

**JUDGES 3:31**  
**WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

This morning we will finish up Judges chapter 3 by looking at one verse, verse 31. And, as we will see, the focus here is on the third Judge in Israel, Shamgar!

Again, not a lot of information on this man but what he does and what he does it with is important for us to understand because I believe the Lord is speaking to us in our service to Him!

You see, I have called this study – ***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?***

And I am going to focus on three main points, and they are as follows,

***PREPARATION FOR SERVICE***

***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND***

***GOD ENCOURAGES US IN THE WORK***

Before we get to our text this morning, let me share this with you. There are two main points that come out of this story, and I will share with you which one we will be looking at this morning.

We are told,

Tuesday night I couldn't go to sleep. I clicked on the hotel TV and found my beloved Atlanta Braves playing the Colorado Rockies. It was the ninth inning, and the score was tied at 6-6.

The game continued. As the innings progressed, the Rockies used all of their relief pitchers. (Major league teams have 25 person rosters, 10 of which are usually pitchers. Of those, four or five are starters, and the rest are relievers.)

Without any relief pitchers left on the bench, the starting pitcher from the night before was sent out to pitch an inning. He had pitched numerous innings the night before but went out again and held the Braves.

In the 12th inning, the Rockies had a terrible choice. Should they send out one of their two remaining starting pitchers, who would have to play over the next two days, or a utility player? They chose to send an injured catcher, Brent Mayne, to the mound.

The manager asked him: “Can you pitch?”

“Sure” said Brent, even though he had never pitched at any level in his life.

A few pitches went over the catcher’s head. One flew behind a batter’s back, but Mayne managed to get the Braves to ground into two grounders and a fly ball out to get the Rockies out of the inning.

In the bottom of that inning, Mayne’s position came up to hit. With an injured batting hand, he couldn’t.

So the Rockies sent out a new player who had never had a hit in the major leagues. Of course he drove a run in to win the game.

Why tell this story? Because sometimes [Christian workers] have to fill uncomfortable positions. Sometimes you have to do it even when you are hurt. You have to go out there and take one for the team.

And that is very true. There are times we have to do things that we may be uncomfortable in doing, but, as part of the body of Christ we do those things to keep the body healthy and moving forward, the body of Christ!

The thing I want to take out of this story is this.

The catcher had the ball in his hand many times, and yes, maybe he never pitched before, but the manager needed him and called him to pitch, and he did, and he got the opposing team out!

What is in your hand? A ball! Go out there and pitch!

The other player, who had hit many a baseball's in his life but never in a major league game, was called by the manager to step up to the plate and bat. And he did, and he got the game winning hit!

What is in your hand? A bat! Go out there and get us a hit!

And, as you will see, we are all gifted, God has equipped us for the work that He wants us to do, and then we must go out there and do the work.

We will see that with Shamgar this morning!

With that as our background, let's look at Judges chapter 3, and specifically verse 31 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this morning and look at the topic –

***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?***

**JUDGES 3****VERSE 31**

As I have said, Shamgar was the third Judge sent to deliver the children of Israel but not much else is spoken of him. We don't have a lot of information about this man.

Now the period of time that Shamgar was a Judge could have taken place sometime during those 98 years of the previous judge, Ehud, who judged Israel for 80 years and prior to that were 18 years of oppression.

So there could be an overlap of these two Judges since they did not rule the entire nation, just local Judges described in the previous section (vv. 12-30).

And in Judges 4:1 we go back to Ehud and his death, which again tells me that Shamgar probably overlapped with Ehud, possibly close to his death.

Also, there is no mention of Israel doing evil in the sight of the LORD because it could have taken place during the judging of Ehud's day.

In Judges 4:1 we are told of this, "**When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.**"

And I don't think that this rebellion began as soon as the Judge died. I think it was in their hearts already and with the death of a godly leader, there was the opportunity to manifest these evil things in their lives. In other words, what was going on inside of them was now manifested outwardly!

Now I am not going to speculate who this man is, what his background was, but God did use him mightily and if God wanted us to know more, He would have told us.

But this we do know.

Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with just an ox goad. Now we don't know if this was accomplished at one battle or during a lifetime.

Whatever the case, he accomplished it with just an ox goad, which was a sharp metal tipped stick some 8 to 10 feet long and used to direct the animals.

The other end was usually a chisel-like blade for cleaning the plow.

Why did he use an ox goad?

