

1. Outwardly, because
2. He provides it inwardly

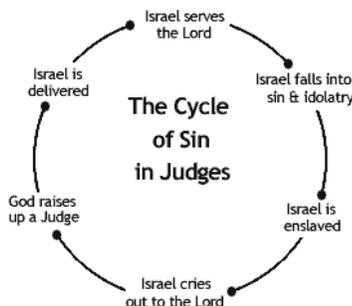
- It just takes one night for lives to be shattered. One night in a movie theater; one night of senseless shootings; one act of evil and wickedness to rob so many of peace.
- It just takes one phone call from a family member who says, “Are you sitting down...”
- It takes just one trip to the doctor’s office,
  - one argument,
  - one visit with the boss,
  - one tour of duty,
    - And PEACE is gone and words like post-traumatic stress syndrome enter our vocabulary.

Even sadder – it takes just one sin to rob us of peace in our hearts. And if we don’t find it again and again and again, we will lose it for eternity. The Bible describes hell as a place without peace, as a place where the worm will not die and the fire will never be quenched. We need peace. We have to have peace. We need to know the one whose name is: “the LORD is my Peace.”

1. Outwardly, 2. by having it inwardly.

### 1. Outwardly and inwardly for the Israelites

When you and I think about a judge, we get the picture of someone sitting in a black Geneva gown, sitting behind a courtroom bench, making decisions about guilt and innocence. But when the Bible speaks about judges, it paints a different picture. These men and women were heroes, deliverers, rescuers – judges who would come to the aid of God’s people and save them from their enemies.



You know the most famous of the judges? The man with a head of hair and a deceiving Delilah? Samson. He rescued God’s people from the hand of the Philistines. Those judges were needed because of the cycle the people of Israel fell into. (Walk them through the chart.) This cycle repeated itself again and again, a cycle that, by the way, repeats in our lives again and again.

Today we’ll read about the fourth cycle that takes place in the book of Judges and be introduced to the hero who would rescue them, Gideon.

It starts out in verse 1 or Judges 6:

- Notice:
- v.1 It took seven years for Israel to finally turn to God.
  - v.2 The Israelites were hiding in caves, living in the hills away from their homes and cities and crops – outwardly they had lost peace in their lives.
  - v.5 like swarms of locusts – back in the dirty thirties, when it was hotter and drier than it is now, locusts would sweep over the land and leave nothing behind – even eating fence posts. The Midianites outwardly robbed the Israelites of everything, especially peace.
  - v.7 Notice how God reestablishes peace for his people peace. Where the source for that peace comes. He doesn’t always make things “better.” But he does always speak to us in his Word. Here an unknown prophet points to the God of love and goodness, and points out how they have lost that peace through their sins – outwardly as well as inwardly by worshipping other gods.

God would restore that peace by calling a young man named Gideon. His story is next.

Notice:v.11 The angel of the LORD, as we'll find out from Gideon, is God himself, the second person of the Triune God who would later come as the Prince of Peace.

- v.11 Note where Gideon is doing the threshing – in a winepress. Normally that was done out in the open, even up on a hill. The idea was to separate the kernel or grain from the chaff or husk by throwing it up in the air and letting the wind carry the chaff away. But Gideon is down low in a winepress which would have had walls and is sheltered. Clearly he too has lost outward peace. He is afraid of the Midianites.
- v.12 God calls Gideon a “might warrior.” Here is this man hiding from the Midianites. Only God could make him a mighty warrior.
- v.13 Could it be that many people dealing with this weekend’s tragedy have been asking the same questions? Why? How? Where are you God? But notice that God doesn’t always answer our questions for us. But he does always offer us peace...
- v.14-16 Gideon recognizes that peace can only come from God, not himself. He’s the youngest of the smallest family of one of the smallest and weakest tribes of Israel. But God would be with him and grant peace.

That’s how God brought peace outwardly to Gideon – notice now how he will give him inward peace...

- v.17-22 Gideon came to realize the same thing Isaiah did when he saw God in a vision of heaven and cried, “Woe to me, I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips.” It’s the same thing Peter recognized when he recognized that Jesus was the very Son of God, “Away from me Lord for I am a sinful man.” It’s the same thing John realized when he fell face down on the ground as though dead, when he came “face to face” with his Lord. And it’s the same thing that we would do if we faced our holy God with our sinful hearts.

But listen to what God says. Instead of judgment he said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” Gideon couldn’t have heard anything better. Outwardly, there would be peace again, because inwardly, he had peace with God. “So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace.”

In Hebrew it sounds like this “Shalom-Adonai.” Shalom. If there is a Hebrew word you know it’s that one. Jewish people use it to say, “Hello” and “Good-bye.” But it’s more than a greeting. It’s a blessing. May you be free from adversity and strife and struggles in your life. May you have health and happiness, wealth and prosperity. May your family and friends be blessed. Peace. But that word means more than just outward peace. The word shalom carries the idea of completeness, wholeness or harmony with someone else. A husband and wife strive for that kind of peace and harmony. It’s the kind of relationship you want with your friends and neighbors. More importantly, it’s what you need with God – harmony, peace.

And it’s yours in the name of the Prince of Peace. At the cross, by his death, he gave up harmony, shalom with his Heavenly Father so that by his death and the hell he paid, you and I might be complete, whole and at peace with God. In Jesus there is forgiveness. In Jesus there is heaven. In Jesus there is nothing to fear or worry about – inwardly, and therefore outwardly.

This weekend there has been non-stop coverage of the shooting in Aurora. Have you noticed it’s the same thing over and over again? The same questions asked again and again. Our nation and community are at a loss on how to deal with all of this. So let’s ask the question: How does a Christian deal with this?

First, we pray. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace (Shalom) of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7) Pray, be in harmony with God, and you will have peace inwardly that guards you outwardly.

The next thing we are to do is repent. A group of people brought Jesus the news of the day and they talked about a tragedy that took place, not in a movie theater but in a place of worship. Pontius Pilate’s soldiers

killed a number of Galileans while they were worshipping. Jesus asked the people, “Do you think they were worse than other people” that this happened to them. His answer: “By no means no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:3) Repentance is God’s way to get in harmony with us – a way to remove the sin that robs us of peace with him and find the One who came as the Prince of Peace. He’s the One who assures us, “I do not give to you as the world gives. My peace I give you. My peace I leave with you. ”

A father was once trying to read a magazine but his little girl just wouldn’t leave him alone. There was a map of the United States on the back of the magazine and she asked question after question about it. What’s this state? What’s this river? What’s this city? Finally the father tore off the back page, tore the map in pieces and told his daughter to go and put it back together. He thought for sure it would take her more than enough time for him to finish his magazine. But the girl came back in just a short 2 minutes. The father asked how she could have gotten it done so quickly. Her answer: there was a picture of Jesus on the opposite side and when she put Jesus back together, the United States was complete again. If that’s true for our country, it’s true for our community and our families and us as his children. Be at peace with Christ here (inwardly) and you’ll have the ability to deal peacefully with all the stuff out there. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 3:16: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.”

VVV – Phillip Sievert

*Source of illustration is unknown...*

*Illustration of the cycle of the book of Judges is from God’s Unfolding Promise (CPH)*