EHUD

THE LEFT HANDED MAN

**DATE: 3/24/2013 pm**

**TEXT: Judges 3:12-30**

**INTRODUCTION**

For the 400 years covered in the book of Judges,

The nation of Israel followed a predictable pattern

They would serve God faithfully while they followed the strong leadership of their judges

But when the judge died, and they had no leader, they would desert God

Then they would begin to live in disobedience to His Law

Finally, ending up, worshipping, the pagan gods of the Canaanites

When they rebelled against the Lord …

He would send His judgment upon them,

How?, by allowing Israel to be oppressed by their enemies

After a time, Israel would repent of their sins and God would raise up a deliverer

God would use this person to defeat Israel’s enemies and set them free

That is exactly the pattern we see at work in the verses of our text

Israel sinned against God and the Lord caused Eglon, the king of Moab, to become strong

Eglon invaded Israel, with the help of the Ammonites and the Amalekites, oppressed Israel for 18 years

When Israel repented, God raised up a man named Ehud to be their deliverer

Ehud assassinated Eglon and led Israel to victory and freedom

This story has a lot to teach us, if we will allow it

Like Israel, we often follow the same pattern of Disobedience, Chastisement and Restoration

Our problem is not the Moabites, the Ammonites or the Amalekites

Our problem is the World, the Flesh and the Devil

As this text unfolds, we will see that Israel’s enemy is a clear type of one of our enemies

Eglon is the perfect picture of the Old Nature / Flesh

Your Flesh and your body are not the same (the body is neutral)

The Flesh is out of control, self-indulgent, fat, lazy, evil, and full of pride

But, we also see how the Flesh can be dealt with

(That is, if we want it that way)

In Israel’s defeat of Eglon, we see a picture of the battle we are fighting every day

Every one of us has problems with our flesh / old nature

Sometimes we win; sometimes we lose

We are literally in the fight of our lives every day

A fight we must win, or else

This passage gives us the help we need to fight and win

I want to preach about Ehud and Israel, and their battle with Eglon

I want us to see that they won their battle with those who oppressed them (and we can too)

- We do not have to be a slave to our fleshly passions

- We can be free from the grip of old nature’s desire to sin

- We can walk in victory if we will fight the battle God’s way

I want to preach on ***Ehud, the Left Handed Man***

As we consider these great truths …

We will be given the tools we need to fight and win the daily battle we face with our old nature

We’ll look at 3 things -

***Israel’s “Dilemma”***; ***Israel’s “Deliverer”***; and ***Israel’s “Deliverance”***

Let’s begin by praying and then notice these 3 great Bible truths and get some help

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, we have -

**I.** **ISRAEL’S “DILEMMA” - vs. 12-14**

These verses describe the horrible oppression Israel suffered because of her rebellion against the Lord

**v. 12a - *“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD”***

Their problems stand as a warning to all those who would walk away from the One Who redeemed them

**v. 12b - *“and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD”***

Let’s look and see what we can learn from this Warning

**A.** **Their ‘Foe’** **– vs. 12, 13a**

Israel faced 3 nations because of their rebellion

They faced the Moabites (v.12), the Ammonites and the Amalekites (v.13a)

All 3 were a continual problem for Israel

The interesting part is that all 3 were connected to Israel by blood

The Amalekites were descended from Esau, Jacob’s twin brother

The Moabites and the Ammonite were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew

We all know what happened after Lot and his daughters were delivered from Sodom and Gomorrah

All 3 Nations worshipped false gods

The Moabites served a god called Chemosh

The Ammonites worshiped a god called Moloch

Both gods were worshipped using baby sacrifices and vile, immoral practices

The Amalekites were a nomadic, warlike people that worshipped a variety of pagan gods

All 3 were a continual thorn in the side of Israel

They were constantly attacking, hindering and seeking to enslave the people of Israel

These 3 nations are a picture of our old, fleshly natures

Moab represents the power of the flesh

Ammon represents the passion of the flesh

Amalek represents the persistence of the flesh

Just like Israel was repeatedly attacked by these nations

The believer is continually attacked by the old nature

Our old nature has its own desires

It does not like the ways of holiness and righteousness

**Ephesians 2:1-3 …**

**John 8:44 – *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”***

**II Timothy 2:26 – *“And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”***

The flesh that we carry around will do everything in its power to get its own way

