

Title: The man who is ready when the need arises

Scripture Reading: Judges 3:31

'And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.'

There was no break between the second judge and the third judge. This time God doesn't even bother to describe the children of Israel's forsaking Him to serve other gods but goes directly to the savior He raised up to deliver them from the Philistines.

Shamgar was the third judge of Israel. The name 'Shamgar' is a Hurrian name (with its origin from the Hittites and Assyria), therefore there is suspicion that he was not Hebrew. The reasoning is he was the 'son of Anath'. The name Anath was a place in northern Israel and was apparently also the name of the Canaanite goddess of sex and war. But then it could also

refer to Beth-Anath, a city of Galilee. At least his father's name suggest that there was a deep influence of paganism in his family background. He is called by scholars a 'minor judge', but this refers only because of the amount of Scripture that describes his exploits. Shamgar is one of six individuals we call "minor" judges, because not much is written about them. Yet the work they did for God was just as important in their day as anyone else's work. Shamgar was a man of great accomplishment, yet only one verse describes his work. So little is said about Shamgar yet his story was so well known. His exploits was so well known that they have to include him as one of the Judges and everybody cannot forget what this man has done; thus they talked about him. What can be said of Shamgar?

1. **He is a nobody**

The name 'Shamgar' means 'cupbearer' or 'surprised stranger'. His name is so appropriate. He is God's cupbearer and was the surprised stranger who arises at the appropriate time that

God could use. A cupbearer must be totally trustworthy, In spite of his heathenistic background, Shamgar became YHWH's cupbearer and he served the true and living God. Here I am reminded of all of us. I, for one came from a paganistic background. My parents has a god in our living room, a kitchen god and we constantly worshipped a god at the entrance door. Once you worshipped saints. You have statues in your house where you prayed to. Some of you will protest that you don't worship the saints or the statutes: you simply respect it. Well, you think that you can put God in a box or a casing, that he would always be there to deliver your family irrespective of your neglect of the covenant obligations that the real God had imposed on you. You thought that you had trained God. That is always the essence of idolatry. The making of graven images, however much it may be protested that they are merely symbolic, inevitably has the effect of reducing the invisible, infinite sovereign Creator to a man-sized, predictable representation. God tells you truthfully it is simply idolatry. You have

to break away from it just as I broke away from my paganistic family.

But then we became God's cupbearer and surprised stranger. 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 totally describes us. It says, 'take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies"? Do you feel like a nobody? Praise God. We found here that there is hope for nobody today. So here we see God use a 'no name' man, a nobody, probably a peasant farmer (because of his weapon; the oxgoad). God's requirement for usefulness in His Kingdom work is not ability but availability. It has always been so because His ways are not man's ways. He will use whomever will trust and obey. One individual endowed with God's power can accomplish impossible tasks against evil forces, no matter

how entrenched or how powerful. I remember on January 1, I said, 'God, I want to be useful for your Kingdom. I am praying with trepidation on what can come upon me. But I am willing, available. I only ask God, 'Just be with me throughout whatever I face.' God did exactly what I prayed for and something happened on January 2. But I also felt the invisible hand of God with me throughout. And there was one night the devil lied to me that things will go out of hand. The forces of evil are truly entrenched and powerful. But I just took authority and speak to the enemy in the air. I rebuked the evil forces. And I felt that things will be alright and peace returned to my soul. I knew that God has answered my prayer. It is so scary that God can take your word for it. But I want my life to count and this church to count. And God will deliver. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 says, 'We don't want you in the dark, friends, about how hard it was when all this came down on us in Asia province. It was so bad we didn't think we were going to make it. We felt like we'd been sent to death row, that it was all over for us. As it turned out, it was the best thing that

could have happened. Instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust God totally—not a bad idea since he’s the God who raises the dead! And he did it, rescued us from certain doom. *And* he’ll do it again, rescuing us as many times as we need rescuing.

2. **He uses the foolish thing of this world**

Judges 3:31 says, ‘And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.’

