

SHAMGAR

JUDGES 3:31

Text:

Introduction:

The Bible is filled with tales of obscure people who appear on the pages of the Bible, and then promptly disappear. These people step out of the shadows, are used mightily by the Lord and then they fade away, most of them never being mentioned again.

Among those that come to mind are:

Adino – 2 Sam. 23:8 – One of David's mighty men. He killed 800 men at one time with a spear.

Eleazar – 2 Sam. 23:9-10 – Another of David's mighty men. He stood boldly in the day of battle and fought so long, and killed so many Philistines, that his hand would not open and allow him to release his sword.

Shammah – 2 Sam. 23:11-12 – Another of David's warriors. Shammah stood alone in a field of peas and fought the Philistines and God gave him a great victory.

The Widow of Zarephath – 1 Kings 17 – She fed the prophet Elijah and sheltered him during a famine.

The Israelite Maid who told Naaman about the Man of God – 1 Kings 5:1-4 – She told her master about the God of Israel and this led to his cleansing from leprosy and to his spiritual conversion.

The little boy who gave his lunch to Jesus – John 6:5-13 – He gave the little he possessed and God used that tiny portion of food to feed a vast multitude of people.

The woman who anointed the Lord and washed His feet with her hair – Luke 7:36-50 – She performed a labor of sacrificial love on the Lord Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea – John 19:38-42 – At great personal risk and cost, Joseph buried the body of Jesus.

This list could go on and on. It seems that God chooses to use those who are unknown and obscure to accomplish His work in this world. The passage before us is no exception. We are introduced to a man named Shamgar. He is an unknown man who appears on the pages of the Word of God, is used by God in a great way, and then vanished back into the shadows from which he came.

Not much is known about Shamgar. He is only mentioned twice in the Bible. He is mentioned here in Judges 3:31 and in Judges 5:6. What is said about him reveals a man of character and courage. The little

information we are given reveals a man who served God in a great way.

Notice:

1. SHAMGAR THE WORKER

Judges 3:31

³¹ *And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.*

The name “***Shamgar***” means either “***sword***” or “***cupbearer***”. Either name would fit with the details we have concerning this man. He was like a “***sword***” in the hand of God, as God used him to destroy the enemies of Israel. He was like a “***cupbearer***” who brought the cup of God’s wrath to those God would judge.

He is called “***the son of Anath***”. “***Anath***” was the Canaanite goddess of war. This might be a nickname for Shamgar. It is possible that he was called “***the warrior***”. This name could also mean that he was from the town of “***Beth-Anath***”, which was located in northeast Israel on land belonging to the tribe of Naphtali. Of course, it could mean that his father’s name was Anath.

One thing we know for sure about Shamgar was that he was a farmer. He carried and fought with an “**oxgoad**”.

An oxgoad was not a weapon, it was an agricultural tool. It was a pole some 8 to 10 feet in length and about 2 inches in diameter. One end was tipped by a long iron point. This end was used to encourage the oxen he was driving to move. Oxen might not respond to voice commands or the pulling of the reins, but they would respond to the sharp point of the oxgoad.

The other end of this tool was shaped like a spade. It was a metal blade used to clean wet clay, roots and other impediments off plow points.

Another thing we know about Shamgar has to do with the time in which he lived. It was a very difficult time for the people of Israel. **Judges chapters 4-5** talk about the times in which they lived.

The nation of Israel was being oppressed by Jabin, the King of Canaan. Jabin was a powerful enemy, who possessed 900 iron chariots, **Jud. 4:3**. His army seemed totally unbeatable. As was the custom in those days, he probably would not allow the Israelites to arm themselves, **1 Sam. 13:19-23; Jud. 5:8**.

It was a time when the people of Israel were filled with fear, **Jud. 5:6-7**. They were afraid to travel the

highways because of their oppressors. They were afraid to live in their homes because of those who invaded and attacked them.

It seems that while Israel was oppressed by Canaan, they were also under attack from the Philistines. We will talk more about them in a moment.

One of the great lessons we can take away from Shamgar is that God tends to use those who are already busy. When God called Shamgar, He called a man who already busy. Shamgar was a man who was actively working to feed and care for his family. When the enemy came, God used Shamgar as His chosen instrument.

