[ 24 : 35 ] This was not something to lay hold of. This was something that was granted. Something that was given. And it establishes this pattern that we're going to see throughout the rest of the book of Judges.

That whenever the Lord raises up judges for them the Lord was with the judge. This is Judges chapter 2 verse 18. He saved them from the hand of their enemies. All the days of the judge for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. We're going to see consistently it starts pretty good with Othniel but there's a downward decline from this point on. Why does God rescue?

Not because of the judge's ability to honor the Lord. We're going to see that the more we go. But it's because God's character, God's pity, God's compassion, and God's power are put on display.

When the judge is in place, the people are to look not to the judge but to the judge's God, to God himself, to the Lord. That's why deliverance comes.

[ 25 : 46 ] Briefly, I just want to give you a preview of what are these judges or who are these judges? Often when we think about judges, we think about courtrooms, right?

We think about those who make verdicts, who settle disputes. We think about those who know the law and can execute the law between parties. And some of that is true.

But as you look through the Old Testament, I want you to not just think about officials. I don't want you to think about those who settle legal disputes. I want you to think about heads of households. I want you to think about those whom God has raised up to help provide leadership, especially among households, among families. And instead of the law, as we might think about the law, what law did they have?

They had the law of the Lord. They had the law that came from God himself. That was to be their standard. That was to be in front of them. That was to help govern and guide their decisions that they made.

[ 26 : 53 ] We find throughout the rest of judges that God raises up family heads, family leaders. And it shouldn't be a surprise to us, we see this pattern that throughout the book of Judges, almost every single tribe among the nation of Israel is identified.

Reuben and Gad are two tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. So they won't have representation. But Othniel, he's from Judah.

Ehud, which we're going to look at next, he's from Benjamin. Deborah is from Ephraim. Barak is from Naphtali. Gideon is from Manasseh. Tola is from Issachar.

Elon is from Zebulun. And Samson is from the tribe of Dan. At least eight different tribes are represented, which helps to reinforce the pattern that God delights in raising up leaders who are committed to his word and who stand as those who represent well their families, who lead their families well.

And so it shouldn't be a surprise to us as we make our way into the New Testament and we continue to see the pattern that God has set in raising up leaders. What is one of the main qualifications for leaders?

[ 28 : 17 ] Elders? Shepherds? Pastors? Well, 1 Timothy 3 says they need to manage their house well. Household leaders. And I could spend a lot of time on this.

We find this going all the way from numbers to exodus and continuing on through. Family heads that God raises up to exercise leadership among his people.

It should be a comfort to us. It should be also a challenge to us about the importance of leading our houses well under the word of God.

So salvation comes from the Lord. And salvation comes when a people cry out to him. But now we turn to this story of Ehud. And we're going to see that salvation will also come in spite of imperfect deliverers.

It will come in spite of imperfect deliverers. We see that beginning in verse 12. It says, And 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.

[ 29 : 27 ] He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amlekites and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of the palms. And the people of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, 18 years.

We're going to see a number of things throughout these next several verses and I trust to be able to cover them briefly. But we're going to see how God works in spite of what we might expect.

He does that for a reason. He wants to draw attention that salvation comes from him in him alone. It will come in spite of his deliverers, not because of his deliverers.

First we're going to see an unlikely king who conquers Israel. This unlikely king, his name is Eglon, king of Moab. And as I pointed to at the beginning of our time together, the Moabites were actually supposed to be living in harmony among God's people because they kind of shared a family relationship.

Abraham's nephew, Lot, and Lot's son, Moab, there was a family relationship. And so when God had the people of Israel go through this place, he said, don't touch the people of Moab.

[ 30 : 43 ] Leave them alone. They're part of the family. And so here Eglon comes to the forefront. And we've seen this cycle over and over again, this cycle of wickedness.

And the Lord strengthens their enemy. And here we are. God is the one, notice, God is the one who strengthens Eglon. God is the one who raises up this heathen king.

God's the one who empowers this king to execute punishment on his people. It's unexpected. And Eglon will come with his allies, the Ammonites, and they'll take the city of Palms.

And the city of Palms is just the city of Jericho. It was a city that was 800 miles below sea level. It was in this fertile, lush, fertile valley. It was known for its produce.

And so that's where Eglon would reside for 18 years. As I said, Moab sits to the east of the Jordan River, right next to the Dead Sea.

[ 31 : 43 ] And although their narrator attributes Eglon as the one who had been raised up from God, we don't see how Eglon in any part of this passage has any interest in serving God at all.

And although the narrator attributes Eglon's rise to Yahweh, we recognize that he's operating independently of God himself. And for all of Eglon's achievements, the character, excuse me, the narrator will characterize Eglon not only for his physical appearance, but also for his stupidity. We find repeated references. Eglon is the name. Eglon means bull or it means calf. It also means to be round or rotund.

So when we come to verse 17, it shouldn't be a surprise to us. We see, now Eglon was a very fat man. he's a man who is maybe fattened for the slaughter as we're going to see in our story. It's clear that Eglon loves luxury. Instead of centering his kingdom in Moab, he has centered his kingdom in the fertile valley there in the plains. He's also one, we're going to see, who succumbs to deception, succumbs to trickery.

[ 33 : 08 ] He lets his guard down and because he lets his guard down, he is executed by Ehud. So this unlikely king. Next we're going to see in verse 15, this unlikely hero is raised up by the Lord.

Judges chapter 3 verse 15 says, Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer. Ehud, the son of Gerah, the Benjamite, a left-handed man, the people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon, king of Moab.

The deliverer is identified by his name, Ehud. We find that Ehud is left-handed. This is the divine response of the Lord's cry to raise up a judge.

