

## JUDGES AND RUTH: FACING GROUP APOSTASY AS INDIVIDUALS

### Part III: Relying On GOD'S Gifts To Do HIS Spiritual Work

(Judges 3:7-31)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Well-intentioned Christians often **long** to be *greatly* used by God to do His work in Christian service.
- B. However, try as he might to impact others for God, a believer may come to sense his abilities are so unconventional, or ordinary or weak that he wonders what he can possibly accomplish for Christ. He may then sit immobilized in his life, wishing he could make an impact but doubting he can accomplish much!
- C. Judges 3:7-31 offers God's solution to this need as follows:

#### II. Relying On GOD'S Gifts To Do HIS Spiritual Work, Judges 3:7-31.

- A. As we previously learned, Israel resorted to human strength (Judges 1:3), human military information (Judges 2:24) and human treaties (Judges 2:2a) with the Canaanites to protect themselves from harm by conflict with these initial inhabitants of Canaan.
- B. However, this faithlessness in God was condemned by the Angel of the Lord in Judges 2:1-2.
- C. Accordingly, God left the Canaanites in the land to test them to drive them to a life of faith, Judges 2:3.
- D. Just **how** God began to **do** this can be illustrated in God's use of three **humanly unusually WEAK** judges to deliver Israel from her Gentile oppressors, Judges 3:7-31:
  - 1. God first used a "**no-name**" man in Othniel to deliver Israel from Mesopotamian oppressors, 3:7-11:
    - a. When Israel departed from trusting and obeying the Lord, God disciplined the nation by sending Mesopotamians to oppress His people, Judges 3:7-8.
    - b. Life eventually became so difficult that the people of God called out to God for deliverance, 3:9a.
    - c. Accordingly, God used a "no-name" leader in Othniel to lead Israel to remove these oppressors: (a) Othniel's only claim to notoriety lay in his identification with his uncle in Caleb, a spiritual giant of the previous generation, cf. Judges 3:9b. (b) Othniel led Israel solely because God's Holy Spirit equipped him to impress others in Israel to follow him, Judges 3:10. (c) In the end, he was given victory by God, and ruled Israel peacefully for the next forty years, Judges 3:11.
  - 2. Second, God used an **oddly-gifted** man in Ehud to deliver Israel from her oppressors, Judges 3:12-30.
    - a. When Israel again drifted away from the Lord and His ways, God permitted the Moabites to enter the land and oppress His people, Judges 3:12-14.
    - b. Once again, God's desperate people called out to the Lord for deliverance from her enemies, 3:15a.
    - c. Accordingly, God used a left-handed man in Ehud to deliver the nation, Judges 3:15b-30: (a) Ehud was left-handed, an ability looked upon as being somewhat different as most men were right-handed as they are today, Judges 3:15b. (b) Nevertheless, being left-handed enabled Ehud to conceal a dagger on his right hip under his outer garment, making the Moabites assume he was unarmed when he arrived to give a present to their king, Judges 3:15c-16. (c) Ehud was thus able to get a private audience with the Moabite king where he swiftly, silently slew him, Judges 3:17-22. (d) He used the surprise encounter to buy enough time to secure his escape, Judges 3:23-26. (e) This event equipped Israel to follow Ehud to gain a great victory over the Moabites, Judges 3:27-30.
  - 3. Third, God used a man with an **ordinary tool** to deliver Israel, Judges 3:31:
    - a. The Hebrew man named Shamgar owned an ox goad, an instrument used to clean plows which was around eight feet long, and had "a spoke on one end and a chisel-shaped blade on the other," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Judges 3:31. It presumably needed sharpening by the Philistines, 3:31.
    - b. When he went down among the Philistines to sharpen his goad, he attacked them with it, killing six hundred Philistines and delivering Israel from Philistine oppression, Judges 3:31!

***Lesson:*** *Weak human leadership abilities, odd abilities and ordinary methods and means can be mightily used by God for great works if God's people RELY on His SPIRIT and OBEY His WILL!*

***Application:*** *As Paul told Timothy, we must "fan into flame" the gifts God has given us believers to serve Him, for GOD desires to USE us in the REALM of these GIFTS, cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 4:14-16. Even LOWLY or ODD or ORDINARY people and gifts become HUGE in the hand of Almighty God!*