Understand that the enemies had taken away many of the implements of war, so Shamgar used what was available, an ox goad, to defeat the enemy.

And as silly as that may sound to fight against the enemy, Clarke rightly tells us, "In the hands of a strong, skillful man, such an instrument must be more dangerous and more fatal than any sword."

Let me expound on it like this. Anyone who is surrendered to the Lord can use what is available in their hands to defeat the enemy of God because it is God that is bringing about the victory and not us!

Shamgar was like Moses and his shepherd's staff or David and his shepherd's sling. God uses simple things to accomplish great things.

I think that is a great lesson for us to learn, that instead of complaining about what we don't have, that we use what is available to us for destroying the enemy and building up the Kingdom of God.

For me, I love worship. And I love music, but I have no talent in this area. I would love to play the drums, but no one else would love it.

I would love to be able to play the guitar, but I have no rhythm and yes, I can make a guitar squeal, but it is squealing for its life!

And singing, people wonder what key I sing in, and I say, “All of them and pretty much at the same time!”

This is not something that I am gifted in and for me to try and do worship in front of people, would be like David trying to use the armor of King Saul to do battle against Goliath, the giant. It just does not work.

But here is the thing, what is in my hand?

And for me, it is a Bible. And God has gifted me in teaching the Word of God to people. He has gifted me in shepherding the people of God that He has entrusted to me.

What is in your hand? What has God given to you to use?

Don't become frustrated or discouraged by what you have in your hand, be like Shamgar and use it for the glory of God! And yes, it was just an ox goad, nothing fancy and yet, look how God used this man and what was in his hand!

Now I believe this is so important for us to understand and we are going to look at those three points and see how we can apply these things to our lives and be used by God.

The first point is simple – ***PREPARATION FOR SERVICE!***

Does a newborn baby become a surgeon overnight?

I hope not and he doesn't. It takes years, some twenty-five years or more of his life to grow up and to be prepared for service.

And yet, how many Christians think they are ready the minute they get saved!

Moses spent forty years in the wilderness until he was ready to lead God's people out of Egypt, until he was ready for God to use him!

An example of someone getting saved and getting immediately into the spotlight is American rapper, singer, songwriter, record producer, entrepreneur, and fashion designer, Kanye West.

It seems like he gave his life to Christ, but I don't know his heart, only Kanye knows for sure. The problem is that he is a babe in Christ, he is young in the Lord and he needs to step out of the spotlight and learn the things of God, be trained in the things of God.

I am not saying fourteen or forty years, but he does need to get grounded.

Because he is not grounded, it seems like he is getting into things that are wrong and associating with people who are false teachers and have a lot of false doctrine. That is dangerous, not only for Kanye, but for others who are looking up to Kanye!

Yes, in his hands is his music, his association with many people, but there is a time of preparation, which he has not taken the time to do.

In II Timothy 3:16-17 we are told, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

This is so important for our preparation for service.

Yes, all Scripture comes from God and it is profitable to our lives. It shows us so much. It shows us what is right or what is healthy doctrine. It shows us when we are wrong. It shows us how to get right when we have gone astray. And it shows us how to stay on the right path, the path that God desires us to be on.

And the result of being men and women of the Word of God, of studying the Word of God, is that **“. . . the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

It is hard to serve the Lord when you don't know much about Him.

It is hard to serve the Lord when you don't know what is right and what is wrong.

It is hard to serve the Lord when you are going by your own understanding rather than trusting in the things of God because you don't know them.

Now you may be thinking, *“Hey, I work at the Post Office, how is that going to help me in my work?”*

And you can put any job in there, I am not just picking on people who work at the Post Office.

And that is a good point, but you knowing the Word of God is important, even if you are working for the Post Office, and again, for any job we have.

You see, how are you going to work? Are you going to be joyful, are you going to shine the light of Christ as you work, are you going to be able to answer those questions that people may have about what is going on in this world, about the philosophies of this world?

By knowing God's Word, you will be able to walk worthy of that high calling by which you have been called!

Also, in I Peter 3:15 we are told, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”**

Here we see Peter calling us to be ready to defend our faith! That means you have to know what you believe if you are going to defend your faith!

In fact, that word **“defense”** in the Greek is APOLOGIA, (ap-ol-og-ee'-ah) and it is where we get our English word “apologetics.”