The foolish thing here is the oxgoad. The ‘oxgoad’ was a pole of 8 to 10 feet in length; with a bigger end about 6 inches in circumference used to control oxen. At the other end there was a small paddle of iron, a metal tip strong and massive for cleansing the plough from the clay. In the hand of a powerful man such an instrument must be more dangerous and fatal than a sword. During the time of the judges, the Israelites didn’t have

iron weapons. So they hired Philistine blacksmiths to "sharpen the goads" either by fashioning metal points for the pointed ends or making metal casings for the blunt end which might be used to knock dirt clods from the plow. Goad might be used as a weapon. God warned Paul not to "kick against the goad" because it is a pointed metal tip. Paul wrote that 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. Judges is replete with an interesting colorful list of 'foolish things which Jehovah used to deliver His people.

- Ehud's dagger
- Shamgar's oxgoad
- Jael's hammer and tent peg
- Gideon's trumpets, jars and torch
- The woman's millstone
- Samson's jawbone.

I loved Judges. Because it gives hope to imperfect ordinary people like you and I which

can be put in the hand of God and become mighty weapons for His Kingdom.

His spectacular deliverance of Israel from the Philistines is suggestive. Shamgar the son of Anath was ready to serve God in the common working day. When he drove his oxen out that morning, he did not dream that before nightfall he would accomplish a memorable deliverance for his land. But the call came and he was ready.

Joseph Parker once said

“What is a feeble instrument in the hands of one man is a mighty instrument in the hands of another, simply because the spirit of that other burns with holy determination to accomplish the work that has to be done.”

Brensinger adds that...

It has often been said that you can be too big for God to use, but you can never be too small. The overwhelming majority of people who make up the church today are, as always, ordinary. The Lord, however, can use ordinary people to

do extraordinary things. In the words of Lesslie Newbigin, "The Church is not an organization of spiritual giants. It is broken men and women who can lead others to the Cross". The Shamgars of the past, not to mention the countless others who do not even have a single verse to preserve their memory, can become the often-unnoticed and perhaps modestly equipped servants who faithfully carry out the work of God's kingdom today.

Hudson Taylor looking back over his 30 years as a missionary during which he had seen 600 missionaries respond to his vision to reach China through China Inland Mission summarized what he had learned declaring that...

God is sufficient for God's work... God chose me because I was weak enough. God does not do His great works by large committees. He trains someone to be quiet enough and little enough, and then He uses him.

Today there are 150 million Christians in Communist China. How can this be possible?

We can trace its origin to the missionary work of Hudson Taylor.

By that standard, which is God's standard, all of us qualify. The issue is not whether He can or will use us, to His glory. The great question is whether or not we will trust Him to use us.

There is the story of a man named Telemachus who proved to be a "vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for (God's) good work": In the 4th Century a monk named Telemachus wanted to live his life in pursuit of God, so he lived alone in the desert praying, fasting, and meditating. One day as he prayed, he realized his life was based on a selfish love of God, not self-less. If he were to serve God, he must serve men. He decided to return to the city where there was sin and need so he headed for Rome. He arrived at a time when the Roman general Stilicho, had won a great victory over the Goths. Since Rome was officially Christian, triumph brought people pouring into the churches. But one pagan practice still lingered in "Christian" Rome --

gladiator games. While Christians were not thrown to the lions, prisoners of war were cast into the arena to fight and kill each other. Spectators roared with blood lust as the gladiators battled. Telemachus arrived on the day of the games. Following the noise, he made his way to the arena where 80,000 people had gathered to celebrate. The fights began and Telemachus stood aghast. Men for whom Christ had died were about to kill each other to amuse a supposedly Christian populace. Telemachus jumped the wall and, in a moment, stood between 2 gladiators. For an instant they stopped but the crowd screamed "Let the games go on." So they pushed the old man in monk's robes aside. Again he came between the gladiators. The crowd hurled stones at him; they urged the gladiators to kill him and get him out of the way. The commander of the games gave the order - a sword flashed and Telemachus lay dead. Suddenly the crowd hushed silent, shocked that a holy man had been killed. The games ended abruptly that day -- and were never resumed again. Telemachus by dying had

ended them. As historian Edward Gibbon observed: 'His death was more useful to mankind than his life.'

