

**Andrew B. Spurgeon**

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Message 6 of 12

**When God Speaks**

**(Judges 10:1-16)**

**Theme**: “In those days there was no king in Israel; **each person did what was right in his/her own eyes**” (21:25). God was their king (8:23), but they didn’t live under His rule.

**Cycles**: The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord and served other gods, God handed them over to an enemy who oppressed them for x-number of years, the Israelites cried out to God, God raised a “warrior” (Judge) who delivered them from the oppressor(s), and there was peace for x-number of years. But then the cycle continued: Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served other gods, God handed them over to an enemy, etc. (2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; **10:6**; 13:1).

**Title** **of the Series**: Israel had a severe problem, that is, not acknowledging God as their king (8:23) and living according to His will. That was their gunshot wound, which needed an operation and healing. Since they weren’t willing for God to heal them, He raised up enemies to oppress them and “judges/warriors” to deliver them from the oppressors. The judges were “Band-Aids,” temporary relief of their spiritual decay and destruction, but they couldn’t heal the wound (which only God could). Unfortunately, as the years progressed, even the judges themselves became *dirty* Band-Aids, unable to give even temporary relief.

**Today’s Lesson (Judges 10:1–16)**:God Speaks. He is justified when He speaks!

Two “judges” (10:1–5): After the evil “king” Abimelech (illegitimate son of Gideon), Tola rose to save Israel and led Israel for 23 years. We notice that the writer didn’t mention anything about the people’s sin, God allowing a nation to oppress them, the nation(s) oppressing them for x-number of years, the people crying to God, or God bringing a judge/warrior to deliver the people. Tola rose to save Israel and led them for 23 years. Similarly, Jair led Israel 22 years. Again, the writer didn’t give us the cycle. By omitting the “cycle,” the writer was warning the readers: “The situation has changed.” Israel had become so accustomed to the cycle that they no longer needed God to bring them a deliverer; automatically, “x rose to save Israel and led Israel for x-number of years.” They no longer needed God; they managed on their own: “Jair had 30 sons who rode donkeys and controlled the 30 towns in Gilead” (10:4).

The first elements of the “cycle” (10:6–10): After a pause, the writer stated yet another cycle of idolatry, as Pastor Rick calls sin—servitude—supplication. The Israelites became “polytheists,” worshippers of many gods: “They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the **Ammonites** and the gods of the **Philistines**” (10:6). God became angry at their idolatry (i.e., lack of faithfulness to Him alone) and handed them over to the last two nations whose gods they worshiped: the Ammonites and the Philistines. The enemies oppressed the Jews on either side of the Jordan River: Gilead on the east (where Tola and Jair were rulers), and Judah, Ephraim, and Benjamin on the west. As before, the Israelites cried to the Lord and said, “We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals.”

But, God spoke and refused to help (10:11–16): Usually the Lord came to their defense, but this time, He refused. First, He recollected how He delivered them repeatedly and they failed Him every time (10:11–13). Second, He told them to cry to the gods that they served (10:14). But then, the Israelites understood that God wanted “actions” and not mere words. So they removed their idols and worshipped Him alone (10:15–16a). The writer concluded, “And the Lord could bear the misery of the Israel no more” (10:16b). Does that mean God came to their deliverance? (A possible answer is in next week’s lesson).

**Narrative Pause:** “Pausing is important for cognitive planning of spontaneous speech” (Jane Teresa Zeches and Kathryn M. Yorkston in *Clinical Aphasiology* [vol. 23, 1995, 155–63]). In the Scriptures, a writer *pauses* for the readers to *stop and think*. Similarly, the writer of the book of Judges wanted the readers to stop and think of what he had said: “When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, **did I not save you from their hands**? But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!” (Judges 10:11–14).

When and how did God save them from the Egyptians? God delivered them from Pharaoh of Egypt by the hands of Moses (Book of Exodus).

When and how did God save them from the Amorites? God delivered them from the hands of Sihon and Og, two kings of Amorites, through Moses (Numbers 21).

When and how did God save them from the Ammonites? God delivered them from the hands of the Ammonites by Ehud, the left-handed warrior (Judges 3).

When and how did God save them from the Philistines? Shamgar, son of Anath, killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad and saved Israel (Judges 3:31).

When and how did God save them from the Sidonians? God delivered Mount Hermon, the land of the Sidonians, by the hands of Moses (Deuteronomy 3:8–9).

When and how did God save them from the Amalekites? God delivered the wandering Israelites from the attack of the Amalekites through the leaders, Moses and Joshua; Aaron and Hur held Moses’s hands up—as long as it was up, Israelites won (Exodus 17:8–15).

When and how did God save them from the Maonites? The Greek version of the Old Testament says “Midians” instead of Maonites. God delivered Israel from the kings of the Midians through Gideon (Judges 6).

The people were to remember God’s faithfulness. But what was their response after each one of those deliverances? They forsook Him and served other gods.

**Lesson for us**: Biblical “meditation” is not a gaze into oblivion; it is a recollection of God’s faithfulness in our lives, over the past many years. We are to *pause*, recollect and tell others of God’s faithfulness in our lives. “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD’” (Exod 10:1–2). **“**The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel. ‘Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your forefathers? Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation’” (Joel 1:1–3). It is important that we recollect and tell of God’s acts of faithfulness in our lives so that we don’t forget them in times of trials.