Thus, it is a word that speaks of a formal defense in a judicial court. In other words, can you defend your faith before the court of this world, what you believe?

You see, if we are living what we say we believe, then we need to be able to share that with others, give them the reason for the hope that is in us.

How is that done?

By “**sanctifying**” or setting your life apart for the Lord, by consecrating yourself to His control and be ready to share your faith.

Be men and women of the Word!

Why is this such a big deal?

First of all, if you can't share your faith, you are a poor witness of Jesus and what are you going to give people if you are not giving them Jesus?

Secondly, if you don't know what you believe, when difficult times come your way, your faith is going to be shaken, you may even doubt your salvation.

Thus, know what you believe and be ready to share it!

Think about a golfer, a professional golfer. Do you think he just steps up on the green and hits the ball perfectly without practice? No way.

I didn't know this off hand, so I checked it out. And I found that professional golfers probably hit around 500-1000 balls a day when practicing. That is crazy, but if you want to be good, that is what you need to do!

And here we are as Christians, and we read the Word, the Bible, a few times a week, here a little and there a little and then we wonder why we can't defend our faith. You have to put time into studying the Word, of hearing the Word being taught and the more you do, the more you will be able to defend your faith!

Make no mistake about it, it does take practice; it does take preparation if you want to complete the task that is before you.

I see God doing that in our lives. He is working to prepare us for the work.

In Philippians 2:13 we are told, **“for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.”**

In other words, God is working in us not only to equip us for the work but to also put those desires in our hearts and as we obey the Lord it is pleasing in His sight.

I am sure as you look at your life, the things you have gone through, you can see how God has been preparing you for the work that He wants you to do.

Yes, it may be a slow process but don't negate the small things or the things you see as insignificant because God is using them to prepare you!

Remember Moses, forty years in the wilderness before God used him as the deliverer for the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt.

For Moses, day in and day out he was traveling with these sheep, shepherding over them, caring for them and it was not easy nor was it a waste of time.

God was preparing Moses to know the land where the children of Israel would be traveling. He was preparing Moses to shepherd the children of Israel, who were like sheep. They were stiff-necked, rebellious people, needing lots of care and attention.

He was breaking Moses of his self-will; he was breaking him of self so that he would instead turn to the Lord and trust in Him!

Paul expounds on this, what God is doing in our lives, in Hebrews 13:20-21 as he writes, **“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

You see, God will make us complete for the work He has called us to do. That should bring great comfort to our lives knowing God is the one preparing us for the work.

Also, God not only prepares us for the work, but He also prepares the work for us.

How do I know that?

Because Paul, in Ephesians 2:10 tells us, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

And the New Living Translation puts it like this, **“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”**

If God has planned the work for us and He also has prepared us for the work then what is our responsibility in the situation, what are we to do?

We are to walk by faith and use the things that God has given to us for His glory.

For Shamgar, I am sure he used this ox goad many times. And thus, he was prepared for the work that was before him, the destruction of these Philistines!

So we have looked at the ***PREPARATION FOR SERVICE!***

And now we will look at ***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?***

What did Shamgar have in his hand?

He had an ox goad in his hand!

And he used what was in his hand to kill six hundred men of the Philistines!

Let me also ask you this. What did Moses have in his hand?

Moses had a rod and most likely the shepherd's crook.

This shepherd's crook was a long staff with a curved head, and it could be 3 to 6 feet long.

It was the rod he used those 40 years as he watched over the sheep for Jethro.

There was nothing really special about this rod. It was just a piece of wood that could be broken, or it could be cut. This staff had no power in it; it could not do anything worthwhile on its own. And yet, God was going to use this rod in the hands of Moses to do great things.

I believe this is a powerful point that the Lord is showing us here.

God asks Moses, "***What is that in your hand?***" and Moses simply says, "***A rod.***"

And God says, "***Great, that is what I will use!***"

You see, God will use what is in our hand, the gifts, the talents He has given us to be used for His glory.

Now, we may not see them as gifts or talents. We may be afraid that what we have to offer is nothing. But think about this. Was this rod anything more than a piece of wood? Absolutely not! The only difference is God was going to use this rod in the hand of Moses to do great things, as I have said.

God said to Paul, "***What is that in your hand?***" And Paul said, "***A pen for I am a scholar.***" And God said, "***Great, that is what I will use.***" And God used Paul to write 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament!