God does not use lazy people in any great fashion. When He looks at the church and places His hands on folk to use them, He always chooses those who are actively engaged in His work already. We need to remember that He saved us to serve Him, **Eph. 2:10;** **James 2:18.** As we are faithful to work in the small tasks He assigns us, He will open up larger and more important avenues of service. If He cannot trust you to do the small tasks He will never use you in greater ways, **Luke 10:16.**

The day in which we live is a hard day for the servants of the Lord. It seems that the government and society are growing in their hatred of the Lord and His work. It

seems that hearts are becoming continually harder against the message of the Gospel and the Lord's call to salvation. It is a hard day to raise families. It is hard day to be in the ministry.

The Lord is watching! He takes note of your faithful service and He will bless you and use you here. You can be sure that He will reward you when you get home.

Notice not only Shamgar the Worker but also:

2. SHAMGAR THE WARRIOR

As I said a moment ago, the Israelites were being oppressed by the Canaanites under King Jabin and his powerful army. Jabin has disarmed the Israelites and made them weak militarily. They were not in a position to defend themselves. This provided an opportunity for the Philistines, a warlike people who lived near the Mediterranean Sea, to take advantage of the situation. They would invade Israel and capture slaves, steal crops and destroy villages.

When the Philistines came, he stood his ground and he fought. He did not have any weapons of war, but he had his oxgoad. While this was a tool, it could also be used as a weapon. It would have replaced a spear on one end. It would have served as an axe on the other end. The long pole could have been used to block blows by a sword.

Shamgar took what he had and he used it to secure victory for his people and safety for his family. Over the course of his life, he killed 600 of the Philistine raiders. Using that heavy oxgoad to kill 600 men would have been an amazing physical feat. He was a man who was in top notch physical condition, but his power wasn't merely physical. His power was spiritual.

Shamgar was a man empowered by God for this task.

There can be no doubt that the Spirit of God enabled Shamgar to stand and fight like he did.

Shamgar stood his ground and fought while others ran away because Shamgar knew that some things are worth fighting for. He was fighting for his home, his family, his freedom and his land. He was fighting for the right to worship his God. Shamgar was a physical and spiritual powerhouse. He was a fighter used in a mighty way by the Lord.

Can I just remind you that while we are to be workers, we must also be warriors! When God saved us, He enlisted us in His army and set us about the business of spiritual warfare, **Gal. 5:17**. We are war today! We are at war with Satan, like the Canaanites, he would oppress us. We are at war with the world, like the Philistines, it would invade us and take away everything we value.

Notice not only Shamgar the Worker and Shamgar the Warrior but also:

3. SHAMGAR THE WINNER

Judges 3:31

³¹ *And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and **he also delivered Israel.***

His courage freed the people around him and allowed them to live in freedom and liberty. He made a difference in the lives of those he fought for.

We are fighting for things that truly matter. It may seem at times that there are very few victories down here. In spite of that, the fight is still worthwhile! Because we are willing to fight the good fight of faith, others have the hope of a better future.

If we can pass down a pure Gospel and a holy church to the next generation, we have been successful. If we can hear Him say, “**Well done**” at the end of the way, we have been successful.

Let me encourage you to stay in the battle.

All around us, many are laying down their oxgoads and running away in fear of the enemy. Some are running

away to join the enemy. Can I encourage you to stay in the fight?

Be like Shamgar and stay in the fight until Jesus comes, **Gal. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:58.**

Galatians 6:9

⁹ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Close:

What lessons can we glean for our own lives. Let me suggest a few as a I close.

- **Shamgar fought where and when he was** – He did not give in to fear. He did not wait for better circumstances. He just took his stand for God and won the victory.
- **Shamgar fought with what he had** – No matter how weak you think your weapons are, put them in the hand of God and watch Him do great things with them. Ill. Oxblood, Moses' rod,

David's sling, the Widow's meal and oil, Dorcas' needle and thread, the lunch of a little boy, etc.

- **Shamgar stood his ground** – He just made up his mind to fight!
- **Shamgar left the results to God** – Every time he fought he put his life on the line. Shamgar trusted God with his life. Live or die, he would stand for the Lord and for what was right.
- **Shamgar enjoyed victory** – Every time he fought, Shamgar walked off the field of battle the victor. God honored his faith and He will honor yours too!

Are you standing your ground in the day of battle? Are you fighting for your home, your marriage, your family, your church and the other things that matter in your life?

He will use you if you will take your stand for Him!