

# Free Delivery

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[0:00] Can we turn back then to our reading in the book of Judges, chapter 3. We're going to look at verse 7 to verse 11.

We see in verse 9, But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them, Othniel, the son of Canaz, Caleb's younger brother.

The Lord raised up a deliverer for the people. Is there such a thing as free delivery? I'm sure many of us have been in the position where you're going to order something online.

You've been looking around, looking for the item, searching around for the best price, quickest delivery and all of that. And you find it and then you enter in all the details.

You're going to go ahead and purchase it. But when you enter the address, because of where we live, all of a sudden maybe free delivery changes to a delivery cost that's even more than the item that you're going to buy.

[1:12] It happens so often. Delivery then puts us off going any further with that and we just forget about it. There seems to be no such thing as free delivery.

But as we're reading God's word, we're often reminded of just that idea of deliverance and delivery. There is a delivery that we can have, but it's a delivery that maybe seems far removed from us in many ways, out of our reach and doesn't come or count for us.

And as you look at the book of Judges and as we look at this together this evening, what we see is a people here who have the offer of free delivery given to them.

And they almost have it again and again and again. But they keep making a mess of it. There's a free delivery offered here and yet it's costly in some ways, not to them, but to the Lord.

And as you look at the book of Judges, the period that we're looking at here is many, many years ago, many, many generations ago as we're going back into the Old Testament.

[2:29] But it's a period defined by disobedience towards God as we've read in these verses. That's why we took up our reading early in chapter 2.

You see that the people of God were just becoming more and more unfaithful towards God. They weren't listening to him. There was rebellion. There was moral failure among the people.

But interspersed in the book of Judges, you find periods of peace and periods of revival. But yet if you were to sum up the book of Judges as a whole, it's probably in a repeated verse that you find. In chapter 17, verse 6, and then in the very last verse of the book of Judges, chapter 21, verse 25, the same phrase is said.

And it says, In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes.

[3:34] This was the kind of attitude that prevails throughout the book of Judges, throughout this period. And indeed you can see it again and again in the scriptures. The people did what was right in their own eyes.

And it's a pretty good description for our world today as well. The people we do right as we see it according to our own eyes.

But what we find in this book of Judges is that God was gracious. He was right to judge the people because that is what he had said would come upon them.

But when he sees a people who cry out to him, he relents and has mercy. And that's the story of our delivery as well.

When you look at the history of God's people throughout the Old Testament, you see that before this period of the Judges, they had been held captive in Egypt.

[4:34] And God had redeemed them, delivered them from that captivity. And he'd led them 40 years through the wilderness. He'd used Joshua to lead them. He brought them safely into the land of Canaan.

And he gave them promises that if they were obedient to him, that then he would be a blessing to them. If they would walk in his ways. But what we find is, again and again, the very opposite happens.

In verse 7 of chapter 3, 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 Ashtaroth.

So they turned to idolatry. They turned away from God. And how had this come to be? Well, a generation who had loved the Lord and seen his amazing works was now passing on.

You see it as Joshua passed. And in verse 10 of chapter 2, it tells us there, There was this forgetfulness.

[5:54] There was this turning away from God. They didn't know God. And they'd forgotten all that God had done for them. And this is an ongoing problem.

Ongoing to this very day. Where we forget about God. Turn away from him. And we forget what the Lord has done for us. And we think that we can just do what is right in our own eyes.

And there'll be no consequences. But God is reminding them here and reminding us this evening that what we need is to see our need of deliverance.

We need this deliverance for ourselves. And that's where we're going to focus on verse 7 to 11.

Where we see this judge that God has raised.

Othniel. Who comes to serve the Lord in the midst of the people. And there's lessons that we can take from this for ourselves.

[6:52] In particular, there's three lessons I want to think of this evening. And the first is disobedience. As we see it throughout this section. Disobedience leads to defeat.

There's no alternative. Disobedience to God leads to defeat. But what we see here is that this defeat leads to a cry.

They cry out to the Lord. And that is what we are to learn as well. That when we see the disarray and the defeat in our own lives. When we recognize the sin in our own heart.

That we can cry out to the Lord. So defeat can lead to a cry. And when we cry out to God. Thirdly what we see is a cry leads to an answer.

