

RUF Bible Study – Judges
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Judges 3 – Ehud, left-handed salvation

Judges 3:12 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 13 He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms. 14 And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.

What kind of person do you want to save you? What sort of deliverer would you wish for? I think most of us would wish for a Superman kind. He's the classic hero – strong, handsome, smart, and other-worldly. He always seems to be in the right place at the right time. He doesn't get entangled in worldly things, but keeps himself spotless.

On the other hand is Batman. Batman isn't that savory. After all, he's just a man. He doesn't have any real special powers, just cool gadgets and a large amount of bravery. He also seems rather disturbed. There's a dark side to this knight, one we aren't exactly sure of down there in the bat cave.

We'll take Superman, thanks. But we'd take Batman over nothing. We'd want to be saved, no matter who did it.

The Bible continually paints a picture of strange saviors. Over and over again it presents and promotes people we wouldn't expect to be the guy. Judges 3 is certainly no exception. We'll see how how great – and strange – a salvation we have as God's people.

Let's look at the cycles, the sinful situation and the savior.

Cycles

We went over this in our last lesson, but I want to make sure we really get it and see it. The author of Judges spells out these cycles for us in chapter two. Let's summarize them here.

Cycle Part One – The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. They abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers. They went after other gods; they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. In the first part of the cycle, God renders his verdict on the people – they are sinful and evil. The height and ultimate proof of their sin is their worshipping these Canaanite gods, these Baals.

God had told his people to remain faithful and pure. He wanted them to eliminate the idolators and their temples and high places so they wouldn't fall into this trap. But they did not do it. They let the Canaanites remain in place, and slowly adopted a syncretistic approach to life. Yahweh is God. But we can handle some Baal too. A little Baal never hurt anyone, they thought. So they began what we called a God Plus religion. God Plus sex. God Plus nature. God Plus success. God calls this whoring after other gods, for it robs him of his intimacy with his people.

Cycle Part Two – The anger of the Lord was kindled, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them. God doesn't take kindly to being cheated on. So he sent troubles Israel's way in order to discipline them and bring them to repentance. What do you think about this? We didn't spend much time on this in the last chapter, but it's worth dwelling on.

God sends plunderers to plunder his people. The ones he loves. Do you like that? We don't know what to make of a God like this. But this is how he acts. An important New Testament passage that speaks to this is Hebrews 12:
My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

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For this series, I used commentaries on Judges from Block, Wilcock, Redeemer Presbyterian, Davis, Cundall/Morris, Jordan and Pete Hatton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

If you are a Christian, God does not punish you any more. Jesus Christ has taken all the punishment due to you. But he will continue to discipline you. This is the loving discipline of a good father. Bad fathers let their children do anything they want. Or bad fathers over-discipline everything, which is really punishment or making their children pay.

God isn't a bad father. He is a good one, and that means he's involved in bringing about consequences to his children for their sins. If something bad is going on in your life, you should think about it. Don't be too quick to dismiss it. God has brought about this for a reason. You may actually never figure out what that reason is, but there is one. Think if you are being disciplined. Think if you are being drawn closer to God, a process that almost always involves suffering in some way.

Here we read that God's purpose for bringing these plunderers was "to teach war to those who had not known it before." (Judges 3:2). A good illustration might be a basketball team that had won the national championship each year for the past five years. But this year, they'd gotten lazy. They thought they could just show up and win it again. They expected it. So the coach starts to drill them, to run them, to bring in even better players to practice against, and to make them fight. The OU wrestling coach, Jack Spates, always wants his team "to battle." He would love to win every match, but because he knows he can't, he really wants his wrestlers to fight hard to win.

God wants us to battle too. So sometimes he sends us battles to teach us how to fight. God sent the plunderers.

Cycle Part Three – The Lord was moved to pity by their groaning, and he sent judges to save them from the hands of their enemies. Thankfully, God doesn't only send plunderers our way. He also sends deliverers. He sends saviors to deliver his people. God hears the cries of his people and he sends help.

Cycle Part Four – But whenever the judge died, the people turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. The judge saved the people, but it was a temporary salvation. The people turned back and became even worse than before. Not because God's salvation wasn't good enough, but because the people's sinfulness was so bad.

