

## Flawed Heroes Part 1

Ehud: The King Slayer

*Judges 3:12-30*

*Memory Verses: 1 Corinthians 1:27*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

What is a hero? Someone who does something heroic, right? Someone who looks past the obstacles and overcomes what others cannot in order to preserve freedom, or life, or some other lofty ideal or virtue. A hero is courageous, unselfish, and sacrificial. A hero leaves a legacy.

When many of us think of heroes we often think of the fictionalized versions we see in movies. Men in capes who always tell the truth, always do the right thing, and are always there to save the day. We don't like to think of our heroes as having flaws. But that's not realistic is it? As Harvey Dent says in the movie *The Dark Knight*, "you either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain." All of the real heroes have flaws, and have shortcomings. Why? Because they are all humans. Abraham Lincoln lost 10 elections before finally becoming the President of the United States. Michael Jordan was too short to play on his High School varsity basketball team and so he was cut. JFK, one of our greatest presidents, loved by all, had multiple affairs. Martin Luther King Jr., one of the greatest orators of all time, the hero of the civil rights movement, had demons so ugly that I don't even feel comfortable describing them to you. The point is, whether physical, mental, or moral... all of our human heroes are flawed.

And while most of us may be frustrated at finding the chinks in our hero's armors, it is in a way encouraging. How so? Because, it gives us the hope that we too can be heroes in our own right. Even though we are flawed, fragile, and sinful people, through the power of Christ, we can overcome even the greatest obstacles in order to help the helpless, and see the lost saved.

Today we are beginning a new series where we will look at a book chalked full of flawed heroes who through the power of God were able to free Israel from bondage and bring God glory despite their many shortcomings.

So let's go ahead and open up to the book of Judges and let's start in **Judges 2:16-19**. The author of Judges lays out a pattern here that we will see played out through the entirety of this book. The Israelites, the chosen people of God, brought out of slavery in Egypt, heirs of the promised land, witnesses of the awe inspiring miracles of God, when left to themselves will forget God, turn to pagan idolatry and

will eventually find themselves enslaved again to foreign rulers, at which point they will remember their God, repent, and God will hear them and send them a hero to deliver them from their oppressors. Those heroes are called Judges, and as you will see today and through the rest of this series, everyone of them has some type of flaw... they are flawed heroes.

So this morning let's look at our first flawed hero; Ehud. Turn over to **Judges 3:12-20** and let's read this interesting story. There's a lot going on here. First we see that Israel falls into pagan idolatry again, doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord, and thus God strengthens Moab and their king Eglon to occupy them for 18 years. Secondly, we see that in response to the cries of Israel God raises up Ehud, who has at least two flaws; he is left handed and from the tribe of Benjamin. Thirdly, we see the evils of Moab which God cannot let continue. And lastly, we see Ehud's cunning and brave plan to free his people from the bondage of Eglon and Moab. And so, today and through the rest of this series, the main theme is this... **God uses flawed people to free people.**

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

As we look at this passage there are a few things we need to notice. First, **God Can't Just Let Sin Go Dismissed**. Look again at **vs. 12-14**. Sin is a very serious matter. It separates us from God spiritually. It creates a barrier between us and God where he can't hear our prayers. It is the reason for endless sacrifices in the Old Testament, and of course it is the reason that Jesus had to die on the cross in the New Testament.

Why is sin so serious? Because, sin is rebellion to God. It's you thinking you know better than God... and guess what... you don't. God has a plan, a perfect plan for mankind, and we've messed it up by trying to Fleetwood Mac it and go our own way. You can go your own way... but as the Bible says in **Proverbs 14:12**... it leads to death.

Sin leads to death because sin must be punished; it cannot go dismissed. If sin cannot go unpunished, then when God's chosen people, the Israelites, rebel from him, turn to pagan idolatry, and do what is evil, he, like any good father, must discipline them. And he does just that.

And his instrument of punishment? Moab and their king, Eglon. You see this... this is the exact **Paddle** that 35 years ago my mom would use to spank me and my brother. This was mom's instrument of punishment and we didn't like it at all. Eglon was God's paddle for Israel. God allows Eglon to create an army of Israel's enemies to defeat them on the battle field. God must show Israel that their strength is not in their army, but their faith in Him. God allows Eglon to reclaim Jericho. God must show the Israelites that their past victories do not guarantee present or future victories. And then God allows Eglon to oppress his own people for over 18 years.

Why? Because, **the discipline of the Lord is meant to draw us back**

**to him.** God must make the people yearn for him again. God must wait until they cry out for him once again. The punishment may seem harsh, but nothing is worse than living in rebellion to God. God must do whatever it takes to draw us back to him.

Listen, do you have sin in your life this morning? If so, let the discipline of God lead you to repentance and to turning back to him this morning. The Israelites were a flawed people because of their sin and idolatry... but even in the midst of that God used their sin which led to punishment, which led to repentance... to cause many to turn back to God. Through repentance... **God uses flawed people to free people.**

Another thing we see here is that... **God Gives Us Flaws To Make Us Dependent On Him.** Look again at **vs. 15.** So, God hears the cries of the Israelites as they repent of their sin. Their flaw of sin leads them to repentance which leads God to send them a judge, a hero, to help them.

But here's the catch. Their hero is also flawed. For one, he's from the tribe of Benjamin which was the smallest of all of the tribes. No one ever expected anything from the tribe of Benjamin. I'm sure it was a hard sell for Ehud to convince Israel to follow him simply because of his heritage. And, some of us don't have the greatest heritage. Some of us come from poor families. Some of us come from families that struggled with drug use or alcohol abuse. Some of us have had a rough upbringing. Guess what, some may say that disqualifies you from being a hero... wrong. God uses people from all walks of life, from every kind of past. If he can use Ehud, he can use you.

