

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 9
JUDGES
CHAPTER 10**

Judges 10:13-14, *“Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.”*

INTRODUCTION

With the completion of the judgeship of Gideon and the “reign” of Abimelech, Chapter 10 opens with the introduction to two “minor” judges, Tola and Jair. They are understood as “minor” judges not because the extent of their judgeship was insignificant nor were they personally unimportant. They were exemplary judges, and between them they judged Israel for 45 years. Rather, they are “minor” because so little is recorded about them in comparison with Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and Abimelech.

God has and shall always be intimately involved with His people. Thus far in our study of Judges, we have learned this. This truth is a great

comfort for those who bear the name of Jesus Christ today. What God has done in the past in his dealings and relationship with Israel, His chosen people, He will also do for His Blood-bought children today. We can rest assured of this. When we sin we must quickly repent. The longsuffering of the LORD is not infinite.

Israel had sinned again and again and the LORD continued to be merciful. But Israel had not learned from her previous experiences. Her previous cries of repentance were “temporal” in that the new generation did not learn from the punishment and repentance of the previous generation. This divine writer teaches us the important lesson on the meaning of the limitations of God’s long suffering.

OUTLINE

1. Tola and Jair (10:1-5);
2. Punishment for Sins (10:6-9);
3. History of Deliverance and Rebuke (10:10-14);
4. Compassion of the LORD (10:15-16);
5. Offer of Leadership (10:17-18).

COMMENTARY

Tola & Jair – 10:1-5

After Abimelech’s death two judges arose to “defend” Israel in succession. The first was Tola, whose name means “worm”, who judged Israel for 23 years. The next was Jair,

whose name means “he enlightens”, who judged Israel for 22 years.

Nothing much is told about Tola. His genealogy is given: son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a member of the tribe of Issachar. From 1 Chronicles 7:1, 4 sons of Issachar were mentioned: Tola, and Puah [Junior], Jashub, and Shimron. The fact that his father, Puah, named his son, Tola suggests that theirs was a family of prominence. In addition, the fact that his generation was mentioned three generations back proved that he was a man of high social standing.¹

But Tola did not live in Issachar, which was on the west side of Jordan and just south of the Sea of Galilee. Instead he lived in Shamir in the Mount of Ephraim, which was much farther south, and the tribe of Manasseh separated Issachar and Ephraim. One wonders why Tola, a man of Issachar, lived in Ephraim and what was he doing there. It is mentioned that he rose to defend and judge Israel for 23 years (10:1, 2). From whom did Tola defend Israel? Was Israel under any oppression by an enemy? The text is silent about this. It has been suggested that Tola saved Israel from more internal strife which threatened to break up the nation into warring factions. Abimelech operated in the region and

¹ Often in the Old Testament such a genealogical statement is an evidence of high social standing. (K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *Judges/Ruth*, p. 238).

seized power in Shechem. He had left the nation in turmoil and Tola prevented the country from further disintegration.

The family background of the next “minor” judge is not given. However, he is identified as a Gileadite, and that would naturally place the area of his service on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Transjordan). He judged Israel for a year less than Tola. He had a large family of 30 sons. This strongly suggests that he had more than one wife. Another indication of this, was that he was an important and influential man in his community. Each of his sons rode on donkeys. In those days, donkeys and mules symbolised wealth, security, and at times royalty.²

Each of his sons ruled a city and altogether there were 30 cities, which were called Havoth-Jair, meaning the “village of Jair.” The people who lived in the region of Gilead must have also approved of his rule, power, and authority — willing to follow him voluntarily. Jair died and was buried in Camon. This indicates that Camon was his official residence,

² Judges 12:14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

and the city was about 34 kilometres southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Punishment for Sins – 10:6-9

After the death of Tola and Jair, the children of Israel once again did evil in the sight of the LORD. They “served” not one pagan god but seven. The word “to serve” when used in connection with a person or deity means to express one’s highest adoration and worship. Israel served the Canaanite gods, (Baalim and Ashtaroh), the gods of Syria in the north (Haddad, Thammuz), the gods of Zidon or Sidon in the northwest (Baal Astarte, the queen of heaven), the gods of Moab in the east (Chemosh), the gods of the children of Ammon in the east (Molech), and the gods of the Philistines in the southwest (Dagon, Beel-zebub).