I ask you today, What is in your hand? In Shamgar's hand was an oxgoad with which he slew 600 Philistines. We may not have genius, brilliance, gifts of speech or song, but if we are in the hand of Christ, He can take foolish things to confound the wise.

With an ox goad: Shamgar is an excellent example of serving God. He simply used what God put in his hand – in his case, an ox goad. Here we are reminded of another person. That person is none other than Moses. I would dare to say that Moses' Shepherd Staff is no different from the oxgoad because both were used to guide the animals under their possession. A common response of human when looking at what they have and who they are the reply more often than not is, It's too hard! I am not qualified! I don't have the training! I am not properly equipped.' These are few of the common excuses that people may give when

they realize that a need has risen. Many feel, perhaps in all sincerity, that they are not good enough to do something for God. This certainly was displayed in the life of a well-known Bible character, Moses. When God revealed his plan for the life of Moses, Moses responded with doubt and excuses. He felt no one would believe him or follow him. In Exodus 4:1, Moses tells God, "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee."

In the following verse, there is a wonderful lesson to be learned in the reply that God offered. Exodus 4:2 tells us, "And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand?" The answer to God's question was that Moses had a shepherd's rod in his hand. Throughout the Bible, God had a wonderful habit of using whatever a person possessed if that person would simply yield it to God. Among many other items, God used a stick, a coat, a fish, a couple of pennies, a slingshot, a jawbone, a rock, and some loaves of bread. The almighty Creator of the universe is able to use any ordinary object

that is yielded to him in faith. The process is not complicated.

So examine your hand – “What is that in thine hand?” Each person only needs to examine what they personally have. It doesn’t have to be grand, majestic or even what the next person has. God simply wants to know what you have. Whatever you have is enough for God to do something miraculous. Then partner with God and enjoy God’s hand. God used it to perform many impossible tasks. That rod turned into a snake, ate other snakes, brought water out of a rock, turned water to blood, and probably performed other miracles that are not recorded. Of course, the miracles were not accomplished by the rod but by the power of God. The rod was simply a symbol of the submission and faith of Moses. The rod of Moses was dedicated to God and used in the right hand of Moses. For Shamgar his oxgoad help him to kill 600 Philippines and wrought a great victory for Israel. I Corinthians 1:27 confirms that “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” Simply

take whatever you have and yield it completely to God. Next, sit back and enjoy the wonderful things that God will do!

All of us here have one common weapon, the Word of God; it may be presented in different aspects, but it is the only one that the man of faith makes use of in the warfare. I hear people say today, 'Oh, we must have the best and the latest methods.' It is fine to have good methods, but what about the message, which is really the Word of God. It is fine to have airplanes that transport missionaries, but when the missionary gets to his field, is he giving out the Word of God? Or communities works? Television is great, but notice how it is prostituted today. Christian Television has become a money churning industry.

To the intellectual and unbelieving world, it is like an ox-goad, fit, at the best, only for women, children and uneducated persons, full of fiction and contradictions; yet it is this instrument, despised by men, that God uses to gain the victory. In making use of it, faith finds

a weapon where the world only sees folly, for the weakness of God is stronger than men. Doubtless, it is written for the unlearned and suited to their needs and to their walk; but this very ox-goad can kill six hundred Philistines.

Let us, then, make use of the Word with which God has entrusted us, and our feet shod with the Gospel of peace, always remembering that faith only can make it effectual, and that, too, when the sinful soul has found therein (inside the word) communion with God, the knowledge of Christ, and, therewith blessing, joy and strength. What is in your hand can save a soul.