Secondly, he's left handed. Now, in today's culture that's actually a desirable trait. In pro sports everyone wants a lefty because lefties are harder to guard, hit, etc... Left handed people are unique and that's a cool thing. But, back in Ehud's day, if you were left handed people thought that it was a sign of a defection, a disease, or some sort of disorder. It was a bad thing. Some people were dismissed from society simply by being left-handed. But there's a secret message here. Benjamin means man of God's right hand. And Ehud is left handed. Meaning... God will choose left handed people to fight at his right hand! Perhaps you have a disability or undesirable trait. Guess what, God don't care about that. God will use you anyway.

In fact, God probably gave you that disability simply for his glory and to show his strength through your weakness. If our heroes were perfect they would be filled with pride, always depending on their own strength. That will get them by for a time, but eventually pride leads to a fall. That's why God needs to keep our heroes humble. That's why he needs to keep us humble. So we don't look to our power, but to his. Look at **1 Corinthians 1:27**; God uses the weak to shame strong. The

point is this... **The things that you think make you weak are the very things that draw you to Christ's ultimate power.** God gives us character flaws for the same reason he allows us to be tempted by a sinful world... to make us see our need for him and depend on him. And when we depend on him he uses us. **God uses flawed people to free people.**

And of course we see here that... **God Defends The Oppressed From Dictators.** Eglon is without a doubt a Dictator and a true tyrant. He rules with an iron fist and demands tribute from Israel, while he sits in his palace getting ridiculously fat. As in all dictatorships, those in power live large while the people suffer. And when I say Eglon is living large... I mean he is actually living large. He was fat. In fact, he was so fat... that he had his boys take a picture of him... it's still printing. He was so fat... that when he walked past the TV his boys missed three episodes. He was so fat... that when he pushed the up button on the elevator the elevator said nope. He was so fat... that when the judge said order in the court he ordered two big macs.

Not really, but he did order all of the food in Israel yearly. This tribute was most likely a yearly caravan of Israel's best food, resources, etc. Basically, Moab was plundering all of Israel to make this fat king fatter. And, of course, God cannot allow one person to steal the food from another while the other starves, he cannot allow one people to oppress another. He cannot allow dictators and tyrants to go unpunished. Even though Eglon was his instrument of punishment for Israel, Ehud was God's instrument of punishment for Eglon.

And so Ehud took his sword and slayed the King right there in his room. And there is some symbolism here of course. This sword represents God's justice. Once again, he must punish sin. Israel's sin, Moab's sin, Eglon's sin... all of sin must get the sword. Gluttony – get's the sword. Hedonism – get's the sword. Idolatry – get's the sword. You get the point. All sin must be punished. God will defend us against dictators, and God will defend us against the sin of our own souls if needs be. There is a punishment for the sin of dictatorship as there is a punishment for every sin. Eglon's punishment came in the form of a flawed hero named Ehud because **God uses flawed people to free people.**

And lastly we can see that ... **God Delivers The Repentant Despite Their Rebellion.** In verses **27-30** we see that God allowed a flawed Israel to turn back to Him and repent. And eventually God used a flawed hero in Ehud to defeat Eglon and rally Israel to defeat the moabites killing 10,000 of them before it was all said and done. Get this, in spite of their flaws God still delivered the Israelites for another 80 years.

Why does God deliver us despite our rebellion? Why can we turn our backs on him, live completely against him for a time, and he will forgive

us and restore us when we repent? Why? Simple, because it's not about our righteousness, it's about his! **God delivers us not because of our righteousness, but because of his.**

You see, there is a hero who is not flawed. There is a hero who came 2000 years ago who had no sin, no disabilities, nothing that anyone could claim was a flaw. And, even though he was the most perfect hero, he took the sword for our sin on the cross. We are saved from our sin, not because of anything we can do... but because of what Jesus has done. He loves us for no other reason but that he wants to.

And so, we are thankful for flawed heroes like Ehud who show us that God can use us... but that's just it... **we are never really the hero of the story... Jesus always is...** and we are just following his lead. When we follow Jesus lead, we, flawed people, can lead other flawed people, to salvation in Christ. In that way **God uses flawed people to free people.**

### Application

We are all flawed. But, are you going to allow your flaws to keep you from doing what God has called you to do? Are you going to allow your sin to keep you stagnant? Are you going to allow your flaws to keep you from standing for Christ? Or are you going to see the example of Ehud and the salvation of Christ and fight to free people from oppression and the slavery of sin? Stop letting your weaknesses hold you back. Find strength in Christ and fight to set people free from sin.

### Conclusion

As we close, it's interesting to note that we are talking about heroes. Did you know that there is a comic book hero who is blind. His name is Matt Murdock and he goes by the alias Dare Devil. And get this, his blindness is actually his strength. Since he can't see he has developed his other senses to an extreme level where he can see through hearing and feeling vibrations. How cool is that?

Now of course that's fiction, but did you know that there is a real life guy name Stevie Wonder who is blind and yet has become one of the greatest piano playing artists of all time. Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm yours. He is a living legend who, despite his weakness, became one of the greatest who has ever lived.

The point is this... don't ever let your flaws stop you from being who God created you to be or from doing what created you to do... which is... set people free. So make like Ehud, with all of your flaws and go and set people free in your schools, jobs, neighborhoods, and community.

**God uses flawed people to free people.**