

God Doesn't Need a Somebody

Revival

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Bible Text: Judges 3:31

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If only. If only.

Don't we use that phrase a lot in life? We hear it especially in the sports world. If only we had our best pitcher. If only we had our best running back. If only he hadn't fumbled. And in life we often use it: If only I had gotten a break. If only I had had a little bit more money. If only I would have had luck on my side.

And we frequently use that phrase, if only, if only, in recognition of the fact that in our lives we have weakness and difficulty and hardship. We can't always solve every issue that we face. But with God he has no if onlies. For God does not need somebody special to accomplish his plan and purpose. Nor does he need favorable circumstances in order to accomplish it.

The study that we will examine today gives us an example of that very truth. As I have the sheets out available for you this morning coming in, Sue said, "Is that all? Are those the only verses?"

There is two of them. There is two verses three. And those are the only two verses in all of the Bible that make reference to the man we want to examine this morning, a man with an unusual name, Shamgar. Can you imagine naming your son Shamgar? Well, it had meaning in that day, not in ours. But in that day Shamgar delivered Israel. God used this man to bring about salvation and protection for the children of Israel. We don't know much about him, because these two verses give the extent of the Bible's comments about him. More unknown things than known things.

For example, where did he come from? We don't know the city that he dwelled in. We don't even know his parents. Now it says here "son of Anath," but scholars dispute what that means. They don't know whether that means his father's name or the name of a city or the name of a religious group and organization, because it could mean any one of those three things. So we really don't know his family line or his lineage. We don't know the city of his birth.

As we examine the fact that it says there he delivered and saved Israel, how did he do that? Did he do it alone? Or did he have companions who fought with him? How long did it take? We don't know. How long a peace did he have after his victories over the Philistines? We don't know.

Many unknowns about Shamgar and the battles described in that verse 31. But it does give to us some things that we do know. Notice as I read it from Judges chapter 3 verse number 31.

And this is following the one we examined last week, Ehud, the left handed warrior.

“After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad, and he also saved Israel.”¹

Alone or with companions? We don't know, but he fought the Philistines. That much we do know. We also know that he slew 600 of them. And we also know that in the process it saved Israel. He protected them.

Now the second verse from Judges chapter five—we will arrive in Judges chapter five in a few weeks—but this is the second reference in the Bible to Shamgar and the person talking in verse number six of Judges five makes reference back to the days of Shamgar. And it gives us a little bit of a clue as to what went on during that time, just a little clue.

“In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael...”²

Which immediately came after Shamgar. We will study that next.

“...the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways.”³

What does that tell us? That tells us that the Philistines controlled the main roads, the expressways of the day, the highways of the day, the routes that travelers would take from city to city. The Philistines controlled those. And because they had control of them, they somehow suppressed the Israelites either through thievery or physical attacks or brutalities in some form that caused the Israelites to go around them by the by ways, go the back roads, in other words, go the private paths so they could escape the cruelty of the Philistines. And that tells us that Shamgar slew 600 with an oxgoad.

Now I know you all know what an oxgoad is. An oxgoad is eight to 10 feet in length. On one end it had a spike that the person behind the plow would use to prod the oxen so that they would keep plowing through the rough terrain. At the other end of the oxgoad it had kind of like a shovel and that shovel end they would use to clear away dirt from the plow if it got caught in it. So this had a dual purpose instrument. On one end the spike for prodding the oxen and on the other a shovel to help remove some dirt from the plows,

¹ Judges 3:31.

² Judges 5:6.

³ Ibid.

certainly not an instrument of war, would you say?

And yet God used Shamgar with his oxgoad to slay 600 people. And if you use your imagination just a little bit, you can imagine the vicious ways in which he could have used that instrument to slay the enemy.

That is all we know about Shamgar. God used him to bring about victory in Israel, in defense against the Philistines.

Why do you think God would preserve and provide a record of these events for Israel? Because they first received this record and read it as part of their history. Why would God provide these little incidents, small as they are? First of all, he would want the children of Israel to realize that they cannot defeat and overcome their enemies by their own strength. Their own strength would not accomplish it. They would need help.

Now as we look back over the history of Israel and their coming out of the land of Egypt, we find many occasions that God proved this very fact to the children of Israel. They had very thick skulls, apparently, because he had to repeat the lesson over and over and over again. He showed them in bringing them out of Egypt they could not have done that on their own. Only God in his mighty power could cause the Egyptians to urge the children of Israel to leave. And all of the events that they faced wandering through the wilderness for 40 years, where would they get food enough to feed a million and a half people? How would they do that? How would they have water in the midst of a desert? How would they have food? God provided it. God protected them from their enemies and got them passage to the Promised Land.

How would they get across the River Jordan at flood stage? At flood stage that river would be somewhere around a mile wide. How would they ever cross that to get into the land of Promise? God made a way. How would they conquer the enemies? Only by God's power.

