OHBC Six-Day Bible Study

Weekly Bible Study: Judges 3

God's Mercy Toward an Unfaithful People

Weekly Theme: God Remains Faithful Even When His People Are Unfaithful

Judges 3 reveals a troubling pattern in Israel's relationship with God. Although the Lord had faithfully delivered His people from Egypt, brought them into the Promised Land, and established His covenant with them, the Israelites repeatedly turned away from Him. Instead of remaining devoted to the Lord, they adopted the practices of the surrounding nations, worshiped false gods, and forgot the One who had delivered them. Their disobedience brought suffering, yet God's mercy remained evident as He raised up deliverers to rescue them.

The chapter introduces three judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Each was used by God to deliver Israel from its enemies. Their stories demonstrate that the Lord is sovereign over nations, circumstances, and individuals. God used oppression to discipline His people, but He also demonstrated His compassion by providing deliverance when they cried out to Him. Israel's rescue was not the result of its own strength or righteousness, but of God's gracious intervention.

As we study Judges 3, we should recognize that the same sinful tendencies found in Israel remain present in the human heart today. We may not bow before carved idols, but we can easily place comfort, possessions, relationships, personal desires, or worldly approval above our devotion to God. Like Israel, we often forget the Lord's faithfulness when life becomes comfortable, only to recognize our need for Him when difficulties arise.

However, this chapter also points us toward the greater deliverance accomplished through Jesus Christ. The judges provided temporary relief from earthly oppression, but Jesus delivers His people from the guilt and power of sin. Unlike Israel's judges, whose victories were followed by renewed disobedience, Christ accomplished a complete and lasting redemption through His death and resurrection.

Throughout this week, consider how God's patience, discipline, mercy, and sovereignty are revealed in Judges 3. Examine your own heart for areas of misplaced devotion, and remember that genuine faithfulness is not simply calling upon God in times of trouble, but loving, trusting, and obeying Him in every season of life.

Monday: God Tests the Faithfulness of His People

Reading: Judges 3:1–6

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Focus Verse — Judges 3:4 (ESV)

"*They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the* LORD*, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses*."

Study Question:

According to Judges 3:1–6, why did God allow certain nations to remain in the land, and how did Israel's relationships with these nations eventually lead the people into disobedience?

Personal Application:

God's people are called to remain faithful to Him even when surrounded by influences that encourage disobedience. Israel's failure began when the people became comfortable with the sinful practices of the nations around them. Rather than remaining distinct as God's covenant people, they gradually adopted the beliefs and behaviors of those who did not worship the Lord.

Consider the influences that shape your daily decisions. Are your values and priorities being formed primarily by God's Word, or are you allowing the attitudes of the world to determine what you believe and how you live? Faithfulness requires more than avoiding obvious sin; it requires a heart that desires to honor God in every area of life.

Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through Psalm 119:9–11

example: Heavenly Father, Your Word teaches me that faithfulness comes through knowing and obeying Your commands. Help me recognize the influences in my life that draw my attention away from You. Give me wisdom to distinguish between what is pleasing to You and what the world encourages me to accept. Teach me to treasure Your Word in my heart so that I might not sin against You. Strengthen my desire to live according to Your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

Tuesday: The Danger of Forgetting the Lord

Reading: Judges 3:7–8

Focus Verse — Judges 3:7 (ESV)

"*And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth*."

Study Question:

What does it mean that Israel "forgot the LORD their God," and how did this spiritual forgetfulness lead to idolatry and God's righteous judgment?

Personal Application:

Israel's forgetfulness was more than a failure to remember historical events. The people had abandoned their covenant responsibilities and allowed other things to take the place of God in their hearts. They knew what the Lord had commanded, yet they chose to worship the false gods of the surrounding nations. Spiritual forgetfulness can develop gradually. When prayer becomes unimportant, Scripture is neglected, worship becomes an afterthought, and obedience is treated as optional, our hearts can begin to drift away from the Lord. We must continually remind ourselves of God's character, His promises, and the salvation He has provided through Jesus Christ.

Take time today to consider whether your daily habits demonstrate that God holds the highest place in your life. Remembering the Lord means more than acknowledging His existence; it means living in grateful obedience to Him.

Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through Deuteronomy 6:10–12

example: Gracious Father, forgive me for the times I have allowed the blessings of life to distract me from the One who provides them. Help me remember Your goodness and remain grateful for Your mercy. Guard my heart against idolatry, and teach me to worship You alone. May my life demonstrate that You are worthy of my greatest love and devotion. In Jesus' name, amen.

Wednesday: God Raises Up a Deliverer

Reading: Judges 3:9–11

Focus Verse — Judges 3:9 (ESV)

"*But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.*"

Study Question:

What does the account of Othniel reveal about God's mercy, the work of His Spirit, and the source of Israel's deliverance?

Personal Application:

After eight years of oppression, the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and God raised up Othniel to deliver them. Scripture emphasizes that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Othniel, demonstrating that Israel's victory came through God's power rather than human ability.

This account reminds us that our greatest hope is not found in our strength, wisdom, or determination, but in the Lord who graciously provides what His people need. Although we are responsible for obedience, we must never confuse faithfulness with self-sufficiency.

When you face difficulties, temptation, or spiritual weakness, remember that God is not limited by your abilities. Depend upon Him through prayer, trust His promises, and seek to obey His Word. Above all, remember that Jesus Christ is the greater Deliverer, who accomplished what no earthly judge could accomplish by saving His people from their sins.

Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through Psalm 34:17–19

example: Merciful Father, thank You for hearing the cries of Your people and for demonstrating Your compassion toward those who are in need. Forgive me for relying upon my own strength rather than trusting in Your power. Help me recognize that every good thing I possess comes from Your gracious hand. When I face trials, teach me to seek You first and trust Your wisdom. Thank You for sending Jesus, who has accomplished the salvation I could never earn. Strengthen my faith and help me walk in humble obedience. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thursday: The Consequences of Returning to Sin

Reading: Judges 3:12–14

Focus Verse — Judges 3:12 (ESV)

"*And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD.*"

Study Question:

Why did the Lord strengthen Eglon against Israel, and what does the repeated phrase "again did what was evil" reveal about Israel's spiritual condition?

Personal Application:

After experiencing forty years of rest under Othniel, Israel returned to the same sinful behavior that had previously brought God's judgment. The people had experienced God's mercy and deliverance, yet they failed to remain faithful to Him. Their renewed disobedience resulted in eighteen years of oppression under Eglon, king of Moab.

This repeated pattern warns us against treating God's grace as permission to continue in sin. The Lord's patience should lead us toward repentance and obedience, not spiritual carelessness. True repentance involves more than sorrow over the consequences of sin; it includes a genuine turning away from sin and toward God.

Consider whether there are sinful habits or attitudes that repeatedly return to your life. Rather than excusing these patterns, bring them before the Lord in repentance. Remember that God's grace not only provides forgiveness through Christ but also teaches His people to reject ungodliness and pursue holiness.

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Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through Romans 6:1–4

example: Holy Father, Your Word teaches that those who belong to Christ should no longer continue living under the rule of sin. Forgive me for the times I have returned to sinful attitudes and behaviors despite knowing Your truth. Teach me to repent sincerely rather than simply regretting the consequences of my actions. Through Your Spirit, strengthen me to walk in the newness of life that Christ has provided. In Jesus' name, amen.

Friday: God's Deliverance Through Unexpected Means

Reading: Judges 3:15–30

Focus Verse — Judges 3:15 (ESV)

"*Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man*."

Study Question:

How did God use Ehud to deliver Israel from Moab, and what does this account teach us about God's sovereignty over human circumstances and unexpected instruments of deliverance?

Personal Application:

The account of Ehud demonstrates that God is not dependent upon the methods or abilities that people might naturally expect. Ehud's left-handedness became an important detail in the events leading to Israel's deliverance. Through circumstances that appeared unusual, the Lord brought about the defeat of Moab and provided eighty years of rest for His people.

The passage does not invite us to imitate Ehud's violent methods. Rather, it calls us to recognize God's sovereign power in delivering Israel during a particular period of redemptive history. God accomplishes His purposes according to His wisdom, even when His methods are unexpected.

We often assume that God can use only those who possess exceptional abilities, impressive knowledge, or positions of influence. Yet Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that the Lord works through ordinary and unexpected people to accomplish His purposes.