Don’t be deceived, your flesh doesn’t want to be spiritual

Your flesh will never submit to the Word of God

**Romans 8:7 – *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”*** (it won’t be)

It must be brought into submission

Here is how Paul described this enemy –

**Romans 7:14-25 …**

**Our ‘Foe’**

**B.** **Their ‘Fight’** – **v.13b**

These 3 nations joined forces and came against Israel

We are told that they “***smote Israel***”

The word “***smote***” means *to strike, hit, beat, slay, and kill*

These pagan armies didn’t come by for a friendly visit

They came to destroy Israel

Israel was in a fight for its very existence

The battle we wake up to every day is just as serious!

We are in a fight for our very existence

Paul describes this battle for us in -

**Galatians 5:16-18 …**

We all have different areas, in which we fight

But if you are saved, you are involved in warfare

**Ephesians 6:12 – *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”***

You can win the battles; or you can lose the battles

This is determined by who we yield to as we fight

**Romans 6:16 – *“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”***

If we yield to God, we live to righteousness

If we yield to ourselves, we will be slaves to sin

We are in a war!

We need to suit up for war every day by putting on the whole armor of God

**Ephesians 6:10-18** …

By praying and reading the Word, and by taking a stand that refuses to yield to sin in any form!

It isn’t easy, but it’s God’s command!

**Our ‘Foe’**

**Our ‘Fight’**

**C. Their ‘Failure’ – v.13c**

Eglon established his headquarters in “***the city of palm trees***”

This is another name for the city of Jericho

**Deuteronomy 34:3 – *“And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar”***

Jericho was the first city conquered by Israel when they entered the Promised Land in **Joshua 6**

Jericho *represented* the victories that God would give them in the future

Their Oppressors set up headquarters in the very place where they once had enjoyed a great victory

Such is the power of the flesh!

Just when you think you have the victory in an area of your life, and …

Just when you think that problem with that sin is settled forever, here comes the flesh

It will do everything in its power to undermine your victories and take back any ground you have won

The flesh is relentless

Unfortunately, our spiritual desire is not

**Matthew 26:41 – *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”***

Whenever there is a failure, it is a failure to Live by Faith

We fail to pray

We fail to read the Word

We fail to avoid exposure to the things that tempt us

We fail to take a stand against the flesh

**I Corinthians 9:27** - “***But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway,***”

The phrase “***keep under***” means *to hold back*

When the flesh rises up, we must ***“reckon”*** with it

**Romans 6:11 – *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”***

Reckon – *means to suppose something to be true*

It isn’t easy, but if we don’t do this, we will fail every time!

**Our ‘Foe’, ‘Fight’, “failure’**

**D. Their ‘Foolishness’ – v.14**

***“So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years”***

Because Israel failed to honor the will of God in their daily walk, they became the servants of Eglon

The word “***served***” means *to work; to labor; to become a slave to*

Israel had been redeemed to be the servants of Jehovah God

Now, because of their sins, they have become the servants of pagan kings

This condition lasted for 18 years! (What a waste!)

Again, this showcases the power of the flesh

It has the power to enslave us and lead us away from the Lord

It has the power to enslave us and to cause us to work for the world and the devil

It has the power to make us labor for self every day,

…. While we ignore the will of God for our lives

It is not what God saved us for

He did not save us so that we might remain the slaves of sin

He saved us to be free

**John 8:36 – *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”***

He saved us to serve Him and Him alone!

But, if you allow the flesh to have its way …

You too will become it’s slave

It will draw you into its trap and hold you there,

Just like a spider and her web

Squeezing all the spiritual life out of you

I have no doubt that there are some right now who are a mere spiritual shell of what they used to be

Our prayer life, our devotional life, our church life, our life of service and devotion to God have all fallen into disrepair

**ISRAEL’S “DILEMMA”**

**II.** **ISRAEL’S “DELIVERER” – vs. 15-26**

That’s where Israel found herself

Before she even knew it, she was away from God and under bondage

When she finally got tired of the servitude …

Israel called out to God and He began the process of restoration

**v.15a – *“But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD…”***

The first step in restoration is always repentance!