Look at the apostle Peter. God said to Peter, ***“What is that in your hand?”*** And Peter said, ***“That is my Pope hat!”*** No, he didn’t say that. But he did say, ***“It is a fishing net for I am a fisherman.”*** And God said, ***“Great, that is what I will use.”*** And God made Peter a fisher of men!

And again, look at these examples and I will start out with Shamgar and move on from there and you will see that God can use what is in our hand for His glory!

Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad – Judges 3:31.

Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey – Judges 15:16.

David killed the Philistine giant, Goliath with a sling and a stone – I Samuel 17:49.

And God took five small barely crackers and two pickled fish from the hand of a young boy and fed 5,000 men plus women and children – John 6: 9, 13.

Can God use what is in your hand? You bet He can if you will let Him!

But I think we at times look at our lives and wonder how God can use us.

God asks us, ***“What is that in your hand?”*** And we reply, ***“It’s just a computer.”*** And the Lord is saying, ***“Great, that is what I will use.”***

How can God use a computer for His glory?

Don’t negate what God can and will use as He calls you for a work.

I look at those in the church who have computer skills and how God is using them!

The radio station is run by computers that have to be programmed.

We have people who are programming the computer to run the station.

We have people who are editing the studies to put them on the air.

We have people who have put together the web page.

And we can go on. Don't negate what is in your hand as being meaningless because if God can use an ox goad for His glory, He can use anything, and He will!

Let me share this story with you and you will see how God can use what we have in our lives for His glory. We are told,

An elderly widow, restricted in her activities, was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized that she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano.

The next day she placed this small ad in the Oakland Tribune: "Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent - the service is free."

The notice included the number to dial. When people called, she would ask, "What hymn would you like to hear?"

Within a few months her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people. Many of them freely poured out their hearts to her, and she was able to help and encourage them.

- Source unknown

You see, God asked her, "*What is that in your hand?*" And she said, "*A piano.*" And God said, "*Great, that is what I will use.*"

Think about it, she could have come up with all the reasons why she could not serve the Lord but instead, she took those steps of faith and God blessed it. She was able to bless the people and in doing so she was bringing glory to God! It was all because she took that step of faith and used the gift that God had placed in her hand!

What is in your hand? A schoolbook? A basketball? A hammer? A pen? A broom? An apron? An instrument?

You see, it doesn't matter because God has given you a gift to be used for His glory. He not only prepared the work for you, but He also prepared you for the work and all you need to do is step out in faith and use it!

I think about people that clean the church and many of you may not even be aware that there are people that clean the church. But they do and they are behind the scenes but what is in their hand, let's say a vacuum cleaner, God is using it in their lives to bless others.

Can you imagine what the church would look like if no one cleaned the church? It would not be good. And yet, they do a wonderful job and I am not trying to take their rewards away from them but it is important that whatever we are doing, we do unto the Lord and what the Lord has placed in our hand is needed to be used!

In *Our Daily Bread* they make this observation. They wrote,

*And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? Exodus 4:2*

Our Scripture reading for today contains Moses' response to God's call at the burning bush. Having just been commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of bondage, he was apprehensive about how the Egyptians, and even his countrymen, would react.

But the Lord said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" "A rod," Moses answered. Then He said to him in verse 17, "And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."

Most of us are familiar with the great miracles associated with that rod when Moses obeyed the Lord. It was insignificant in itself, but it became a powerful instrument when committed to the Lord.

Writing on this theme, J. W. Johnson imagined the following conversation between God and some of His faithful servants down through the centuries: “‘What is that in thine hand?’ asked the Lord. ‘A sling,’ said David. ‘It is enough; go up against the giant,’ and the great Goliath fell before the shepherd boy. ‘What is that in thine hand?’ ‘A sword,’ answered Jonathan. ‘It is enough,’ and the brave youth, followed by his armor-bearer, went up against an army, and the Philistines were defeated. . . . ‘What is that in thine hand?’ ‘A pen,’ said John Bunyan, as he spoke from the arches of Bedford prison. ‘It is enough,’ and he wrote the story *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which will live while the world endures.”

Don’t sell yourself short, friend! If God has called you to a task, He’ll equip you for it. He merely asks, “**What is that in thine hand?**” Give it to Him, and you’ll see what He can do with little things.

- Our Daily Bread

I love that about our God. You see, don’t negate what God wants to do or think you are insignificant, that God can’t use you!