3. The Influence of Example.

Judges 3:31 starts with 'after him' – after Ehud. But 'after him' has another significance. Ehud inspires a Shamgar. I called this the influence of example. Joshua was influenced by the example of Moses. Elisha was influenced by the example of Elijah. The twelve disciples were influenced by the example of Jesus.

Shamgar, the son of Anath, who followed Ehud, gained a signal victory over the Philistines: he also delivered Israel. Ehud's sword was mighty, though short. Shamgar wrought deliverance by the means of a weapon which seemed wholly unsuited to such a work; a contemptible instrument, to all appearance only suitable for goading brute creatures. The lesson we can learn from Judges 3:31 is the influence of example. The phrase 'after him' implied that Ehud inspires Shamgar. Probably Shamgar thought: 'if Ehud can use a dagger, I can use an oxgoad.'

One of the richest and most rewarding parts of a Christian's life is the development of godly character through the power of the Holy Spirit. Some people never develop much character because it takes hard work. Brother Robert was telling me that he has been doing brisk walking (fast walking), 6 times a week at 40 minutes each time. He managed to cover 3.5 kilometers each day as an exercise. Then he told me something that caught my attention. He said it takes 2 to 8 months to cultivate a habit. Now

his body craves for the exercise. He also doesn't easily get tired and he felt healthier. This is the same for spiritual exercise. I remember it took me that same amount of time to make spiritual exercise a habit. But the 20 months in Singapore totally destroyed that habit. Now I am still trying to get back to the same spiritual exercise. I repeat, one of the richest and most rewarding parts of a Christian's life is the development of godly character through the power of the Holy Spirit. The crux of it is: the transformation of personal weaknesses to character strengths. It's the building of attributes rooted in one's heart, which becomes the rock-solid foundation of moral and ethical thinking and response based upon God's Word. It's the place where great hope, great faith, and great confidence and trust in God's promises reside. It's what turns a person from someone lost and fearful to a confident warrior of life. David was such a person.

If you were the VP of Human Resources and had to hire 400 people to work in a new division of

your company, is this who you'd hire? Would you hire 400 applicants that were in debt, distressed, and discontent? I think not. But that's who God sent to David because David was the real deal. He had developed godly character and leadership and was ready to impart it to others. God knew that David was ready to help transform these 400 men into men after God's own heart. Many years ago God told me specifically that the composition of this church will be those in debt, distressed and discontented. And Pastor Lily and I were to faithfully transform them into Giants. What God requires from two of us is dedication and godly character.

As you read through the chapters that follow in your Bible, you come to discover that these men become great warriors like David. They developed godly character and learned to trust God. They also, like David, killed a number of Goliaths—real Goliaths, relatives of the original.

David shined in the hardest of times. He mentored and developed others in the hardest

of times. He did so because whether he was alone or with an army of mighty men, he knew where his strength and help came from. It was the core of his character. It was what He taught his distressed, in debt, and discontented men that transformed them into warriors of God.

As you continue your day today, understand that trouble comes to everyone's life and know this; when you purpose to stand strong in faith and prayer knowing that God is working behind the scenes in your behalf to turn what the devil meant for evil, for good—that it is the greatest time of character development in you. And as it was for David, it becomes a great power and gift of influence within you. This is how world-changers are made!

Psalm 33:16-22 (NLT) “The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don’t count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you. But the Lord watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing

love. He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine. We depend on the Lord alone to save us. Only he can help us, protecting us like a shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we are trusting in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone."

Jesus is our greatest influence of example. We are so much like the 12 disciples of Jesus: we forsook him, denied him and went back to our previous lifestyles. But he still went to the Cross to die for our sins. He forgave us, and came looking for us. Not only that He empowered us and equipped us. And he said this to us, 'You are Cephas (a small stone; a nobody) and upon this Rock I will build my church (filled with small stones: many nobodies). And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. If we will just trust and obey him, no evil forces can defeat us. And he will use us in way unimaginable.

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