Let’s learn more about Ehud, Israel’s deliverer

**A. His ‘Problem’ – v.15a**

***“Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded”***

Ehud was from the tribe of Benjamin

Benjamin’s allotment of land included the area around Jericho

Thus, they would have suffered the most under Eglon’s reign

Ehud, and the men of Benjamin, had plenty of reasons for wanting Eglon and his armies gone

We are also told that Ehud was “***a man lefthanded***”

There seems to have been a great number of men from the tribe of Benjamin who were left handed

**Judges 20:15, 16 – *“And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities…”***

***“Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss”***

There were also many in Benjamin who were ambidextrous (the ability to use both hands well)

**I Chronicles 12:2 – *“They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in***

***hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin”***

When the Bible says that Ehud was “***a man lefthanded***”

It’s not referring to either

It literally means that he was *bound in the right hand*

In other words, Ehud was crippled on his right side

He was forced to use his left hand because his right hand did not function

This would seem like a handicap for a *would be* deliverer (don’t you think?)

If the people had been voting for a deliverer

Ehud probably would not have been the first choice

As we will see, Ehud took what many would see as a liability and turned it into an asset

Not *ability* but *availability* (We’ll see that with Gideon)

Let me say right here, what everyone already knows

We all have our problems!

Moses was tongued tied

David was young

Paul was hated by the early church

… Just to name a few

We all have our issues that hinder us from being all the Lord would have us to be

Well, I have one question for you -

*“Did God not know about your issues when He saved you?”*

Of course He did, But He saved you anyway

He didn’t save you, so you could fret over what you couldn’t do

He saved you so He could enable you to do what only He can do through you

(Then He Gets the Glory)

We need to stop making excuses about why we can’t do this or that, and get busy doing something for God!

None of the excuses change the fact that when He saved us …

He placed His Spirit within us

**I Corinthians 12:13 – *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”***

He has also gifted us to serve Him

**I Corinthians 12:7 - *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”***

Throw out your excuses and do something for Jesus!

**Our ‘Problem’**

**B. His ‘Plan’ – vs. 15b-19**

***“…and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab”***

Every so often, the people of Israel were required to pay tribute to Eglon

So, they sent their gift to Eglon with a delegation led by Ehud

But before he did …

Ehud took the liberty of making himself a double-edged dagger about 14” long

**v.16a – *“But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length;…”***

We see he strapped this dagger to his right thigh, under his cloak,

**v. 16b - *“…and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh”***

… And then went to take the tribute money to the king

His plan was to get Eglon alone,

And when he did, he was going to assassinate him

It was a daring plan!

If Ehud had been caught with that dagger, he would have been killed on the spot

But, he was a cripple! (What’s he going to do?)

The guards would have expected to see a sword

They probably didn’t even search him,

Thinking they had nothing to fear from a crippled man

By the way, the flesh knows you’re crippled

The flesh knows you lack the power to overcome it

The flesh knows we are weak

The flesh thinks it can control you and rule your life

The flesh is right!

But, the flesh forgets one important truth

The flesh forgets about the Spirit of God Who lives inside the believer

The flesh forgets that we have this promise from our Lord in **II Corinthians 12:9 -** “***My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness***,”

The flesh forgets **Philippians 4:13** - “***I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,***”

The flesh forgets that **I John 4:4** - “...***greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world***,”

The flesh forgets that I have been saved and I do not have to sin – **Romans 6:14 – *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”***

The flesh forgets that I have been delivered from its power and I can walk in victory for the glory of God!

**I John 5:4 – *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”***

That’s way it is so important to know the Word of God,

Because the Flesh Forgets!!!

After delivering the tribute to Eglon, the delegation departs **– v.18, 19**

After they had gone a short distance,

Ehud turns back, acting like he forgot to tell Eglon something

The king, supposing that he was about to hear some great secret, tells Ehud to keep silent until they are alone

Eglon dismisses all of his servants

**Our ‘Problem’**

**Our ‘Plan’**

**C. His ‘Performance’ – vs. 20-26**

When Ehud gets Eglon alone, Ehud tells the king that he has a message for the king *from God*

**v. 20b – *“…And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee…”***

Eglon stands up to hear this message, for even a king must honor the Word of God!