Folks, that is the point, we are nothing, we are insignificant, and God will use us to do great things and He then gets the glory.

We are the instruments that God will use and folks, don’t praise the instrument, praise the one who used the instrument, **GOD!**

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**”



The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble, and good deeds and recognize and honor and praise and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.”**

Do you see that? Our good works, the things that we do are to bring glory to God. Don't mess with God's glory because if you do, He will put you on the shelf, He won't use you until you humble yourself before Him!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Now, we learn from this, that God can use any instrument which He pleases for His work, and that those are altogether wrong who suppose that they are not called upon to do anything in the service of God because, perhaps, they are not distinguished as others of their fellow-creatures - have not so much money, not so much influence, not so great learning, not so much time on their hands, and so on. It is not to be looked at in this way, as if God demanded of us that which we have not, but simply that He requires of us that which we have.

Observe, next, the Lord said unto Moses, “Cast it on the ground”; and upon its being cast on the ground, the rod, we are told, “became a serpent.”

Afterwards he was told to put forth his hand, and “it became a rod in his hand.” God, by this double miracle, laid hold of that rod of Moses as His rod; it was no longer the rod of Moses only; it was the rod of God.

- W. Cadman, M. A.

Yes, there are times that we doubt what God is doing and the reason for that is because we have taken our eyes off of God and placed them on the situations we are facing and that causes us to lose hope and doubt that it can be accomplished. But we do have a gracious and merciful God who will encourage us just as He did with Moses here.

We have seen:

**PREPARATION FOR SERVICE!**

**WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?**

And now, ***GOD IS ENCOURAGING US IN THE WORK!***

There was nothing spectacular about an ox goad. But God can use, and wants to use, whatever is in our hands. Shamgar was merely a laborer doing his job; but he took what was in his hand when prompted by God and he rescued the people of God from their enemies.

And I am sure, even though we don't read it here, that God encouraged Shamgar to go forward, yes, just with an ox goad, and he did so with the encouragement of God and look at the salvation he brought to the people of God!

Let me share this with you in regard to encouragement and then I want to take a few minutes and look at three points regarding encouragement, where it comes from.

We are told,

***“Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”***

2 Corinthians 1:2-5

Do you ever get discouraged? Don't answer that, because I already know the answer. Of course you do, you're human. Encouragement is something we all need. Thank God it is something He has promised to every one of us. I'd like you to first see that the word, "encouragement", is not used in the King James Version of the Bible. Instead, you'll see the word "comfort" which is used 10 times in this passage from 2 Corinthians. It is also translated "consolation" and used to describe the Holy Spirit who is called the Comforter (John 14 & 15). I want you to know the sweet encouragement that only our Savior can bring. And once you receive that gift, to pass it on, thereby allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you up again and again.

God has cornered the market on comfort. So if you are discouraged right now, the devil is hot on your trail. There's a story that illustrates this point so well.

One day, the devil was auctioning off his tools. That is, all but one tool. It was such a high price, no one could afford it. When someone asked why, he said, "That's my favorite tool. It's the tool of discouragement. I use it to pry open a life and when I get inside, I can do all kinds of damage with my other tools of hatred, lust, envy, jealousy, and pride."

When the Bible says, "who comforteth us," I want you to notice that the word "comforteth" is in the present tense. This encouragement is ever-present. It flows like a river - never stopping to flow from the loving bosom of God.

That's you and me, and everyone who's gone before us or who will come after us. You see, one of the consolations of discouragement, is that we're in good company. We don't have to go around wearing a mask and pretending to be happy when we're not. There have been three times in my life when I was really discouraged. And in all three times I went to the Lord and He met me there. He became the God of all comfort to me.

Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, was often discouraged. In fact, his wife thought the only way to help him was to shock him out of it. She put on a black dress and veil as if she was going to a funeral. When he asked her who had died, she said, “Martin, haven’t your heard? God has died.” He declared, “That is blasphemy!” His wife said, “Aye Husband, and it is blasphemy for you to be living as if God is dead.” Needless to say, Martin snapped out of it!

God is the One who encourages us so that we may be able to comfort others. This is the purpose of encouragement! We are blessed that we might be a blessing. The word “aboundeth” in 2 Corinthians, verse 5 means that we are to overflow with the life of Jesus Christ. Everywhere we go, we are to be a source of encouragement.

