

Judges 3:7-11

Introduction - Judges begins with two introductions. The first one emphasizes the historical background, telling us how Israel got into this mess. The second overviews the events which will be recorded throughout the book, highlighting the faithlessness of Israel, and the faithfulness of God, both in His wrath and in His mercy. We now turn to the first of two stories of exemplary judges. The first, the story of Othniel, is given to us without much detail to show us the basic ideal paradigm from which all of the other stories will add many variations. And in this simple paradigm, we see the sovereign goodness and grace of God in His chastisements and in His salvation.

The Sin of Forgetfulness (v7) - The first evil mentioned in this verse is what draws them in to the second, and more visible, evil. It is not that they simply worshipped and served the Baals, but that *'they forgot the Lord their God'*. We do not keep God's law when we do not remember His gospel - *"I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery"*. When we forget God, when we forget His name, who He is, and what He has done, we will fail to remain faithful and we will turn to other gods. Poor historians make great sinners.

It is a Sin to Forget - "I forgot" is not an adequate excuse. Not to your mother, not to your employer, and particularly not to God. And yet our flesh is bent towards forgetting because it is lazy and tends to only be interested in the present. That is why God exhorts us in the disciplines of remembrance - "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." It is here as God's people that we remember and renew our covenant with God. And it is here that He reminds us of His covenant faithfulness to us, strengthening us in His Word and sacraments.

God Did Not Forget (v8) - While the people forgot their God and their covenant with Him, He did not. One could argue that this judgment was simply the natural consequence: serving the gods of the heathens would eventually enslave you to those heathen. But that would be interpreting history incorrectly. It was not the tame, 'natural' process, but the blazing hot, supernatural, wrath of God that was ordering history (Psalm 90:11).

"Cushanrithathaim, King of Aramnaharaim" - There is a play on words taking place in the Hebrew. Roughly, it is 'the Cushite of double-wickedness', king of 'Syria of the double-river'. This attack is from the north, from where Abraham had come. The people do not want to follow God so He is sending them back, giving them over to their sin. But this is also the place where one day Assyria and then Babylon will come and truly take the people into exile, and it will be doubly cruel compared to Egypt. It is as if God is saying, "you want to try living without Me - let Me show you".

God Raised Up a Deliverer (v9) - This jealous love of the Lord shown forth in His hard chastisements reminds God's people that He is the Lord and, just as you would expect from a well administered cosmic-spanking, they cry out to Him. *"How many in eternity will bless the loving correction of God in time"*-Fausset. Having gained their attention, this gracious God raises up a deliverer.

Othniel - God raises up a savior, a 'yasha', and he saves God's people. Again, it is not simply being the right person at the right place at the right time. God calls and ordains this man for His people.

Spirit-Anointed (v10) - Not only a savior, Othniel is a messiah, an anointed-one. It is made clear that his victory is due to the work of the Spirit upon Othniel and then through Othniel upon God's enemies.

Seeing Through Othniel (Luke 1:68-75) - Zacharias sees through this story and the stories of deliverance in the scriptures. By faith he sees these stories as types telling the story of the Antitype. Christ is coming, he prophesies, to save and to deliver His people from the enemies of God. The Spirit descended upon Jesus and He went to war, destroying the work of the devil and all his enemies, and delivering His people from the power and guilt of their sins.

The Spirit of God - was given to Othniel in measure, but to Christ without measure (John 3:34). Othniel's victory was only partial (in time and space), but Christ's is and will be complete (Isaiah 11:1-5, 42:1-4). In Christ, the Spirit comes to us in full measure as well that we might wage the good fight. Only in the Spirit-anointed Christ can we be strong against our enemies (Eph 6:10-13). But in the Spirit-anointed Christ we can stand against them. The Spirit makes the preaching of the Word effective. The Spirit makes your works and prayers effective. The Spirit gives you strength to triumph over your sin.

Gospel Rest (v11) - The result of this victory was a full generation of rest (most likely rest from war). God seeks to awaken us not only with His severity but with His kindness to us as well (Rom 2:24, 11:22). In these days are we not more thoughtfully aware of the kindness of God for the days He has granted this land peace? And our gospel peace is not simply to rest 'in the heavens'. We are commanded to pray for such peace (1 Tim 2:2).

Rest and Remembering - The peace that God has granted you in Christ is not so that you would forget Him, but that you might grow in holiness as, in His kindness, you are led to repentance. Othniel overpowered Cushan and the results were for a generation. Jesus overpowered the devil and your sin, and His reign and the manifestation of that reign will last a thousand, increasing forever.