

# Judges 3:12-31

**Introduction** – The gospel is not a “Precious Moments” story for the faint of heart. It is an earthy, dragon-slaying story, full of deception and blood and unclean things. Jesus said, “*..the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*”. The gospel is a story of the Seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent, the battle of Light over darkness, and the decided victory of the Light. The gospel is also a story of laughter because it is a story of surprise and irony. The scriptures tell us that “*weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning*”. God tells His enemies as they shake their hands at Him in contempt that He and all of heaven laugh.

The story we are about to tell is a violent comedy. It is another good picture of the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Enslavement and Irony** (vv 12-14) – Once again, Israel falls away from the God of their salvation. God never loses control, but enslaves them with a host of ironic twists.

**Moab and Ammon** – These two people-groups are descendants from the incestuous relations of Lot’s daughters with their father. They had learned such immorality from their lives in Sodom and Gomorrah, and now Israel is being brought under such a culture. In more faithful days, Moab had been afraid of Israel (Num 22). Now, they find themselves triumphing over Israel.

**Amalekites** – These were sworn enemies of God and Israel, and once defeated foes (Ex 17:8ff). God had delivered Amalek into the hands of Israel, and now He was delivering Israel into the hands of Amalek.

**Eglon** – His name means ‘calf’, and like the golden calves, Eglon, surrounded by his trophy of idols, forces Israel to render tribute to Him. These tributes may very well have been the firstfruit sacrifices which should have been rendered to the Lord.

**Eighteen Years** – It appears that as soon as the people would cry out to God in true repentance, he would deliver them. Yet it is eighteen long years of oppression before they cry out.

**Crushing the Head of the Enemy** (vv15-25) – Ehud, a Benjamite (son of my right hand), is a left-handed warrior. He is also a magistrate, trusted by Eglon to present the required tribute. Although it was most likely illegal, Ehud makes a dagger for himself and hides it on his right thigh. But his ‘unconventional’ actions have only begun.

**Tribute/Stone Images** (vv18-19) – Ehud puts his plan into action when he is permitted to bring the tribute of the people before Eglon. The stone idols are mentioned, either referring to the altar of stones built in Gilgal in Joshua’s day (Josh 4:20) or to idols placed there by Moab.

**Ehud’s Deception** – This shrewd deliverer took advantage of his situation to bring about the salvation of his people from the tyranny of Eglon. Ehud was fully justified to use deception and then to kill this tyrant. Ehud was at war, serving in the magistrate, and Eglon was an unlawful king in Israel’s homeland. This was not the act of an individual in a domestic dispute. This was a civil magistrate using the sword and lawful deception to bring justice for his people in a time of war.

**Disgusting Details** (vv20-25) – God determined to take the time to give us gruesome details. The ‘savior’ leaves the rest of his people and deals with the head of the enemy himself. He declares that he has a word from God and then drives the dagger home. This sword enters into the fat Eglon, disappears, but reveals the unclean excrement of this Moabite king while leaving him helpless in a scene which becomes humorous at Eglon’s expense. We know that our great Savior has made a mockery of His foes even more (Col 2:14-15).

**The Savior Leads His Army to Victory** (vv 26-30) – Ehud passes by the impotent idols, escapes and declares the word of the Lord again – this time to Israel, “Follow me, for the Lord has delivered your enemies...” And so, having crushed the (political) head of the enemy, this savior summons his army and leads them to victory – 10,000 are killed at that time. The day had begun with a tribute to a false-god’s king and ended with that kingdom routed and ashamed, and the people of God set free.

**And If You Think That Was Surprising** (v31) – In what seems a strange and out-of-place addendum, this story ends with a single verse about another judge, Shamgar. Although we know little of his story now, he was apparently well known in the days of Deborah (Judges 5:6). His name reveals that he was most likely not an Israelite, but a convert to Jehovah. Apparently, this farmer-turned-warrior was a big surprise to his Philistine opponents.

**Deception From Heaven** – Christ’s crucifixion was a surprise. Had they known what would happen from His death, His foes would never have put Him to death (1 Cor 2:7-9). But that deception was our salvation.

**Laughter From Heaven** – God still laughs at the folly of those who vainly pursue their schemes against Him (Psalm 2:1-4). We would do well to learn to laugh at this world with its ‘devils filled’, for ‘one little Word shall fell him’. The gospel is the true story of “Surprise – victory!”

**Violence From Heaven** – That psalm continues, declaring a violent overthrow of the world (Psalm 2:7-12), and is directly applied to Christ in Rev 19. He is the head who has trampled down the enemy’s head and leads His people in gospel-victory over the earth.

**Grace From Heaven** – How many times do we find ourselves thinking we lack the grace to beat our foe in our battle for holiness? How many times are we actually far too complacent in our sins and compromises, not realizing the slavery into which we are falling? O that we would learn to cry out for grace from heaven and believe the promises of God.