God gives a gracious answer to them. So the first thing we want to see here is that disobedience leads to defeat.

[7:54] How is the book of Judges profitable for us today? What's to be gained in looking at this passage? Or looking at the book of Judges? When people will say, but it's just the word from long ago.

It's things that happened many, many years ago. It's not relevant to us today. Well as you read through the book of Judges. You see the people of God face the same problems that we face up to today as well.

And we've seen the reality of it even in these last few days. You see the people of God here. They faced physical enemies. They were surrounded by enemies.

So are we. We see that with conflicts going on around the world. The people of God here, they faced problems from the world, the flesh and the devil.

And so do we. We face all of these things today as well. And they faced here, the people of God, a challenge to their faith.

[8:59] You see that quite clearly in verse 7. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God. There was a challenge to their faith.

And in that challenge, they forgot God. And that's the challenge that we face today as well. So we have all of these things to face up to. And it all boils down to our obedience or our disobedience.

And the reality of disobedience leading to defeat is through for ourselves today as well. Because when we're disobedience, as you see there in verse 7, they forgot the Lord, served the Baals and

the Asheroth.

These were idols and worshipping false gods. That's what they turned to. And then in verse 8, But what's happening here then is too that God is still in the midst of them.

And God comes in a gracious way to bring the judges to them. Now why judges? Why this phrase, the judges, or Othniel, as a judge?

[10:27] Well, as a reminder to us that disobedience faces judgment. And our judgment is before us as well. So when we are disobedient to God, and we do not listen to him, and we turn away from him and forget about him, it leads to a judgment upon ourselves as well.

So God used judges to come. Because of their wickedness and their disobedience, that's what he used. You see, the people have been given clear guidance before going into the promised land of how they were to live, of how they were to be obedient to God.

And in the book of Deuteronomy, one of the phrases that comes up a number of times is, Do not forget the Lord. When you go into this land that's flowing with milk and honey, it's got everything that they need in this promised land.

And the gods sing again and again, Do not forget the Lord. And yet what happens in verse 7? They forgot the Lord their God.

Exactly what he had said to them not to do, they did. They forgot the Lord their God. And over time, this disobedience against God, it just leads to a downward spiral.

[11:49] And it says in verse 8 there, The people of Israel served Cush and Rissathim eight years. Instead of serving God, they were in this disobedient way of serving a foreign god for eight years.

It was torture for them because of their disobedience. And where did this lead them? It led them to worshipping the false gods of this king.

The Ashtaroth and the Baals, all of these false gods, that's the direction that they went. So disobedience leads to defeat.

But what's the lessons there for ourselves? Well, surely it's obvious as we look at this passage. What they did stands in stark warning to ourselves today.

They forgot God, and it led them on a downward trajectory. And that's exactly what happens to ourselves today. If we forget God, if we turn away from God, it leads us down the wrong path completely.

[13:00] So what is God saying? God is saying, Don't compromise on my word. Don't compromise on what I have said to you. Otherwise, there are consequences.

If we reject God and his word and carry on with the same attitude of the people here, people doing right as they saw in their own eyes, what would we expect but days of judgment upon us?

If we don't put his word first, if we don't put God first in our lives, what happens? There are consequences. There's a judgment that comes upon us.

And you see, it just comes in slowly as it were. Little by little, a generation goes on, a generation comes who has forgot the work the Lord had done.

It begins with that forgetting what God had done. Then it comes to forgetting God. And then it comes to worshipping false gods. And the Bible describes that as sin, sin that crouches at the door.

[14:07] It's waiting to attack. It's waiting to come in. And all we have to do is give it an inch and it'll keep taking more and more. A small compromise here leads to another that's bigger and it leads to this downward spiral.

So we don't let God's commands slip. You see, disobedience leads to defeat. And if we continue in that pathway, if we continue in that way, we're only going in a downward spiral.

So that's the first lesson. But there's a second lesson for us here. And we see it in verse 9. But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them.

Defeat can lead to a cry. Although they felt defeated. And here they are eight years serving this foreign king.

Wondering probably how they've ended back in such a similar situation as they had in Egypt when they were serving the foreign gods there. Here they are again serving in a foreign king in a foreign

land with foreign gods.