In addition to this sinful apostasy, they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him (10:6)! Three glaring verbs describe the evil they did: “served... forsook... did not serve”. They forsook their living covenant LORD to whom they were bound by oaths and turned to dead-wood gods of their own choosing.³ The spiritual condition of Israel had struck rock bottom. They had forgotten the wonderful works the LORD had performed on their behalf in their

³Jeremiah 2:11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

nation’s history. The LORD God had repeatedly warned them that they should not forget Him when He had blessed them with many things in the Promised Land.⁴

Once again, the Israelites incurred the burning anger or wrath of the LORD. He “sold” them to the Philistines in the southeast, and into the hands of the Ammonites in central Transjordan in the east. The Philistines and the Ammonites “vexed and oppressed” the children of Israel for 18 years. The length of the time of oppression was indicative of the depths of Israel’s sin and idolatry. The phrase “vexed and oppressed” literally means “shattered and crushed.” The children of Israel who lived on the eastern side of Jordan River in the land of the Amorites which was Gilead were oppressed by the Ammonites. The Ammonites even crossed over Jordan River to the west and made war against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim. The Ammonites “bombed and blasted” the Israelites on both sides of the Jordan River so that Israel was “sore distressed.” The gods

⁴ Deuteronomy 8:11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: 12 Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*; 13 And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; 14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

which Israel worshipped and served could not help them. Instead these gods became the very cause of their insufferable pain. What a shame for Israel. God is sovereign and had allowed the enemies to oppress His children so that they would realise their sins, repent, and return to Him. The LORD God acted out of love and care for His chosen and covenant people.

History of Deliverance and Rebuke – 10:10-14

Israel's only refuge and security is the LORD God. In their desperation they turned again to the LORD, who had repeatedly saved the children of Israel in the past, whenever they cried to Him for deliverance. The children of Israel acknowledged that they had sinned against the LORD. This is the first confession of sin and was unlike the previous instances when they just cried to the LORD for deliverance. They also confessed that they had forsaken Him, and even served Baalim (10:10).

The LORD responded. He began by reminding them of His faithfulness since the time when He delivered them from the Egyptians to the present moment. Just as the children of Israel committed idolatry sevenfold, the LORD listed seven episodes of past deliverance: from bondage in Egypt, from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon (in Transjordan), from the Philistines, and

the Zidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites (Midianites). In those instances, Israel cried to the LORD, and He delivered her. Yet, Israel had forsaken the LORD and served other gods (10:13). The LORD then said that He would not deliver them, and told them to go and cry to the gods, whom they had chosen, and let the gods deliver them from their tribulation (10:14).

The point which the LORD made to Israel is very clear: God's faithfulness to them was perfect and complete and should have motivated them to remain faithful and devoted to Him. So, the LORD rebuked them. They were warned that the LORD's longsuffering has a limit. Such a vicious cycle of sin will result in a greater intensity of punishment. The sending of a Judge to deliver Israel must not be taken for granted.

Compassion of the LORD – 10:15-16

The children of Israel learned the first lesson on repentance. Their response in genuine repentance was fourfold. They confessed that they had sinned, the first essential step. They were willing to be treated as the LORD thought fit — they were prepared to be punished by the LORD. Then they demonstrated their sincerity of repentance by putting away the foreign gods among them — a total cleansing of their house of idols. And finally, they firmly pledged to serve the LORD unreservedly (10:15, 16).