And repeatedly and repeatedly and repeatedly God proved to the children of Israel that they needed him to help them overcome the enemies.

Here is an unknown man, virtually an unknown man, Shamgar with a simple instrument in his hand, whether alone or with some of his companions, God enabled him to bring a mighty victory over the Philistines. He could never have done it on his own. Only by God's power could he do that. And God wanted the children of Israel to learn that lesson. They could not overcome their enemies by their own strength and by their own power. They must depend upon God.

Another lesson he would want them to remember is the success of God's plan come through God's power. When you rely and trust upon God and obey him, he brings victory. He enables you to overcome your weaknesses and grants you victory.

You know, sometimes we are tempted to think that because we are obscure nobodies, we are useless to God. Not so. And then on the other hand, there are those of us who might be tempted that I am somebody, therefore I must be very valuable to God. Not so.

Whether you have a large amount of skills and abilities or whether you have few, it still takes God's power to accomplish God's plan and God's purpose. And he wanted the children of Israel to learn that lesson, because he had promised them. He said to them, "If you will believe me and obey me, I will give you the land and you will be a blessing to all of the nations of the earth.

It was only when they tried to accomplish it in their own strength and according to their own ways that they would experience defeat. God wanted the children of Israel to learn and to learn indelibly on their minds his ways. His ways begin with faith. They proceed from faith to obedience. And they proceed from obedience to surrender, yielding what very it is that I have, whether it is an oxgoad or whether it is a rod in the hand of Moses or whether it is a serpent of brass up on a pole, whatever it is, we give it to God and God makes use of it.

God can take the obscure things of life and make them useful in his hand.

Another thing that God wanted them to learn is to remember the covenant. God made a covenant with Abraham, their forefather. And he promised them a mighty nation and a land of their own, free from enemies and abundant land.

At the time of Shamgar and unfortunately repeated throughout the history of Israel, they did not have control of their land that God had promised them. Neither were they free from enemies who would assault them and subdue them. And God had told them he said, "If you will not obey me and believe me, I will become your enemy. And I will stir up your enemies against you. And they will suppress you."

And God did that, because the children of Israel failed to believe and to obey. And yet God in his grace and in his mercy would come to them occasionally and would remind them of his promises and his covenant. For he would deliver them from their enemies and allow them to experience the land that he had promised to their forefather Abraham. And here is another occasion when God reminded the children of Israel of that covenant that he had made with Abraham.

"This is your land. This doesn't belong to the Philistines. This is your land. I promised it to you. And if you will obey me and you will believe and trust me, you will enjoy the land."

God had a reason why he repeated his lessons over and over again to the children of Israel. They failed to learn. And isn't it too sad in our day as well that those who fail to learn from history will repeat it? And I frequently say in commentary on that statement, that we have failed to learn from history. Only one lesson we have learned and that is we have failed to learn from history, because we repeat it over and over and over again.

Another reason why God would bring these events to the attention of the children of Israel is he wanted to remind them of his promise of redemption. Back when God created the heavens and the earth he created man without sin, upright, in full fellowship with him. They walked and talked in the garden and the fellowshiped one with another in the beauty of God's creation. And then one day Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed God. They yielded to the temptation of the serpent and they sinned. And immediately upon their sin they began to die and there were many things that died immediately, their relationship with God died. It ended. They no longer had a relationship with God. They no longer had fellowship with him. Their sinlessness died. They now became sinners.

Well, they became in need of a Savior. And God promised them a Savior. He said to Adam and to Eve that he would provide the seed of the woman who would come and would crush the head of the serpent, the first indication from God that he would provide a Savior who would overcome evil on behalf of people like you and like me.

And over the years after his promise to Adam and Eve, God gave promises, reminded them of his promise with example after example after example, providing them Saviors along the way that would point to the fact that he had made that promise of a Savior.

And we can look back from this occasion to the short history of Israel to see the number of times he provided a Savior for them: Moses, Joshua, Othniel, Ehud and now Shamgar, all pictures of the Savior who would come. All of these saviors, however, shared one common aspect. They could not bring full victory because they were weak in the flesh. They could not ultimately overcome sin. Oh, they could do it for a short time. They could do it for a few years. But they couldn't do it forever.

We don't know how long Shamgar brought peace and safety to Israel. It doesn't tell us.

"But appointed to the fact that you need a Savior and I have promised one, these are not your Savior. They are just a picture of the one that I have promised."

And we find as history unfolded throughout the centuries that God finally provided the Savior, the one that he had promised to Adam and Eve in the garden that he had pictured frequently throughout their history. Shamgar being one of those pictures.

The Savior came and they called him Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh who took upon him in his death and in his life and in his resurrection the sins of people like you and like me and he offered up himself as a sacrifice to God to pay the penalty that sins from men and women like you and me deserve. And he paid that penalty and the penalty covers people like you and me and all who come to him find forgiveness, not just a temporary forgiveness in our own physical lifetimes, but a forgiveness that lasts throughout eternity. For at death we would then join that heavenly band that surrounds the throne where the Lord Jesus now sits at his Father's right hand waiting for the

consummation of all things. And we will join that band and it is reserved for all who come to Christ in faith and obedience and in surrender, pictured by Shamgar.

