

Judges 10 - Thursday, 13th, 2012

(1) After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. (2) He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

- These first two verses begin with something that is very peculiar as it relates to this sixth deliverer of Israel whose name we're told is Tola.
- Notice how that there are only two verses recorded for Tola who actually judged Israel for twenty-three years, which is longer than Samson.
- This begs the question of why, why would nothing be said of this judge other than he dwelt, he judged, he died, and he was buried, that's it.

- Couple of thoughts here, the first of which is that he didn't get into trouble as some of the other judges, whom we consider the major ones.
- In other words, while they may be seen as a minor judge as we would see a minor prophet of whom little is recorded, much can be learned.
- Here's what I'm thinking Tola, and even Jair who we will be introduced to in the next verse though minor judges teach us major life lessons.

- Namely we do err greatly when we mitigate the magnificence of those who are faithfully serving and ministering in obscurity and anonymity.
- In our economy, those unknown servants aren't perceived as having as much value in the body of Christ as those who are very well known.
- Conversely, in God's economy those unknown servants are of indispensable value to the body of Christ. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 NIV (14) Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. (15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? (18) But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (19) If they were all one part, where would the body be? (20) As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (21) The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (22) On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, (24) while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, (25) so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (26) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- At the risk of giving a dissertation on the human anatomy, have you ever considered the paramount importance of the big toe to our body?
- Not only is the big toe indispensable, so too are the little toes, for they will feel the ground that we walk on and in so doing they balance us.
- While the little toes provide us with balance, the big toe is also balancing us, so as to provide us with the strength we need to run, jog, etc.

- In fact, according to recent research, it's believed that as much as 40% of our body's weight is distributed to the big toe. Mine carries a lot!
- It's for this reason that if we were to lose our big toe, we would be in serious Kimchee, as it were, because serious problems would ensue.
- Simple things like walking would become extremely difficult, as the other toes would balance that weight, which would cause deformities.

(3) After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. (4) Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called "Havoth Jair" to this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. (5) And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, it would indicate that with 30 of everything Jair was a very wealthy man.
- The reason I find this interesting is like Tola before him he only has two verses recorded about him though he judged for twenty-two years.
- I say that for two reasons, first, because often times, God chooses and uses those who are considered wealthy to further His kingdom.

- The second reason is not so visible at first glance, actually, it's sort of conspicuously absent from the narrative of both Tola and Jair as well.
- Notice that they weren't "war time" judges, in that they didn't deliver the Israelites from the bondage of an enemy oppressor like the others.
- Perhaps they were peace time judges because they pleased the Lord. That's not to say that the others weren't, but consider Proverbs 16:7.

Proverbs 16:7 NIV When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

(6) Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

- So, here we go again, after the forty-five years of Tola and Jair's righteous covering is gone, the Israelites, like dogs, go back to their vomit.
- We identified this as the "sin-cycle" at the beginning of our study of the book of Judges. The Israelites will repeat this cyclically seven times.
- Lest you become too quick to dismiss this as having any application to our lives today, think again. We're just as prone to this as they were.

- By that I mean obedience and disobedience is repeated in cycles, such that we see a template from the Israelites that resembles our lives.
- Let me explain, first it starts with a rebellion against God. This is willful disobedience meaning we, of our own volition, choose to disobey.
- The next part of this cycle is bondage, or being taken captive, if you prefer. Sadly, willful disobedience will always lead into bondage to sin.

- This brings us to the third part of the cycle, which is calling out to God for deliverance from the sin that's defeated me, and enslaved me.
- This is what we're seeing over and over again with the Israelites when in their rebellion they are taken captive then beg God for a deliverer.
- God in His mercy and grace is always faithful when our godly sorrow has led to a genuine repentance to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

- This is a three-pronged cycle, in that it's rebellion, bondage, and deliverance. The problem is after deliverance we're prone to rebel again.
- Then this starts the cycle starts all over again. We go from rebellion to bondage to deliverance, back to rebellion, bondage and deliverance.
- If the truth be known, you could sort of sum up the life of a defeated Christian in this way. They are always at some juncture in this cycle.

- This is why the Israelites, at this juncture have again did evil in the sight of the Lord, in their willful and sinful disobedience against the Lord.
- It's interesting to note that it was when the Israelite's served and worshipped these seven gods, that they forsook the true and living God.
- It wasn't the other way around, in that they didn't forsake God to serve these other gods, no, in serving these other gods they forsook God.

Charles Spurgeon - "The multiplicity of those idols should have provoked the scorn of those who knew the one only living and true God: but such is the besotting influence of sin that the Israelites became universal image-worshippers. The rites used in the adoration of many of these false deities were to the last degree degrading, and this rendered Israel's sin all the more heinous. Observe, that they forsook Jehovah altogether when they became followers of idols; man cannot serve God and Manmon; and where falsehood enters, truth leaves in disgust."

Matthew 6:24 NKJV "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

(7) So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. (8) From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. (9) Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

- If this is not an apt description of bondage to sin, then I don't know what is. Sin harasses us, sin oppresses us, and sin even depresses us.
- I can't get over how the Israelites could live under this oppression, and in this depression, for as long as eighteen years. How can that be?

- The only explanation that I can come up with is Jeremiah 17:9, which says that; "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

Charles Spurgeon - "It is clear that afflictions are unavailing to change the heart; their best results are only temporary, and as soon as they are withdrawn, men return to their old ways."

(10) And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!" (11) So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? (12) Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. (13) Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. (14) Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."

- These five verses can be a little disturbing by virtue of how it appears that God has had it with them such that He will deliver them no more.
- The question becomes, why. I believe the answer is that God wants to teach them a lesson in how their false gods cannot deliver them.
- In effect, God is wanting them to see how that they in their stupidity have traded in the true and delivering God, for these other false gods.

Charles Spurgeon - "This was but justice, but what a dreadful sound it must have made in Israel's ears. Suppose the Lord should deal thus with us and beat us back to the false confidences and sinful pleasures, which we have at any time set our hearts upon. Imagine His saying, 'Go to your self-righteousness for comfort' – turn to your merrymakings or to your money bags' – what would desponding souls be able to reply?"

(15) And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray." (16) So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

- This would almost seem as if God has had a change of heart, vis-à-vis his broken heart, in no longer being able to endure Israel's misery.
- I would suggest, while its true God's heartbreaks when his children needlessly suffer, it's not necessarily what moved Him to deliver them.
- What moved God's hand of deliverance was their repentance as evidenced by their getting rid of their foreign gods and serving the Lord.

- What also moved God's hand of deliverance was their submission to God as evidenced by saying; "do to us whatever seems best to You."
- Never underestimate the power of humility, especially when we fall on our face before God with the godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

(17) Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. (18) And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

- So, here they are, all ready to go to battle, and they have no one to lead them. Why? It was because of their idolatry for eighteen years.
- Here's how I get there, it's hard to find godly leaders in a climate of rebellion. The sin of God's people, affects the leaders of God's people.
- This speaks to the far-reaching consequences of sin and rebellion against God. But God, is merciful in raising up Jephthah, in chapter 11.