Ehud is the guy. Ehud is God's gracious gift to his people. But we find in this narrative, we find Benjamin, who is son of the right hand, and here Ehud is a Benjamite, and he's left-handed.

The Lord is using some contrast to help us recognize that he is the one who is bringing victory. He is the one who will save, this unlikely hero.

[ 34 : 32 ] Then we turn to an unlikely victory that's given in verses 16 to 23. Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, which is about a foot and a half.

He bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. He presented tribute to Eglon, king of Moab. Now, Eglon was a very fat man, and when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who carried the tribute.

But he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said, I have a secret message for you, O king. And he commanded silence, and all his attendants went out from his presence.

Now, briefly, Ehud comes, he comes with a group of individuals, he comes with an entourage, he comes to bring tribute, he brings these individuals, because likely it wasn't cash that was on hand, but bringing produce perhaps, bringing other goods to pay this tribute.

he's coming to do what's necessary in order to appease this king. He is good enough at what he has done that he ushers his attendants, and he goes back with them after the tribute has been given, and we find that he returns.

[ 35 : 49 ] He returns, in verse 19, back to the king, king Eglon, and he says, I have a word for you, I have a message for you.

Now this word, *deber*, this Hebrew word, *deber*, can either be, I have a message for you, or I have a word for you, it can also be translated, a thing for you, I have an object for you, I have an experience for you.

In other words, I've got a surprise for you. Perhaps when king Eglon hears this, he thinks, ah, an additional gift, or a special word from this man.

And Eglon presents this tribute to Eglon at the bottom of the stairs, and he cleverly gets the king in a vulnerable position. He says, I have this secret word for you, and so the king removes his attendance, he puts himself in a place of vulnerability that Eglon will capitalize on, and he then reiterates, not only do I have a message for you, but I have a message from God, and then he rushes up the stairs, he uses this two-edged sword, and he pierces Eglon right through the stomach, and we find that it goes all the way up to his gut, it buries right in to the stomach of Eglon. the dagger has done his work, Ehud will escape, he leaves the couriers and attendants to the side, and he's able to make his getaway, we find in verse 24, when he had gone, the servants came, and when they saw the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, surely he's relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber, and when they waited until they were embarrassed, but

when he still had not opened the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them, and there lay their Lord dead on the floor.

[ 37 : 53 ] It seems that having accomplished his mission, that Ehud then made his way, somehow, privately, he locks the doors from the inside, he makes his way, and God allows him to have his getaway.

Verse 26, Ehud escaped while they delayed, he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Sarai, when he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, then the people of Israel went down from him to the hill country, and he was their leader, and he said to them, follow after me, for the Lord has given your enemies, the Moabites, into your hand.

So they went down after him and seized the fords of Jordan against the Moabites, and did not allow anyone to pass over. And they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men, not a man was able to escape.

So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel, and the land had rest for 80 years. We don't find much about Ehud in his posture towards the Lord, except for this one statement that we find in verse 28, follow me, for the Lord has given your enemies into your hands.

The rest of the story is conniving, scheming, the rest of the story shows kind of the darker side of what we're going to begin to see consistently through the judges, assorted kind of people, a polluted kind of people, people who were corrupted by the individuals that they lived alongside.

[ 39 : 30 ] And so even when a deliverance will come and God gives that deliverance, you begin to wonder, is this really a deliverance that God gave because of a righteous judge, because of a life that was devoted to him?

And of course the answer will be no, God gives deliverance in spite, in spite of his agents. You see, when Yahweh delivers, God delivers.

It's the mercy of the Lord. Judges are meant to point not to the judge themselves, but they're to point to the great judge. God himself, the one who graciously gives deliverance.

And finally, and briefly, we look at an unlikely foreigner who is used by the Lord in verse 31. An unlikely foreigner. Judges chapter 3 verse 31 says, After him was Shemgar, the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an ox goad, and he also saved Israel.

Now, there are several things that are missing in this narrative. It's a pretty short description of what's taken place. But we can begin to see the mercy of God that's written across the pages, even in this very short verse.

[ 40 : 52 ] You see, Shemgar is not a Hebrew name. Shemgar is a Canaanite name. And while it says he's the son of Anath, it's probably better to see him as one who was dedicated to the service of Anath.

He was not a follower of Yahweh. He was not a follower of God. He wasn't even a part of Israel. But God used him anyway. History will record this man, Shemgar, as an officer of the command of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

He's not intentionally serving Israel's purpose, but God uses him in spite of his intentions. In this event, in spite of his personal heroics, God uses him to deliver Israel in spite of his background. He's a Philistine. He's killing the Philistines on behalf of the Lord himself. This instrument that he uses, he uses this ox goat, which is just a stick with an iron tip at the front.

And even in his exploits of killing 600 men, this foreigner is used in a way that points only to the Lord himself, only to God in his saving work over his people.

[ 42 : 24 ] You see, God delights in rescue. He delights in saving his people. He saves in spite of our rebellion. He saves in spite of our forgetting.

He saves in spite of our wickedness. But he saves because of his son, Jesus. I wonder this morning, do you know? Do you know the Lord Jesus?

Do you recognize that you are in need of saving? Do you recognize that you're in need of deliverance? Have you come to a place of recognizing your sin, asking the Lord to forgive you, and experiencing the benefits of rescue that happens because of Jesus Christ himself?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Let me pray. Lord, thank you this morning for the testimony and the reminder that you delight in saving in spite of the frailties of your people. that even when we reject you, even when we forget you, even when we willingly serve the baals and the astras, as it were, you delight in extending the offer of forgiveness through your son, Jesus Christ.

[ 43 : 43 ] And I pray, Lord, this morning if there's anyone that does not know you as their savior, that you would address that sin in their life and remind them of the wonder of the mercy that comes through faith in Jesus Christ and that you would lead them to salvation.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.