

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 7- "The Forge of Faith"

Key text: Judges 6:1-32

Suppl. texts: Exodus 33:20

Introduction: Last time, we undertook the challenge to see that two are better than one. We studied the most unique of judges, Deborah, along with her general, Barak. First, we noted an iron-fisted Canaanite king named Jabin. We saw how brutally he treated the Israelites & oppressed them through the strength of his military & his general Sisera. Again, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help & He graciously raised Deborah & Barak to help aid His people. Deborah was a faithful & courageous woman who helped settle disputes in Israel, but was not a military leader. This dark time in the nation's history was underlined by the fact that Barak put conditions on his obedience when God called him through Deborah. This reluctant general twice lost out on the glory & renown of victory because of his conditional obedience. God would remove both Jabin & Sisera from their positions of power & use another woman (Jael) to carry out His plan. Tonight, we move to one of the most famous judges, Gideon.

Outline: *read Judges 6:1-6.*

1. Sanctifying trials

- God continues to provide protection, deliverance, & victory for His people against overwhelming odds.
- However, that doesn't mean that God is pleased with His people. He continues to discipline them through their surrounding pagan enemies.
- **Vs. 1;** *"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years He gave them into the hands of the Midianites." Seven years of oppression.*
- God continues to choose the most unlikely of heroes to accomplish His purposes. This is certainly true in the story of Gideon.
- Gideon's story makes up the largest portion of any of the Judges in the book. Comprising chapters 6-8, he is considered the greatest of the O.T. judges.
- **Familiar foes:** the Midianites & Amalekites join forces to attack Israel & subdue them. Things got bad, really bad.
- **Vs. 2;** *"Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds."*
- Imagine that you have a great Christmas every year. You get a lot of new things, but then your neighbors knock on the door & rob you to your face. You get so scared that you hide every time you see them.
- **Vs. 3-6;** *"Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the*

- crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it.*" Again, in their despair, Israel feels remorse & cries out to Yahweh.
- **"Crushing trials have a sanctifying effect."** God uses the hard times of life as a refiner's fire for faithful children & also for times of discipline.
 - **Spurgeon quote:** "God does not let His children sin successfully."
 - God is not a permissive parent. He will build their character through trials. He will not sit idly by & watch His kids destroy themselves & those around them.
 - **Vs. 6;** *"Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help."* Took their crops, cattle, & destroyed the land. They were starving & afraid.
 - Interestingly, God does not immediately send a deliverer. Instead, He sends an **unnamed prophet** to deliver His **chastisement**.
 - **Vs. 7-10;** *"When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian, He sent them a prophet, who said, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."*
 - *"The motive for Christian living is not that we might gain something we don't have but that we might live up to what we already have in Christ."*
 - God still mercifully dispenses grace to those who don't deserve it; it's called mercy.

2. **A cowardly warrior?**

- After the unnamed prophet delivers God's judgment, God Himself comes down.
- **Vs. 11;** *"The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites."* We know this is the preincarnate Christ.
- The name Gideon in Hebrew means **woodcutter** or a feller of trees, a **lumberjack**.
- The fact that Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress gives us some insight into his situation. A winepress is an enclosed room, created below ground. It is not an ideal place to process/sift wheat. Usually, an elevated place with an open-air platform.
- He is doing this work secretly for fear of his food being taken away.
- **Vs. 12;** *"When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'" Why would Jesus call Gideon a mighty warrior?*
- Though Gideon may be an outdoorsman, we see no evidence of a warrior's heart in this section, just a man working to survive in secret.
- God calls Gideon what he will become, not what he is. God sees a seamless timeline.
- **Gideon is mighty only because God is mighty!**

- Not knowing who is addressing him, Gideon **argues** with & **accuses** God.
- **Vs. 13;** *"But sir,' Gideon replied, 'if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.'" God, do you care? Are you concerned about us?*
- Gideon knew the stories of deliverance, the stories of God's power, & the faithfulness of His people, but **lacked** faith of his own. At least he's **wavering**.
- We tend to argue & accuse God from our discomfort.
- **Vs. 14-16;** *"The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. **Am I not sending you?"** "But Lord, " Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."*
- Suddenly, Gideon realizes that he is talking to someone much different, not a prophet of God, but the Angel of the LORD, but he can hardly believe it.

