

Tola and Jair

Judges 10

Judges 10:1-12 – “After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. ² He judged Israel twenty-three years; he died and was buried in Shamir.

³ After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called “Havoth Jair” to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

⁶ Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. ⁷ So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. ⁸ From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. ⁹ Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

¹⁰ And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!”

¹¹ So the LORD said to the children of Israel, “Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? ¹² Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. ¹³ Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.”

¹⁵ And the children of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.” ¹⁶ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

¹⁷ Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. ¹⁸ And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

Background Notes

Judges 10 has sometimes been called the chapter of the “minor judges.” Tola and Jair are not as well known as judges like Deborah, Gideon and Samson. Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years. Notice that Tola saved Israel (v1). From what did he save Israel? No enemy is named. Most likely, he saved Israel from the civil strife that followed Abimelech’s terrible judgeship.

Jair judged Israel twenty-two years. Here's a biblical riddle for you: "As I was on the road to Gilead I met a man who had thirty sons, who rode on thirty donkeys, and lived in thirty cities. Who was this man?" The answer, of course, is Jair - and it's not a riddle! It indicates that Jair was fairly well to do (v4).

The sixth sin cycle in the book of Judges begins in Judges 10:6, and continues through Judges 12:7. Remember, the sin cycle in the time of the Judges began **Step 1**, when Israel would turn away from the Lord: "*Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD...*" (v6). In **Step 2** of the sin cycle the Lord would bring in a foreign power to oppress and discipline his people: "*So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon*" (v7). **Step 3** of the sin cycle came when the people would repent and cry out to the Lord: "*And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, 'We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!'*" (v10).

Step 4 of the sin cycle was when the Lord would raise up a Judge to deliver His people. "*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh (in other words, to raise an army), and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon*" (Judges 11:29). The final stage, or **Step 5** of the cycle was when the land was at rest under the Judge, and the people were, once again, following the Lord. This step would last until the death of the Judge (Judges 12:7). So there's the sixth sin cycle in the book of Judges.

Doctrinal Points

1. There is a limit to God's patience.

Judges 10: 11-14: "*So the LORD said to the children of Israel, 'Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.'*" In paraphrase form, the Lord's message was: "You've had it, Israel! I gave you many chances, but you haven't responded. You've turned away one too many times. Now go cry out to the foreign gods that you've chosen!"

God is very patient, but there's a limit to God's patience. In Genesis 6:3, before the Flood, "*the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.'*" And then came the global Flood. Before the Flood "*the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water*" (1 Peter 3:20). In His great patience, God kept waiting in the days of Noah. God waited patiently for 120 years while Noah preached and built the Ark - and then the Flood came suddenly. There is a limit to God's patience.

In Luke 13:34-35 the Lord Jesus lamented over Jerusalem: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”* And in 70AD, the Temple and the Jewish nation were destroyed. There is a limit to God’s patience.

Let me ask you: Are **you** trying the patience of God? If you’re not a Christian, it’s only a matter a time before you will be cut off. Don’t try the patience of God! *“In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Come to Christ today! Don’t put it off, because there is a limit to God’s patience.

2. There is no limit to God's love.

Judges 10:15-16: *“And the children of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.” So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.”* Think about that! God’s soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel! Oh, the wonderful mercy and love of God! God’s heart is like the heart of a loving parent, always ready to respond to the rebellious teenager who returns home, no matter what that teenager has done. God, our perfect heavenly Father, has no limit to His love.

There is a limit to God’s patience, but if people truly repent, no matter how terrible they’ve been, they will find that there’s no limit to God’s love. Do you think that the worst dictator on earth could be saved? Yes! Could Saddam Hussein of Iraq or Vladimir Putin of Russia be saved? Yes! What about Assad of Syria - could he be saved? Yes, but these men would have to repent and turn to the Lord.

Notice what triggered God’s mercy: *“And the children of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.” So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.”* (v15-16). The misery and repentance of Israel triggered God’s mercy. And notice that it was **real repentance** - not just words, not just going to church, not just carrying a Bible. They **put away their foreign gods**. That’s not just a remorseful feeling - that’s true repentance!

When people truly repent of their sin, they will find that there is no limit to God’s love. Do you remember the story of the lost son in Luke 15? The father was not only waiting for the son to return, he never gave up on him! There was no limit to the father’s love! The son was more than welcomed home! He was fully restored and fully reconciled. Remember, while there is a limit to God’s patience, there is no limit to God’s love.

Practical Application

Don't make God your last resort!

“Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him” (v6).

Do you get the picture here? Israel was trying every “god” other than the one true God! Finally they turned to the Lord, but only after 18 years of heavy oppression. They turned to the Lord as a last resort.

A lot of people today are in that category. They only turn to God as a last resort. They try every “god” under the sun for experience and satisfaction – except the Lord. There is a “god” out there for every taste and every experience that people could possibly want, and people are trying everything but the Lord in a vain effort to satisfy their desires and longings.

People will risk their lives for the ultimate experience or adventure or pleasure. And it’s only when they get hurt, or fail, or burn out, or lose their possessions, or lose their job, or lose their friends that some of them will finally turn to the Lord - as a last resort.

Well, of course it’s better late than never. But if only people would realize that it doesn’t have to be that way! The Lord is ready and willing and waiting to bring satisfaction to anyone who turns to Him **now**. In the words of Jeremiah 2, *“Why turn to broken cisterns that can hold no water when the living fountain is readily available?”*

Don't make God your last resort!