[15:25] But it's like the people come to themselves. They come to their senses. And when they come to that, they cry out to the Lord.

And if we know that there is sin in our lives that's leading us on a downward path, that we have failed God by rejecting him, forgetting him, and rejecting his word, and the salvation offered through his son, Jesus Christ, what can we do?

Where can we turn? Well, there is the lesson for us. Defeat can lead to a cry. And the people, they cried out to God. And we can cry out to God for help.

In Psalm 107, it's a wonderful psalm that speaks so clearly of people in trouble. And as you read through it, you find four times different situations that people find themselves in various trouble is outlined for us.

But in each situation, it's the same words that you hear repeated. They cried out to the Lord in their trouble. And the Lord heard them and delivered them.

[16:37] There's that wonderful repetition in that psalm that they come to that point where they see their trouble and they cry out in their trouble and the Lord delivers them out of their trouble.

And that's the great promise that we have here as well. When the people of God, when they come to themselves, when the people of Israel, it says, cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them.

Was this a cry of repentance? A cry of regret? A cry of despair? It's maybe not clear for us, but what we need to do is recognize it's got to be a cry that's turning back to God.

A cry of desperation, but a cry of repentance where we are confessing our sin before God. Where we are saying, Lord, against you we have sinned.

And now we are turning to you again to know that forgiveness. They knew that they had done wrong before God and they were crying out to God for help. But the very fact that you see it being repeated again and again, you wonder, was it repentance or was it just regret?

[17:56] Because if it's through repentance, you don't go back into the same cycle again. You turn back to God and you focus on God. So that's a reminder here for us as well.

It's not just in our sin to confess it one day and carry on as if there's nothing more to confess again. It's to keep coming back to God but turning from that sin and through repentance.

We have a God to cry out to. And that's the wonderful thing for us. We have a God who in Psalm 103 is described as a father who has compassion on his children.

And so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. And what you see here with Othniel is this judge is raised up by God, this deliverer.

And the word deliverer, it means a saviour. A saviour is given for the people. And it's a saviour who has come to show them the way back to God.

[19:01] And that's what we have today as well. We have a saviour to cry out to. Jesus, son of David, as he's often referred to in the New Testament, as they cry out to him for help.

You see those in trouble, those who are sick, those who are blind, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. It's the very words we sang in Psalm 86.

Verse 3, it says, Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, for you, O Lord, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call upon you. There's that reminder that we can call on the Lord.

And the Lord hears and is able to answer. The Lord Jesus hears our cries today when we turn to him because he is the deliverer, the saviour, who is given for us.

[20:05] There's a programme I watch. It's online. It's not a programme on the television. But it's one of these online short clips that you find of a guy called Matt Armstrong.

He's a mechanic. And him, along with some of his friends, they find cars that have been written off in crashes or flooding or some kind of accident.

Sports cars, mainly. And when you look at these cars, what you think is, how on earth are they going to restore that and get that back on the road? There's no way it's possible.

And yet, little by little, with patience and time and money, they restore them. And you think, how is that possible?

There's no way that can all come together. And eventually, you see the car back on the road. It's quite amazing to watch. But it reminds me of myself.

[21:02] Perhaps of yourself as well. Beyond repair. Beyond salvation. That's the way we so often see ourselves. How on earth could my life get back on track with God?

How on earth can we get back to Him? That's what you might say as you read through the book of Judges. How on earth can these people who have forgotten God, who have turned away from Him, how on earth can they get back to God?

Well, it's by grace. It's by the grace of God. Because you see here in verse 9, the Deliverer was raised up by God.

The Lord raised up a Deliverer. The Lord has done it. And that's the wonder of our restoration. of how He can restore us as we cry out to Him. Because the third thing we see here is a cry can lead to an answer.

[22:06] When you look at the likes of that Psalm 86, or as you go into the New Testament, and you read in Romans 10, for example, where it calls about calling on the Lord.

In verse 13 of Romans 10, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There is that promise as we cry out to God, truly crying out to Him.

Well, there is a cry answered. And that's what we see here. The cry of the people is answered by God as God raises up a Savior, a Deliverer, who is Othniel, the judge of the people.

And Othniel here is useful for the people because it's not Othniel, but the Lord who is doing this saving work. You see it there in verse 10.

