

Spirit of Courage

Scripture Reading — Judges 3:7-11

The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. — Judges 3:10

The book of Judges relates one disheartening story of failure after another. Over and over, we see a vicious cycle in which Israel, settling into the promised land, slides back and forth from faith and obedience to lack of trust and disobedience, followed by oppression from the surrounding nations.

That's the scene in our passage. After Joshua, who had led the people of Israel into the promised land, died, the writer tells us, "The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs." Those were the gods of their neighbors.

But God in his mercy and patience poured out his Spirit on Othniel, Caleb's nephew, to deliver the people from the hand of their oppressors. Othniel, "lion of God," became a mighty hero of Israel. After his victory over Israel's oppressors, Othniel ruled over Israel for forty years, a period of rest and prosperity. Following his death, however, the people again rejected God, became oppressed, and cried out to God, who delivered them through other Spirit-filled leaders, such as Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.

At Pentecost, God poured out his Spirit on all his people, including you and me. We too fight battles, sometimes failing, sometimes succeeding. Take courage today in the Spirit's power, asking for God's help in all you think, say, and do.

Prayer

O Holy Spirit, we dare not trust ourselves in the spiritual battles we face. Give us courage to trust your power in us to face the challenges of each day. Amen.

Written by Kurt Selles — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/kurt-selles>

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