Judges presents a downward spiral of sin and oppression. Let's see if our passage has these parts of the cycle in it.

Cycle Part One – Judges 3:12a *And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord*, We see the first cycle in this verse, although we don't have the usual comment about the Baal worship. Considering the weight and testimony of the other judgments, it should most likely be assumed idolatry is involved here as well.

Cycle Part Two – Judges 3:12b *and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord*. The second part is shown by the specific king of Eglon, king of Moab. Notice how the text says the Lord "strengthened" Eglon to do this task. This is the same verb as "hardened" in Exodus (see for example Exodus 9:7) for what God did to Pharaoh's heart. God did not produce evil in Eglon, but allowed the evil that was there to grow unfettered and to its full extent against God's people.

Cycle Part Three – Judges 3:15 *Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab*. God raised up a deliverer, in this case, Ehud the Benjamite, which is our focus for this lesson.

Cycle Part Four – Judges 4:1 *And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died*. And yes, the fourth cycle is also fulfilled, as we read of God's people returning to their evil ways in short order.

The Situation

We have skipped over one of the judges and his story. Othniel began our journey with the judges with just five verses in chapter 3. He is the "classic" judge, the one who sets the pattern. For eight years, Israel suffered under a king of Mesopotamia, but God heard their cry and sent Othniel, who was a nephew of Caleb (one of the main men in the book of Joshua). Othniel raised an army, went out to war and defeated the king. The land rested for forty years.

There's not much to say here. Things go amazingly well and are extremely straight-forward. Our only comment should be to notice that this is exactly what we would expect. It fits our Superman idea. Not that Othniel is perfect or superhuman, but he doesn't have any apparent flaws and his battle is clear. However, this will be the last and therefore only one of these periods. Perhaps that is why the author has placed it here – to show us how nothing will go this way again.

We have mentioned already Eglon, the king that God raised up. He was from Moab, which is troubling for the Israelites. They wouldn't have expected to be dealing with these people. They aren't from the region, but have swooped in to take territory away from the Israelites. They've even gotten so far as the "city of palms" (3:13), which is Jericho. Remember Jericho is the city Joshua took in his first victory, which we read about in Joshua 6. It appears Jericho was a city worth rebuilding, so the Moabites went and reclaimed it. God's people are losing ground here. The Moabites formed a coalition with the Amalekites and the Ammorites, and they took over the Israelites. King Eglon had the Israelites for 18 years as servants.

The other thing we know about this situation comes from Judges 3:16. *Now Eglon was a very fat man*. This will matter soon, but it's a detail that the writer wants us to notice. The Israelite reader would have a wry smile come across his face, for he knew what happened next. It's true our idols often turn out to be the very thing that kills us. Think of Absalom. He loved himself, but that love was shown in his love for his hair. He'd cut his hair and weigh it every year. I think all of us have some amount of hair idolatry (I call this your "Hair Vanity Quotient" and have had lengthy discussions about my theory, and never convince anyone), and some of us spend a lot of time on it. Do you remember how Absalom died? His hair was caught in

some branches, so he was stuck, and he was killed. We have a similar situation here – we need to see if Eglon’s corpulence will be his undoing.

That’s the situation. God’s people are stuck in their sins. God has sent a king to oppress them. And they cry out to him.

Our modern generations are stuck in their sins as well. Research reveals this younger generation (commonly called the Millennials or Mosaics) is dealing with some deep, deep stuff.² Currently more than one third of children born in the United States are born to unmarried mothers. Seventy-five percent of young people approve of sex before marriage. One-fifth of Busters [born between 1964 and 1980] and two-fifths of Mosaics [born between 1980 and now] say in the last thirty days they have had a sexual encounter with someone who is not their spouse. From the late 1960s to the late 1990s, the average age when a young woman lost her virginity had dropped from eighteen to fifteen. By the time today’s adults reach their midforties, women typically have had four sexual partners and men have had eight. In a typical month, about one-fifth of those ages eighteen to twenty-five have used illegal or nonprescription drugs. One out of seven admits to dealing with an addiction. One-third describe themselves as overweight. One-sixth recognizes they are already in serious debt. One-eighth are lonely. One-quarter feel unfulfilled in life. Nearly half say they are stressed out. Suicide is the leading cause of death among people aged fifteen to twenty four. In a 2005 study, one out of every six high school students had contemplated suicide during the last year, while one out of every twelve high school students said they had attempted suicide in the last year.