This was genuine repentance. Genuine repentance always includes a heart of submission and a bearing of the consequences for sins committed. It was unconditional surrender. They got rid of the idols. It moved the heart of the LORD who responded in loving-kindness and tender-mercy. He was grieved for the misery of Israel. The LORD is always merciful but God's people must never take it for granted. Do not have a light view of sin.

Offer of Leadership --10:17-18

The Ammonites on the east bank of Jordan "gathered together" (Hebrew, *sa-aq*) in Gilead. The Ammonites were literally loudly calling out to any opposing party against Israel (10:17). They tried to stir up as many people to fight against Israel. The children of Israel on the other hand assembled together at Mizpeh (meaning: watchtower). It was a place in Gilead, north of the River Jabbok.

After 18 years of devastation and destruction, the Israelites now had a new commitment to serve their LORD. They gathered in Mizpeh but they met an obstacle. They had no leader or army general to lead them against the Ammonites who had been harassing and oppressing them. They desperately took counsel with one another: "What man is there that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon?" Note that the LORD did not directly intervene by solving the problem for them as previously (e.g.

6:12). The LORD let them deliberate in order to resolve the problem themselves. This was human responsibility in action. This set the stage for Jephthah, who will emerge as one of their most unusual and colourful leaders. .

PRACTICAL VALUE

Idolatry is a constant problem with the people of God. Time and again, in spite of the grace and goodness of God in helping and saving the Israelites from oppression and suffering, they sin the same sin. Their sin of idolatry negates their worship of God. Soon they forgot God by turning to serve the useless gods of the inhabitants of the Land. Churches today face the same problem. God has so loved Christians, forgiven them from condemnation, saved them from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire, and blessed them innumerable, yet, like the Israelites, how easily they forget God. They have turned their backs on the living God of the Bible by serving other modern "gods" — the gods of money, power, pleasure, social status and self-gratification. This ought not to be so. The lesson must be well learnt from this chapter.

Another pertinent point in the study of this chapter is that the longsuffering of our God has a limit. Do not sin and then repent as if repentance will automatically bring forgiveness and deliverance. The

LORD warned Israel and rebuked her for her failure to learn from the repentance of past generations. Remember the goodness and compassion of God in days past. This must evoke gratitude in the hearts of every true Christian. Repentance will bring forth mercy and grace. But why is there a need for chastisement and pain first? This is the sad cycle of sin Israel was steeped in. The LORD's desiderative will is one of continual obedience and NOT this cycle of sin, punishment, repentance and forgiveness. If Israel did not sin and walk holily before God would it not have been better than for God to keep sending heathen nations to punish Israel?

Finally, one of the ways God guides us to make discerning life choices and decisions is through the use of our God-given faculties of intellect, emotions and will. The LORD did not directly seek and choose a military general for the Israelites when they asked: "Who could lead and deliver them from the Ammonites?" Many Christians take the easy and wrong path by simply saying that God speaks to them in a dream, in a vision, in their heart, and even say, "the Holy Spirit spoke to me" without proper attestation from the Word of God and discernment. AMEN

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CHAPTER 10

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 10:1-5; Nehemiah 9:27.

TUESDAY: Judges 10:6-9; Romans 1:21-25; Leviticus 20:1-5.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 10:10-14; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Romans 2:4.

THURSDAY: Judges 10:15-16; Matthew 3:8; 1 John 1:9-10.

FRIDAY: Judges 10:17-18; Proverbs 3:5-6.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the purpose of mentioning Tola and Jair and not elaborate on what they did?

2. Can a church today commit the sin of Israel by worshipping a plethora of idols? If yes, list some of these idols? Are they found in our church?

3. What is the meaning of God's longsuffering? Do you take God's longsuffering for granted?

4. What is the best way for a believer to live today that is pleasing to God? Describe this life in practical terms? Are you walking this life?

5. Was God upset with Israel when He told Israel to turn to idols instead of turning to Him?

6. Was the LORD satisfied with Israel's prayer for deliverance? If not, why not?

7. How does this chapter add to your understanding of God? How will this understanding influence the way you live?
