

[engaged]

:: judges 3.31 ::

23 words.

23 words is all that we're given concerning Shamgar, deliverer of Israel.

We find his record in Judges, chapter 3, verse 31. There we read:

Judges 3.31 - After [Ehud] was Shamgar, the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad and he also saved Israel.

He's one of the more forgotten Judges, one of those Bible characters that doesn't have anyone named after him. He's not mentioned in any other book of the Bible. He doesn't have any action figure available for purchase. I looked.

But, despite that fact, this morning he is our model. Because we are given 23 words about Shamgar that we might learn from him. He is the example we can look to to find the kind of life that God wants each of us to have. Again and again I want to remind us that God desires great things for the lives of each of us here this morning. He wants us to be men who are strong and victorious, men who accomplish His will and further His work. He wants us to be men of valor and purpose and strength. God wants it for you and me and the rest of His people.

So, today, as we look at these 23 words, as we study Shamgar's activity and relationship with God and as we study the fight he fought, we will find that if we want to be men who are battle ready, we must be **engaged**.

Judges 3.31a - After him (speaking of Ehud) was Shamgar, the son of Anath.

We don't know where he was from. We don't know what his name meant. We don't know anything other than his dad's name, which we also know nothing about. To us he is simply John Q Believer.

And, in one sense, I am very glad for that. Because, though it is important that the Bible gives us specific details concerning certain people and places and happenings (and it does), it is encouraging to see these somewhat nondescript portions of Scripture. Because those portions can speak to us very powerfully and very personally.

Look at it this way: We read about Samson, who we know a great deal about. We know about what he looked like and talked like. We know about his parents. We know where he lived and who he married. We know about his personal sins and his thought processes. We've known him from birth till death. And that is good. We gain multiplied insights from Samson's life.

But, we also can look at a person like Samson and feel pretty disconnected from him. We may have some similarities, hopefully not many, but all in all he is a person who is so specific to us it is almost easier to look and say, 'Well, that's not *ME!* I'm not a Samson. He's in a category way over *there!*'

That is a dangerous attitude when we're approaching God's word, but it happens sometimes.

Much harder to have that attitude when we read about someone like Shamgar. Because he *is* you and me. He is every man. He is simply a man who followed God and who God used to do a wonderful work. He is nondescript so that we can identify with him.

So never overlook these characters who are less detailed than some of the others. Don't read Ehud and then skip right to Deborah. I have a tendency to do that; to place more importance on certain areas of Scripture than others. Instead, I need to challenge myself to line up against Shamgar and see what similarities and insights I might find. Remember that his record is given that we might apply God's word to ourselves and that we might draw nearer to Jesus in this life. His obscurity reminds us that we are men that God wants to fill and empower and send out to accomplish His will, even in the obscure town of Hanford.

Judges 3.31b - [He] killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad.

My dad has a great take on this battle in his study of this chapter. You should go and read it later today. Visit calvaryhanford.com and search for Judges 3-5. You can get some great insights there.

But here's what I want us to think about this morning. Shamgar is out in the field, presumably working with his oxen. Then, at least 600 Philistine soldiers show up. Maybe they were invading Israel, maybe Shamgar lived near the coast where the Philistines hung out. We don't know, we don't want to speculate too much. But he had an oxgoad in his hand and he stood against this well trained, well armed battalion of soldiers. Because he was empowered by God, because he was filled with the Spirit of God, he was able to strike down these warriors with a simple, wooden tool.

So what are we seeing here? Again, we need to be careful to speculate too much, but since the Bible doesn't give us many details we should try to think through this logically and rationally.

We see him at work. We see Shamgar living his life, tending his oxen, going about his day and God brings him this situation where he might be used very mightily to defend and protect Israel. Shamgar engages the enemy and we see God using the abilities and tools that were *already available* to him to do it. Shamgar apparently kept oxen, and God used that part of his life to accomplish this victory.

We must use our lives and our jobs to win victory for Christ. Why? Because God has specifically scattered each of you around this community so that you can impact different people and spread the Gospel in different ways. He has sent you that you might engage the world directly around you. God has placed each of you into active duty. He has led each of you to a place so that you can minister. Some to sailors, some to students, some to clients, some to co-workers. Your friends, your families, your neighborhoods, your unions, your departments, they are all areas that God has placed you so that you can be a Shamgar there when the moment of ministry arises. So that you can be there to defend and to protect and to encourage, to teach and to pray and to share, to show grace and love and truth. That's your mission. That's the plan.

If we understand this, it should excite us. Because the truth of the Christian life is that our 'job' is to draw near to God, who is then faithful to direct you to the place where He needs you to be at any given time, and then He fills you with what you need in order to effectively minister to the people around you. To be used in those interactions, those opportunities, where we have a chance to **engage** on behalf of the Lord and to see what sort of victory we can enjoy through His power.

Shamgar was **engaged**. He saw the situation before him, he took what was already in his hands and he moved in the power of the Spirit. It's very simple. Then **God** provided the miraculous. **God** brought the great victory. Shamgar was simply willing to step out.

We need to engage. We need to view each interaction as a potential opportunity that God might use in order to change a life, whether it be a moment of evangelism, encouragement, instruction, comfort or service. Whatever the situation, we should have the understanding that maybe this is a moment that God wants to use to change the world. We need to **engage** in this life that we're living.

Judges 3.31c - And he also saved Israel.

Shamgar is not one of the more famous Judges. But he was a deliverer. He delivered Israel. He stood in the gap and was used by God to save.

Who will we deliver? What opportunities might God give each of us to change this world today?

You may feel like your life is insignificant, like you're one of the forgotten people of the Bible. But you, men, are like Shamgar. Men God desires to fill and use in order to save and deliver those who are bound in darkness. You are mighty in God's sight. You are His men of valor and He has given you the call of duty. He has sent you out with a mission and an equipping and a purpose in your life.

Shamgar was battle ready. He was engaged. He was working in the field that God had given him, he saw an opportunity to serve the Lord, he took what was in his hands and he said 'let's do this.'

We want this mentality. We want to have this readiness. Where we are **engaged** in thought and attitude and activity, understanding that perhaps *this* is the moment where God wants me to share my faith. Perhaps *this* is the moment where God wants me to invite someone to church. Perhaps *this* is the moment that God wants me to serve someone around me. Perhaps *this* is the moment that God wants me to stand in the gap or tell someone a Bible verse or demonstrate grace.

Where has God placed me? What is in my hands? I know I have His Spirit within me, I know that God partners with me in my life to do incredible things and now I'm going to **engage**. I'm going to join God in His work. I'm going to present myself as a willing servant. If we do that, men, then we are going to be used powerfully to deliver and save and serve and minister and further the work of Jesus Christ.

Be ready to engage. Be ready to move in the power of God. Be ready to be God's man in whatever field He has placed you.