Those are sad, sad statistics. Let’s pause to think about where we are. Where are you in any of that? Are you stuck in a sin by your own doing or are you struggling with something someone else has done to you?

Women, have you been oppressed by a man somehow? This is increasingly common. Perhaps you were touched as a girl by a babysitter or relative. Maybe you were talked into oral sex at a party in junior high. Or you’ve experienced the horror of date rape. You might even feel guilty, like it was your fault somehow. This is a huge thing in your life and in our society.

I want you to hear the message of Judges. You need to talk about this abuse, this thing in your life that you hide away and never allow yourself to talk about. You must. You must bring it out into the light. You need a deliverer. You need a savior. You need to tell your story and receive healing.

Men, have you had something like this happen to you? Or have you done this to someone else? Maybe you were just joking, or maybe you thought she wanted you to or maybe you were drunk. Have you done the oppressing? Have you talked about your guilt and shame? I can remember driving with one of my high school friends. Her name was Melissa.³ We were talking, and I liked her, and all of a sudden I wanted to have sex with her. I’d never had sex before, and well – I wanted to. With her. Right then. We were alone, and all I had to do was pull over, and I knew I could overpower her and force her to do it with me.

But I didn’t. I’m glad I didn’t, so glad. That was a scary moment in my heart, when I saw I was capable of something like that. Maybe you didn’t stop. Maybe you went through with it. Have you talked about this with anyone?

I’m convinced all of us have some place in our hearts, some secret sin, some trapped place of oppression. We’re all in this situation. Some of you were placed in it, maybe even by God. We have to say theologically that God allowed it. And that might make you furious. Why didn’t God stop it from happening?!

I don’t know the answer to that. I do know that God can handle your anger. And I do know he allows us to be hurt so we can experience his love and forgiveness, as crazy as that seems sometimes. I do know he hears his children when they cry to him.

You should cry out to him. You should tell him all of how you feel, even your anger. You should enlist others in this story-telling project. We should cry out to him together.

We’re all in this situation. None of us are immune.

The Unexpected Savior

So here we all are. In some sort of oppression. Some of us are here by our own devices. We’ve loved sin so much we’ve become enslaved to it. We’re captured by what people think of us. We’re pursuing a God Plus life with the Plus being money, popularity, marriage or dating. It’s so pervasive we don’t even think about it any more.

But God wants to jar that out of us. He might orchestrate circumstances in our lives in such a way to have that happen. Are you prepared to deal with what God brings your way? Are you crying out to him to be so gracious as to save you from evil no matter what he would have to do to make that happen?

God might send an Ehud. The first thing we read about Ehud is *the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man*. Ehud is a Benjaminite. The name Benjamin means “son of my right hand.”

Right-handedness is important in the Bible. A fine example from Exodus is 15:6: *Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy*. Jesus is said to sit at God’s right hand. It’s the place of power and strength. Everyone was right-handed. You fought with your right hand. You were trained to do so.

² The following statistics come from *UnChristian*, chapter 6: Sheltered.

³ That’s not her real name.

So being from the tribe of the Benjamites is good for fighting. We expect God to raise up a warrior from there, a right-handed man of power to defeat the people. Someone like Othniel perhaps.

But we're told Ehud is left-handed! I know this doesn't seem too crazy to you, for you know many left-handed people. Wikipedia says approximately 7-10% of the population are left-handed and it is more common in males than females. Studies show left-handed people aren't as smart as right-handed people. Oh wait, that's not true. But that is the common association. In fact, it is worse than that. One of the words for left-handed is "sinistral" which derives from "sinister," the Latin word for left. Many languages legitimize the right (dexterity comes from "dextrus," meaning right), while disparaging the left. In Chinese, the left is the bad side, for example.