How can the Spirit of God apply these events in our lives today? Do they have any bearing to us at all? Or do they only relate to centuries past and we listen to an interesting story and that is all it has for us is just a story of the past. Or does it have some meaning to us that how it can be applied to us?

It does fit us, because it describes for us our condition today. It describes our condition as individuals. As individuals we face an enemy that we cannot overcome. In our day as individuals we face servitude to evil. In our day we need a Savior just like the children of Israel needed in that day. They needed a Savior. They could not overcome their enemy on their own. It describes our condition as individuals. Every one of us need a Savior. It describes, as well, the condition of the Church of Jesus Christ today, because the Church of Jesus Christ today desperately needs to turn back to God. It has become afflicted with what I call cultural disease. By that I mean it has so adapted itself to the culture, it barely resembles the Church of God as described in Scripture. We have come to think that if we become more and more like the world, the world will want to become like us.

Well, now whatever caused that to make any sense?

God said, "No, come out from among them and be separate, be different, so that they would become like you, not you becoming like them."

So this story that occurred centuries ago provides for us a description of our present condition as individuals and as the Church of Jesus Christ. Our unbelief has brought into our lives sin and iniquity. We fail to believe the gospel. The gospel, briefly, is Jesus Christ came into the world. He yielded up himself as a sacrifice on behalf of people like you and me, bearing our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. And we fail to believe and trust the gospel. We fail to believe and trust God and turn exclusively to him, trusting in our own abilities and strength.

We no longer believe and follow the exclusivity of God. We now have many gods, many gods in our nation and, unfortunately, many gods in our own lives. We look to many things to solve our problems in life instead of looking to God himself and him alone. And many things in life occupy our attention and divert us away from God, just like idols did in the day of Shamgar. And we fail to trust the sufficiency of God, that he is more than able to meet our needs, regardless of what they are.

In our unbelief and cause the flourishing of sin in our lives and iniquity just like in that day. And we see it in the Church and we see it in our lives as individuals. We can learn from this example of Shamgar, for it pictures our conditions in our day.

Furthermore, a reflection upon this story of Shamgar and his victory over the Philistines can remind us how we need a Savior as well, because we encounter enemies that we cannot overcome, just like they did. Only God can bring to us the victory that we need.

We need a Savior and we need a Savior not only initially to bring to us forgiveness and salvation from sin, but we need that Savior repeatedly throughout our lives. All the days of our lives we need that Savior to intervene on our behalf and to bring to us on a day to day experience victory in our lives.

The prophet Zechariah wrote, "It is not by might, it is not by power. It is by my Spirit, saith the Lord, that we overcome the enemy."

And God tells us through his wonderful apostle Paul in the New Testament, he said we are to walk by faith and not by sight. And through Paul again he said that God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the wise of this world.

Would a Shamgar gain any merit in our day as a leader? We would laugh him off the stage, wouldn't we? We would call him a red necked hillbilly. Go back to the country, Shamgar. We don't need people like you.

God chooses the obscure and empowers them to accomplish his plan and purpose. God doesn't call the equipped. He equips ones he calls.

How will you respond to this story and to the events recorded in Scripture from the man Shamgar and the lessons that we can learn from it? Has the Spirit of God identified in your heart and life how these same truths apply to you? And has he pointed out to you in your life your need of a Savior, perhaps for the first time to call upon him as your Savior? Perhaps in another time to repeatedly call upon him? He has promised to serve as your savior, not just one time, but every day of your life. Do you trust him, obey him exclusively? He is not just a one time Savior. Oh, it starts there. It begins there. But then he performs the role of a Savior every day of our lives. We call upon him and trust upon him. Will you just reject it and throw it aside and say, "It is an interesting story. I have had my Bible lesson for the day"? Will you put it off and say, "Oh, I will think about it another time"? Or will you examine your life in light of these truths and the example of Shamgar as obscure as he was?

What changes do these truths require in your life today? Do they call upon you to trust God, perhaps for the very first time? Maybe up till now you have never really trusted him. You know about Jesus. You celebrate Easter. You celebrate Christmas. You use the phrase of our nation, in God I trust. But have you ever really called upon him and trusted him exclusively to save you and to bring to you eternal life and to forgive you for your sin and to transform you and to change you into a new creature? Have you forgotten to trust him every day? He calls upon us to trust him every day, to obey him every day, to surrender and to yield to him every day.

Well, I pray that the Spirit of God will take these truths from an obscure man by the name of Shamgar from centuries past and use the example of his life and how God used him and worked in his life and gave an example through him of us and that the Spirit of God might take these truths and apply them in your lives today. And may today be a day when you call upon him and trust him for the first time or for the 100th time.

Let's close in a word of prayer.