Consider how God has equipped you to serve Him. You may not believe that your abilities are significant, but faithfulness is not measured by how impressive our service appears to others. Whether through prayer, encouragement, teaching, generosity, or sharing the gospel, every believer has opportunities to serve Christ and His church.

Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

example: Sovereign Lord, thank You for reminding me that Your purposes are not dependent upon human wisdom, strength, or importance. Forgive me when I underestimate what You can accomplish through ordinary people who trust and obey You. Help me serve faithfully with the abilities and opportunities You have given me. Guard my heart against pride when things go well and discouragement when I feel inadequate. May everything I accomplish bring glory to You rather than attention to myself. In Jesus' name, amen.

Saturday: The Lord Is the Source of Victory

Reading: Judges 3:31

Focus Verse — Judges 3:31 (ESV)

"*After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad, and he also saved Israel*."

Study Question:

What does the brief account of Shamgar reveal about God's ability to deliver His people, and how does his victory reinforce the central message of Judges 3?

Personal Application:

Although Shamgar's account occupies only one verse, it reinforces an important truth found throughout Judges 3: God is the One who provides deliverance for His people. Shamgar defeated six hundred Philistines using an oxgoad, an agricultural tool ordinarily used to direct livestock. His victory reminds us that the Lord is not dependent upon conventional weapons, military strength, or impressive resources to accomplish His purposes.

Throughout this chapter, God raised up different men in different circumstances, yet the source of deliverance remained the same. Israel repeatedly demonstrated its unfaithfulness, but the Lord continued to reveal His sovereignty and mercy.

As Christians, we must remember that the ultimate expression of God's delivering grace is found in Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished a victory greater than any military deliverance recorded in Judges. He conquered sin and death and secured eternal redemption for His people.

As you conclude this week's study, consider how you can respond to God's mercy with greater faithfulness. Do not allow your spiritual life to become a repeated pattern of neglect, difficulty, and temporary devotion. Instead, seek to cultivate a consistent walk with Christ through Scripture, prayer, worship, fellowship, and obedience.

Scriptural Prayer:

Today, pray through 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

example: Almighty Father, thank You for demonstrating throughout Scripture that Your power is sufficient to accomplish Your purposes. Help me recognize that my weaknesses do not limit Your ability to work in my life. Teach me to depend upon Your grace rather than my own strength. Give me a willing heart to serve You faithfully, even when the opportunities seem small or the responsibilities seem difficult. Above all, thank You for the victory accomplished through Jesus. May my life reflect gratitude for His sacrifice and a sincere desire to glorify You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Closing Thought: God's Faithfulness Calls Us to Faithful Obedience

Judges 3 presents a powerful contrast between the unfaithfulness of God's people and the steadfast mercy of the Lord. Israel repeatedly abandoned God's commandments, pursued false worship, and suffered the consequences of disobedience. However, when the people cried out, God graciously raised up deliverers to rescue them. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar each served as instruments through whom the Lord demonstrated His power and compassion.

However, the chapter also reveals the limitations of these earthly deliverers. Although they rescued Israel from its enemies, they could not permanently change the sinful hearts of the people. Each period of peace eventually gave way to renewed disobedience because Israel's greatest problem was not simply the presence of foreign oppressors, but the rebellion within their own hearts.

This is why Judges 3 ultimately directs our attention toward the need for a greater Savior. Jesus did not come merely to provide temporary relief from earthly suffering. He came to reconcile sinners to God, bear the punishment their sins deserved, and grant new life through the power of His resurrection. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, those who belong to Jesus are given new hearts and empowered to walk in obedience to God.

As we reflect upon this chapter, we should ask ourselves whether we are living in grateful obedience to the Lord or gradually allowing the things of this world to capture our devotion. God's patience must never be mistaken for indifference toward sin, and His mercy must never become an excuse for disobedience.

The central lesson of Judges 3 is that God's people repeatedly demonstrate their need for deliverance, but the Lord remains merciful and sovereign in providing it. As believers living under the new covenant, we have an even greater reason to respond with gratitude, repentance, and faithful obedience because our Deliverer, Jesus Christ, has accomplished an eternal salvation. May we not simply remember the Lord when difficulties arise, but faithfully love, worship, and obey Him throughout every season of life.