

# Lingering Enemies

*Book of Judges*

By Ken Wimer

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**Bible Text:** Judges 3:1-7

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## **Shreveport Grace Church**

2970 Baird Road

Shreveport, LA 71118

**Website:** <http://www.shrevegrace.org/>

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech](http://www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech)

Look with me in your Bibles to Judges 3 and I want us to consider verses 1 through 7 and speak with you about the subject that we've seen already in these first two chapters and that is the enemies that linger, these enemies of the land that were left and as we see here in verse 1, which the Lord left. How many times have we heard messages preached that have said, "Well, if they had just had a little more faith. If they had just done this or just done that, then God would have chased out the enemies." But we see here specific reason why the Lord left these enemies. It says in verse 1,

1 Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; 2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof; 3 Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath. 4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: 6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

Well, here we have in this first portion of this chapter a general accounting of Israel's enemies and how the Lord used those enemies to prove Israel. You may wonder why it is that in the high priestly prayer of our Lord in John 17, he said of his disciples and of his people, "I pray not that you should take them from the world but that you should keep them from the evil one." We have a very similar parallel with regard to even our own spiritual lives and the struggles that we face with enemies that God has left in this world. There is not a utopia that we're going to find where we're not going to face such enemies. God has so purposed and so we're going to consider how is it that we live then in light of this reality because the same is true for us today as it was for Israel. Again, another reason to see that Canaan was not a type of heaven. Thank God that heaven will not be

full of enemies, in fact, not one will be there. When the Lord comes and renders his judgment, all that is impure, all that is unransomed, every enemy, Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire. But for now the reality is that the Lord has caused these enemies to linger. Then in the rest of the chapter and really throughout the rest of the book, what we are going to see is how God himself when the children of Israel cried out in their need, that the Lord raised up these judges, that's the name of this book. These judges but first we're going to see next time is Othniel but I wanted us to again make sure that the foundation is clearly laid here before we move on into the rest of the book. It's like building a building. You've got to lay that foundation and let the concrete dry, test it and make sure it's ready and then start putting the walls up.

So the first thing that I would have you see here in this portion is that the nature of this world as we see it described here in Canaan, but the nature of this world is only that of evil and as we know from the New Testament, the whole world lieth in wickedness. Here we have a clear picture when it speaks here of enemies, when it speaks of wars, when it speaks of idolatry and temptation and trials, this is the world that God has purposed. Let's never doubt that. The world would not be the way it is right now had God not purposed it to be so. A fallen world and one full of darkness and depravity and you say, "Why would he do that?" Well, out of that shines brighter his grace. Out of it shines even more gloriously the mercies of the Lord. And out of it shines forth even more clearly just as is pictured in these judges that we're going to see, the Lord Jesus Christ and his deliverance of his people.

But if you look in 1 John 5:19, you'll see this parallel over here and you'll see the same warning that we have from these Old Testament portions of Scripture with regard to keeping yourself from idols. When the Scriptures speak of idols, the enemy is not just out there, it's in here. We are idolaters by nature so therefore we need the Lord to keep us from that enemy that is within just like Israel dwelt with his enemies all around and amongst them, according to what God purposed. But here in 1 John 5, it says in verse 18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." Now when it says "sinneth not," you have to understand the context. Sin is not in the sense of going after the way of idolatry. Sin is not in the sense of leaving the Gospel and leaving Christ to follow after other gods. That can never happen to one who is truly born of God. It doesn't mean sin is not in their personal experience, that doesn't make any sense, but as you read the context as we're going to see here, sin is not in the sense of following after the world or idolatry, doing an about face, returning to the vomit as Peter describes it of religion, false works. "But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." This is talking, if you will, about the Caleb's and the Joshua's. It wasn't that they were any better than the rest but if they stood all their days even in the face of all the hypocrisy of the rest of Israel and the apostasy, it's because the Spirit of God in them, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not." That wicked one, that evil that would take the chaff away cannot take the wheat away. Again, it's because of a strong representative even as Christ said of Peter, "Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat but," what? "I prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." There is that keeping.

He says in verse 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." So imagine here a light in a dark place. We are of God, not by any merit of our own but having been set apart by his electing grace; having been sanctified by that read deeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We stand apart from the rest of the world and its idolatry and in its enmity toward this very God. We hear of a God who saves sinners sovereignly and does so purely by his grace through the work of Christ alone and we rejoice but it says here, "the whole world lieth in wickedness." In other words, there is a whole world out there that is opposed to such a message and would rather run headlong into hell following after works religion or other idolatrous notions than to bow to Christ.