This is all interesting, and a downer for God's people. Here they are in bondage, giving tribute to a fat king who isn't supposed to be there, and they have a judge who can't use his right hand. Not good. This is like sending in one of the B-level superheroes. SaranWrap Man. Tupperware Woman. Mr. No Hands. Wormboy.

But hey, we're in trouble so we'll take him. Let's see what Ehud can do. They send him in. He has made a sword about 18 inches long. It's double-sided and without a hilt. He straps it onto his right side, which would be the opposite side from normal.

Ehud presents the bribe money to Eglon, and he leaves. This doesn't seem like it's going anywhere. "So far from a crusade of liberation, this is a mission which sums up the abject humiliation of a defeated people – the conveying of a tribute payment. It expresses not revolt but submission."⁴

But here is where the story turns. Ehud gets to the idols at Gilgal and turns back. We are left to wonder if he saw the idols and was so disgusted with his people and their situation that he had to act. Or if he saw the idols and worshipped them before he went to kill the king. We don't know. I'd like to think it was the first situation.

He gets back to Eglon's palace and tells Eglon he has something for him, a secret thing. Eglon sends out everyone. It's just him and Ehud. He must trust Ehud to do this. It seems like Ehud isn't a threat. He's been an envoy for an oppressed people for years, so they know him. He's pathetic. He's got a crippled fighting hand and couldn't do anything harmful even if he tried.

So Ehud is alone on the roof chamber with Eglon. "I have a message (or thing) from God for you." Cool, Eglon thinks. He stands up out of reverence from this god, whoever he is (and thereby shaming some of us who show no reverence for the words of God).

Aha. Things get good here. We've entered R-rated Bible action time.

Judges 3:21 *And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. 22 And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung came out. 23 Then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them.*

Ehud grabs his sword from the wrong side. The camera would pan to Eglon, who now has a huge "What?!!" written on his face. He's about to yell for the guards when Ehud plunges the sword into Eglon's huge, fat belly, which instantly kills him. He slumps to the ground. No one hears. Maybe Ehud has grabbed his throat at the same time, and he slowly works the dagger in so far that he can't get it out.

Now this is gross. Some of your Bibles can't handle it so they translate it away, but the ESV goes for it. Apparently when Eglon died, his bowels released and he pooped himself. The dung came out, it says. Some find this distasteful, but I think it's awesomely gross. The Bible has stuff like this, and it makes it much more interesting.

Eglon lies on the ground, surrounded by blood, fat and feces. Commentator Jordan writes, "His excrement would therefore have been copious, poorly digested and very noisome. God used this stench to buy Ehud time to escape."⁵ Ehud makes his escape. After awhile, the servants start to wonder what is taking so long. But they don't want to interrupt Eglon. And they can smell something, so they figure he's on the toilet. It smells. "Surely he is relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber." Don't go in there. Yikes. But they eventually get over their embarrassment and find him dead on the floor.

Ehud has walked away. He didn't have to hide or clean the sword because it was stuck in Eglon. He got out past the idols and to his people. You get the impression that they were waiting to see if he would make it. They had their doubts. But when he did, they went down to the shocked, leaderless Moabites and killed 10,000 of their strong, able-bodied men. The enslaved, nomadic, conquered people with their left-handed leader defeated the strong, fattened, tanned and toned Moabites. And Israel had rest for eighty years. What a story.

How do we make application to this story? How to make daggers? Lefties make better assassins? Don't be alone and fooled?

We've seen how we need help, how we ALL need help. This isn't a picture of those bad people "out there." It's a picture of us and our need. If you need help in any way, then this text is for you. If you think you have it all together and are doing great, then you might as well move on. You're wrong, but I can't help you. If there is something in your life – something

⁴ Wilcock, 42

⁵ Jordan, 63

big or small or anything – that feels like death, smells like death or sounds like death, then you need to hear and understand this message.

God delights in saving people who need help. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Here's our big clue that this text is also about Jesus. When we were talking about this verse: *the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man*, it was easy to start with the left-handedness issue. But the important word here is "deliverer." God didn't send an assassin or a murderer or a deceiver. He sent a deliverer! That word is the word where we get "Messiah." God sent a Messiah.