**v.20c – *“….And he arose out of his seat”***

Ehud reaches under his cloak, draws out the dagger and thrusts it into Eglon’s body **– v.21**

The blade sinks so deep into the king’s body that the fat closes around the handle and Ehud cannot retrieve the dagger **– v.22**

Not that it matters, because Eglon is dead

Ehud locks the doors to the rooftop room where they are, and he makes his escape **– v.23**

Eglon’s servants find the doors locked, and think the king is in the restroom **–v.24**

You see, this is the meaning of the phrase “***covereth his feet***” in **v. 24**

This is gross, but the phrase “***the dirt came out***” in **v. 22** means that Eglon emptied himself when he died

The locked door and the aroma from the chamber convince the servants that the king was on the throne, so to speak

They waited until they are literally embarrassed - **v. 25**

Then they retrieve a key and enter the chamber only to find the king dead on the floor

By this time, Ehud is long gone **– v.26**

I realize that some of that was probably more information than we wanted

But those details, while they are disgusting, plainly illustrate the nature of the fight we find ourselves in every day

If we are going to enjoy victory over this flesh,

We are going to have to battle with it

We are going to have to get close to it and deal it a death blow

It’s going to be nasty work

It isn’t for the squeamish, but it is the only way to enjoy victory

Jesus described it this way

**Mark 9:43-48 …**

What is the Lord saying?

No step is too great

No price it too high

We must take whatever steps are necessary to see that the flesh is defeated

If we don’t, we will remain its servant as long as we live!

**ISRAEL’S “DILEMMA”**

**ISRAEL’S “DELIVERER”**

**III. ISRAEL’S “DELIVERANCE” – vs. 27-30**

**A.** **It Involved ‘Following’ – vs. 27, 28a**

When Ehud returned from killing Eglon

He sounded a ram’s horn

***“And it came to pass, when he had come, that he blew a trumpet”***

Trumpets were sounded for several reasons in Israel

- They were blown to announce a feast

- They were blown to signal a change of location

- They were blown to demonstrate joy and to praise the Lord

- They were blown to call the people to war

That is the purpose here

God had heard Israel’s prayers and had raised up a deliverer

Ehud had taken the first step toward giving them victory over their enemies

He had severed the head of the serpent,

They now needed to destroy the body

The test now was to see whether they would follow God’s man or not

We see they did

**‘Following’** also …

**B. Involved ‘Fighting’ – vs. 28c, 29a**

We see they followed because of what they did

Israel cut off the avenues of escape and the means whereby reinforcements could get in

**v.28c - *“…and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over”***

Then, they killed about 10,000 men

**v. 29a - *“And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour;”***

The men they killed were ***“lusty”*** – *big guys*

They were “***men of valor***” – *great physical strength*

But, regardless of their power and military ability

They were defeated by Israel because God gave them the victory!

**“Following’, ‘Fighting’ also …**

**C. Involves ‘Finishing’ – v.29b**

“***There escaped not a man***”

Israel did not back off until every last one of the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Amalekites in their country had been put to the sword

It was a total victory over the enemy

Israel’s victory has a lesson or two to teach about our own battles with sin and the flesh

God has given us everything we need to enable us to walk in spiritual victory

He has given us His Word, His Spirit, prayer and His presence in our lives

If we fail to yield to Him, to walk in His will,

We can never have victory

But, if we will follow Him, humbly and faithfully,

He can and will keep us from the bondage of the flesh!

We need not fear the size or the power of our enemies

We are to fight them with everything God has given us

We are to cut off every avenue of escape and every place where the enemy might send reinforcements

We are to fight until every last ounce of the enemy’s strength is gone

We are to fight until the day He calls us home to glory!

We are not to tolerate even the tiniest bit of the flesh life within us

Every vestige of the flesh must be put to death

**Jude 23** - “***hating even the garment spotted by the flesh***,”

**CONCLUSION**

We all have problems with the old nature

It is overindulged, self-assured, and out of control

This message is a call for us to take the battle to the flesh

It does not have to carry the day

It does not have to win the victory

It does not have the right to claim our lives

You can be free!

We are a lot like Ehud

We are all unlikely conquerors

We are all crippled in one way or another

We are all weak

We are all prone to spiritual failure

But, like Ehud, we can walk in victory

We need to take the Word of God, our dagger,

Hide it away in our hearts

**Psalm 119:11- *“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee”***

And assassinate the flesh in a sneak attack

You don’t have to be a victim

You can be a victor!

You can be a victor over the flesh!

**ISRAEL’S “DILEMMA”**

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