He says in verse 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come," he's talking about him coming in the flesh, "and hath given us an understanding." There it is. That's what makes the difference is that the Spirit of God has through his Spirit given an understanding of those things that pertain to Christ and those things that pertain to our own flesh, "that we may know him that is true," there is an important statement there. Not just know the doctrine but know him that is true, "and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Then verse 21 says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

So that's the message over here in Judges. Yes, there are these lingering enemies and yes, the whole world lies in wickedness. I know every generation thinks that this generation is worse than the one before but as I have told you before, even reading this description, we know the evil that has been around but when you go all the way back to Genesis 6, how can it get any more evil than what is described here and which was the reason for God destroying the world initially by the flood. It says here, "There were giants in the earth," in verse 4, "in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Now, let's just make a clarification here because there are a lot of interpretations of who these sons of God are but if you go back to Genesis 4:26, you'll see that there was a particular seed that God had purposed to preserve through which he would bring his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, that lineage that goes all the way back to the Garden. Then that was represented by Abel but then he also had the rest which were represented by Cain and Genesis 4:26, after Cain slew Abel, it says, "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." I believe here in Genesis 6:4 when it speaks of the sons of God, it's not talking about angels that came down and cohabited with women. You see, that's a popular interpretation. I don't know where it got started but we know that the angels don't cohabit with men. They don't marry, neither are they given in marriage. There is no seed to produce seed.

And the giants that it speaks of here aren't some weird offspring that came as a result of angels mixing with men. Put that interpretation away but look at it in the context: it's talking about a mixture of this lineage of the sons of God with the daughters of men, with the lineage of Cain. There began to be a fuzzing of the line of distinction. Just like over here in Judges 3, these enemies that were left in Israel, God put them there to prove Israel as a nation and what happened? Verse 6, "They took their daughters to be their wives,

and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods." That's what's described all the way back here in Genesis 6:4. When it says "giants in the earth," you've heard the expression, "They were giants among men," it's not talking about like physical stature and the reason is because the last part of verse 4 explains the first, "the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." In other words, these were superstars among men. Men elevated them to prominence and we know one of these men that came out of this was Nimrod who started building the tower of Babel and became renowned. Isn't that what men seek after? Promotion and prominence, popularity? But such is not the direction of one who is a servant of the Lord. You look at how Peter and Paul and these other apostles opened up their epistles and Paul, the what? Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wasn't seeking renown. He wasn't seeking to be a giant among men as religion does, alright?

Now, look at God's condemnation of all this in Genesis 6:5, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." You look at that and think, "Whoa, wickedness." It was the wickedness of the heart that was drawing these away from the one way of worship that was set forth there in Genesis 4 by the blood sacrifice, the way set forth by Abel for which he had died and God saw that wickedness and "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Now, how can you get any stronger statement than that and that was all the way back in the beginning? So it's just to say that I believe maybe with all of our technology and the way right now within milliseconds something can be around the world that we're more exposed to the evil but it's always been there. It's in every child that's born. Every one of us born in this world, we come into this world with this very nature.

So that's the first thing we see here described in Judges 3, this wickedness in which the world lies because of the fall. But the second point I want you to see and underscore and this is really where the rest of the message hinges and that is the nature of God. We see the nature of man and we know what that is but what is God's nature? How is it revealed in his sovereignty in this world? And I would have to say here number 1 from verse 1, how wisely God has acted in the way that he has dealt with this world and deals with it. You see, our own rebellion is manifested every time we question God, "God, why this? Why that? How come this? How come that?" If the Lord would grant us by his Spirit this fundamental assurance that everything is exactly the way it's supposed to be and that many times what we consider a severe trial or some irritation or agitation out here that causes agitation in here and we wonder, "Well, why doesn't God just strike them dead and deal with them?" We're always thinking them, them, them when in reality it's for the exercise of our own heart and that's the part where we wiggle and squirm and as long as we're blaming someone else or looking at a circumstance and not seeing God's hand in it, then we're going to continue to blindly move forward.

