

Who Is My King? - God is our refuge in times of trouble. Do we cry out to God for help?

Judges 3:7-11

Walk away from the Lord is a step by step process

1. Did evil in the eyes of the Lord (v.7) – "Did evil" appeared in the book of Judges 21 times. The book of Judges has 21 chapters. On average, it appeared once each chapter. "Did evil" does not necessarily mean murder, bombing, etc.... - it simply means did anything that God doesn't like.

Jesus is the Lord of our life

We like to be in control of our lives and situations. When we believe in God and follow God, does it mean that we believe and follow God's standard, or we believe and follow God with our own standard? If we use our own standard to follow God, then we are not believing and following God. When we say we believe and follow God, it doesn't only mean we agree that God exists, it means Jesus is the Lord of our life. If we use our own standard to follow and believe God, then Jesus is not our Lord, then we cannot say we follow and believe Jesus.

2. Forgot their Lord their God means they forgot or ignored or purposefully neglected God's work in the people of Israel or God's rules and commandments.
3. Served Baals and Asherahs – be at service or wait on. Background: Archeologists discovered that Canaan has many idols and the biggest one is called El. El's wife is Asherah. Their son is Baal. Later when El stepped down from power and Baal took over. Baal's wife is also Asherah, Baal's mother became his wife.

According to Canaan religious culture, Baal is an idol that controls harvest in farming. The Canaanites belief that if they sleep with Baal's temple prostitute, they would receive a big harvest. The Canaanites also burn their children as a sacrifice to their idols.

Walking away from God

Step 1. Did evil in the eyes of the Lord meaning did something wrong and not pleasing to God

Step 2. Forgot about God meaning begin to distort or twist the standard of God's laws

Step 3. Serve Baal and Asherahs meaning set up our own idols

We see that in our daily lives. For example, yelling at others, a disrespectful act. Christians shouldn't yell at others. After yelling at others, we have two choices: 1. Ask God for forgiveness and ask the other party for forgiveness; or 2. Like the Israelites, they have no remorse and justify their action by altering God's teaching from the Bible. The bible teaches us to love one another. We may say, I am in my spiritual low point. Loving others can leave it for others who are more spiritual. From then on it became more difficult for one to receive any more correction related to loving others and control one's temper etc. S/he may say, I am going to be my own master and decide what's right and wrong. This is step 3, serving and setting up my

own idol - I am not going to change even I say I follow Jesus and eventually forgetting what it means to follow Jesus.

Why would Christians slowly walk away from God? It is because, in this faith journey, Christians are supposedly, gradually, day-by-day, surrendering, and giving up rights to God, and allowing God to be in charge. There is a say, "More of God, and less of us." "He must become greater; I must become less." John 3:30

If we say, we are not going to change this, or that for God, or this is impossible to change, then our lives became less of God, and more of us. We became the Lord. God's voice and his influence in our lives would diminish, then it's hard to tell Christians from non-Christians. The most beautiful and amazing thing about following and believing in Jesus Christ is to allow God to change us so that our lives become a blessed and abundant life. The blessed and abundant life is a promise for everyone, you and I can receive that. When we face challenges, if we follow God's standard, God will change us to be more like him.

God brought discipline

V8 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subjected for eight years.

Very vivid description that literally means smoke comes from the Lord's nostrils.

Aram Naharaim – Aram of the two rivers – of Mesopotamia

Cushan-Rishathaim – Cushan – a royal title like a pharaoh in Egypt

Rishathaim – double evil

Don't think the Lord only loves and never gets mad. God is love. He is also Just. God judge and get angry including towards his people. In the N.T., God disciplines his children because he loves them. the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he disciplines everyone he accepts as his son. Hebrews 12:6 Proverbs 3:11,12.

Disciplines = Building up

The reason God discipline the Israelites is that he wants to build up the Israelites. If God did not discipline his people the Israelites, they will continue the path of destruction. For example, God often brings discipline by allowing interruption in our life to slow us down. I am sure you may have heard of many stories like that that even Christians can just busy themselves with serving the church and that so-called serving is actually keeping them away from God. Eventually, because of their fatigue, their body gave up. They end up forced to take a pause in life. In this particular example, God allowed a challenge to happen as a signal calling his people to return to their first love. God disciplines his people in order to build them up so that they don't continue to stay in the wrong path.

Can you think of an example that relates to God's discipline to his people or even yourself? What's your initial feeling?

Going back to our passage today, how did the Israelites turn back to God?

Turning back to God – How?

V9. **First**, they cried out to the Lord. They called for help. They came to realize their mistake so they repent. Remember we just talked about God's discipline, oftentimes, once God's people realized or being convicted by the Holy Spirit, the first thing they did is to repent. Admit their sin of putting themselves first that they became the idol that they serve. They served themselves actually rather than serving God.

In our passage today, the Israelites realized their sin, and they cried out to God.

God raised up Othniel – who is Othniel?

Othniel appeared already in chap. 1:12-13. Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Aksah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher. Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it.

Second, by faith, the Israelites accept God's arrangement. God did just fix their problem byways of miracles. The Israelites still have to accept God's plan whatever that was. In this case, God rose up a deliver, Othniel. The Israelites believed God heard their prayer. God will fight for them. By faith, they accept God's plan.

Third, they go to war. God rose up Othniel to deliver them from their enemy. There is a process. They still have to fight. Although we have no details, we know that they won.

Summary

Walking away from God often includes action, thoughts, and our spiritual life. 1. Our action deviates from God's standard; 2. our thoughts justify our actions; 3. spiritually, we forget or walk away from God and we became god, in place of God, and take charge. In contrast, returning to God often includes 1. returning to God spiritually, let God be the God of our life, we cried out to God for help; then 2. We believe God will help us solve our problem by building up our faith in him; finally, 3. We take part in the fight. How we walk away from God is how we return back to God. The key is not solely changing our actions. The key is in rebuilding our relationship with God.

V10. V8. When the Israelites did evil in the lord's eyes, he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim. Now, when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel.

If we do not have God, the challenges will overcome us; If we depend on God, the result will be changed to the challenges will be overcome by us. God will help us to rise above life challenges. God is our refuge in times of trouble. That's God's promise.