The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushion Ressatham, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand.

[23:11] And his hand prevailed, and the land had rest for 40 years. You see here Othniel, a Savior, a Deliverer for the people.

He came to judge, but he came to deliver. And he was able to do it because the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. And again, that's a phrase you see repeated of Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 61, in that chapter that's entitled The Year of the Lord's Favor, it says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

And so it goes on to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives. There is that sense of deliverance because the Spirit of the Lord is upon Isaiah.

And when we see that and we bring it forward, we see it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Spirit was poured out on him. This is my beloved Son, it says, as he was baptized and the Spirit came down in the form of a dove.

[24:22] The Spirit was upon him. This is my beloved Son. Hear him. Jesus was given that authority. We have a Savior who is Christ Jesus.

And so here, the Lord hears their cries and gives an answer. He provides a Savior, a deliverer, Othnia. There is free delivery for them through the grace of God.

And there is also for us. Where is our free delivery found? It is found in him who gave himself for us, in Jesus who came for his people.

Jonathan Edwards, the Christian writer, he says this, the redeemed are dependent of God for all. All that we have, wisdom, the pardon of sin, deliverance, acceptance in God's favor, grace, holiness, true comfort, happiness, eternal life, and glory, we have from God by a mediator.

And this mediator is God. God not only gives us the mediator and accepts his mediation and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the mediator, but he is the mediator.

[25:49] Our blessings are what we have by purchase and the purchase is made of God. The blessings are purchased of him and not only so, but God is the purchaser.

Yes, God is both the purchaser and the price for Christ, who is God, purchased these blessings by offering himself as the price of our salvation.

He is the price of our salvation, the deliverer, the one who we have free delivery through as we put our trust in him.

So we ask ourselves this evening, I ask myself, do I need delivering? And do you need delivering today? Of course we do. For we are like a people of old here who forget God so easily, who turn away from him.

But yet, in the gospel we have that good news. There is a deliverer. And there is free delivery through faith in him.

[26:58] As the hymn writer says, there is a redeemer, Jesus, God's own son, precious lamb of God, Messiah, holy one. Jesus, my redeemer, name above all names, precious lamb of God, Messiah, O for sinners slain.

Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done. When I stand in glory, I will see his face and there I'll serve my king forever in that holy place.

There is a redeemer. There is a deliverer for us. Othniel was a deliverer used by God in the days of the judges.

But we have a redeemer, Jesus, God's own son. And if we need delivering, then we can cry out to him.

It's so easy for us to feel defeated. Defeated by this world, defeated by the sin that we have in our hearts.

[28:09] but we can cry. We can cry out to God. And an answer can be found in a precious redeemer.

That's what we read of here. But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them.

If we are feeling defeated, we can cry. Cry out to the Lord and see a deliverer, a redeemer who is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we do thank you that you teach us even through your people from so long ago, reminding us of just how we are ourselves, that we are a people who always turn that way left to our own devices to do what is right in our own eyes.

But we thank you for a deliverer and that we can cry out to you in our need and see the salvation that is offered through your Son, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29:21] And may you help us, even anew this evening, to recognize that need in our own hearts of a deliverer and a deliverance that is free to us, but that came at a great price, of him who gave himself for us, who paid that price.

So Lord, be near to us, guide us by your Spirit, draw us ever closer to yourself, forgiving our sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in conclusion in Psalm 3, the Sing Psalms version.

We'll find this on page 3 of the psalm book. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6, the tune is Finart.

Psalm 3 at verse 1, O Lord, how many are my foes, how many up against me rise.

They all are saying now of me, in vain he on his God relies. But you are my protector, Lord, you are my shield around me spread.

My glory comes from you alone, the one who raises up my head. We'll sing from verse 1 to 6 to God's praise. O Lord, how many are my foes, how many up against me rise.

[30:57] They all are sin not only in vain he on his holy eyes.

But you are my protector, Lord, you are a shield around his of My glory comes from you alone, the one who raises up my head.

When to the Lord I lift my voice, in face of those who hate me still, the Lord will hear my cry to hear and answer from this holy hymn.

I set to the end of the season, I lift your voice to the holy God.

I will not fear ten thousand souls who serve their heart against me.

[32:56] After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.