To some people, tribulation is a prison. For others, tribulation is a hospital from which they get well. But friend, tribulation is to be a seminary where we learn to become stewards of the comfort we receive, so that we can pass on our encouragement to others.

- <http://bit.ly/35H1Egl>

How true that is!

And the first point I want to look at in regard to comfort, in regard to encouragement is that ***GOD COMFORTS US THROUGH HIS WORD!***

We saw that in II Corinthians chapter 1, where we read that our God is the God of ***ALL*** comfort. Not some or even most, but His comfort is for every situation we face!

Now it is easy when you have a cold and you feel miserable, you will get better. But what happens when you lose your job, your spouse leaves you, you lose your house, your kids are out of control and-so-on, is He still the ***GOD OF ALL COMFORT?***

You bet He is. God wants to comfort us as we read His Word. And I don't know about you, but for me, there have been times of real difficulty, stress in my life and all of a sudden, as I am reading the Word of God, the portion I am reading speaks directly to me and not only comforts me but encourages me! Or, at times, it is just a verse that the Lord brings to my remembrance that comforts me, encourages me!

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus gives to us these comforting words, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

Notice that Jesus did not say go here or go there for help. No, Jesus said that we need to come to Him, and He will give us the rest, the comfort that we need in the situations we are facing!

In Isaiah 41:10 we are told, **“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”**

I like that. I don't have to fear, I don't have to be dismayed, not because the situation is resolved, but because God is with me and He is encouraging me to go forward. He will hold me up when I just can't stand any longer! Praise God for that!

In Romans 15:4 Paul wrote, **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”**

I think you can see that as you read through the Scriptures, God's Word will comfort your heart and give you hope. And we all need that, don't we? Of course we do!

Let me share this with you and show you how God's Word can comfort us during difficult times. We are told,

But now my wife and I are experiencing God's comfort for ourselves. In the months since Elsie's stroke, we have known daily the comfort of the Savior, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the precious Word of God. May you too learn for yourself, in your day of trial, that the Lord is truly the God of all comfort.

The faith of the Christian should grow stronger in times of trial and trouble. Trials have a way of digging up the soil of our hearts and turning up weeds. That is good for us, for it is not in the sunshine but in the storm that we discover the depth of our need. Someone has said, Great soldiers are not made in the barracks nor on the parade ground, but on the battlefield where the going is tough.

Trials provide opportunities for us to get to know God better. In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul assured the Christians that he was praying for them on a regular basis. Included in the list of things for which he prayed was the request that they might be increasing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10). Paul knew that one of the secrets to a full and blessed life is getting to know God better.

The primary source of the knowledge of God is His Word. The book of Proverbs says, My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. . . . Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:1, 5). As every student of the Bible knows, God does reveal Himself in His Word. . . .

God's comfort is unique. It is infinite, inexhaustible, immutable, and indestructible. Our afflictions are temporary and transient; God's comfort is everlasting (2 Thessalonians 2:16). It is available at all times.

No Christian is left to face sickness and sorrow alone. God said to His children in Israel, As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you (Isaiah 66:13). The Israelites needed to be reminded of God's love and pity for them when He redeemed them from Egyptian bondage. Isaiah also wrote, In all their affliction he [God] was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old (Isaiah 63:9). . . .

One reason the Scriptures were written was to comfort God's children in times of sickness, suffering, and sorrow. The learning we glean from the Bible is for the everyday experiences of life, and comfort is one of the needs the Scriptures supply. The very fact that Paul quoted from the Old Testament tells us that he depended upon the Scriptures for consolation and encouragement. Comfort is one of the blessings God gives to us through His Word.

An important factor is that we must receive the Word of God in faith. God's truth must be appropriated with implicit trust, and with no mental reservations whatsoever. Paul expressed this idea clearly in his first epistle to the Thessalonians when he wrote, For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The mere reading of some portion of Scripture or listening to someone expound it is not sufficient in itself. The Word must be applied. James said, But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22).

The Bible has been our guidebook throughout the years of our marriage. We believed it, taught it to our children, and sought to obey its precepts. We knew it worked. But now we are facing a severe personal trial. It has afforded us an excellent opportunity to prove the Bible's effectiveness in the hour of affliction and adversity. Elsie was helpless, unable to read. So it was left to me to find comfort in the Scriptures and then to share it with her. In my heart has come a deeper hunger for God's Word. In fact, my desire to listen to God speak to me is greater than my desire to pray. When I pray, I speak to God. When I read God's Word, He speaks to me, and I need to know what He has to say in the dark hour.