What is a Messiah? A Messiah is an anointed one sent by God to save and rule his people. Ehud was a temporary, imperfect Messiah. His deliverance was effective, but only for a short time. It wasn't the right time for God to send his son as The Messiah.

Let's make two applications then.

First, when God did send his Messiah at just the right time (Galatians 4:4), it was also a left-handed salvation. Not that Jesus was left-handed, but that he wasn't what the people (or we) expected. They wanted a mighty king, someone who would come in and smash the Romans to the ground, grinding them up and casting them into the sea. Instead, their king was born in the middle of nowhere in a cattle stall and lived in obscurity until he turned thirty. Then, in his ministry and public speaking, he refused to discuss the government and got in the face of the Jewish leaders. That didn't make sense to people. Just when this so-called Messiah was gaining popularity from the masses, he started sounding rather insane with all of his "I am the Bread of Life" speeches (see John 6, especially the end of the chapter when Jesus' sermon dispels the crowd). And then the final coup de grace – conquering kings don't get crucified as common criminals.

It had been foretold, this unexpected deliverer. Especially in Isaiah, we should have known that Jesus would have been someone who would be despised and rejected, who wouldn't be super handsome or super human. But we want a Superman, not an Ehud. "Who would have predicted that when the Judge came himself in the flesh, he would have come as such a 'left-handed' person, with 'no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him... despised and rejected by man.'"⁶

Jesus came as a man. He wasn't 6 foot 5 inches with dashing looks. He was a Jewish man raised in a carpenter's family. He did have an odd charisma, but you may not have liked him. He talked about his own death a lot, and didn't always stand up for himself like a Messiah "should." Do you think you would have followed him?

It's an interesting question – how would we have and how do we relate to God? I think most of us don't truly understand grace at all. I know that to be true. So we think what needs to happen is this – we should get ourselves cleaned up so that God will love and accept us. God hates sinful and dirty people, so we need to get right and get clean and then come to him.

But that is not how it works. That way of thinking will mean you never, ever come to God. This story in Judges 3 is for you. It's just simply crazy. It's messy; it's gross; it's earthy; it's R-rated. God isn't a drill sergeant who comes and inspects the barracks with his white gloves to give you demerits. God is not scrubbing his hands before entering the germ-free zone of your heart. Commentator Ralph Davis writes, "Yahweh is not a white-gloved, standoffish God out somewhere in the remote left field of the universe who hesitates to get his strong right arm dirty in the yuck of our lives. The God of the Bible does not hold back in the wild blue yonder somewhere waiting for you to pour Clorox and spray Lysol over the affairs of your life before he will touch it."⁷

This then is the second then we have to see from this story. God is in the mess and grime of your life and your heart. And he shows up with an unexpected savior, in this case with a messy, left-handed one, but in Jesus with a man who knows your heart and weakness. He doesn't want you to clean up first, but he is there with your filth and puke, the messes you've made and the hurt that has been done to you. God is not fazed by sin, but he enters into it with us. "Whether you can comfortably put it together or not, he is the God who delights to deliver his people even in their messes and likes to make them laugh again; he is the God who allows weeping to endure for a night but sees that joy comes in the morning."⁸

The book of Hebrews makes this point over and over again. Jesus became a man so he could relate to us. He wasn't a superhuman god or a storybook god. But he was something that had never happened – God and man in the same person forever. Jesus got tired and lonely. He was despised and rejected. He experienced loss and hurt. People talked bad about him behind his back. He was forced to do things he didn't want to or have to do. He was beaten. He was *a man*.

That matters because we are a sinful people. There is a lot of blame to go around, but each of us deserves some of it. God is angry about sin. He pours out wrath on sin. We will stand before him to be judged for our sins.

That is scary, unless we understand we have a Messiah, a Deliverer, a Savior who became down and dirty in order to cleanse us from our messes and sinfulness. Jesus Christ became flesh for us, lived the perfect life even in the temptations, so that he could take the wrath and give us peace. So we wouldn't have to fear God's judgment, but could live in God's freedoms.

