

God Responds to Our Pain

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JUDGES 3:12-30

This Week's Core

Competency:

Prayer - I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Come and listen, all who fear God, and I will tell what He has done for me. I cried out to Him with my mouth, and praise was on my tongue. If I had been aware of malice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. However, God has listened; He has paid attention to the sound of my prayer. May God be praised! He has not turned away my prayer or turned His faithful love from me. (Psalm 66:16-20)

Using This Study

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

③ EXPAND His Word

How does this FIT? Studying cross references can help expand your understanding of a passage and discover the unity in God's word.

④ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

Introduction

Have you ever cried out to God? I am not talking about the sterile, polite discussions you normally direct to God. I am referring to when you finally getting to a point in which you cry a desperate plea to the only One who can deliver. God attaches a promise to those pleas for help –He *will* respond.

Now, this *does not* suggest that our Heavenly Father is a vending machine, or a short order cook who is at the whim of our emotional and theatrical expressions of spoiled discontent. No, I am referring to the seemingly irresistible response of compassion and initiative our Heavenly Father exercises toward His people who get to the end of themselves because of their sin, or the sin of others. Scripture repeatedly illustrates this benevolent response by God, and few periods in biblical history demonstrate this extravagant grace more than the time of the Judges.

Last week we explored the consequences associated with God's people embracing the vile and destructive life-style of the Canaanites. Instead of taking advantage of the blessings and success that faithfulness to God and His covenant promised, the generation after Joshua chose to align themselves with the sin of God's enemies. Consequently, God's children find themselves in bondage both to God's enemies and to the sin that repeatedly enslaves them to their destructive passions.

This Week

The misery that sin ultimately brings to God's people is too much for them to bear. Out of desperation, Israel cries out to Yahweh. What does God do? Yes, He had told them not to get caught up in that lifestyle. Yes, He had warned them that sin was destructive and that it would lead them away from Him. Yes, He is completely justified in sweeping away all the filth of the land. But, He swore to Abraham that He would rise up a Savior for the whole world through this people.

What will God endure to keep His promise? Learn this week how God responds to His people's cry for help, and the lesson He teaches in the unlikely manner in which He brings relief.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

12 The Israelites again did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel, because they had done what was evil in the LORD's sight.

13 After Eglon convinced the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join forces with him, he attacked and defeated Israel and took possession of the City of Palms.

14 The Israelites served Eglon king of Moab 18 years.

15 Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and He raised up Ehud son of Gera, a left-handed Benjaminite, as a deliverer for them. The Israelites sent him to Eglon king of Moab with tribute money.

16 Ehud made himself a double-edged sword 18 inches long. He strapped it to his right thigh under his clothes

17 and brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was an extremely fat man.

18 When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he dismissed the people who had carried it.

19 At the carved images near Gilgal he returned and said, "King Eglon, I have a secret message for you." The king called for silence, and all his attendants left him.

20 Then Ehud approached him while he was sitting alone in his room upstairs where it was cool. Ehud said, "I have a word from God for you," and the king stood up from his throne.

21 Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and plunged it into Eglon's belly.

Notes:

Moab (v. 12) - The Moabites were related to the Israelites through Lot (Abraham's nephew). Lot was the father of both the Ammonites and the Moabites through incestuous relations with his daughters while in a drunken state.

Israelites cried out (v. 15) - This statement occurs five times (3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6; 10:10), in each instance describing the Israelite response to the heavy hand of the enemy into whose hand Yahweh had sold them. Fundamentally the verb expresses not repentance for sin but the anguish of a person in a distressing situation in need of deliverance. Sometimes it is simply a cry of pain, but usually it is expressly directed to one who it is hoped will rescue the person, especially God. In Judges the latter is always the case. In fact, in 10:14, when the descendants of Israel "cried out" to Yahweh, he retorted

22 Even the handle went in after the blade, and Eglon's fat closed in over it, so that Ehud did not withdraw the sword from his belly. And Eglon's insides came out.

23 Ehud escaped by way of the porch, closing and locking the doors of the upstairs room behind him.

24 Ehud was gone when Eglon's servants came in. They looked and found the doors of the upstairs room locked and thought he was relieving himself in the cool room.

25 The servants waited until they became worried and saw that he had still not opened the doors of the upstairs room. So they took the key and opened the doors—and there was their lord lying dead on the floor!

26 Ehud escaped while the servants waited. He crossed over the Jordan near the carved images and reached Seirah.

27 After he arrived, he sounded the ram's horn throughout the hill country of Ephraim. The Israelites came down with him from the hill country, and he became their leader.

28 He told them, "Follow me, because the LORD has handed over your enemies, the Moabites, to you." So they followed him, captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over.

29 At that time they struck down about 10,000 Moabites, all strong and able-bodied men. Not one of them escaped.

30 Moab became subject to Israel that day, and the land was peaceful 80 years.

sarcastically, "Go and cry out (zālaq) to the gods you have chosen. Let them save (hōšîa) you when you are in trouble (sārâ)."

Ehud...a left-handed Benjaminite (v. 15) - In addition to the cultural handicap a left-handed man possessed, Ehud's association with the tribe of Benjamin served something else. Ironically, Benjamin means "son of the right hand." As God's agent then, a left-handed Benjaminite underscores how God delights in using the least likely individual to deliver Israel.

(v.20) room upstairs - In ancient cities, the coolest place in the house was on the roof (cf. the "small room on the roof" that a Shunammite couple made for Elisha, 2 Kings 4:10).

2 EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

1. Verses 12-14 describe Israel's undesirable situation. In your own words describe Israel's predicament.
2. In this week's passage, the NIV says Israel did "evil in the eyes of the Lord". Read 3:1-7 and list what actions the Lord viewed as evil.
3. In your opinion, why did Israel turn away from God?
4. Verse 15 says that Israel "cried out to the Lord". What does it mean to cry out to the Lord?
5. At this time in Israel's history, being left-handed was considered a handicap. Why do you think that, in verse 15, Ehud is identified as being left-handed and how might this be significant?

3 EXPAND His Word

How does this FIT?

6. Read Psalm 66:16-20. These verses are from our core competency for the week. How does this passage further inform the concept of crying out to the Lord?
7. In verse 28, Ehud, the deliverer, says, "Follow me." Many times during his life time, Jesus issued an invitation to follow him. What do the following references indicate about following Jesus?
 - a. Matthew 4:19
 - b. Matthew 8:21-22
 - c. Matthew 9:9-13

d. Matthew 16:24-25

e. John 10:3-4

④ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

8. It is difficult for us to understand why Israel would turn away from the one true God, yet we may be guilty of (inadvertently) trading away worship of our God for other things. Reflect on your use of time over the last week. What do your activities suggest about your values?

9. What does God's willingness to use Ehud suggest about His willingness to use you?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW...

Write about how God wants you to FEEL...

Write about what God wants you to DO...

Sermon Notes:

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.