

## **Commentary on Judges 10:10-18**

**By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, July 31, 2011**, is from **Judges 10:10-18**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary* below.

### **Judges 10:10-18**

**(Judges 10:10)** So the Israelites cried to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against you, because we have abandoned our God and have worshiped the Baals.”

As the years passed by, the Israelites finally learned by experience that God would punish them when they abandoned Him. When they turned from God, God allowed them to suffer the consequences, for He did not protect them from their enemies, but allowed them to learn that the Baals and other false gods were powerless to help them. In addition to allowing His people to suffer the natural consequences of their disobedience, sometimes God also sent punishments of various types upon them.

**(Judges 10:11)** And the LORD said to the Israelites, “Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines?”

God reminded the Israelites (and the Bible reminds us) of His faithfulness to them whenever the Israelites cried out to God in their suffering and confessed their sins. In His explanation, God began with the momentous moment of delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. Then, He included the enemies that Joshua and other judges defeated with God's help when they entered and possessed the Promised Land.

**(Judges 10:12) The Sidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, oppressed you; and you cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.**

In this verse, God listed some of the kingdoms He sent to oppress the Israelites in the Promised Land as punishment for their sins of idolatry, and He also reminded them of how He rescued them when they cried out to Him. In most cases, the Israelites had turned from the LORD to worship the same false gods as their enemies and oppressors. Rather than bless the Israelites, the Baals were unable to do anything for them.

**(Judges 10:13) Yet you have abandoned me and worshiped other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more.**

The LORD told the Israelites that their idolatrous practices amounted to abandoning God. Their turning to idols and turning back to God, and turning to idols again and turning back to God again had

become a repeating cycle. It is evident that the Israelites were taking their God for granted: that they had come to believe that they could sin and abandon God, and then all they had to do was cry out to God and He would save them. Their taking God and God's deliverance for granted, because of His compassionate mercy, needed to be remedied by God, and so He said, "I will deliver you no more." God would not allow them to take sinful advantage of His grace, for that would only encourage continuing disobedience and greater suffer for many. As long as the Israelites remained unrepentant, God would not deliver them.

**(Judges 10:14) Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress."**

The Israelites had turned to false and powerless gods; gods that had no power to save; idols that were served by deceived priests and worshipers who, in turn, deceived others. Only as the Israelites experienced the helplessness of these gods to save would they discover the difference between these idols and the true God. God would give them a period of increasing suffering to discover how powerless their idols were to help them. God knew they needed to learn this lesson of tough love.

**(Judges 10:15) And the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to you; but deliver us this day!"**

The Israelites finally preferred to be punished directly by God rather than continue suffering their punishment from the oppression of their neighbors, whose idols were unable to help them. They admitted their sins and trusted God to be compassionate and lenient with them when He punished them directly rather than indirectly through their enemies. They acknowledged that the Baals could not deliver them, but God could and would do what seemed good to Him. They came to trust in the goodness of God and the power of God.

**(Judges 10:16) So they put away the foreign gods from among them and worshiped the LORD; and he could no longer bear to see Israel suffer.**

The Israelites demonstrated they were serious in their confession of sin when they turned from their commission of sin. They repented when they turned from their worship of false gods and returned to their worship of the LORD. God demanded that they worship Him exclusively as part of His covenant with them to bless them and protect them. So, they returned to keeping their part of the covenant, and God felt sorry for them. God acted in their behalf from compassionate sorrow and not because they deserved God's salvation.

**(Judges 10:17) Then the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead;**

**and the Israelites came together, and they encamped at Mizpah.**

God decided to help His people once again. The Ammonites decided to go to war with the Israelites. The Israelites then gathered to defend their land. Gilead belonged to the Israelites. Mizpah was a town in Gilead, where Jephthah, who would lead them into battle, lived. [Read further in Judges to learn about Jephthah's sad mistake and sin; for God did not need Jephthah or require Jephthah's oath to deliver the Israelites. Jephthah could have repented before God for making a foolish oath, and God would have forgiven him and not required him to fulfill His oath.]

**(Judges 10:18) The commanders of the people of Gilead said to one another, "Who will begin the fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."**

The Israelites looked for a leader and finally chose Jephthah. Usually, in the past, God raised up a leader who went to the Israelites and defeated their enemies or gathered an army. In this case, the Israelites looked among themselves for a person who seemed most qualified in battle. God graciously used the person they chose to deliver them. The Israelites had a propensity for choosing leaders they wanted instead of waiting for God to raise up the leaders they truly needed.

**Five Questions for Discussion**

1. What are some of the disciplinary actions that God took in the Old Testament so His people would not take His grace, forgiveness for sins, and deliverance from their enemies for granted.
2. What disciplinary actions might God take today to prevent people from taking His grace, forgiveness for sins, and deliverance for granted.
3. What are some of the sins that people seem to repeat today? What are some of the idols that some people worship today? How can God's people avoid being misled into following false gods and false promises?
4. What can happen to someone, or to some church, or to some nation, when God abandons them? What is the solution for that person, or church, or nation when they come to believe that God has abandoned them?
5. What are some events in your life or in your church or in your nation that God could point to as events He worked in because He wanted to bless or deliver you, your church, or your nation? Give thanks to God for these events!

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