What I see here first of all and that's why I read Romans 8 for us before the message, that all things are for our good and God's glory. I believe that and so when I read here in verse 1, "Now these are the nations which the LORD left," you see, he is exercising his sovereignty even over these enemies. I know years ago when someone put the book "The Sovereignty of God" in my hands, I didn't realize it but before I read that book and really

started comparing Scripture, I had a dualistic view of this world. I had a view that here was one circle which is God and over here is another circle which is man and those two circles were always in conflict. And I know this professor when I went to seminary who didn't have a clue of what he was talking about, in fact, he was one of the worst professors we ever had but one thing that he did state that caused me to start really going back to Scripture and weighing was he came in one day and he drew a big old circle on the board and he said, "This circle represents God," and he said, "Now, I want you to tell me where do I put sin? Where do I put Satan? Where do I put evil? Where do I put as far as influence and as far as power, where do these things go?" Of course, we were all sitting in class, "We need to have another circle over here that represents those things." So he went ahead and put it on the board but then when he got done, he said, "Now, you just take a look at this. What have we got? We've got then two equal powers conflicting with one another. If you really believe that somehow even Satan is outside of God's influence, you've got a power outside of God himself and that," he said, "is never taught in the Scripture." That kind of set me back in my seat but I went back and the Lord directed me back to the Scriptures and started reading and here is a clear example of one of those portions of Scripture. I had never seen it before but it clearly says, "Now these are the nations which the LORD left," and we're going to see why that is.

But the key here is that the Lord purposed that these enemies not be removed. You say, "Well, why is that?" Well, there are a couple of reasons and I would say that this first reason is one of the reasons why in looking at this, I'm thankful that the Lord doesn't leave me at peace because the propensity in my heart would be...remember, this land of Canaan was a land full of riches, milk and honey. It was wealthy. It was a wealthy land just like this world is. It's amazing to me. We just got back from New York City and you would never have a clue that there was an economic crisis as you hear about, you know, listening to the media. I mean, hustle and bustle and buildings and people going and luxury. I mean, women's purses that cost over \$1,000 a bag and the doors are open and stores are selling. There is money somewhere. So as you look at that and you weigh even the path that the Lord has directed for each one of us, I'm thankful that he makes it difficult to earn a dollar. I'm thankful that it is by the sweat of our brow that we're going to earn our keep in this world and the more difficult the Lord makes it, the more it is to remind us not to pursue these things that the world pursues. They pursue it because that's all they're ever going to know as far as temporal blessings so let them go.

These enemies were there to prove Israel and it says there in verse 1, "by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan." There was a young generation that was raised up in the time of Judges that even during the battles of Joshua, so we're reading of a time removed here, a whole generation removed, that without those enemies being there, they might have taken their ease. Their parents kind of told them about the victories of Joshua because, remember, Joshua is dead now and you know how it is with kids today, when you try to go back and remind them of what it took to enjoy the freedoms we have, they say, "Yeah, yeah. This is boring. Why do we have to hear about the Revolutionary War again? That's old." But blood was shed in order for us to enjoy the freedoms that we enjoy today. How soon we forget unless every day there is a constant reminder and that's what the Lord did with these enemies. Wherever that enemy was, it

was a reminder that it was the Lord that had put them there and they were not to sit back on their laurels and presume.

But the second reason I believe that we have here in the word "proving," the Lord left these nations to prove Israel. That word is one that would be used of an artisan, one that wants to make sure that the gold is pure and so heats the gold until the dross floats to the top and then the dross is removed and what's left is pure gold. There is a separating. There is a dividing that the Lord has purposed by having his own people in the midst of these enemies around us and within us and it's the Lord's way of sifting the wheat from the chaff. If you look, and that's mentioned again in verse 4, "And they were to prove Israel by them," that's the same word. There is a sifting that goes on. Paul over in 1 Corinthians 11, if you'll look at that with me. Do you understand now why the Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one"? People spout that off, you know, rote and regurgitate, without really thinking about it. What would it be should ever the Lord take his hand off of any one of us? The stream, the current of this world not only out there but in our flesh would sweep us into the same condemnation as the world. That makes you stop and think, "Why is it that I'm not of the world?" Well, there's only one thing and that's his grace, that's his mercy.

But there is a sifting that goes on when you see this in 1 Corinthians 11:19. Well, in verse 18 it says, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." Now look how he puts this in verse 19, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved," isn't that interesting? Over here it says they were to prove Israel by them. That's to say that that which is chaff will be manifest and that which is truly the Lord's will be proven, approved. That's what the word is there, "that they which are approved." And notice how it's put, already approved. It's speaking of those who have been accepted in the Beloved, for whom Christ has paid the debt and they are sanctified in him. They are justified in him. They are kept in him but it's that they which are approved, "may be made manifest among you."