3. **Fleecing Yahweh**

- Probably the most famous part of Gideon's story is the 'fleeces' he placed before God as proof of His providential hand in victory for the Israelites.
- However, there was a fleece before the fleece, so to speak!
- **Vs. 17-18a;** *"Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign **that it is really you talking to me.** Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you."*
- **First**, see that Gideon's first reaction to an encounter with God is to bring an **offering**. This is clearly **an act of worship**.
- **Second**, essentially, Gideon says to Yahweh, 'Stay here, I'll be right back!'
- Who knows how long it took Gideon to gather what was needed for the sacrifice? And that's exactly what it was, a sacrifice. The Israelites are barely surviving, and he's about to give away a young goat, broth, & unleavened bread amid hardship.
- Surprisingly, God waits. **Vs. 18b;** *"And the LORD said, 'I will wait until you return.'"*
- **Vs. 19-21;** *"Gideon went in, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.'" And Gideon did so. With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared."*
- What happened when you were a kid & you questioned your parents? Wrath ensued.

- Gideon now realizes that he has questioned Yahweh. He also realizes that he has seen a representation of Yahweh in the flesh. He knows **Exodus 33: 20**; *"You cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live."* Gideon rightly expects to die!
- **Vs. 22**; *"When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!"*
- **Jesus declares peace. Vs. 23-24**; *"But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."* He still does today.
- Instead of receiving what he deserved, Gideon is shown mercy.
- **God tests Gideon's obedience. Vs. 25-26**; *"That same night the LORD said to him, 'Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering."*
- God is testing Gideon's faith among his family first, as they are pagans!
- The bull Gideon is to offer is seven years old, the length of their oppression.
- **Gideon offers careful obedience. Vs. 27**; *"So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime."*
- Gideon still doesn't seem like a mighty warrior at all, but a **scared son**.
- **Vs. 28-32**; *"In the morning, when the men of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon, son of Joash, did it." The men of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it." But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." So that day they called Gideon "Jerubbaal, " saying, "Let Baal contend with him," because he broke down Baal's altar."*

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 7

Last time, we undertook the challenge to see that two are better than one. We studied the most unique of judges, Deborah, along with her general, Barak. First, we noted an iron-fisted Canaanite king named Jabin. We saw how brutally he treated the Israelites & oppressed them through the strength of his military & his general Sisera. Again, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help & He graciously raised Deborah & Barak to help aid His people. Deborah was a faithful & courageous woman who helped settle disputes in Israel, but was not a military leader. This dark time in the nation's history was underlined by the fact that Barak put conditions on his obedience when God called him through Deborah. This reluctant general twice lost out on the glory & renown of victory because of his conditional obedience. God would remove both Jabin & Sisera from their positions of power & use another woman (Jael) to carry out His plan. Tonight, we move to one of the most famous judges, Gideon.

1. _____ **trials**

- God continues to provide protection, deliverance, & victory for His people against _____.
- Gideon's story makes up the _____ portion of any of the Judges in the book. Comprising chapters 6-8, he is considered the _____ of the O.T. judges.
- _____ **foes:** the Midianites & Amalekites join forces to attack Israel & subdue them.
- Interestingly, God does not immediately send a deliverer. Instead, He sends an _____ to deliver His _____.

2. A _____ **warrior?**

- The name Gideon in Hebrew means _____ or a feller of trees, a _____.
- Not knowing who is addressing him, Gideon _____ with & _____ God.
- Gideon knew the stories of deliverance, the stories of God's power, & the faithfulness of His people, but _____ faith of his own. At least he's _____.

3. _____ **Yahweh**

- **First**, see that Gideon's first reaction to an encounter with God is to bring an _____. This is clearly **an act of** _____.
- **Jesus declares** _____.
- **God** _____ **Gideon's obedience.**
- **Gideon offers** _____ **obedience.**
- Gideon still doesn't seem like a mighty warrior at all, but a _____.

Small Group Questions:

- 1. What does it mean that God is sovereign? How does His sovereignty affect our daily lives?**
- 2. Why did God send the Israelites a prophet before a judge & deliverer?**
- 3. Why was it important that the angel of the Lord come & call Gideon?**
- 4. Why was Gideon timid in the destruction of the false gods/idols? Why do we fear the judgment of man more than God?**
- 5. We notice the phrase, “Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon”. Why is this act by God so important to his & our success?**
- 6. Has the Spirit of God ever given you the boldness to do something outside of your comfort zone? Share with the group.**