

MAJOR LESSONS FROM SOME MINOR JUDGES

Text: Judges 3:31; 10:1-5; 12:8-15

INTRO: After the death of Joshua, there was no centralized government in Israel for about 300 years. During those days, at various times and in various places, God raised up judges to deliver the Israelite people from their enemies and to call them back to His truths. Some of the judges are fairly well known -- Gideon, Deborah, Samson... Others are all but unknown. Our study will center around six of the lesser known judges of Israel, and some lessons may learn from them.

I. NO ONE IS EXEMPT FROM SERVING GOD.

- A. In the time of Shamgar, the Philistines had overpowered Israel and allowed the Israelites to possess no weapons of war. READ JUDGES 5:6-8
- B. Shamgar's weapon probably tells us much about his background. His tool -- an ox goad. Shamgar was almost certainly a poor farmer, untrained in military skill., but "he also delivered Israel" (3:31).
- C. Jair, on the other hand, was evidently a man of wealth and influence. READ JUDGES 10:4
- D. Ibzan and Abdon were also apparently wealthy and influential, 12:9, 13-14
- E. Shamgar's obscurity did not exclude him from service to God; the wealth & power of Jair, Ibzan & Abdon did not exclude them.

II. GOD MUST BE SERVED WITH HUMILITY.

- A. Josephus says of Ibzan, "He did nothing in the 7 years of his administration that was worth recording, or deserving a memorial." Of Elon, he writes, "Neither did Helon... do anything remarkable." of Abdon, Josephus says, "He is only recorded to have been happy in his children; for the public affairs were then so peaceable, and in such security, that neither did he perform any glorious action... He died an old man, and

obtained a magnificent burial.”

- B. Probably none of these men were trained in military tactics. They probably had no formal training in leadership. They could have looked at their minuses and opted out.
- C. True humility realizes one’s weaknesses & limitations. “One thing I do...” (Phil. 3:13).
- D. But true humility also recognizes duty to God. He has put some things within my power, & I must do them.

III. SERVE GOD WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

- A. Shamgar had an ox goad -- a sharpened stick.
- B. Thu-out history, God has looked to men & women to use what they have in His service. He asked Moses, “What is in your hand?” (EX 4:2). Jesus observed that the poor widow who gave 2 cents had done more than all the others—because she gave all she could.(MK 12:43)
- C. “There is room in the kingdom of God for the small things we can do.” A cup of cold water. A note of concern. A word of encouragement...

It isn’t what you’d do tomorrow
If a million should be your lot;
But what are you doing today, my friend
With the dollar and quarter you’ve got.

IV. SERVICE TO GOD MUST BE VOLUNTARY.

- A. Tola “arose to save Israel” (Judg. 10:1)
- B. “Shamgar... killed 600 men of the Philistines with an ox goad, & he also delivered Israel” (3:31).
- C. Neither of these or the other judges we are discussing waited till the crowds beat down their doors, begging them to become servants of God. God’s kingdom is not a “forced labor” camp.

Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your

power... (Psalm 110:3).

V. EVEN “ORDINARY” PEOPLE CAN WIN THE DAY.

A. Perhaps none of these judges did anything that later generations would look back on and erect a monument to. They are probably not listed in anyone’s list of great heroes. And, yet, by rising to the occasion as needed, each of them was indeed a real hero for at least a while.

B. During their times, the land was at peace. Tola judged in peace for 23 years; Jair for 22 years; Elon for 10 years; for Abdon 8; for Ibzan 7. Josephus speculates that Shamgar died in the first year of his judgeship. But each of these judges rose to the need of his day.

C. We are all aware of certain Biblical heroes like Moses, who gave up the riches & power of Egypt to cast his lot with the Hebrew slaves. Like Paul, a young, well-trained rabbi, who had the world of Judaism spread out before him, but who gave it up to follow the lowly Nazarene.

D. I’ve known a few heroes in my time.

1. I’ve known a couple of fellows who were highly trained and well skilled in the engineering department, who gave up lucrative careers to preach the gospel in difficult places.

2. I knew a preacher who had done nothing wrong, but who was asked to move on because some preferred to hear someone else. He could have drawn away disciples after himself & started “a new work,” but he chose not to further trouble the cause of Christ, by moving to another area and continuing his faithful service to God.

3. I knew a preacher who was told by another preacher that if he would keep quiet about the dangers of institutionalism in the church, he would help

him find a congregation with the guarantee of adequate financial support. He didn't sell out.

4. I've known men who were qualified and willing to serve as elders but who refused to allow personal ambition to become a problem when brethren either did not see the need, or else were reluctant to give up their "say" in the business meeting. These heroes continue to serve God as they can & as they should without personal recognition.
5. I've known countless couples and families who could have assembled in their homes and called it a church and saved themselves the trouble of driving across town or across the county to assemble with the saints. They could thus set their own time, have everything their way, etc. But for the good of the cause, & for the good of their own souls, they rise up & do what they can to help build up the kingdom of God in a difficult territory.
6. These heroes of whom I speak will never have a monument erected to their memory. They will never have a city named after them. After they die, they will soon be forgotten. But they are heroes, none-the-less. And in the day of judgment, their service will not go unrewarded.

Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58)

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