

“The Excellent Leader”
Judges 3:7-11
(Preached at Trinity, January 4, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In Chapter 2 the writer of Judges described the situation that would run throughout the entire book. It was a consistent paradigm: Israel's sin, God's anger and judgment against them, Israel's cry for deliverance, God's pity by raising up a deliverer.
2. As we entered **Chapter 3** we found this pattern illustrated in actual practice.
 - A. In **Verse 7** we find Israel's sinful rebellion against God.
Judges 3:7 NAU - "The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth."
 - B. In **Verse 8** we find God's anger and He delivers them into the hand of their enemies.
Judges 3:8 NAU - " Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years."
 - C. Then in **Verse 9** we find Israel crying out in distress
Judges 3:9 NAU - "When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD"
 - D. And then God taking pity in raising up a deliverer
Judges 3:9 NAU - "the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother."
 - E. These deliverers God raised up were referred to as judges. The judges were not to be seen in the sense of someone to settle judicial disputes but of someone to govern and lead. Most often they led Israel's army to victory.
3. This first deliverer or judge over Israel was Othniel. In several ways he is unique among the judges.
 - A. First, he is no stranger to us. He first appears in the book of Joshua where we first learn that not only is he Caleb's nephew, he was also Caleb's son-in-law.
Joshua 15:14-17 NAU - "Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the children of Anak. ¹⁵ Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. ¹⁶ And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife." ¹⁷ Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife."
This is repeated for us at the beginning of **Judges 1**

- B. Kiriath-Sepher means “City of the Book.” It was a Canaanite city of higher learning. Caleb had a high interest in this city and a high interest in the man who would gain the hand of his daughter. He would have to be a learned man, one interested in the “city of the book.” It would have to be a mighty man; a man who could command an army. Othniel was this man.
 - C. All of the judges were flawed characters. They led Israel during a time of great moral and spiritual decline. Othniel, however, is the only judge who is described in any detail that we are not told of some specific flaw in his life. He was of the old-stock of Israel. He remembered the mighty power of God in delivering up His people. When the rest of Israel fell into idolatrous and sexual sin Othniel kept his way pure. He was qualified to be God’s leader.
4. Tonight I want us to look at several things we know about Othniel, things that contributed to him being an excellent leader.
- I. He was a family man
 - A. He was willing to pay the brides price for his bride
 - 1. The pattern of the “brides price” was consistent in the Old Testament
The potential husband would pay the specified price fixed by the bride’s father.
The young man had to prove himself willing to sacrifice for his bride.
 - a. Jacob served Laban for the privilege of Rachel.
Genesis 29:20 NAS - " So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her."
 - b. Shechem was willing to pay the brides-price for Dinah
Genesis 34:11-12 NAS - "Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."
 - c. David killed 200 Philistines for the hand of Saul’s daughter
1 Samuel 18:26-27 NAS - " When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired ²⁷ David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. "
 - d. Our greatest example of the brides price can be see with our Lord’s purchase of His Bride.
Ephesians 5:25-27 NAS - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; ²⁶ that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."
 - 2. Othniel was a man of honor and willing to meet Caleb’s demands in order to have his bride