While Elsie was in the hospital, each morning I would thank Him for blessings and mercies, which I mentioned one by one. Then, after a request for guidance, I would go immediately to the Word. After I read and meditated quietly, I selected a verse, typed it on a 3 by 5 card, and began my drive to the hospital. On the way down I memorized the verse. Throughout the day I read it to Elsie at intervals, and before leaving her at night we would recite it together. This became our daily practice, and it continues to be the main source of strength and comfort to us.

- <http://bit.ly/33mNNtS>

Make no mistake about it, our God is one who will bring comfort to us through His Word, as Psalm 119:50 tells us, "**This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.**" May we not forget that!

***GOD WILL COMFORT US THROUGH HIS WORD!***

But there is more. God will also comfort us ***THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!***

Let me show you what I mean.



In Acts 9:31 we are told, **“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”**

Now when it says that they **“had peace and were edified”** it does not mean that the persecution stopped! What is being said is that they had peace through these storms, the peace of God in their lives.

The church was strong; it was growing because they walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

It has been said; God afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted. There are times that God tries to get our attention, to get us moving and He will use affliction to do that! But our God also comforts us as we are afflicted!

I like the way that one writer summed this up for us as he wants us to learn the lessons that we see here. He wrote,

“Is it not already but too evident that the church of our day has little or no conception of the priceless blessing involved in this paracletic of the Spirit? What if once more this lesson could be learned? What ‘rest’ would the church have from internal dissension and division, from heresy and schism! What edification, ‘being built up’ on the most holy faith! What holy ‘walking in the fear of the Lord,’ what rapid multiplication, and what world-wide evangelization! There is not an evil now cursing or threatening our church life which this ‘comfort of the Holy Ghost’ would not remedy and perhaps remove.” (Pierson)

I like that and God is trying to show us that we can rest in His Word and in His Spirit!

We see that spoken of by Jesus in John 14:16-18, where we are told, **“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”**

What we see here is Jesus giving them these words of comfort as He speaks of this **“Helper”** or **“Comforter.”**

And He is speaking of the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, it is PARAKLETOS.

This Greek word speaks of “a person summoned to one’s aid.” The Holy Spirit is coming alongside of us to help us and I am so thankful for that!

So we have seen that ***GOD COMFORTS US THROUGH HIS WORD!***

And we have seen that ***GOD COMFORTS US THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!***

What I want to look at next is that God will comfort us ***THROUGH OTHERS!***

Here is the wonderful thing, or I should say, another wonderful thing about our God. As He brings comfort to our lives through the various situations we go through, that comfort is not just for us. We are to take that comfort that God has given to us and help others who are going through similar things in their lives.

Paul put it like this in II Corinthians 1:3-4, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”**

And I am sure you have seen this played out in your own life as you have comforted others with what God has comforted you with or others have comforted you!

In Isaiah 40:1 we are told, “**“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!’ Says your God.”** So God is calling us to do this. And yes, it is not always easy but what a blessing to be able to bring the comfort of God to others.

That is what Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:11, “**“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”**”

Comfort each other with the Word of God. Edify or build them up in the faith. Help each other to grow. Yes, they were doing this, but Paul is admonishing them not to stop but to go even further!

Like it or not, we do need each other. We are part of the body of Christ and yes, individual members, but part of the body. Thus, just like the human body we work together for the betterment of the body! We don’t shut down, isolate ourselves, get into our little pity party because of this or that. We serve the Lord faithfully, no matter what and that can be difficult but that is why we need to comfort and encourage each other, build each other up in the faith!

I like what one writer said about this. He wrote, “It is clear that in the primitive churches the care of souls was not delegated to an individual officer, or even the more gifted brethren among them; it was a work in which every believer might have a share.” (Hiebert)

I realize for some; they think the pastor is to do everything. Not true. He too is part of the body of Christ and thus, as the body works together people will be comforted, they will be edified or built up by the body of believers working together for the betterment of the body!

Look at the encouragement that God gives to us:

***THROUGH HIS WORD!***

***THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!***

***THROUGH OTHERS!***

As I close this morning look at what the Lord has shown us through this third Judge in Israel, Shamgar.

We need to have that ***PREPARATION FOR SERVICE!*** And we prepare for service by being in the Word of God and applying the Word of God to our lives!