The years I grew up in Africa, I have vivid memories and pictures still in my mind of the women taking that rice, you just didn't go out and buy rice in bags, they had to bring it in from the field, harvest it and then pound it every night to separate the husks from the grain and they would have a winnowing fan that they would use to toss the rice up and down and blow the chaff away and then put it back in and pound it some more in the mortar until it was pure and the chaff was removed. That pounding, that separating out, is I believe by design what the Lord has done here. You say, "You know, it's tough living in this world." I agree. Where is the fellowship? Where are those that we can sit down with and truly fellowship in the Son and with regard to his death? It seems like we're just in a constant conflict, always having to correct, always having to define. Well dear friends, it's going to be that way but it's for the exercise of our own heart because every time you have to clarify again who the Lord Jesus Christ is to you and what it is that his death has accomplished, when those who oppose it, oppose you, they're really not opposing you, they're opposing this very Lord and Savior and unless the Lord grants them his Spirit and

grace, unless they are one of these approved, it will be proven that they're going to go the way of all flesh just like anybody else.

So those are the two reasons that I see here as to why these enemies remain. Now again, when you come back here to Judges 3 and this is going to lead us into the rest of the book of Judges, the beginning here, but how were those proven that were not approved? How were those shown not to be the Lord's? Well, it says there in verse 6, you're not going to change verse 5. It's just like the church in the world, dwelt among Canaanites. Dwelt among Hittites. Dwelt among Amorites and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites. We live in a wicked world but verse 6, "They," notice that, "they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and," what? "Served their gods." They. That's the "they" verses "us." It's not for anything in us but those who are the Lord's, he does keep, that I know. The only reason I'm standing here today and preaching for you a distinct, exclusive message of grace in the Gospel isn't because I learned this in a preacher's school somewhere, I didn't. Everything, in fact, I was talking about this with Brother Mike the other day and everything that I've learned and even as the Lord began to teach me all the different directions that I could have gone and been caught up in and yet here I am today preaching this one single, solitary, exclusive message of Christ and him crucified. I have to give all the glory to God alone. But you know what? I don't sit back on my laurels because the Scripture says, "They that persevere to the end shall be saved." Now, am I afraid that somehow I'm going to fall away and lose my salvation? Not if the Lord has saved me.

And that's why when we consider even what's written over here in Psalm 141:4, remember these things are for the exercise of our hearts for the Lord's. Look how David put it here in Psalm 141 and notice here in my Bible, the title is "Conduct amidst trial." How should we then live in light of this truth? What does David say the very first thing, "LORD, I cry unto thee." That's the Lord singling him out. "Make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Can you see how that parallels? Don't accept my prayer but accept it as if it were Christ interceding on my behalf. That's strong. That's what the evening sacrifice represented. "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." In other words, may I never, ever give honor and glory to the flesh or to myself or to any other person, doctrine, whatever it may be.

He says, "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties." It's talking there about false worship, being drawn aside, and the reason I say that is right here in Judges 3:7, "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD," and you're thinking, "Okay, they started killing one another, stealing from one another, committing adultery, all these things you hear preachers going down through the list." What does it say, "forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves." The groves were high places. They were beautiful places. They had a physical attraction to them apart from the simplicity of the tabernacle. You know, you get into the land and you look over here and here are all these huge monuments built up on mountaintops and then you look over here and here's this little building that is made out of badger skin and if you're not the Lord's, you're beginning to

think, "Well, there are a whole lot more people going over here than are worshipping over here." Your eyes are turned and that's exactly how Balaam, when you go back to the book of Numbers, told Balak that he could draw the people away, "Invite them to your sacrifices. Let them go and enjoy themselves a little bit. Oh, it's just a fellowship. We're not talking about having them come worship, it's just a fellowship meal. Come on, bring something. Bring the potatoes, bring the meat, come join us." That's how it all begins. "You know, you guys have got some stuff that involves children's programs and other things and we don't have that over here. Ours is kind of just plain Jane. You know, we get together and we sing and read the Scriptures and don't have anything set apart for children or whatever." What happens? If a person's heart has not been delivered by the Spirit of God and drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ, one of his redeemed, they are going to run down that street just as fast as they can.

But the Lord purposes those things and proves sinners that way. That's why David says there, "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity." That's what the Lord said, "Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not done many mighty works in your name?" And what did the Lord say? "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you." It's better to stand alone. It's better to be that minority. Everybody wants to be in the majority. No, truth has never been in the majority. The Lord has always had his witness but it hasn't been among the groves. It hasn't been among the populace. It's been in that one sinner here and that one sinner there. The Rahab. The Jacob. It's not anything in them. You look at Jacob, the name Jacob. You look at Rahab. You look at who these people were, sinners just like the rest but saved by grace and kept by grace and grace alone.

So these lingering enemies, they're real, they are lethal to the soul and yet it's just like the hymn writer wrote,

"Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has led me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home."

That's precious when you stop and think about the Lord's keeping and the Lord does keep.