⁶ Wilcock, 47

⁷ Davis, 63

⁸ Davis, 63

Do you hear the call of this Real Jesus? Ehud only points to him. Ehud was just a figure, a type or a picture of the Real Deliverer. The story of Ehud shows us that God hears the cries of his people and he sends them someone to save them from their sins. Do you know that story today? Do you have something in your life you're hiding or some part you're not telling? Bring that to Jesus today. Don't think you have to fix it before you give it to him. He wants it, all of you. If you are confident of facing God in the future, then face him now and repent of your sins. Don't continue to serve sin and walk in its ways, but cry out for the deliverer that he might plunge to death the evil, tyrant king who enslaves you.

The best illustration for this sort of down and dirty salvation is one I read recently in the *unChristian* book and then on the website www.twloha.org.

Jamie Tworowski apparently has hung out with Joaquin Phoenix. Aside from his great acting, it stuck with him that Phoenix writes on his arms. He uses his arms like a to do list and a notepad. Awhile after this, Jamie decided to be like Phoenix, so he took a Sharpie and wrote "LOVE" on his arms.

Jamie met a 19-year-old girl named Renee. When he met her, she still had cocaine in her system, and she hadn't slept in 36 hours. She was depressed, suicidal at times and had "felt the touch of awful naked men." In the morning after Jamie met her, she fely trapped, and after downing a bottle of liquor she "takes a razor blade from the table and locks herself in the bathroom. She cuts herself, using the blade to write 'F--- UP' large across her left forearm."⁹

The detox Renee checked into wouldn't take her because they said she was too much of a risk. So Jamie took her. Jamie writes that he's never seen anyone be so close to life and death at the same time. She was beautiful and horrifying, dark and soft.

They started Jamie's own rehab program together, with Jamie making it up as he went along. They drank coffee and smoke. They went to basketball games and stopped often for more coffee and books. They attended some shows and went to church where people prayed for her. The next day Renee was scheduled to actually go to real rehab, so people gave her things to hold and think of while she was there.

Renee pulled Jamie aside and handed "me her last razor blade, tells me it is the one she used to cut her arm and her last lines of cocaine five nights before. She's had it with her ever since, shares that tonight will be the hardest night and she shouldn't have it. I hold it carefully, thank her and know instantly that this moment, this gift, will stay with me. It hits me to wonder if this great feeling is what Christ knows when we surrender our broken hearts, when we trade death for life."

I'll let Jamie make his own analysis of this story: "We often ask God to show up. We pray prayers of rescue. Perhaps God would ask us to be that rescue, to be His body, to move for things that matter. He is not invisible when we come alive. I might be simple but more and more, I believe God works in love, speaks in love, is revealed in our love. I have seen that this week and honestly, it has been simple: Take a broken girl, treat her like a famous princess, give her the best seats in the house. Buy her coffee and cigarettes for the coming down, books and bathroom things for the days ahead. Tell her something true when all she's known are lies. Tell her God loves her. Tell her about forgiveness, the possibility of freedom, tell her she was made to dance in white dresses. All these things are true.

"We are only asked to love, to offer hope to the many hopeless. We don't get to choose all the endings, but we are asked to play the rescuers. We won't solve all mysteries and our hearts will certainly break in such a vulnerable life, but it is the best way. We were made to be lovers bold in broken places, pouring ourselves out again and again until we're called home."

Friends, Jamie was like Ehud to Renee. He, a broken person himself, entered her broken places and instead of writing condemnation and judgment, he did write love on her arms. That was a picture of Jesus, not Ehud.

God says he will write love in our hearts. He may bring about "left-handed" ways so he can work, but we should be grateful for those ways and see God in them. To the moralist, Ehud is a clever, but brutal assassin savior. But to the rightly thinking Christian, Ehud is a story about a God who saves people from their well-deserved afflictions by sending a Savior to deliver them. God is the hero of this story.

⁹ I don't know whether to write the word or not. I think I should, since that's what she wrote, and seeing it won't hurt or damn you in any way, but I'm sure some of you will disagree so, sadly, it seems better to just use this code for what it is.