And when God asks us, ***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?*** we are willing to go forward and use those gifts, those talents that He has given to us.

And lastly, we have seen that ***GOD ENCOURAGES US IN THE WORK*** through His Word, through His Spirit, and through others.

May we be able to say at the end of our lives, these words that Jesus spoke to the Father in John 17:4, "**I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**"

And I will leave you with this - ***WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?***

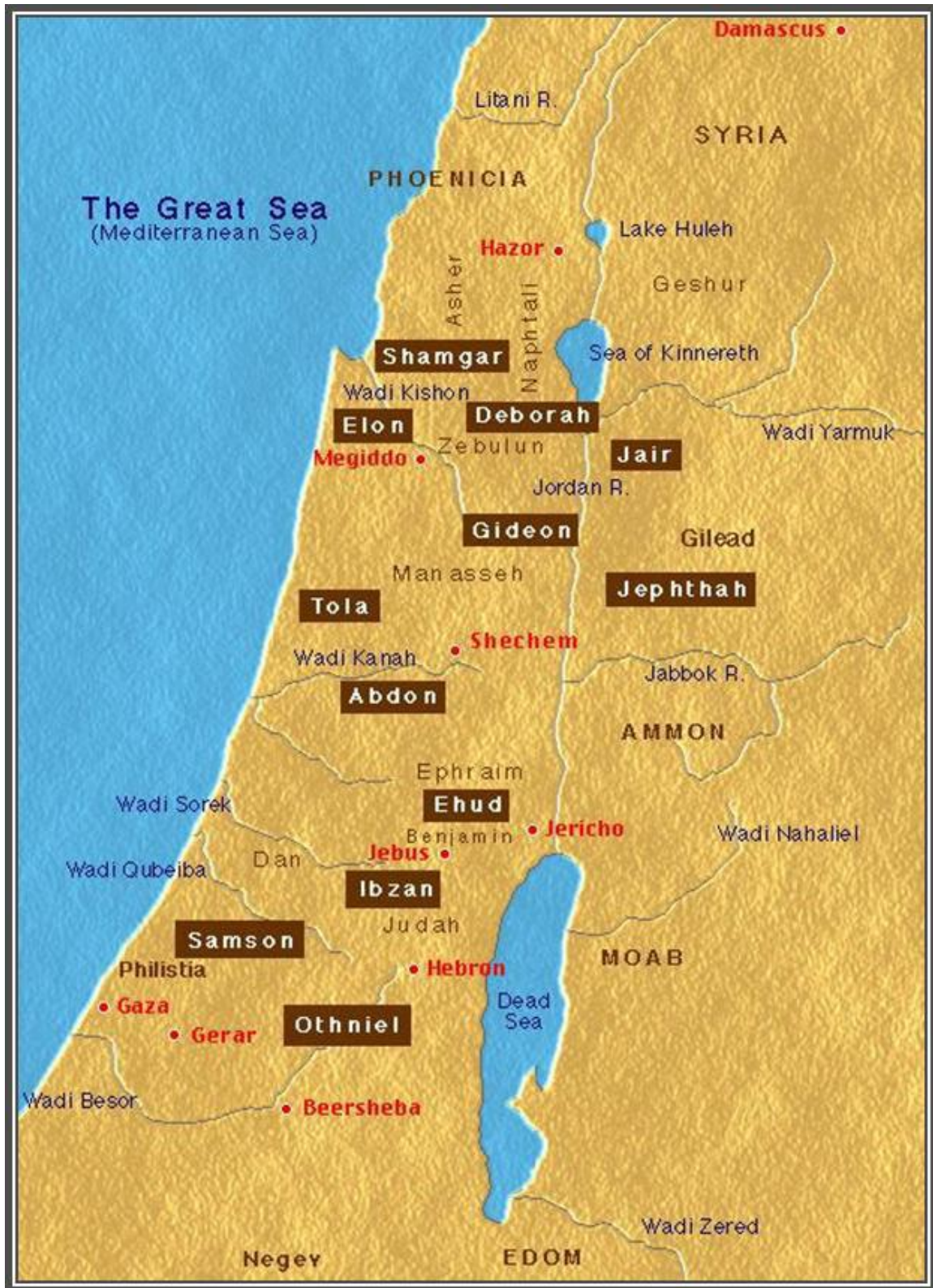


Fig 3. The 12 Judges and Locations