- B. But it wasn't just any bride – Achsah was a virtuous woman
1. She was a strong woman - faithful helper for Othniel
Othniel had obtained an excellent wife
Proverbs 31:10-12 NAU - "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good and not evil All the days of her life."
 2. She set her heart to improve her husband's territory
Judges 1:14-15 NAU - " Then it came about when she came *to him*, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" ¹⁵ She said to him, "Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."
 3. This was no small matter. She knew they needed a field rich for cultivation. But most important they needed water. Access to water in the ancient world was a matter of life or death.
- C. These events demonstrate that Othniel had a strong family.
1. George Schwab: "Othniel is presented as a conquest-era hero, with a strong woman behind him, a family man related to famous Caleb. He settles down and begins to build a home and family with a good marriage."
 2. Too often Christians are confused about how to train up their daughters. This is because they devalue the skill needed to be a wife and mother. Managing a household is a major career. It involves the management of a major institution. She is nurse, counselor, educator, innovator, accountant, and purchaser. She oversees recreation, food prep, laundry, maintenance, and non-ending custodial work – and all with grace.
 3. As a wise man Othniel valued the counsel of his wife
 4. As a family man Othniel remained faithful to his wife. The asheroth of **Verse 7** was a fertility goddess and sexual perversion was a part of her worship. Othniel stayed away from this wickedness.
 5. He was an excellent father. His sons would grow up to be great craftsmen (1Chron. 4:13-14).
 6. A man's leadership of his home reflects his ability to lead
1 Timothy 3:4-5 NAS - "*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity* ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?);"
 7. Othniel was an effective leader. While he judged Israel they knew peace.
Judges 3:11 NAU - "Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died."
As soon as Othniel passed on Israel soon repeated their pattern of sin. Clearly they needed a strong leader.

- II. He was a great man of valor
- A. He had demonstrated his courage when he fought for his wife
Judges 1:12-13 NAU - "And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife." ¹³ Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife."
1. He demonstrated courage and confidence
 2. Others might have doubted and retreated but not Othniel
 3. But this was only preparatory
- B. In **Chapter 3** we find God raised Othniel as Israel's deliverer
1. We find the foe in **Verse 8** - Cushan-rishathaim
 2. He is described as the king of Mesopotamia.
Rishathaim means "double evil."
 3. Mesopotamia would prove to be Israel's undoing in latter years.
 - a. The Assyrian Empire conquered the Northern Kingdom and they were forever scattered.
 - b. The Babylonian Empire would later destroy Judah.
 - c. Assyria and Babylon were the twin evils from Mesopotamia
They were powerful and unstoppable powers.
 4. God raises up Othniel who effortlessly defeats Cushan-rishathaim – King Double-evil.
- C. A man who fights by the power of God is unstoppable. This is the only power we have.
 Paul admonishes us:
Ephesians 6:10-13 NAU - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."
- III. He was God's man
- A. Israel cried out in distress and God showed them pity in raising up a great leader
1. God didn't simply look out over the land to see if there were any mighty men – God makes mighty men.
 2. The name Othniel means "Lion of God." Strong, fearless, confident—yet, God's man.

3. He was a man of covenant faithfulness, remembering God's promise. He was a man of courageous obedience. He remembered God's words to Joshua:
Joshua 1:7-9 NAU - "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹ "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

B. Othniel was a man of valor. He was a powerful military leader

1. By now he was probably advanced in years but like his father-in-law remained ready to do whatever necessary to defeat God's enemies. Caleb's words would have been his words.
Joshua 14:10-14 NAU - "Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. ¹¹ "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. ¹² "Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken." ¹³ So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. ¹⁴ Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully."
2. Like Caleb, Othniel's power was not his own
Judges 3:10 NAU - "the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim."
3. We should notice that in **Verse 8** it was God who sold Israel into the Cushan-rishathaim's hand but also God who sold Cushan-rishathaim into Othniel's hand – **Verse 10**. God reigns. God raises up and brings down.
1 Samuel 2:6-8 NAU - "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷ "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. ⁸ "He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them."

4. God fights on behalf of His people. God declared to Jehoshaphat
2 Chronicles 20:15 NAU - "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.'"
- C. In **Verse 10** we are told clearly the source of Othniel's power
Judges 3:10 NAU - "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel."
 1. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he was given wisdom to judge Israel. And it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he went out to war and defeated Israel's enemy
 2. The best thing we can see about Othniel is this:
Yes, he was a mighty man of valor, but more important, he was God's man.

Conclusion:

1. We should have no greater ambition but to be God's man, God's woman—someone who has submitted himself or herself to God—entirely, completely, totally.
2. Too many Christians withhold the best of their lives from God and in doing so settle for the dregs when they could have the fullness.
3. We need more Othniels. While the rest of the world has fallen into idolatry, may we keep our way pure and always be ready to be used of God.